

## Web Blog SUNwalk 2008 – engl. IV

1/25 – 1/28/2008

Kingman - Grand Canyon Caves

1/25/2008

At noon I start in Kingman into the tan, vast landscape, at first on the 4-lane Route 66, later on the 2-lane road. In the late afternoon I am looking for a camping site. I see a big bush, in the middle of the large area between the road and the railway tracks.

As soon as I am in the tent and enjoy the last sun rays through the opening of the tent I become aware: I am not alone. I am having a companion here. There is a small caterpillar that looks for a route at the edge of the tent curtain. It's a little bit longer than an inch. Its body is green like grass. It's segmented in 7 parts; the color of the last one is brown. There is a fine yellow-green side line on both sides of the body. Beneath its relatively big, grey-green eyes there are fine brown eating devices. The three pairs of forelegs look like sharp brown thorns. The two pairs of legs at the rear resemble tiny little suction cups. The animal stretches itself straight forward into the air, at an angle of 45 degrees, only hold by the little legs behind. It waits for a little while; then the whole body starts to find a new place. The body swings, back and forth, to the sides. As soon as the forelegs get in touch with a new area of the curtain edge, they take a strong grip. The legs behind are moved until they are placed again, immediately behind the forelegs. The caterpillar forms now a perfect Omega shape. Then it stretches again towards the unknown space, looking for new ground, trusting it. Now my buddy makes a little detour towards the surface of the curtain. When it encounters a new structure, it remains in the same position for a long time. It evaluates. It seems to check if it can trust the new territory, the new situation. The longer it remains the longer nothing unexpected happens, the more the trust level seems to increase. And off it goes again. Omega after omega. There is so much patience, so much care, tenderness in all its movements. I am happy to meet this new unexpected tent mate. I feel deep kinship. It explores new space, it dreams ahead, it risks new steps, it lets follow the rest of its being. This slow growth being encouraged by steps that worked out well seem so familiar. Welcome, little wise being.

1/26/2008

The tent is covered by ice in the morning. I shake the ice away. I dry the tent during the noon break spreading it out on the emergency lane of the road. After a short while everything is dry again.

It's impressive how much energy singing provides. It gives me a lot of momentum,

energy, it warms me up, waters my mouth. Walking I am learning new songs – wonderful texts that praise the Creation:

"Himmel, Erde, Luft und Meer,  
zeugen von des Schoepfers Ehr.  
Meine Seele, singe du,  
und gib auch dein Lob herzu.

Sieh das grosse Sonnenlicht,  
wie es durch die Wolken bricht.  
Auch der Mond, der Sterne Pracht  
jauchzen Gott bei stiller Nacht.

Seht, wie Gott der Erde Ball  
hat gezieret ueberall.  
Waelder, Felder, jedes Tier  
zeigen Gottes Finger hier.

Seht, wie fliegt der Voegel Schar  
in den Lueften, Paar bei Paar,  
Donner, Blitz, Schnee, Regen, Wind  
seines Willens Diener sind.

Seht der Wasserwellen Lauf,  
wie sie steigen ab und auf,  
von der Quelle bis zum Meer  
rauschen sie des Schoepfers Ehr.

Ach, mein Gott, wie wunderbar,  
nimmt Dich meine Seele wahr.  
Druecke stets in meinen Sinn,  
was Du bist und was ich bin."

After 12 miles walking a nostalgic store and restaurant shows up, near the little settlement of Hackberry. The owner just has heated up water for tea and coffee. He has also made a big fire in a giant stove that has been constructed out of two barrels that are put on top of each other. The walls and the ceiling are covered with money bills and license plates from all over the world – in a remote corner of the ceiling I even discover a license plate from Zuerich, Switzerland – ZH – 456 - Z – 77.

On the street shoulders there is a lot of yellow grass – it looks like herds of yellow porcupines. In the dusk a black stallion stands still and watches me – above him a pink ribbon of evening sky and dark grey clouds as if they were painted with a broad brush and much water. The horse neighs, it looks at me as if he had never seen such a weird walking creature. Then it follows me galloping, what a beauty and elegance! The cold evening breeze is combing his black mane. The wind interweaves it with the darkening

landscape.

I feel the four weeks of hiking. I am in good shape. Today I could walk 36 miles quite easily. And at the same time I am glad that I find the comfortable Indian Lodge in Peach Springs where I can refresh myself and rest.

At dinner I am sitting next to a woman and five men. They speak an Eastern European language. I ask them in Russian: "Atkuda Vi?" (From where do you come?). They come from Poland. They are on a business trip here in Arizona. They have taken a day off for some sightseeing. They tell me that they have seen me today on the road. They have waved back when I waved to them. They have asked themselves why this man is walking here. They are very interested in the SUNwalk and ask many questions. They want to make pictures, like after a wedding, everybody with everybody.

