

This is a story about moving  
out West, messing  
everything up, and trying  
again.

(and again)

# Part I: The Northwest



This is the last picture I took in Idaho, working the mountains as a flag & tagger for the St. Joe Wilderness and Payette National Forests.

I'd just left college after a less than satisfying first year in my hometown.

I quit on the 4th of July after a month of frustrating work conditions and terrible pay.

Payette  
June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019



I eventually quit and drove to Oregon for a girl I'd never met.

I figured I'd try to last as long as I could sleeping in my car and delivering food to get by. I wasn't ready to go home.

Somewhere in Oregon  
July 6th, 2019

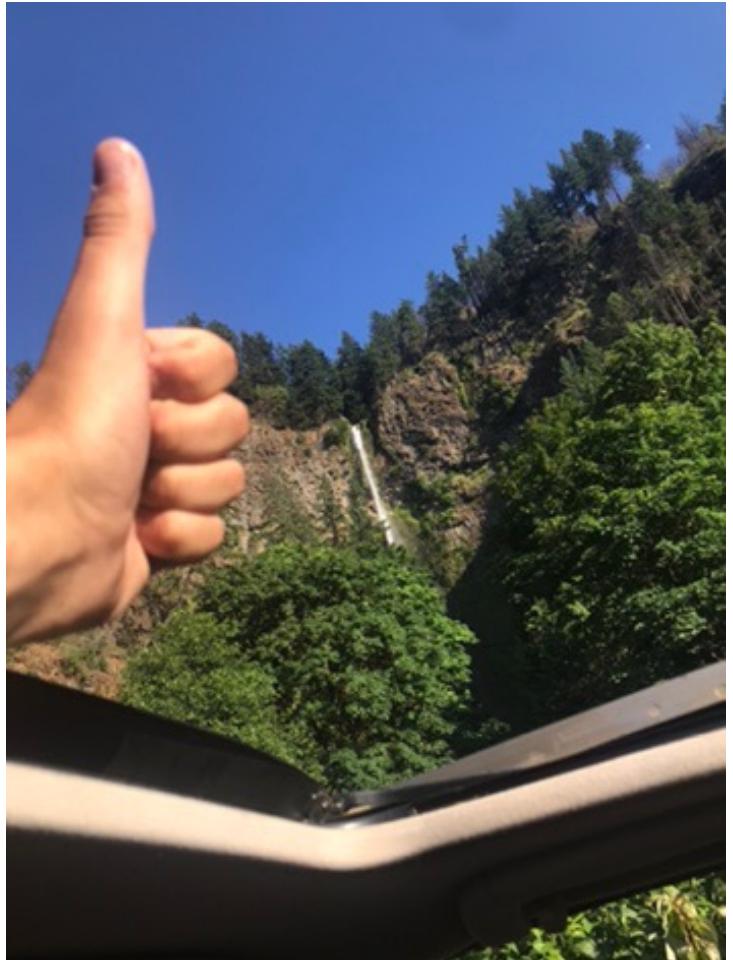


My first night in Portland I met a girl named Emma. She had just left school and was working at a coffee shop while living at her parents house. We travelled together for a little more than a week. We had plans to save up and rent a tree house somewhere.

She showed me this place, The Bridge of the Gods, which stretched over the windiest part of the Columbia River. On the other side was Washington.

It was early July then. I thought I'd try to last through the Summer. I was having fun.

The Bridge of the Gods  
July 8th, 2019



The Bridge of the  
Gods  
July 8th, 2019



It went on like this for a while until I eventually found a vape on the sidewalk and got sick.

I figured I'd take myself on a little vacation over the river and look for a nice peaceful place to camp in Washington.

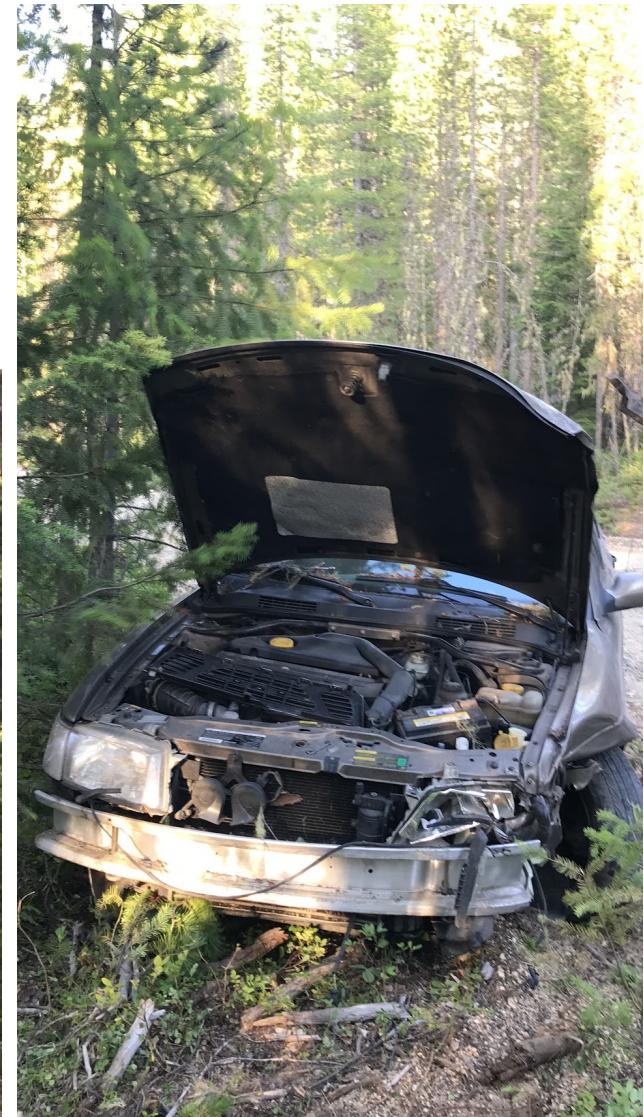
I'd been sleeping about four hours a night, keeping myself up to drive with coffee and Adderall.

My last day in the forest, in my stupor, I was driving recklessly on a gravel road and lost traction and crashed.

