**Humphreys Peak, AZ, 12,633 ft. – November 18, 2010, HP #11: The 360 degree views are expansive seeming to never end almost as though one is looking into space.**

We were supposed to leave at 9:00 am but it was almost 10:30 by the time we headed south on I-15 from Orem, Wednesday Nov 17, 2010. We stopped for dinner at Denny’s in Page AZ and by 9pm we were at Arizona Snowbowl ski area, a 14 mile drive up US-180 from Flagstaff. We camped in the parking lot at over 9,300 feet on a cold night, with no one else around. I had told Ana to bring a warm sleeping bag and an extra blanket or two, but whatever she had wasn’t warm enough and I ended up giving her my down bag. Ana had never tapped resourceful accommodations like this before, and that probably added to her sleeplessness.

Next morning we were up at 5 am, and on the trail at 6:30 am with the sun somewhat up. Our destination being the highest peak on San Francisco Mountain, named Humphreys Peak - the highest natural point in the U.S. state of Arizona. Yet another mountain peak with a boring name, paying tribute to an Army officer. Perhaps an officer is a bit better then honoring a politician - another common heedless way to name a peak. San Francisco Mountain, also known as San Francisco Peaks or simply The Peaks, is a group of dormant volcanic peaks along a horseshoe shaped Massif located in the Coconino National Forest. San Francisco Mountain is situated between highway 89 to the east, and highway 180 to the west, and houses Arizona Snowbowl ski resort on its western aspect with the town of Flagstaff east of the mountain.

The Humphreys’ Peak trail wasn’t obvious so we ended up hiking under one of the ski lifts eventually crossing the trail a few hundred yards beyond the end of the lift. Following the trail we were guided into a conifer and aspen forest, on the west side of the mountain, and up a set of long switchbacks. Near tree line, just below the saddle between Humphreys and Agassiz Peaks, the forest becomes bristlecone pines bent and twisted by wind and frost. A short push up to the saddle offers hikers views of the Inner Basin of the Massif that forms the San Francisco Peaks. Up to this point we had cover roughly three miles, with one and three quarter’s miles remaining. Here, above tree line, the terrain appears volcanic as the route steepens passing three false summits before reaching the highpoint.

We made it to the roof of AZ in 3.5 hours, with Ana doing very well. A dusting of snow, here and there, coated the mountain but volcanic rocks showed through it everywhere. This was my 11th US state highpoint, and my 179th mountain climb. The 360 degree views are expansive seeming to never end almost as though one is looking into space. Out there somewhere was the Grand Canyon, and a lot of seemingly empty land some of which surely is the Painted Desert – it was remarkable. We had the summit to ourselves making the views that much easier to enjoy. After 45 minutes on top of Arizona we began the return trip down.

I wanted to summit Mt. Agassiz on the way down but on the ascent from the saddle we noticed a sign saying it was closed. I have no idea why it was closed but the sign seemed serious threatening a $500 fine. I had just begun a seven month un-jobbing phase, and didn’t like the idea of spending $500 to reach another peak.

Around 3pm we returned to the car, having covered 9.5 miles and over 3300 vertical feet.

On the drive down from the ski resort we stopped before Flagstaff and ate dinner on the side of the road, then headed to the Kaibab forest near Jacobs Lake where we found a free spot to camp for the night.

**Mount Whitney, CA, 14,497 ft. – September 23, 2011, HP #12: Amazingly we had the highest point in California too ourselves.**

Jay, Leif, and I left Utah County around 8 pm September 21, 2011, arriving in Las Vegas around 1 am (Mountain Time). Next morning we took off around 9 am (Mountain Time), and drove west through Pahrump, NV and into Death Valley (where the road reaches a low of 190 feet below sea level, and the temperature was over 100 F), arriving in Lone Pine, CA around noon (Pacific Time). Our first stop was the Ranger Station where we picked up our backcountry permits, and rented a couple of bear proof canisters. Next we stopped at a pizza joint and had lunch. After lunch we drove the 13 miles from 3,727 ft. high Lone Pine to 8,365 ft. high Whitney Portal, where the walking would begin.

