

## GRAND CANYON VIGNETTES

By James Collins.

In 2003, my wife, my brother-in-law, my sister-in-law and I made a trip out to Arizona to visit our nephew who was obtaining an advanced degree. While there, we extended the trip to Sedona, Monument Valley and Grand Canyon. We had a marvelous time. However, we also had a couple of hilarious events. Some lovely women who came from the Midwest, as we surmised from their accents, supplied the humor.

The first of these occurred right after we got to our cabin. Prior to our arrival at the Canyon, we had purchased flashlights in Sedona to assist in going around at night in areas with no streetlights. These served us well around the Grand Canyon rim. This night, well after dark, we were returning from dinner at a restaurant very close to the rim and my brother-in-law and I were walking on the narrow slate path. Coming towards us were two middle-aged women who were walking on the grass between the path and a metal fence that was located about 10 feet from the edge of the rim. One of them was holding onto the fence. As they approached, they asked, "Where did you get the flashlights. That is a great idea. "

"Oh, just down the road about 50 miles at Sedona."

"Fifty miles, that's no good. Just keep holding on to the fence Bessie, we will get there shortly."

"Ladies I don't think you should be holding onto the fence. It ends about 100 feet further on. Then there is nothing between you and the canyon rim. About 10 feet to your left on the other side of that fence, the ground drops half a mile straight down. People fall off all the time. Since you do not have a flashlight' I recommend you come over and stay on the sidewalk. You don't want to become a statistic as one of the ones who fell off the rim."

"Thank you for your concern."

As we continued to walk along, we could hear the women chatting and one said to the other, "Do you think he was serious about the fence and the big falloff?"

"Of course not, they're Easterners and they're just pulling our leg," replied one of the women.

About 15 seconds later, we heard a scream.

"Bessie the fence ended, I can barely see the edge of the rim and there is nothing beyond that. They were not kidding. Get over on the path and let us follow it to where those people are.

That night, thank God, they did not report an accidental fall.

The next night we were on line to the restaurant with about 20 people in front of us, and a different group of middle-aged women with Midwestern accents lined up behind us. There were lights in the restaurant window and a couple of small path marker lights in the ground. To our left about 30 feet were three mule deer feeding in the lush grass. They were almost motionless, with only their tongues flicking out to grab blades of grass. We had seen them earlier in the day, watched them for a while and took pictures of them. One of the women behind us said, "Aren't those lovely lawn ornaments they have here."

"They are not lawn ornaments. They are real deer," I replied.

Again, the Midwestern women reacted to a New York accent. "You would think these city boys would know the difference between a lawn ornament and a real deer."

I was not about to get into an argument with somebody whose intelligence level was that low. I reached down to my belt, slipped out my camera and triggered a picture with the associated flash. The deer jumped three feet and the women behind me jumped five. I never said a word. They were all hysterical.

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