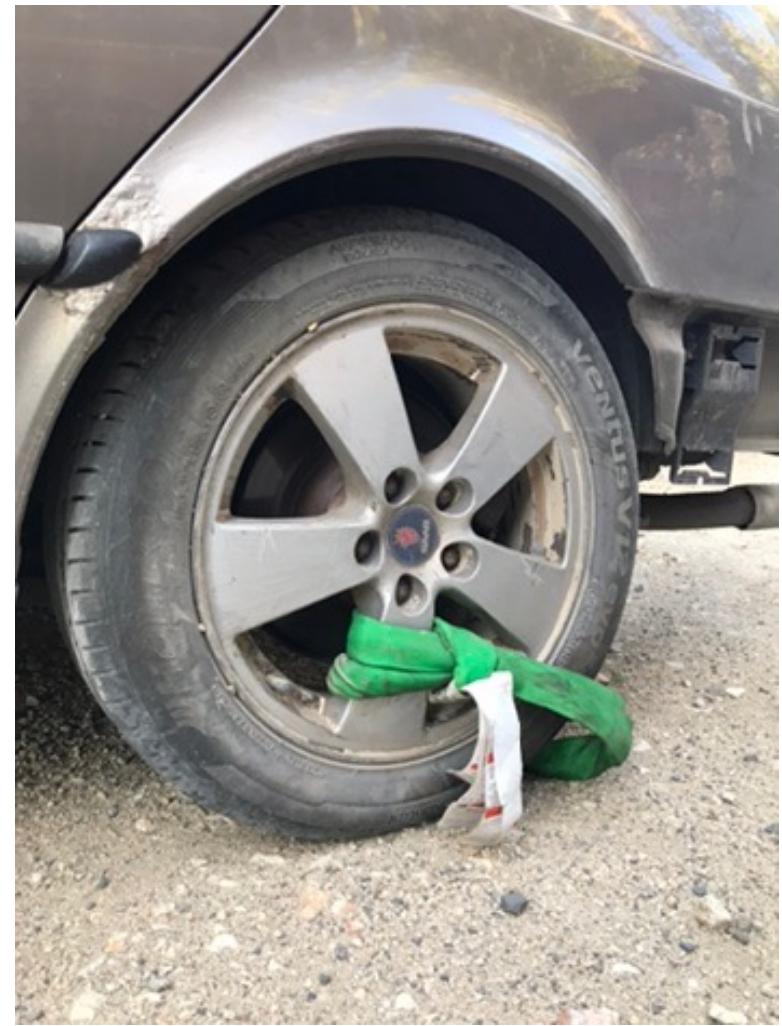
Gifford-Pinchot National Forest  
July 14th, 2019

I spent the rest of my money on a \$200 tow 45 miles from the nearest town of Carson. It was declared totaled on the spot.

Gifford-Pinchot National Forest  
July 14th, 2019

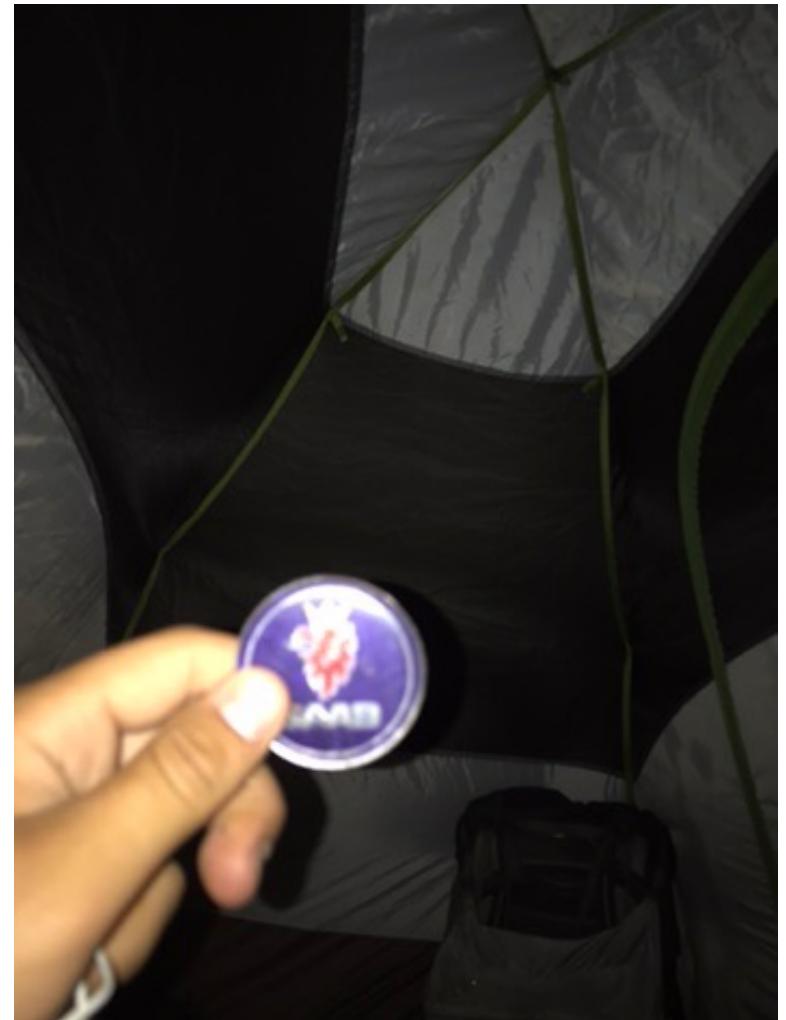


Gifford-Pinchot National Forest  
July 14th, 2019



I salvaged what I could for keepsakes and camped out that night on the cliffside of the Columbia River Gorge.

Gifford-Pinchot National Forest  
July 14th, 2019



The next day I made a call to my family. My adopted grandma's second cousin, Amanda, came to come get me – about two hours from Portland.

She and her husband, Matt, put me up for a few nights in Portland while I gathered my thoughts.

I decided to fly home and try again.

The Bridge of the Gods  
July 15th, 2019



During the three months I spent at home, I was hired at a car dealership selling Hondas (immediately quit); a bar in the seaport bussing tables (quit after a week); and by Tufts Facilities clearing trash out of recycling dumpsters (seasonal).

I wish I had pictures from that, it was actually kind of fun.

In August, one of my close family members was admitted to an in-patient psychiatric facility and I wasn't allowed to see them.

I was unhappy and decided to try my hand back West again.

While visiting a friend in New York later that week, I received a message from Zia in Bisbee, Arizona who I'd reached out to earlier to lend a hand on her permaculture garden. She asked if I could be there by next week, and I said "yes."

I bought a one-way ticket to Phoenix on the spot. In three days, I was off.

the Arizona storybook

an annotated visual guide to  
real life in the intermountain  
west



The Bus  
Station

Sierra Vista  
September  
18<sup>th</sup>, 2019



South Cochise  
County, AZ

September  
18<sup>th</sup>, 2019

The initiative in Bisbee was a commune project, basically. Dragon and Zia were the self-appointed stewards of this land. They were artists and vegans who worshipped the Great Horned Goddess.

They were actually very nice, but strange and disturbingly unsanitary. I actually got flees from sleeping on their ottoman (which I didn't know was possible).

The other volunteers were mostly other hippies, but also travelers and farmers from all around.

The caretaker was a guy named Keith from Bed-Stuey who ended up there chasing his ex-girlfriend from their old life in Hawaii, but she never showed up. Keith had suffered brain damage from accidentally hanging himself on a rope when he was 19, and as a result he was pretty crazy. We became great friends.

We'd drink beers and smoke cigarettes together after we finished work for the day. He wanted to be a photographer for Complex one day. We're still friends on Facebook.

I stayed for the better part of a month before I realized that I was living in a nudist cult operated by retirees convicted of eight counts of sex trafficking in California.

Here are some pictures.



My trailer.

South Cochise  
County  
September  
26th, 2019



Zia's husband, Dragon, was  
a metalworks artist.

He made all sorts of things.