By 2:30 pm (Pacific Time), we had our gear and backpacks organized and were on the main Mount Whitney trail. Within a mile or so we left the main trail where it crosses the North Fork of Lone Pine Creek. On the new trail we headed up a wooded slope into a willow-choked valley, roughly following the North Fork of Lone Pine Creek. After the second creek crossing we arrived at the base of the Ebersbacher Ledges. Traversing the ledges involved some class 3 scrambling where a slip could be fatal. Once over the ledges we reached 10,300 ft. high Lower Boy Scout Lake, around 5:15 pm having walked approximately 2.5 miles. We crossed the creek and traversed around the lake on its left (south) side, and were soon climbing over talus, eventually crossing the creek again where it runs over granite slabs. Within a mile or so from the lower lake, and by 6:00 pm, we had found a camp spot at Upper Boy Scout Lake (11,300 ft.). We managed to get our tents set up before the sun set. That night I ate a Mountain House Pasta Primavera which was surprisingly tasty!

Next morning, September 23, 2011, we left camp around 5:15 am heading toward Iceberg Lake (12,560 ft.) at the base of Mount Whitney’s Eastern Buttress. Iceberg Lake is approximately 1 to 1.5 miles east of Upper Boy Scout Lake and 1,200 plus vertical feet higher and we reached it by 6:30 am, with the sun totally up. At Iceberg Lake we pumped some water, then scrambled up a 1,000 vertical feet of talus and 3rd class terrain to a notch below a tower where the roped climbing would begin.

The first two pitches were more or less straight up to the top of the second tower, and took about an hour and a quarter to climb, putting us at the top of pitch two around 9 am. Leif led the first pitch, and Jay led the second pitch. These first two pitches have ratings ranging from 5.6 to 5.8. Although we started out before another group consisting of two climbers, they caught up to us at the top of the first pitch. Sharing the route with them ended up being the story of the day.

The third pitch is where things got difficult. We had the option at this point to go over a short arête (5.7) or to drop down a big step to a ramp (5.6). With speed in mind, and hoping to pull ahead of the other party, we decided on the ramp, but what we didn’t realize was it was spot covered in snow and ice due to its northern aspect. Leif led this pitch, and masterfully avoided most of the snow/ice, but as I followed I soon had my climbing shoes covered in snow, and my hands frozen. This was a bit nerve rattling to say the least, especially when my now wet shoes failed to grip even as I tried, unsuccessfully, to smear them on the rocks to dry them. Arriving at the belay ledge at the base of a prominent right-facing corner was a great relief, and my shoes eventually dried out. The other party used the 5.7 option for the third pitch converging at the same belay area and informed us that their route was easier climbing but with limited protection.

It was after 10:00 am when Jay led the 4th pitch, and he ran the rope almost completely out on this 5.6 step like section known as the "red corner". Leif led the next pitch which took us up to a large ledge just under the "peewee" block.

The 6th pitch which runs along the right hand side of the peewee block was led by Jay, and the three of us topped out on that by noon. All this time there was one other party of two ahead of our two parties. This front-running party, were often referred to as the "white guy" because one of the fellows was dressed in white, and the other in black if you can believe it. At this point, the top of the peewee, all three groups overlapped momentarily, with the lead group soon pulling ahead again.

Keeping with leads swinging between Leif and Jay, Leif lead the 7th pitch, choosing a flake which was too good to pass up even though he worried it might be challenging for me to follow as my alpine rock climbing experience was very limited. Fortunately it ended up being fine for me to follow.

