

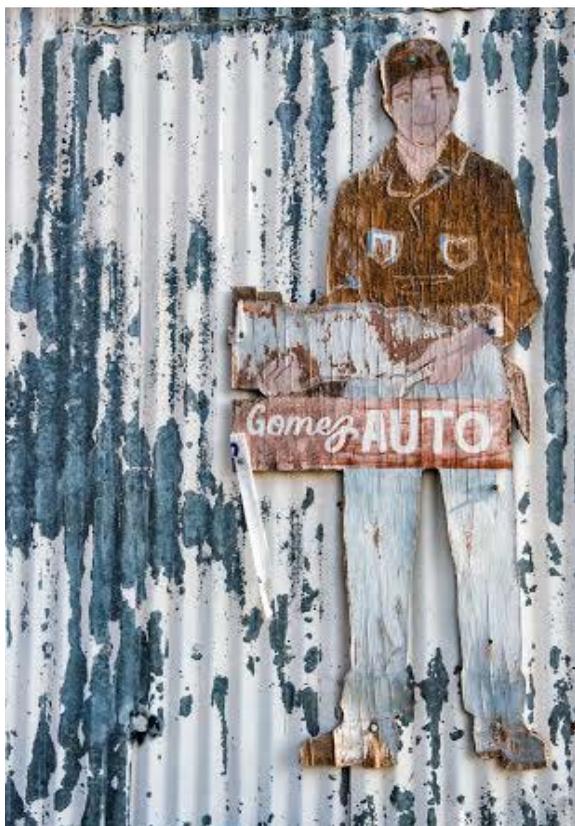
VLACHOS' VIEWS

America through the lens of PAUL VLACHOS



Near Coaldale, Nevada - 2010.

At the intersection of US Federal Routes 6 and 95, there's a deserted truck stop that contains an abandoned motel and casino, as well. The motel is now covered with a mixture of satanic and Christian graffiti that changes from year to year. It looks like bad things have happened in the abandoned rooms and it's not a place I'd want to stop at night. About half a mile from Coaldale is a tiny spur of asphalt that cuts up a hill into the sage. Perhaps it led to a gravel pile left over from road construction. Perhaps it was an aborted spur to a mine. I don't know. What IS clear, though, is that it was used, probably more than once, by the local road crews for painting practice. Maybe they were just aligning their machines. Maybe they were breaking in a new machine operator. Maybe somebody was just having fun, but there it is. Don't cross the double line.



Fort Stockton, Texas - 2012

I don't think Gomez Auto is still in business, but I could be wrong. I'm always passing through Fort Stockton on a Sunday. I took this photo on a Sunday, after I had finally found a room the previous night. Saturday is never a good night to find a motel on the road, even in Fort Stockton. I had found one, though, and then had gotten up the next day and drove around. It felt like I was the only other person awake that morning. It was also a Sunday, back in 1998, when I broke down in Fort Stockton in my old Jeep Wagoneer and had to wait a day for a new part. It's another one of those crossroads towns that I pass through over and over, on my way out west or back east. There is no Starbucks in Fort Stockton - not a whole lot of local coffee options, either, and when I inevitably found myself getting coffee at the McDonalds the last time I was there, I asked them about it. The woman behind the counter had a unified theory as to why there was no Starbucks. It involved local politicians and business owners, a plot, a plan and a nefarious agenda. I listened politely, got my coffee and headed out the door, where Meghan was waiting with Elko and the van.



Northern Arizona - 2012

I love finding fragments of Road Trip America, tourist signage from more innocent days. Well, maybe "more innocent" is not quite true, but how about "less cynical" days? Either way, if the crumbling paint and fading plywood weren't enough to signal its age, "Indian Village" ought to clue in anybody that this sign originated before the 1970's, if not much earlier. Even more solid proof, though, is the hawking of actual film. Does anybody buy film anymore? Do people buy color slides of landmarks to take home and put in their slide projectors? Imagine who thought process behind that one. "Maybe they don't want to carry a camera. Let's shoot some slides, develop them, and then sell them to the tourists!" we are an industrious people, aren't we? My favorite part of this sign, though, is "Place Mats." I'd like to know who was lured off of Route 66 or I-40 to buy place mats.