South Cochise County, AZ

September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019



This was their  
house.

South Cochise  
County, AZ

September  
27<sup>th</sup>, 2019



This is another trailer on their property, where volunteers would live while working for the farm.

South Cochise County,  
AZ  
September 27th, 2019

After a few weeks of building and hedging and composting and stuff, I figured I'd leave.

A hippy woman from San Diego and her baby had come a little after I had, and were also ready to go. Her name, she told me, was Om Moon.

Her baby was Arjuna, the warrior. He was one year old.

I borrowed Zia's car one weekend to visit my friend Shannon, in Tucson, who told me this whole thing sounded weird. She convinced me to go get my stuff and leave.

I said okay, and went back to [42 Spirits Eco Farm & Goddess Temple](#) for another week of work before I hit the road.

Om and Arjuna were expert hitchhikers, apparently, and they were on their way to Sedona, AZ, to dip Arjuna in the sacred and magical water from the Portal-Powered hot springs.

I was also going North, I figured through San Francisco, which was sort of the same direction.

It seemed like a good idea at the time.

The Lady and the Baby would show me the way to Sedona.



Driving to  
Tucson in Zia's  
Highlander.

South Cochise  
County, AZ  
September  
28th, 2019



Shannon and  
Ringo, the  
pitbull.

Tucson, AZ  
September  
28th, 2019



Making signs on the bus.

Phoenix, AZ  
October 4th, 2019



Carefree  
Highway, AZ  
October 4th,  
2019



Om and  
Arjuna, the  
Warrior.

Prescott, AZ  
October 6th,  
2019

Om and Arjuna and I hitched rides with all sorts of people, but by far the most memorable was Snapdragon.

He actually introduced himself as “ShnnnnAAPDRAGON, THE MIDLEY MAGNIFICENT”

He was a homeless man from Arkansas who'd just bought his Jeep a week ago in Tennessee, or somewhere. It had a cracked windshield, no license plates, and no passenger-side seatbelt (which would have been my seatbelt).

He was kind of a professional panhandler, which I guess is how he raised the thousand-dollars to buy his 1998 Jeep XJ. He pulled over for gas, once, outside of a casino near Flagstaff.

“you guys don't have any money, do ya? Aghhh, nevermind ... don't worry I got this – I'm a homeless veteran.”

He got out of the car and panhandled for twenty minutes in which he came up with a mean \$40 to fill the thing up with gas. He even bought me a cup of coffee, which was nice, even if it was probably the worst cup of coffee I'd ever tasted.

At that point, he had actually missed his exit for Sedona an hour ago. He figured we'd just go to Flagstaff instead.

He dropped us off twenty minutes later in front of a Target and said “alright, it's been real! See you later!”

Just like that, he was gone.

We walked an hour to the nearest REI for The Lady to return some stolen stuff she'd got in Tucson a week earlier (we'd been on the road for about eight days now) and I ended up making a friend.

It was freezing in Flagstaff. *Shnappdragon* told us we were at about seven-thousand-feet, and it felt like it. The baby had been miserable in the cold the other night in Prescott, a little lower down. Om was from San Diego and had been living in Honolulu for at least two years, so she didn't think to pack socks for the baby.

In fact, all she had for Arjuna was three cloth diapers and a Hawaii EBT card she'd sometimes use to buy smoothies.

I met this kid, Forrest, in the REI who said he'd put us up for a night. He was pretty cool, and I got to talking with him about his vintage Wrangler with all his cool stickers. He was probably just a little older than me; he said he was finishing up at NAU, just down the street.

He brought us back to his trap house in East Flagstaff he was splitting with his friends. They'd apparently got it for super cheap because they cleaned out about a thousand IV needles off the floor when they moved in - it'd been a famous squatter house for addicts in town for years. These guys cleaned it up, God bless 'em.

I hung out with them for about a week, going paddleboarding and smoking weed in stuff.

Om didn't stay that long. She and Arjuna ended up taking off in the middle of the night along with all the money she owed me. Oh well.



Ian, Forrest,  
Chex, and  
Tom's house.

East Flagstaff,  
AZ  
October 7th,  
2019



Ian, Forrest,  
Chex, and  
Tom's house.

East Flagstaff,  
AZ  
October 7th,  
2019



Luna the German.

She'd been abandoned by her owner while the guys were pet-sitting. She was probably a month old.

Flagstaff, AZ  
October 8th, 2019



Eventually, one of the guys, Ian, had to go back to San Diego to get an MRI, and Chex offered to drive him, since Ian was still in a cast.

Chex even said he could get me to San Francisco, but that turned out to be a little ambitious.

We drove in his Hyundai through the night, leaving at 11pm and ending up in San Diego at daybreak. We also brought Ian's husky, Shilha – who is crazy.

We split up in downtown San Diego.

San Diego, CA  
October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019



California  
October 11th,  
2019

I ended up having nothing to do in San Diego and blew \$25 on a train to LA, where I thought I might have connections.

My friend Jerry, from college, had a friend in the Jazz Department at USC, who put me up at his house off campus for two nights. I slept on a cot in his closet.

This is a jazz banquet. I made a cookie pizza.

Los Angeles, CA  
October 12th, 2021



Los Angeles, CA  
October 11th, 2021



Los Angeles, CA  
October 11th, 2021



I did a bunch of weird things in LA while I tried to recoup my expenses from Arizona, including errands for Jerimiah's bubbe, Joan.

She turned out to be really rich and bought me dinner a few times. I wish I had more pictures.

Beverly Hills, CA  
October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019



I occasionally got to drive her Mercedes around Encino to get groceries from Trader Joes, and do other errands.

Also, she let me try to play her late husband's saxophone, which made her cry.

I generally regard this period of the trip as a complete mess and I think my appearance was beginning to reflect that.

Beverly Hills, CA  
October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019



I eventually got a job as a contractor for this suspicious Czech/German couple on Ventura Blvd. doing various carpentry tasks for some rental properties they were working on.

I was promised 3-meals a day and a bed in exchange for six hours of labor each day. Tony (the Czech guy) would sometimes take me in his truck to listen to reggae music and get Taco Bell, and he bought me a Lasagna once.

I mostly slept on a mattress in the backyard, which I shared with a 19-year-old from Germany on a gap year, whose name was Jakub.

This is a video of Nick smoking a cigarette and clearing the ground for a hot tub they found at a landfill near Encino.

Los Angeles, CA  
October 15th, 2019



I did get to party with the other volunteers, though.

Two of the girls had been invited to this producer's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday somewhere in North Hollywood, and she decided to bring all of us.

Pictured right are pictures of everyone boozing in the streets outside of this guy's house.

Los Angeles, CA  
October 15th, 2019



I eventually got sick  
of this and  
disappeared in the  
middle of the night.

Some friends from  
high school who had  
just graduated  
college were working  
in Los Angeles, and  
let me hang out with  
them for a few days.

This is the train  
station I met them  
at.

Los Angeles  
October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019





The first time I'd ever seen the Pacific Ocean with Darren and Sarah.