We ran into a little bit of trouble on the 8th pitch when we decided not to wait for the climbers we were sharing the route with to finish the pitch. Jay attempted a variation only to run into a difficult ceiling causing him to be lowered back to the belay station. By now, around 1pm, the other climbers were gone, and we were able to follow the standard pitch they had used. Leif also led this one, which looked relatively easy but turned out to be challenging as tired and as cold as we were.

At the top of the 8th pitch, I put in one more piece of protection, climbed up a large boulder and unroped, and Leif and Jay followed. At this point I decided to remove my "cruel shoes" and put on my boots understanding the remaining 300 ft. to be mostly class 3 or moderate 4. As I did so, my friends kept moving and I soon lost sight of them.

Eventual, as I scrambled up what turned out to be 4th class and moderate 5th class, unroped at over 14,000 feet I noticed Leif, and decided climb towards him. About 30 feet from the top, I ran into a sheer 10 foot wall which I dared not climb unroped. I scrambled around a bit looking for an easier alternative only to come up short. I had just decided to sit down and eat my lunch before trying to work my way down and south to the class 3 stuff (left if climbing up), when I heard Leif calling out to me. I asked him to get a rope and drop it down to me, which he did. On rope I was able to climb past my road block, in my boots, and then finish the scramble to the 14,497 foot peak arriving on top at 3:00 pm (about 6 and 3/4 hours from the time we roped up). There was no site of the other two parties who had been on the east buttress with us, and amazingly we had the highest point in California too ourselves.

By 3:45 pm we located the Mountaineers route, and started down it. It was coated in ice, and we didn’t have crampons nor axes, so we stuck to the 4th class boulders on the left side still having to work our way around some snow and ice. Eventually we crossed it on a sugary snow section and continued down the right side. Just above the saddle where the route turns right and heads down to the west we were forced to down climb a 5th class section about 20 feet high, that had limited hand holds with spots of ice and snow, it was quite unsettling, especially after all we had been through up to that point. Fortunately, we all made it down without incident and continued down the "never ending" west aspect couloir of the Mountaineers Route arriving by 6:00 pm at Iceberg Lake. Within an hour we were back at our camp at Upper Boy Scout Lake. Fourteen hours of hiking, climbing, and scrambling was now behind us!

September 24, we woke up to hail, that would come and go intermingled with sunshine and/or rain. Enjoying and needing the rest, we forfeited our plan to scramble up Mt. Russell. By 11:30 am in steady hail we headed down. Soon the hail stopped, and the sun came out. At the lower lake I removed my jacket and paused to look back noticing the peak of Mt. Whitney above the lakes eastern wall, it looked a long ways away!

At the Ebersbacher Ledges we got off track by following a lone hiker in an orange hat. We soon discovered our error and notified the hiker as well. Once we got down the ledges and across the creek, we stopped for a drink and I noticed the hiker had ignored us and was way off course, in potential danger, and without his back pack. I whistled at him, caught his attention, and we were able to yell directions to him, allowing him to get off the ledges. I left my pack and hiked up to him meeting him just a few yards past the creek crossing. He seems uneasy but he said he was fine. I asked about his pack and he said it fell off the cliff when he tried to lower it down a section. Hearing he was alright and confirming a second time that he didn’t need help, we continued down arriving at Jay’s car by 2:15 pm. I weighed my pack at the trailhead, and it was only 2 pounds lighter than when we started out, and I had no water left. A liter of water weighs 2.2 pounds, so essentially my pack was unchanged in weight from the hike in.

From Whitney Portal it was back to Lone Pine and the pizzeria, and then to the Ranger Station to return the bear canisters. Back through Death Valley, to Las Vegas, and my first deep sleep in days! Sunday morning we were up at 5:15 am (Pacific Time), and back to Utah County by 1:00pm (Mountain Time). What an awesome, unforgettable adventure, and how lucky for me that two good friends were willing to allow an inexperienced rock climber, namely me, join them!