On TV I follow the primaries in South Carolina. Barak Obama wins the race with 55 %, against Hillary Clinton (27 %). I am pleased. Obama impresses me with his natural, genuine character, also with the issues he stands for. He evokes in me feelings and hopes how I experienced them as an adolescent when JFK was running for the US presidency and won it. Therefore I am also happy that some important members of the Kennedy family support Barak Obama, JFK's daughter Caroline, his brother Edward and Patrick Kennedy.

I receive a series of supporting messages from Tucson, Arizona. I regret deeply that I cannot go there in order to visit this hot spot for solar energy and innovative ideas, and meet all the highly motivated people, many of them friends of my friend Barbara Warren.

1/27/2008

Williams Tata joins me for breakfast. He is born in Auckland, New Zealand. He leaves his home at the age of 14 after the death of his mother. At the age of 16 he marries. He works in the USA as a business man for a while before he feels his calling to become a minister. He lives with his gig family in Anaheim, CA. He supports Native American and homeless people. He likes music and sings gospel songs. He gives me a CD with his songs.

Today there is much rain. I walk through the cold, wet weather during four hours. I enjoy seeing how the dry ground is drinking the rare precious water. Again and again I duck behind my umbrella; the cars are followed by thick clouds of water spray. I see a special cricket, a species we don't see in Europe: Legs and parts of the body reddish, brownish, its big belly black and yellow like a wasp. It's crawling from the emergency lane to the sandy shoulder of the road looking for a dry hide-away.

In Grand Canyon Caverns I stay in a motel. The Caverns are one mile away. There are signs along the road that announce a restaurant. The first sign says: "Home made desserts"; the second: "Restaurant with good food"; the third one: "Steaks". It reminds

me of a restaurant in San Francisco where I read on a menu many years ago: "Eat dessert first; you never know what will happen."

The evening sky is gorgeous today. At every corner of the big sky there is another weather condition. In southwest the sun is setting, melting gold between black and purple clouds. Above this symphony of colors there are fine cirrus clouds, like migrating eels. In northwest there is a wild scene of grey and red cloud pieces. In the east there is a thick layer of almost black, slightly yellowish thunderstorm clouds. The horizon is covered by a fluffy blanket of white cumulus clouds. The wind blows light clouds across the hills and plains at a quite low altitude, like smoke. Above all there are white, serene clouds at the zenith, at the turquoise and light blue evening sky, like the "cantus firmus" of a deep and awe inspiring music.

Jennifer from South Carolina is welcoming me in the big restaurant. I am the only guest in this very slow season. The walls and window sills are covered with old rusty tools, rattle snake skins, and horns of wild animals. Jennifer has been already informed by other guest about the SUNwalker. The cook asks shouting from the kitchen: "Would you like Swiss cheese for your Veggie Burger?" When I want to pay for my dinner, Jennifer refuses any payment: "No, sweetie, we don't charge people who walk, people who have a mission..."

When I leave the restaurant the sky has become simple in a spooky way. There is only a small yellow-orange line at the horizon. The rest of the sky consists of nothing than black threatening clouds. Snow is in the air.

1/28/2008

This morning I visit the Grand Canyon Caverns. In 1927 Walter Peck discovers the 35 million year old cave. He takes a shortcut on his way to the poker game, for a change; and he sees the big dark hole. The next day he comes back with some companions and explores the hole. He thinks he has found a cave with a lot of treasures, gold, silver, diamonds. He buys an 800 acres lot around the cave in order to be sure that nobody else can take advantage of the treasures. But these treasures are not very precious, just selenite crystals, limestone, iron sediments. Therefore Peck changes his plan. He offers the cave as a tourist attraction. He gives people harnesses, ropes and kerosene lamps and allows them to explore the cave.

The cave is one of the 3 % of known dry caves on this planet. A humidity of 6 %, a constant temperature of 56 degrees F. Studies were made with smoke petards in order to find out where the air of the caverns comes from. It stems from the Grand Canyon. Mysterious channels transport it through the limestone, across 60 miles. That gave the cave the name "Grand Canyon Caverns".

Ron is guiding us – a couple from Oklahoma, Robert and Jony, a US Chinese woman and me. We reach the big cave halls at first using an elevator, then walking through tunnels.

The walls are sparkling from shiny selenite sediments. They look like cauliflower, popcorn, snowballs. There are some small stalactites. There are also polished rocks – reaching back to a time where still sea water was circling in the cave. We see also animals – a bobcat which fell into the cave and broke its hip. It tried to find an exit crawling towards the air draft that it felt; but it didn't succeed. In these dry caves there are practically no bacteria. Therefore the animal was mummified. C14 studies were made: It died in 1850, 5 years old. I am moved by the face of the cat that expresses so much pain. There is also another animal, a "Ground Sloth". This vegetarian mammal is extinct. One of them also fell into the cave. Tracks of its paws at the cave wall show how the hurt animal tried to climb out the cave. There is now a big stuffed Ground Sloth exhibited in the cave. It looks like a cave bear. After the Cuba crisis it was planned to use the cave as a fallout shelter. Still today there are barrels with water and boxes with dried food standing around in one of the big cave halls.

Tomorrow the journey goes on, towards Seligman. Good weather has been forecasted.

