

## Road Trip for Book Sales—a Pilgrimage

### Part Five

About a month after *Beyond the Horizons* was released, I decided to make an extensive road trip to the locales where the story took place. I thought that my chances of getting it into some of the tourist shops and bookstores in the area were good because of the “local” significance. But more than that, it was a pilgrimage of sorts for me. I had lived in years past at or near many of the locations, and the story came to mean so much to me, that I felt I owed it to my characters to walk the same ground they had. To live vicariously a small part of their lives, even if for a short time.

#### Days three, four, and five

Most of this time was spent enjoying the family and seeing old friends, although I did have some success with selling my book. It worked out as well as I’d hoped.

Fort Lewis College had, like everything else, changed over the years. It had tripled its student population, but the bookstore was still where it had always been. There was a throng of activity. Students were scurrying about everywhere, being the first week of the semester. I mentally kicked myself for my poor timing of this trip once again. The bookstore manager would probably be too busy to give me much, if any time.

Armed with my press kit and several copies of my book, I sought him out. I was lucky. I caught him at a good time. When I explained who I was, and that I had graduated from there years ago, he became excited to see a former student “make it”. We talked at great length about the book, and how it takes place in the environs of New Mexico and Arizona, and he agreed that it was the perfect book to sell at his store. The college is still the Center for Southwest Studies, and although it is fiction, that’s just what he needed. He’s trying to build up his fiction section for Southwest studies, and he bought five copies, and promised to order more and keep it in stock throughout the year.

I was one happy camper as I walked around campus reliving old times. This was a major victory for me. This was one of the main reasons I’d had for making the trip. I couldn’t be happier.

Suddenly, I ran into the college president. I introduced myself to him and explained that I was an alumnus and why I had come that day. He was very enthusiastic about keeping my book stocked at the bookstore, and promised to speak with the manager about it to be sure it was an ongoing thing. This was more than I could have hoped for. The bookstore manager *and* the college president going to bat for me! This more than made up for my disappointment at Glorieta Pass.

During this time I made a day trip up to Norwood, where I had worked at a clinic when I first became a Physician Assistant. None of the people who were there when I was, were there any longer. In fact, they informed me that the doctor I had worked with had died of AIDS a few years ago.

But they were glad to see me nonetheless, as I had been a big fish in a small town, and my reputation was still quite high. I sold a few more copies of my book to the clinic staff.

Next I went to the local Drug Store to see an old friend and see if he would carry my book on his shelves. Imagine my surprise to see that the San Juan Drug Store was now a Car Quest Automotive parts store. Apparently, my old friend had sold out a year earlier and moved away. Well, so much for that idea.

The drive back to the ranch over the winding dirt mountain roads was beautiful. Large herds of elk and deer were everywhere, and at that altitude there was a hint of frost in the air. It had been another good day.

The last place I had wanted to try to get my book into was an independent bookstore in Cortez, where the owner was a friend of my daughter in law. Surely, there would be no problem here. In fact, she had even said, before I got there, that she was interested.

Once again, timing was against me. The week before I got there, she had sold the store, and the new owners hadn't re-opened yet. There was no one I could even talk to about it. I smiled and shook my head. A real mixture of good and bad luck I was having, that's for sure.

Although my book selling possibilities had been addressed, there was still one more thing dealing with my characters that I was to enjoy. My son and I went to his firing range where I was able to try my marksmanship with a muzzle loading musket, contemporary to the style Mace and Tom would have used while they fought for the South. I could see, from first hand experience, just what it took to hit the target, and painstakingly reload before the enemy overran you. It's not as easy as the movies lead you to believe. The distance to the target was about the same as some of the situations described in the book, and again, I felt as if I was with them, going through some of what they went through. The sound is deafeningly loud, and the smoke from the powder quickly fills the air. I imagined what it must have been like to have *hundreds* of these things going off instead of just one. And the damage the Minie ball did to the target reminded me of the awesome destruction they did to a human body. Once again, I had a new appreciation for the life and times of my characters.

After several days, it was time to leave Colorado and head back to the Sonoran Desert of Arizona. The biggest prize of all... Fort Bowie... awaited me.

To be continued...