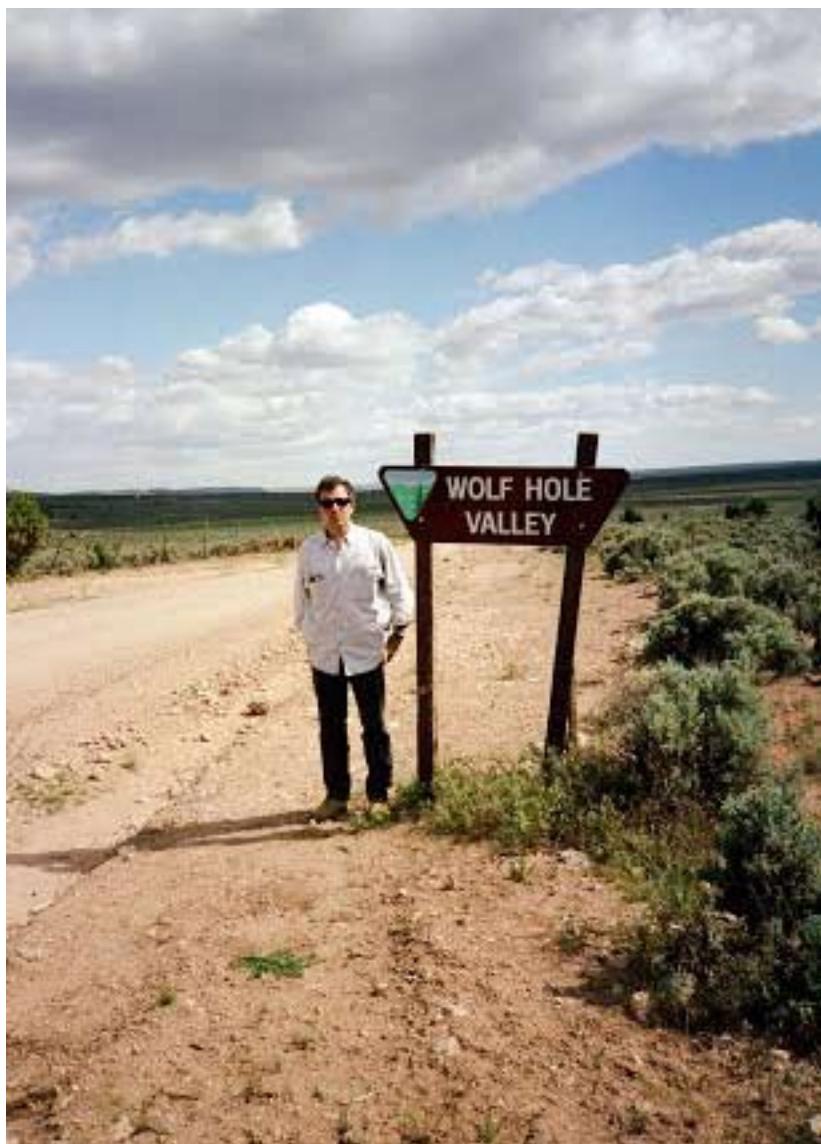


Southern New Mexico - 2012

This is south of Vaughn and north of Alamogordo. If I thought about it for a while, I could probably pinpoint it more closely, but that's close enough for now. There's a chance that, if you lived in this little ranch house back in 1945, and were looking north by northwest, you might have seen the flash of light in the night sky that signaled the dawn of the Atomic Age, when they detonated the first bomb at Trinity Site, in the Jornada del Muerto. Either way, you still had to wake up early the next morning and tend to your duties. My guess is the stock tank and windmill were there then, older versions, probably, but still there. Not sure about the tree, but it be older than it looks from here. I took this shot while heading slowly south, with that growing sadness I feel each time I have to drive back east. It's always good to get home, but it gets harder each time to leave the West behind.

The Arizona Strip - 1998

This may not be such an impressive photograph, but I'm ending with this one to remind myself of how much Edward Abbey has changed my life. In honor of the mighty Canyon Country Zephyr, Mr Abbey, Jim and Tonya, and everybody I have spoken a few words with along the way on the Great American Road, I'd like to say "thank you." I took this on my way to Tuweep, on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon.

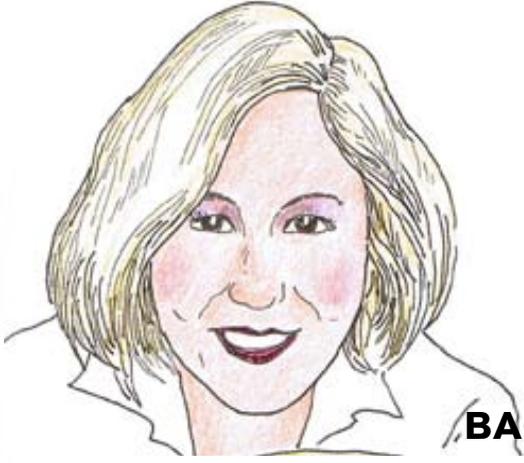


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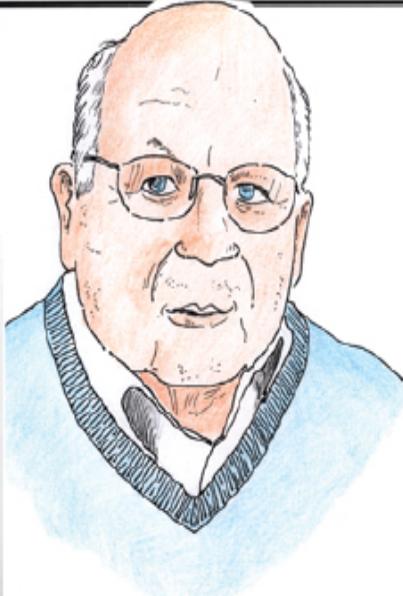
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