

# *Where's Home for You?*

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Bobbing around in an 80 degree swimming pool under a brilliant blue Arizona sky, I ask the question of my bobbing mates, *So, where's home for you?* The Midwest holds the majority today: *Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Iowa....* Here in the Sonoran desert, we're all from somewhere else. Though I lived in Arizona for 15 years and sometimes tired of it's constant sunshine, it's now a relief to make plans for a picnic or a hike days and weeks from now and know it's going to be a warm sunny day.

Like other sun seekers, I'm soaking up every precious moment. The weather forecast is something that comes on the television screen each day showing a straight line of yellow balls for the coming weeks. If we get our fill of 85-degree heat, we simply hike to higher elevations like that of Madera Canyon, birding capital of the state or Mt. Wrightson, highest point in the Santa Rita Mountains at 9,453 feet.

Wherever we travel or for however long, one of the benefits of getting out of Dodge is that it gives us a chance to see the world through new eyes. We leave our rut and pay attention—to new faces, new food, new lifestyles, new ways of doing things. Confucius says, "Wherever you go, go with all your heart." Here's what I've gathered in my heart so far:

## Quotes:

*Know anything about lizards?*

*We're two old, fat smokers; if we can make it up that Dutch John trail, anyone can.*

*Men are like coolers; put enough beer in them and you can take them anywhere.*

*I'm not going back to Minnesota if I still have to walk on water.*

## Storefront notices:

*No photos.*

*No videos.*

*No food.*

*No drinks.*

*No restrooms.*

*Thank you for your cooperation.*

*Due to a hard freeze, tomatoes are limited.*

*If you want a tomato, ask for one.*

On our journey to the Southwest, we see signs of spring, so it does exist. In California we revel in oranges hanging heavy in groves, strawberries for sale at the side of the road, cherry, pear and almond blossoms. California poppies cover hillsides.

In Nevada, while driving down a busy four-lane highway, we know we're in the west when we see a woman trotting her horse across the interstate overpass as we pass beneath at 70 mph. We meander through towns with unusual names: Needles, Gila Bend, Casa Grande, Buckeye, Lake Havasu City and travel on roads like Sore Finger Road, Lone Oak Lane and State Line Road. A billboard advertises "Guided Geese Tours." At a park, we see a sign "No Shooting near Buildings," and then another, "Watch Out! Falling Fronds."

In Rodeo, New Mexico, a tiny burg outside Portal, Arizona, we learn the only place the cell phone might work is to drive up the cemetery road to the ridge and that's a maybe. We stay in the Cowboy Room in Rodeo where the predominant plaque on the wall shows us the "Wire that Fenced the West." We can take our pick of the Reading, Geography or History rooms at the Schoolhouse Inn in Bisbee, but choose the Art room instead. In Tombstone, Arizona, billed as "the town too tough to die," a grizzly black leather jacket guy rides into town on his Harley, cigar in mouth and parrot on shoulder.

Back at the pool in the late afternoon, while lounging in the sun, I drift in and out of a snooze, finally awakening to a comment by a woman who's been bobbing in the pool most of the afternoon: "It's such a nice day," she said, "I suppose we should be doing something." I agree and jump back in the water. "Where's home for you?" she asks. "Oh, I live in a beautiful little town on the Oregon coast," I say. "Nehalem—it means where the people live."