Venice, CA  
October 19th,  
2019



I'd been on my own for the better part of a month, and I was sick of relying on other people.

I was not interested in hitchhiking out of LA, that's for sure.

The next day I got a 24-hour rental car at the airport with my last \$40.

I was going to San Francisco.

Big Sur, CA  
October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019



Big Sur, CA  
October 21st,  
2019

It'd been well over a month since I'd flown into Phoenix and I was fucking miserable. I was absolutely exhausted. I'd come all this way convinced I was doing it for a woman I'd been with for less than two weeks in Oregon and all of a sudden she was screening my calls.

I dropped out of school for this. I gave up two months of my life for this. And for what? An adventure? How long did I think I could go on like this? Forever? Am I fucking losing my mind?

After sleeping in Golden Gate park surrounded by homeless people for the last three nights I realized that the only difference between me and them was my hammock and my dad's willingness to buy me a ticket home.

I found out in the days that followed that I have a genetic predisposition to schizoaffective bipolar disorder.

I started to wonder why I'd come all this way at all.

Then I called my dad.

I was done. I wanted to go home.



San Francisco,  
CA  
October 23rd,  
2019



Denver, CO  
October 24th,  
2019





To be  
continued.

Tucson, AZ  
October 11th,  
2020

Mount  
Lemmon, AZ  
October 23rd,  
2020





Pima County,  
AZ  
October 16th,  
2020



Tucson, AZ  
February 10th,  
2021

Tucson, AZ  
February 10th,  
2021





Tucson, AZ  
November 6<sup>th</sup>,  
2020



Sedona, AZ  
November  
24<sup>th</sup>, 2020

A photograph of a person standing on the back of a dark-colored pickup truck, pointing upwards towards a large, dark mountain range. The person is wearing a dark hoodie and dark pants. The truck has a roof rack and a white license plate. In the background, there is a dense forest of coniferous trees at the base of the mountains, which are partially obscured by a hazy sky.

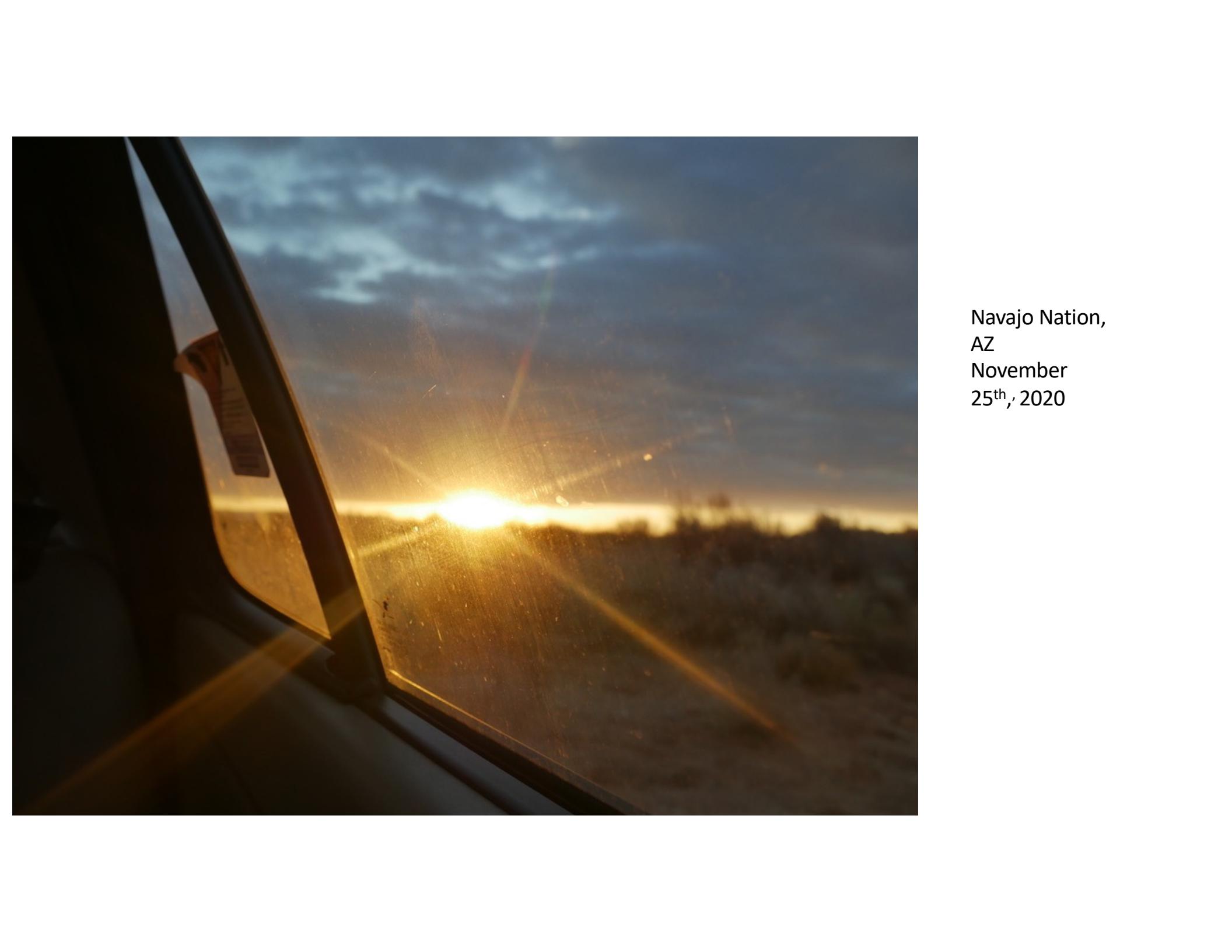
Flagstaff, AZ  
November  
25<sup>th</sup>, 2020