**Granite Peak, MT, 12,799 ft. – August 18, 2012, HP #13: The prospect that Granite Peak would not be in reach this trip settled in hard on us.**

I woke up at 3:00 am August 17, 2012 about 45 minutes earlier then I needed to, but sleep wouldn’t return. As planned I left the house at 4:30 am and drove up to Peter’s place. From there we got into his truck and drove North 450 miles through Utah and Yellowstone to Cook City, Montana where we had lunch.

By 2:07 pm we were on the Lady of the Lakes trail thinking we’d make it to Lone Elk Lake between 6 and 6:30 pm. Our goal for the outing was to climb 12,799 ft. high Granite Peak of the Beartooth Mountains and the high point of Montana. We would be in the wilderness for three days and two nights. Where we parked seemed to be an old abandoned sawmill, and there was a lot of scrap metal parts etc. rusting and lying around.

The walking was quick and before we knew it the trail had faded away, and we were wondering if we’d missed a turn. A quick look at the map showed that all we had to do was head due north, so we continued north ignoring the feeling that we weren’t on route. By 5pm we reached a lake at the top of a steep hill, and we wondered why it wasn’t on the map, but the map was of poor quality and it looked like there might be a blue spot under the blue trail line so we kept on walking. As we rounded the east side of the lake we encountered another hiker and he seemed to confirm that Lower Aero Lake was to the North East about an hour’s hike away. So we tried to go north east, but we couldn’t find the lake.

Finally we had to accept that we had messed up, and the prospect that Granite Peak would not be in reach this trip settled in hard on us. What a disappointment! Where had we gone wrong was the question we mulled over and over for hours as we back tracked to the Lake and then down the hill in the dark. By 10:00 pm, we found a good camp spot near Zimmer Creek and we stopped. Now with the peak out of our reach we hoped, tomorrow, to at least find Aero Lake and discover how and where we had gone wrong.

The next morning as soon as the sun came up, we woke up. By 6:30 pm we were out of the tent. The realization came that just maybe we’d have enough time today to get back on track and even make it up Granite Peak. It was a long shot, and a long ways to go, but we decided to give it a try. This morning we had luck on our side as we discovered we'd walked far enough back, the night before, that we were again at the trail. Within 30 minutes we were back down to the intersection of Zimmer creek and Broadwater River. Next it was through the trees, on the south of the river, and then across the river, and we found a trail heading downstream, and we knew we were on route. By noon we reached Rough Lake, and there wasn’t a cloud in the sky, and we thought maybe, just maybe, we still had a chance of reaching the peak. So we continued up Sky Top creek and along the Sky Top Lakes and soon we spotted Granite Peak. One of the smaller Sky Top lakes just west of the big lower lake had a remarkable calving snowfield along its edge.

By 2:00 pm we found a camp spot, at roughly 10,400 feet and by 3:00 pm, with lighter loads, we were aiming for the peak. It didn’t take more than 30 minutes to reach the head of the large Sky Top Lake, and shortly after we encountered a man and woman heading down. We asked them about the south west couloir route, and we were snapped at by the woman who said “if you don’t know where you are going, we shouldn’t help you”. I returned her rudeness by impolitely waving her off as the man proceeded to chat with us. We hoped to reach the slab, on the face of the mountain, by 5:00 pm, but the walking was slow over miles and miles of boulders.

Peter stared to feel the altitude and by 5:00 pm he told me to just go ahead and try to reach the peak, and that he would follow along at his own pace. We arranged a meeting place as well should he opt to not continue. Feeling guilty about separating I recognized I had to go for it, setting myself a turnaround time of 7:00 pm at the latest. By 5:30 pm I had traversed the base of the slab and was looking up the south west couloir, and up I went. It was all but snow free, and my ice axe wasn’t needed. At 6:15 pm I reached a point that was stout class 4. Worried about the return down climb I searched for an easier way and after trying three different ways up I just about turned around. But then something told me to give it one more go, and up I went reaching the summit ridge by 6:25 pm and the peak by 6:30 pm.

