

Utah Rocks

Fock 13: Surface Creep

With only a few days left till the summer solstice, there was still a goodly dose of daylight left in the western end of this time zone. The sun would not be down till after 9:00, and I didn't envision the nightlife of Kanab, the small town that was the next scheduled stop, as being especially electric.

So, my eyes were open for diversions. Thus, when the brown-and-white sign for Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park showed up as I zoomed down Route 89, I bit on the hook. Wary of the No-National-Parks-Pass-Spoken-Here mentality, I took the turnoff with a timid enthusiasm, if that's even possible: the place sounded cool, but if it meant another \$7 forkover, I would've declined and moved on.

As it turned out, the dunes begin before you ever even enter the park. There was a small dirt parking area to the left, so I pulled in and climbed up the soft sand of the hill that stood about twenty feet high behind the lot.

Once I topped that rise, I stopped and went "whoaaaa!" Huge sand fields rolled out before my eyes. Nearly half a mile of tall waves of soft pure sand rose and fell between my vantage point and the



steep hillsides beyond. And, true to their name, the dunes were a beautiful shade of pink, just like the coral color that is so predominant in southern Florida architecture.

The low angle of the sun accentuated the ripples in the surface, and made the light dusting that breezed over the lips of each dune look like a pink mist. I plunked myself down on the top of a soft pink slope and let my body ooze into the sand. It was really relaxing; the sand shaped around my shoulders and back and buns, and I just did The Ahhhhh Thing for a while again. After all, The Ahhhhh Thing was what this week was all about.

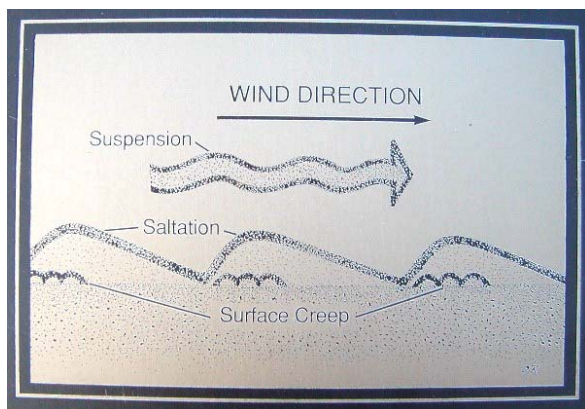
Ahhhhh.

You gotta take time for The Ahhhhh Thing. If your day is ending and you haven't done The Ahhhhh Thing since you got up, even for a half a minute, then you have stress issues that you really need to address. So, get down off that ceiling, do a big cat stretch, and give yourself a sweet little taste of The Ahhhhh Thing whenever you can. Do it right now, in fact. The next paragraph can wait.

The dunes outside the park looked so good, I just had to investigate whatever was within the gates, expense be damned, damnit. Fortuitously, though the booth was occupied, nobody came to the window, or even looked up, when I pulled up. Since they showed no interest, I was not going to give them money. Apparently, you pay for the Fee Collector's attention, not for the use of the park. If they don't pay attention to you, you don't have to dish out any moolah. Perhaps diversions are the key. I'll have to experiment with this.

Anyway, the dunes inside the park were essentially the same ones, but with a different view. There were some people out walking on the largest dunes, which gave them some perspective. What was not so cool, from my standpoint, was the non-stop high-pitched whining of the motors of the three-wheeled ATV's that were carousing out on the dunes. Even from a half-mile away, their noise was grating. They took a lot of the Ahhhhh out of the place. But they were just havin' fun, and that was an area that was designated for such frivolity, so whatchagonnado?

There was a sign there, explaining how these dunes came to be, with a diagram of the three methods of sand transportation: Suspension (fine grains of sand are carried aloft in the wind and dropped when the wind speed slows in this open space), Saltation (where the grains "jump" from dune to dune with gusts of wind along the face of the dune), and, my favorite, Surface Creep. I don't even want to define Surface Creep; I just like the name so much. It conjures up such entertaining images. You, Surface Creep, you.



When I finally returned to Chief, my shoes had a lot of those fine, pinkish grains in them. With a souvenir in mind, I poured it all into a sandwich bag and rolled it up to bring home. It was about the size of a cigar.

I would later decide, at the Las Vegas airport, that an x-ray examination of my shoulder bag would reveal a cellophane baggie filled with a couple of ounces of fine powder, and, though I was carrying nothing illegal – not even a nail clipper – I did not want to face any of the dumb questions that would be elicited by what would appear to be a bag of pink cocaine. So, I dumped it out. No big deal, really. I'm sure I would have dumped it shortly after getting home anyway. Maybe I would have shown it to a

couple of friends, and they would have so-whatted it, and that would've been the end of that.

It was sunset when I reached Kanab, and I took a room at the first western-looking, non-chain motel that I found: Bob-Bon's Ridings Motel. It was a fine little establishment, made of clean, neatly-cut pine, and had a real log cabin look about it.

There were autographed photos of dozens of stars of western movies hanging in the lobby. Mindful of The Duke at The Apache in Moab, I asked Bob, the part-owner (along with his wife Bonnie) who was also the front desk dude that evening, if all those stars had stayed at Bob-Bon's over the years. He confessed that they did not, but that the autographs were authentic and that he had met them all when they were working on movies in the area.

I also noticed that there was a computer on a table in the corner of the room, and a small sign indicated that Internet access was available for a small fee. Well, having not checked my email in one full week (plus nine hours), I decided to shell out a couple bucks to see if anyone had tried to hail me.

I had 351 email messages in my mailbox. 351. Damn, that's 50 per day. I sure am popular. All kinds of folks wanted to help me consolidate my debts, but I don't have any debts anymore.



There were plenty more good people who wanted to help me get a new mortgage rate for my house, but I don't have a house. Some well-intentioned, but clearly misinformed senders wanted to help me make my Walt Whitman bigger, but Walt is already a tall and sturdy trooper, so I saw no point in that either. And dozens of women wanted to show me pictures of their naughty bits. How generous!

Naturally, I wrote individual, polite, replies to each of these concerned parties, thanking one and all for their interest, but declining their offers. (Ya, right: DELETE!)

Of the 351 messages, I think about seven were actually aimed at me. And I only responded to two of those.

I was right about Kanab's nightlife. When that athletic young biker woman had urged me to move out here in 2000, she said she lived in Kanab, and went mountain biking all over southern Utah and northern Arizona. It all sounded great at the time. But one evening was enough to convince me that I would go loopy in this quiet little town. This party dog still needs his party bones.

It was a good night's sleep though. Once I took my hot shower, and settled my hike-weary bod into that clean motel bed, I did The Ahhhhh Thing bigtime. Utah would be left behind tomorrow, and Arizona revisited, though far more extensively than when Blue Man and I had crossed out of Utah, in 2000, on our way to Sacramento!