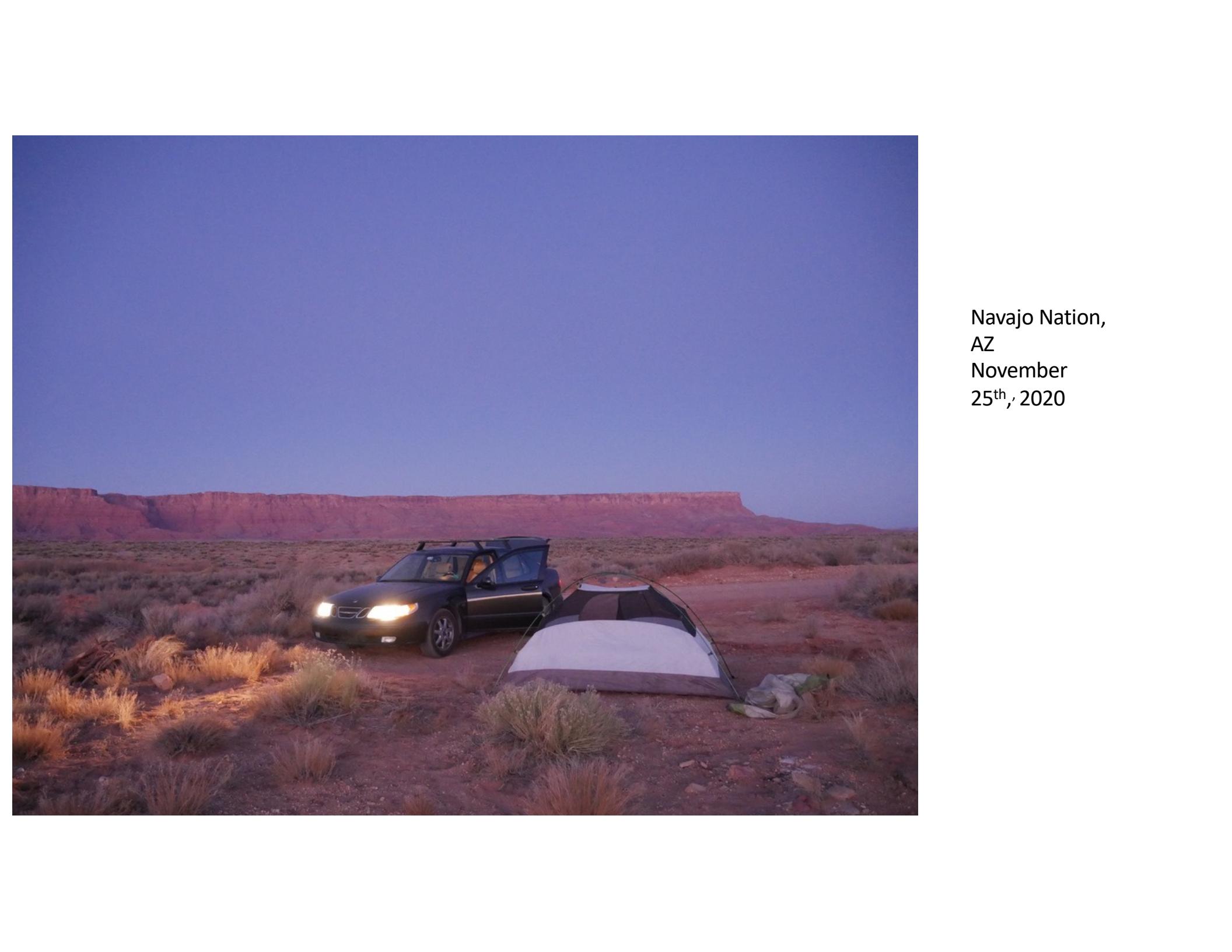
Navajo Nation,  
AZ  
November  
25<sup>th</sup>, 2020



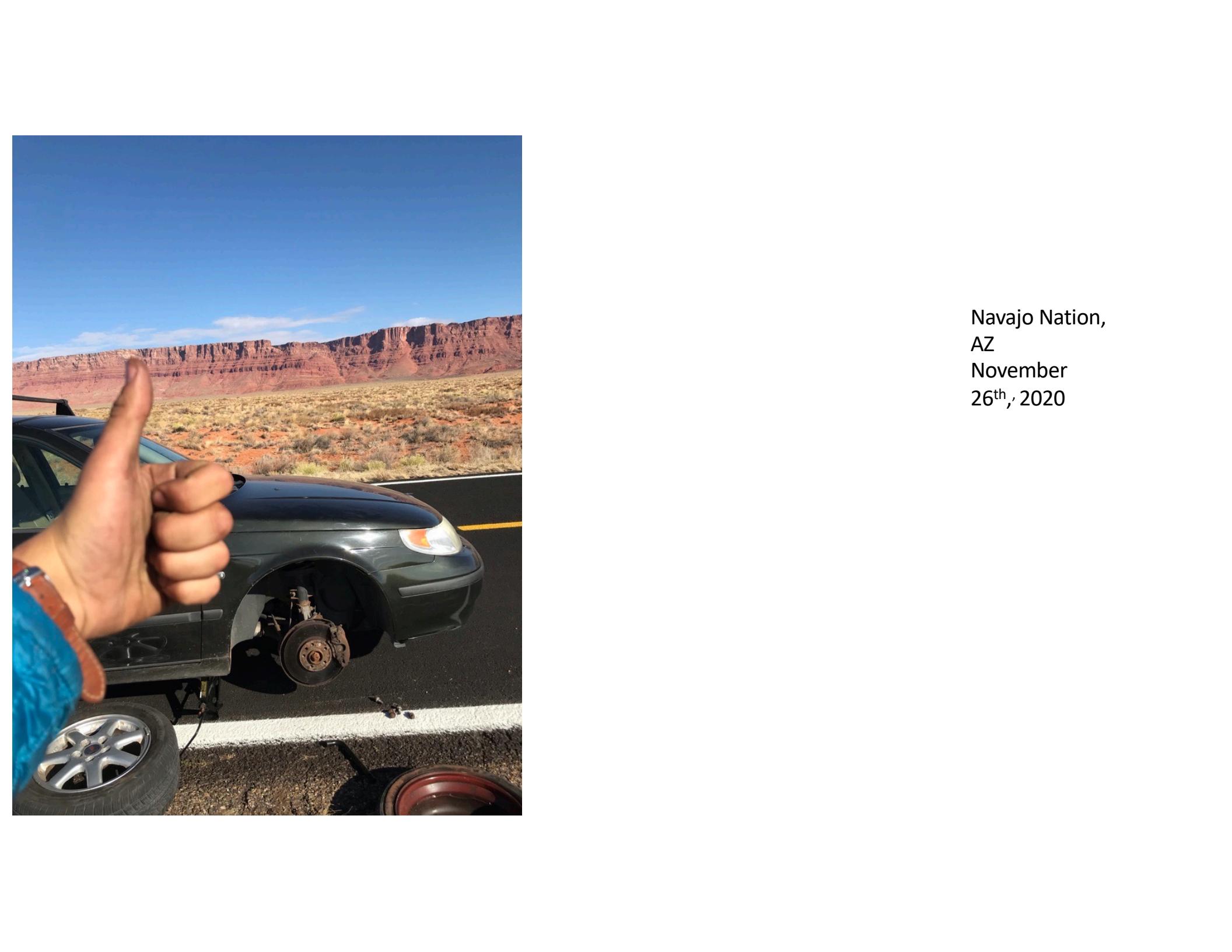
Navajo Nation,  
AZ  
November  
25<sup>th</sup>, 2020