Out came the camera, snap, snap. Next I signed the summit log, and had a bite to eat. By 6:55 pm I started down. Just off the ridge a 3 foot wide chunk of rock broke out from under me, luckily I had two good hand holds, and went zooming down as I yelled “rock, rock” over and over. I prayed Peter wasn’t below it. I made it back to my trekking pole about 50 feet up the couloir at 7:31 pm. I had left the pole there with a piece of orange webbing tied to it as a guide for Peter to spot from the mouth of the couloir.

By 7:40 pm I was out of the couloir and skirting along the slab. By 8:00 pm I spotted Peter at our arranged meeting point on the moraine at the base of the peak, and a few minutes later I joined him. It wasn’t until 10:38 pm that we finally wandered back into camp. Finding the camp in the dark, had been yet another test. We’d been hiking for 14.5 hours! Exhausted I lay on the ground and asked Peter to take my photo. After a few snacks we laid down in the tent and slept.

Next morning I was up at 6:15 am with an upset stomach, and by 8:15 am we were marching out. By 9:00 am we reached Rough Lake, and by 9:45 am Lone Elk Lake was behind us. There were a lot of mountain goats on the ridges east of Lone Elk Lake. At 11:00 am we stopped along the Sky Top creek, and soaked our sore feet as we ate some snacks. By 12:45 pm we were back at the intersection of Broadwater River and Zimmer creek, were we instantly realized how we missed the right turn the day before. Someone had blocked the right fork of the trail with some logs and so we had gone left, and crossed the creek more to the west where the trail downhill along Broadwater River could not be seen. Our lesson learned - bring a better map, and plot a few way points! At 2:15 pm we reached the truck, plenty tried and with more than one sore muscle. We still had 450 miles of driving ahead of us, and by the time we got back to Peter's place we had been gone for 66 hours, with very little rest.

The day after returning home a glance at a terrain map showed were we had wandered off to Zimmer Lake about 2 - 2.5 miles from the turn off to Aero Lake, where the trail ended. From Zimmer Lake we’d gone up to the 11,000 foot south ridge of Mt. Wilse, wandering both south and east, adding at least another 1.5 miles. Overall we walked 8 miles extra from the turn off to Aero Lake. I'd also guess that from our first night camp spot to Broadwater River (aka Star Creek) was 1 to 1.5 miles. So over all we added around 11 miles to our trip.

In summary, day one we drove 450 miles then walked from 2pm till 10 pm, covering 12 or so miles (2,400 vertical feet -from 8,800 to 11,200 ft.). Day two we walked from 8:00 am till 10:38 pm covering around 16 miles and going up at least 4000 vertical feet. I’m not sure how much we went up and down on day two but we started somewhere closed to 8,800 feet and went up to 12,799 ft. Day three we walked from 8:15 am till 2:15 am covering about 11 miles, and then drove 450 miles home.

**Wheeler Peak, NM, 13,161 ft. – April 27, 2013, HP #14: A few cars over took me as marched down the gravel, but they all ignored my thumb asking for a ride.**

Undoubtedly, by this this point in time I was making a conscientious effort to reach state high points. As such April 26, 2013 I drove unaccompanied from Orem to New Mexico’s Taos ski resort. On the way I swung by the four corners where I did my best inverted crab pose, aka a hybrid wheel pose, so I could be in four US states at once – one hand in Colorado, the other in New Mexico, with my feet in Utah and Arizona separately.

Next it was on to Farmington, NM where I purchased a few supplies for the trip and finally to Taos ski resort. Northwest of Taos, along highway 64, after passing through the Apache Nation Reservation, I encountered an Earthship home. I don’t recall if this was before or after crossing the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge the second highest bridge on the U.S. Highway System – but it was probably before.

