

A Hopi And A Prayer

We migrate east in the fourth world into the reservation land. We are driving a road to Tuba City (a Navajo town) which is literally the Navajo Trail. We stop for fuel and a few sundries. It is clear that we are now in a different country and we are not locals.

We are heading for the Hopi lands. Susan is interested in seeing the Hopi villages and this is one of the few roads in this part of the country that she has not traveled. It is a long, frequently rough and lonely road. It is a stark contrast to the National Park.

The Hopi lands are an island surrounded by vast tracts of Navajo lands. Second Mesa is a small island in the middle of the Hopi lands.

The Hopi Cultural Center on Second Mesa is a small motel, a restaurant, a museum and a small collection of crafts shops. We look around for the town. "Cultural Center" appears to be Hopi for "where we let white people stay". We book a room. We are told the museum is closed because today is a baby naming ceremony and everyone is there. We have a lunch of lamb in hominy and blue fry bread. Everyone we have met has wished us "Have a nice day." We find our room and as we fetch our things from Zillie a pack of village dogs slowly gathers, quietly considers us but lets us pass unmolested. During the night we occasionally hear the dogs keeping guard. Against what?

In the morning the Museum is open. Spider Grandmother Anna decides we are worth teaching. The Hopi are generous and very private people. They hold their traditions closely. They share few of their celebrations publicly. They value "the people" over "the person" yet value each person. They are not best friends with the Navajo who are much more willing to take advantage and have managed to define the current reservation partition by lobbying the US government with the help of "hippies" in the 1960-70s.

The men do the weaving. The women work clay. The houses of the ancient villages are crumbling and cinder block is not as good as stone for building houses. Young people are not so willing to invest in stone.

She does not wish us "Have a nice day" but simply turns away when she has other things to attend to. Leaving we feel like we have been turned, just a little bit, Hopi.

From the road,
Susan and Jane

Note: The Hopi ask those who come to take no photos, make no sketches or recording, take no notes during their visit.