Navajo Nation,  
AZ  
November  
25<sup>th</sup>, 2020



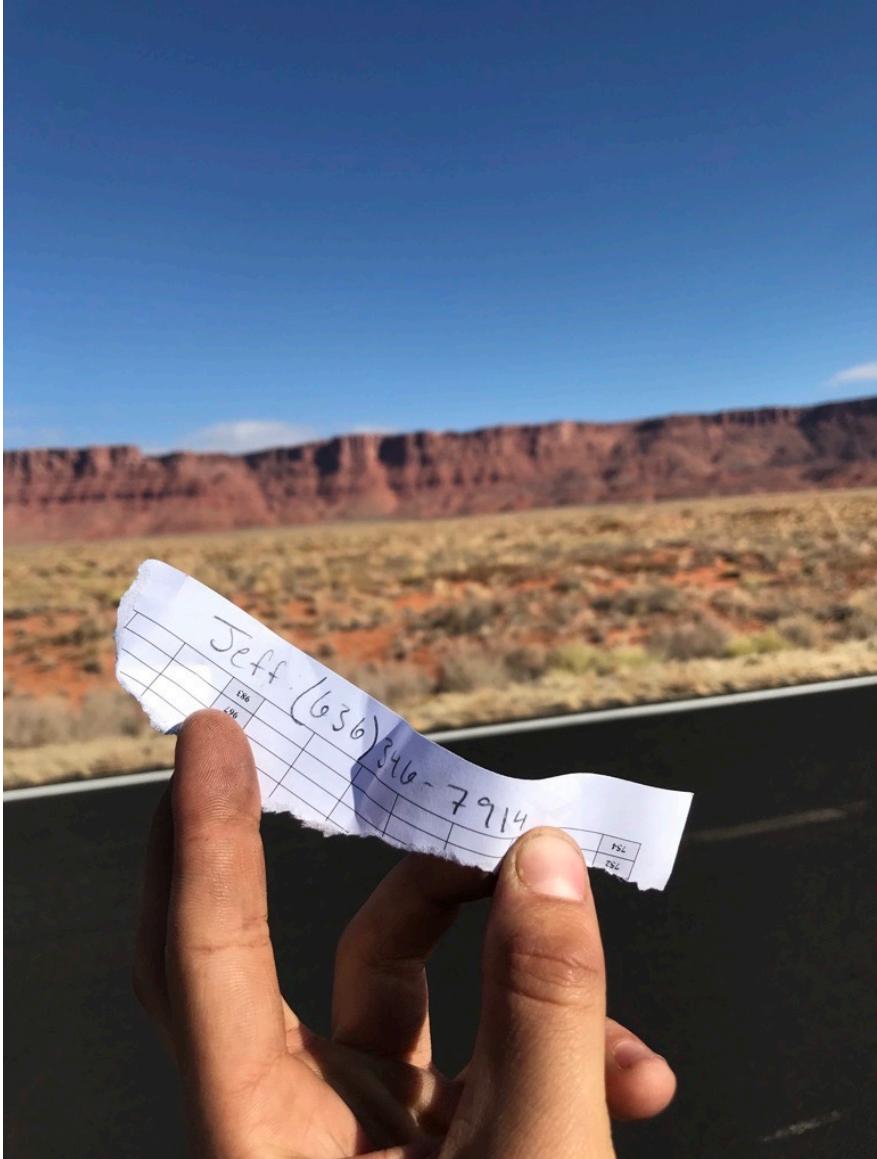
Navajo Nation,  
AZ  
November  
25<sup>th</sup>, 2020



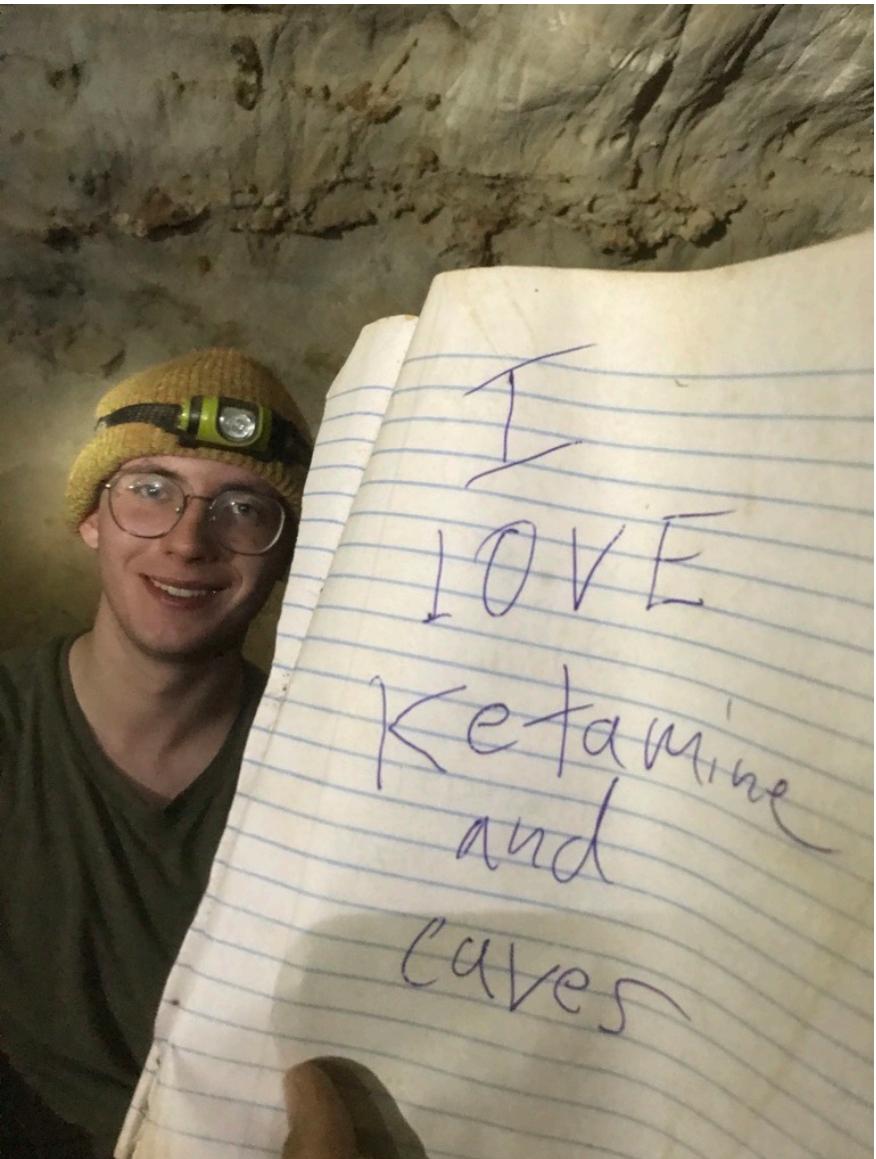
Navajo Nation,  
AZ  
November  
26<sup>th</sup>, 2020



Navajo Nation,  
AZ  
November  
26<sup>th</sup>, 2020



Navajo Nation,  
AZ  
November  
26<sup>th</sup>, 2020



Oracle, AZ  
November  
29<sup>th</sup>, 2020

I  
LOVE  
Ketamine  
and  
caves



Oracle, AZ  
November  
29<sup>th</sup>, 2020

A photograph showing two people from behind, looking out over a vast desert landscape at sunset. The person on the left stands on a large rock, wearing a red and black plaid shirt and dark pants. The person on the right is seated, wearing a bright red jacket and a patterned bandana. The sky is filled with wispy clouds, and distant mountains are visible in the background.