The ski resort allows free over-night camping parking in their upper lot so I took advantage of that sleeping in the back of my SUV. The next morning I woke up at 4:00 am and by 5:00 am I was hiking the Bull of the Woods trail en route to Mt. Walter (13133 ft.), and its neighbor Wheeler Peak (13161 ft.) the two highest peaks in New Mexico. I had to do a little route finding, and I made the occasional stop, so it took 4.5 hours to cover the 3,660+ vertical feet and 8 miles to Mt. Walter. I spooked some bighorn sheep along the way.

It was pretty cool to find a summit sign on Mt. Walter, as it is not every day you get stand on a mountain that shares a name with you, shame it was not his last name. The sign read, “MT. WALTER, ELEV. 13,141 FT., NAMED FOR H. D. WALTER, WHO LOVED THESE MOUNTAINS” and it made me smile.

It was only another 20 minutes to the highest point of New Mexico, Wheeler Peak. From here the ski slopes of Taos are only a mile and a quarter away as the crow flies. This peak used to be called Taos Peak, meaning “place of red willows” but in 1950 it was changed to its current name in honor of the leader of the Wheeler Survey. There is a plaque on top, mounted above a cannon type pipe of some sorts, mentioning he lead the survey for ten years. Walter and Wheeler lie in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains (Spanish for "Blood of Christ"). Perhaps alpenglow led to the name of this range which extends into Colorado.

As I headed down, I decided to make my excursion into a loop hike, turning left (west) between the two peak. With everything still covered in snow I down climbed and glissaded to Williams Lake in about 45 minutes. In another 30 minutes, heading north, I arrived at the south end of the ski resort by 11:30 am. Then I had an hour walk on the Twinning road back to my SUV in the Coyote parking lot at the north end of the resort. A few cars over took me as marched down the gravel, but they all ignored my thumb asking for a ride.

Later that evening I drove to Taos, and then through Durango, Co to near Cortez where I camped in the National Forest. Next day I arrived in Moab and road the slick rock trail on my mountain back, and drove my SUV over Baby Lions Back before returning home.

**Guadalupe Peak, TX, 8,749 ft. – June 8, 2013, HP #15: I was a little less cautious in watching out for rattlesnakes on this leg of the trip.**

Friday morning I got up at my regular time of seven. After spending nine hours at work, I drove from Springville, Utah to the SLC international airport to catch a flight to El Paso, Texas via Phoenix Arizona. I arrived in El Paso at midnight, June 8, 2013, feeling quite sleepy, and picked up a rental car.

From the airport I drove to Wal-Mart and picked up a few grocery items included an energy drink (something I typically detest). Following Wal-Mart I found highway 180/62 and drove east for about 110 miles to Guadalupe Mountains National Park. En route I encountered, for the first time in my life, an “lnland (aka Interior) Check Point” operated by the US Border Patrol. As I approached I assumed it was a weigh station, but as I entered I had this strange feeling that I was crossing the border. So I asked the agent as much and he told me that it was an inland check point and that the border agents have the right to set up check points anywhere within 100 miles of the border. He asked me where I was going, seemed a little surprised due to the late hour, and wondered where I would be staying. I told him I would sleep in the car. There was another officer nearby with a dog, they went behind the car and I assumed the dog was sniffing for drugs. Once the officer’s apparent curiosity was satisfied he asked me to state my country of citizenship, and pleased with my answer he sent me on my way.

By 3:00 am I arrived at the Pine Springs Campground, and spent the next hour looking around, getting food ready, and generally organizing my stuff for my pending hike to the highpoint of Texas - Guadalupe Peak at 8,749 feet tall. The hike rises just over 3,000 vertical feet in 4.25 miles. I figured I could cover that easily in three hours up and two and a half hours down, and I wanted to leave the park before 2pm so I could make it back to the airport two or more hours before my return flight. Having the time and not wanting to deal with darkness, I decided to try to catch an hour of sleep in the car. I did doze off, but as if on cue I woke up 5 am, to a hint of dawn. So I grabbed my pack, adding my headlamp to it (instead of wearing it), and was on the trail by 5:15 am. As I wandered up several switch backs the sun was soon up, and the temperature was very comfortable for a t-shirt.

