

# VLACHOS' VIEWS

America through the lens of PAUL VLACHOS



Another early-dawn shot. I had just begun to pick up speed on my way from west Texas up into New Mexico. This trip was really an excuse to leave New York so that I could fall apart and then let the desert put me back together again. Along the way, I hoped to find some peace with my cameras and Elko, the desert dog. I had covered the ground I had wanted to cover in West Texas and was heading to Las Vegas, New Mexico to soak in a hot spring, via US Route 285, a venerable route goes straight up from Fort Stockton. I saw this old soldier and had to shoot it - who doesn't like an ancient school bus? - but it was a little early. The sun was just peeking over the curvature of the horizon, and I waited a few minutes, but I should have waited longer. It would have been a much better shot. There was just enough light to paint it on the gray, fracked-out haze in the distance, but not enough to make it glow. I hope to pass by there again soon and I hope this bus is still there.

Hattiesburg, Mississippi, just as dawn is breaking and I'm starting the third day of a road trip. It is so difficult to break gravity usually, and get away from the comforts of home, the insidious comforts that lull and dull us. I am usually uneasy until I have actually crossed the Mississippi. In this case, I went far south before I crossed. I am usually drawn to the oasis of light from a nighttime gas station. In fact, I rue one from the end of this particular trip that I passed by because I was in such a rush to get home and it would have involved doubling back on a dicey piece of interstate. In this case, though, I was on the outbound leg and was a bit more introspective.



After you have traveled for another hour and a half past Roswell, you will come to Vaughn, which is a major crossroads, although it doesn't seem to exist for much anymore beyond offering services to travelers. Because cars travel fast now than they once did, my guess is that people don't stay at the old motels in Vaughn as much as they used to. They do stop for gas and to hit the mini mart, but that's about it.



Artesia, New Mexico. I'm backtracking a town or two, but I'm allowed to do that, whether it's in real life or simply in the pages of the Zephyr. I love handmade signs and like to just look at this photo and think about the maker's initial plan, then the execution. How he or she cut out the plywood arrows, painted the words, and then fixed the three boards to the two upright pieces of galvanized steel pipe. I like how the "Sales" placard is NOT an arrow, although I'm not sure why it's not. I might have made it an arrow had I been making the sign for Clyde. This is one issue over which Clyde and I would have had a friendly argument.



I headed back through Pecos again, which is where I shot this old disco. I had been meaning to hit Pecos for years. From the viewpoint of someone who shoots old American ruins, you could see that Pecos was a potentially rich subject just by looking at a map - three highways intersected here, it's more than a speck, meaning it's a bigger dot on the map than most in West Texas and, significantly, it's a little bit off of the Interstate. For whatever reason, that usually means a town has been better preserved than most. Or, from another angle, you could say it's been able to decay more gracefully. Anyway, Pecos did not disappoint and I planned my return east around it. I was going to head another few hundred miles south after this so that I could get another meal at Nora's Tacos, in Sabinal, but the tornado activity in the forecast made me ditch that plan and just head due east, trying to thread the needle between weather fronts. In retrospect, I should have gone south for the huevos ranche-ros

**To see more images and commentary, check out the WordPress version of The Zephyr...**

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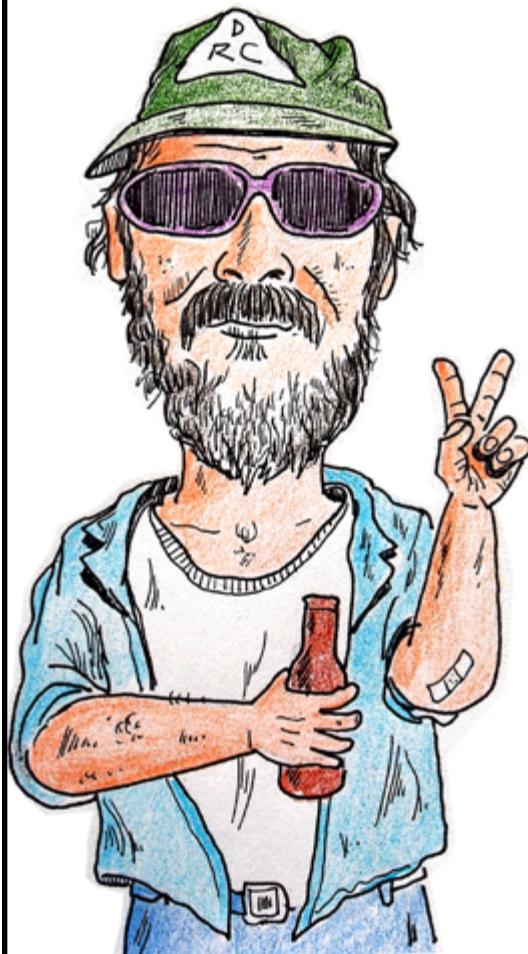
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Thomas Jefferson

## from THE DESERT RAT COMMANDO



Humanity proves, once again, to be engage in a rush towards de-evolution:

A Japanese beverage company has an out-of-this-world advertising idea. Otsuka Pharmaceutical Co. said it's going to shoot a can filled with its beloved beverage Pocari Sweat and embossed with its logo to the moon. It will be the first commercial product ever sent there as a marketing stunt. Set to launch in October 2015, the can will be filled with a powdered version of the popular drink along with the dreams and wishes of 38,000 children from Asia etched inside.

<http://theweek.com/speedreads/index/261677/speedreads-japanese-beverage-company-unveils-plan-to-put-first-ad-on-the-moon>