Ironwood, AZ  
December  
31<sup>st</sup>, 2021



Patagonia, AZ  
January 24<sup>st</sup>,  
2021



Tucson, AZ  
January 30th,  
2021



Tucson, AZ  
February 10th,  
2021



A photograph capturing a creative outdoor scene in Tucson, Arizona. On the left, a concrete ledge holds several pieces of artwork: a black and white photograph of a person's face, a stack of Polaroid photos showing a smiling man, a small painting of a face in orange and purple, and a sketch of a skull in a notebook. A black tray sits nearby, containing a smartphone and some papers. On the ground below, a black case holds various art supplies like pens and pencils. To the right, a large blue planter filled with green plants and tall, striped reeds stands next to a white animal skull. A green garden hose lies across the concrete. The background features a teal door and a window with a metal screen.

Tucson, AZ  
February 10th,  
2021

A photograph of a woman standing on the roof of a dark-colored car in a desert setting. She is wearing a black tank top, black pants with rips, and a bandana. She has tattoos on her arms and legs. In the foreground, another person's head and shoulders are visible, wearing a hat and a jacket, looking up at the woman. The background features a large, rocky hillside covered in desert vegetation like saguaro cacti and mesquites under a clear blue sky.

Tucson, AZ  
February 21st,  
2021

A photograph of a young woman with long dark hair, smiling at the camera. She is wearing a blue and white patterned hoodie. The background is a desert landscape at sunset or sunrise, with a clear blue sky transitioning to orange and yellow near the horizon. Distant mountains are visible in the distance.

California.  
March 26th,  
2021



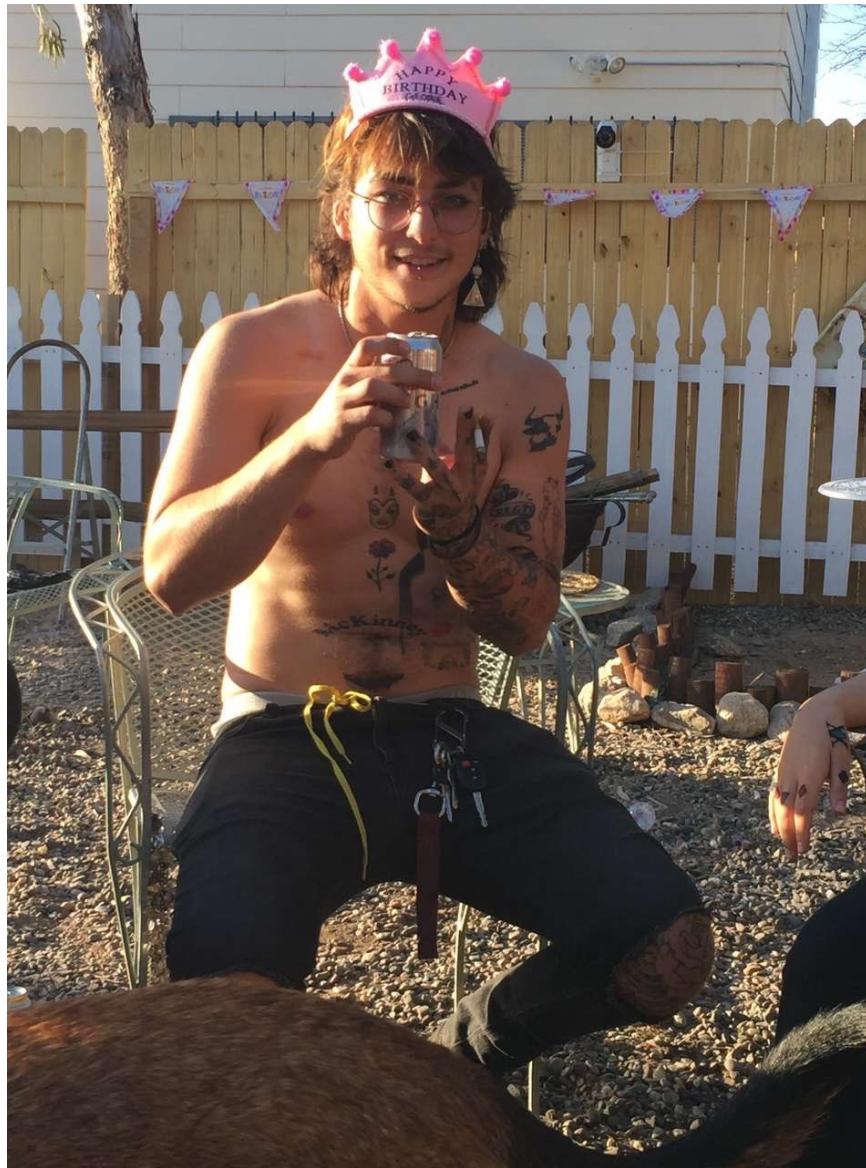
Tucson, AZ  
April 10<sup>th</sup>,  
2021



Tucson, AZ  
April 10<sup>th</sup>,  
2021



Tucson, AZ  
April 10<sup>th</sup>,  
2021



Tucson, AZ  
April 24th,  
2021



Tucson, AZ  
April 24th,  
2021



Tucson, AZ  
April 27th,  
2021



A group of nine people are posing for a group photo in a dark, enclosed space, likely a cave. The group is arranged in two rows: five people standing in the back row and four people sitting or kneeling in the front row. They are dressed in casual outdoor gear, including t-shirts, shorts, and hats. The background is dark, and a large rock formation is visible in the bottom right corner.