To estimate distances as I walked I referred to document I had printed from the NPS website, and about 1.5 miles into the hike, I calculated that I was covering about 0.5 miles every 15 minutes. At that rate I reasoned that I would likely be on top by 7:30 am. The walking was easy, the trial was direct and by 7:10 am I reached the top of Texas, without having seen another person nor having to stop to drink any water. I snapped a few pictures of the summit monument. At this early morning hour the sky in all directions was a cloud-free brilliant blue. Next I ate my breakfast sandwich and both signed and read the summit log book, greatly appreciating the solitude. Several summit registry entries mentioned the lack of a view due to hazy conditions, definitely not the case this morning. Around 7:40 am I mistakenly thought I heard voices, so I rapidly grabbed my pack and started down.

I had lots of time, so I decided to travel cross-country over to El Capitan to the south, keenly aware of potential rattlesnakes. El Capitan, although not a true peak, sits about 664 feet below the Texas highpoint, but due to the nature of the landscape one must drop closer to 900 feet before he can begin climbing up to El Capitan. Within an hour of leaving Guadalupe I encountered a green military ammo box (exactly like the one on Guadalupe Peak) on a highpoint of El Capitan. My instinct wasn’t convinced this was the actual highpoint, but as I looked around nothing seemed noticeable higher so I accepted it as the highpoint, opened the ammo box and signed the summit log. It hadn’t been signed for a few months. The views off the cliff face to the west were breathtaking, and the view back, to the north, of the Texas highpoint made Guadalupe Peak more impressive. At this point I noticed two hikers at the monument.

I hoped I would encounter a trail on El Capitan which I could follow back to the parking lot, but since I didn’t I opted for the prudent thing to do and descend El Capitan and climb the 900 feet or so back up to the Guadalupe trail. This took me just under an hour, as I was a little less cautious in watching out for rattlesnakes on this leg of the trip. Once back on the established trail, I made good time only crossing paths with four or five groups heading up, all who were quite friendly. I glanced over at El Capitan a few times and questioned if the summit register was really on the highpoint. The temperature remained pleasant, with the occasional strong wind gust typical of the area, and by 11:15 am I was back at my rental car having reached two peaks in about as much time as I had allotted for just the one.

With nothing else around to catch my interest I decided to head back to El Paso, where I could get some lunch and hopefully catch a nap at the airport prior to my 6:30 pm departing flight. As I headed west on highway 180/62 I looked back at the peaks, and noticed that the sky was filling with dust, gone were the clear views I had enjoyed that morning.

On the outskirts of El Paso, as I approached, I stopped at different Wal-Mart then the night before. Got myself some fruit and juice and continued into El Paso. Tired and not really interested in looking around I decided to fill up the car with gas and return to the airport in search of a nap. It must have been close to 2pm when I dropped off the rental car, and I found a restroom in the airport to clean up and change out of my hiking gear. By the time I checked-in, cleared TSA, and found my gate it was after 3pm, and so I sat down hoping to sleep. It was uncomfortable to sleep sitting and so I moved to a couch near one of the TVs, and I managed to doze in and out for the next 45 minutes or so.

Eventually it was time for my flight to Phoenix and from there to Salt Lake City. I arrived close to 11pm, and was home a few minutes after 12 am. After 41.5 hours of no real sleep I was exhausted, and so happy to jump into my bed. It was an easy quick hike to the top of Texas, but a fun adventure nonetheless, and I have now reached 15 of the 50 US states highpoints.

**Denali, AK, 20,320 ft. – June 7, 2014, HP #16: I was a little less cautious in watching out for rattlesnakes on this leg of the trip.**

A full year past by from the time I stood on the highest natural point in Texas, until I reached another state highpoint.