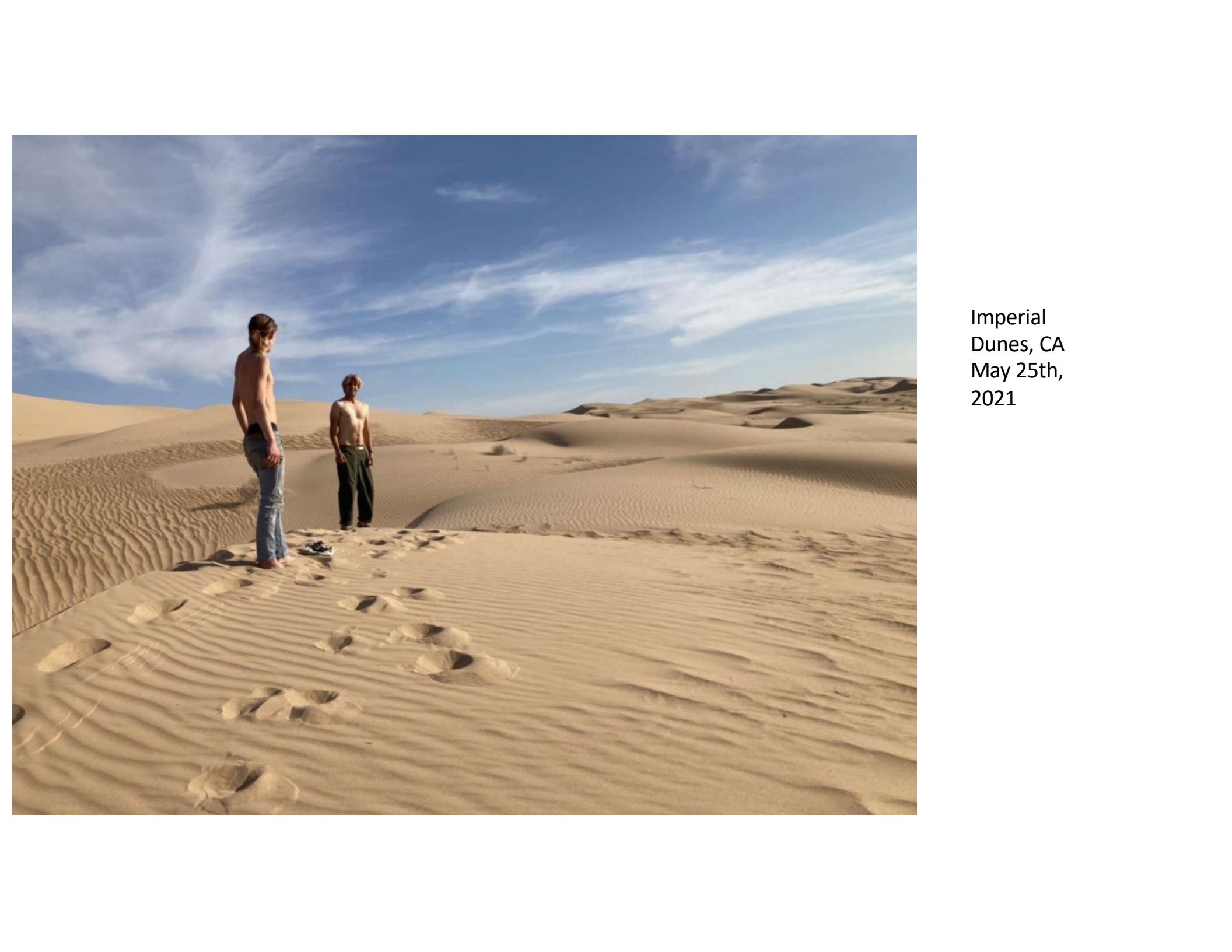
Peppersauce  
Caves, AZ  
May 15th,  
2021



Peppersauce  
Caves, AZ  
May 15th,  
2021

Tucson, AZ  
April 10<sup>th</sup>,  
2021

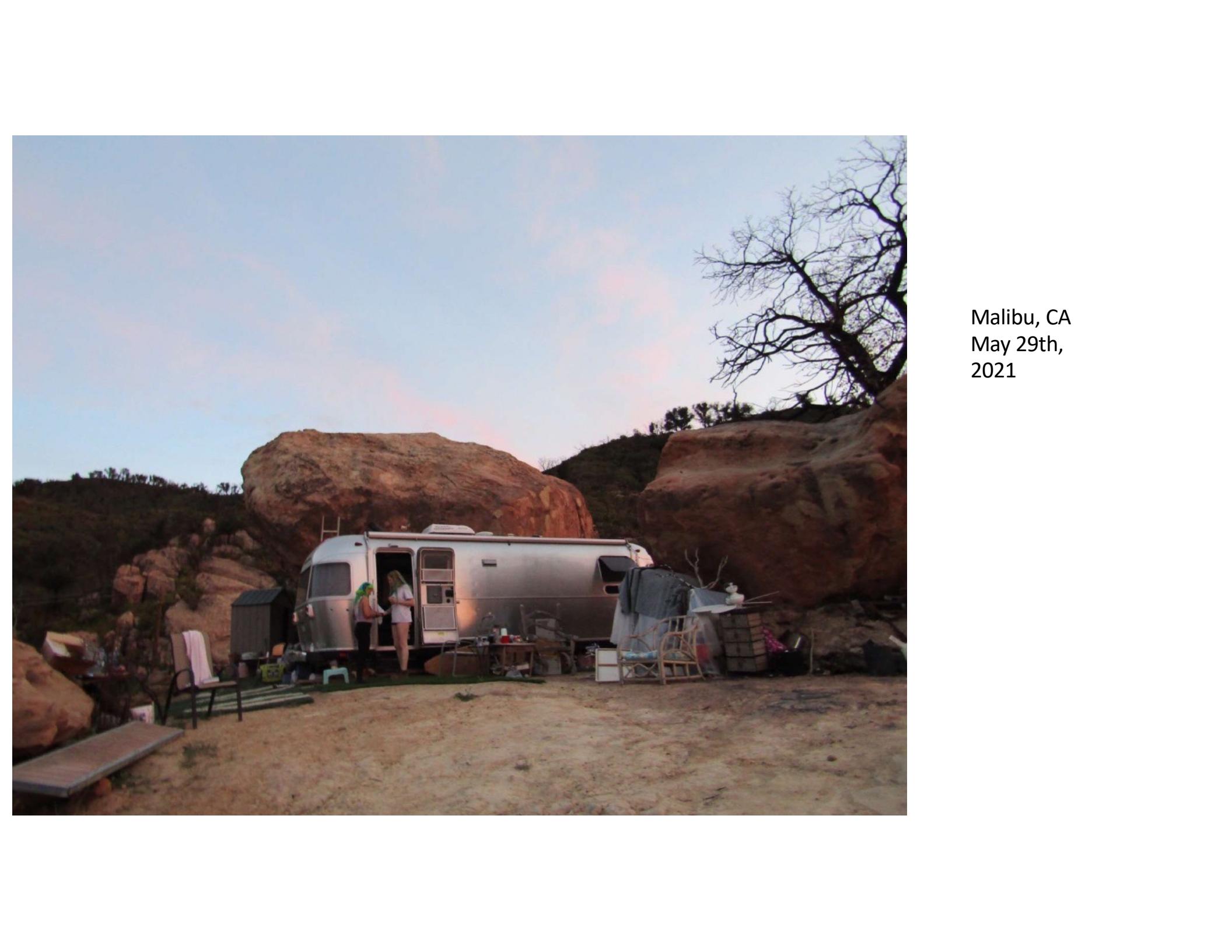


A photograph showing two shirtless men standing on a vast expanse of sand dunes under a blue sky with wispy clouds. The man on the left is facing away from the camera, while the man on the right is facing forward. They are standing on a relatively flat area of the dunes, with many ripples and small mounds of sand visible in the foreground and background.

Imperial  
Dunes, CA  
May 25th,  
2021



Los Angeles,  
CA  
May 27th,  
2021



Malibu, CA  
May 29th,  
2021

A photograph capturing a group of people on a sunny beach. In the foreground, a woman with long dark hair, wearing a white bikini top and red bottoms, is crouching down, looking at a black smartphone held by another person. To her right, a woman with blonde hair, wearing a black bikini, is reclining on a blue and red patterned beach chair, smiling. Behind them, a man in a green baseball cap and red swim trunks is sitting on the sand. The background features the ocean with small waves under a clear blue sky.

Malibu, CA  
May 29th,  
2021

Grand Canyon  
June 2nd,  
2021





Tucson, AZ  
August 14<sup>th</sup>,  
2021

Navajo Nation,  
AZ August  
15<sup>th</sup>, 2021





Western Massachusetts  
August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021



Western Massachusetts  
August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021