

"Two for Art"

The adventures of Bernie and Martha Marks
with Sugar the Campin' Cat
and BluCon, our brand-new Lazy Daze motorhome

August 2009

The first half of August found us in Colorado and Wyoming, where Bernie took part in the Wyoming Plein Air Society's "paint out" and "quick draw" competitions. Previously, we had only barreled past Cheyenne by car on I-25, en route to Cody, Yellowstone N.P. and Grand Teton N.P. It was nice to slow down and spend some quality time in Wyoming's capital city and scenic southeastern edge.

On August 6, after a few leisurely driving-camping days on Colorado's Eastern Slope (we even bought a Colorado State Parks annual pass, because we know we'll be enjoying those again soon, and often), we checked in at Deselms Fine Art in Cheyenne to have Bernie's blank canvases stamped (proof that he didn't paint anything in advance). Then we headed west to the Medicine Bow National Forest, which we had ID'd on the map as a likely spot for great camping, hiking, painting and wildlife photography. We found all of those in spades!

After spending a night in a commercial campground in Saratoga, an old mineral springs spa town, we drove up—and up and up!—into the Snowy Range... a relatively short (27 mile) but phenomenal stretch of mountains, lakes, glaciers, wildlife, and wildflowers along Hwy. 130,



Sugar contemplates Trinidad Lake State Park (CO) from our campsite, through one of BluCon's three panoramic rear windows.



Martha and Bernie at the Snowy Range lookout point on WY 130, with Medicine Bow Peak in the background.



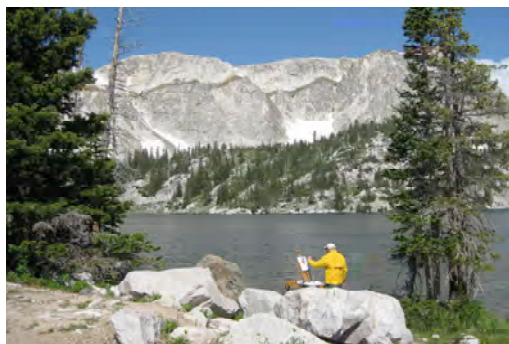
Martha's fav shots of Elephanthead & Alpine Sunflowers (above) and Glacier Lilies (below).



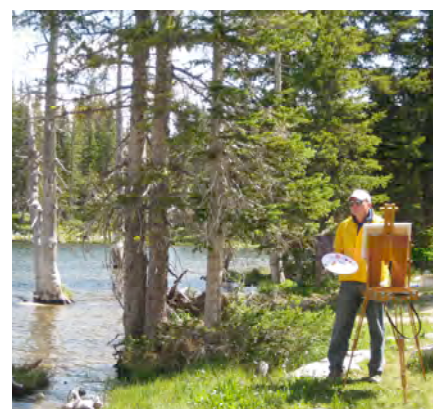
between Saratoga and another classic town, Centennial. We found a mind-blowingly beautiful campsite at Sugarloaf, the highest of several NFS campgrounds in the Snowy Range. Our altitude was 10,700 feet, which made home-base Santa Fe's 7,000 elevation seem practically sea level. Other than a low-grade headache that Martha felt for the first few days, we had no problems with the altitude. Daytime temps rose into the 60s; nights dropped to the 30s. So, every night, we turned BluCon's propane-fueled furnace to low, crawled into our Trivasaks, and (even with a window open for a bit of ventilation) slept cozy and warm.

During our four gorgeous days in the Snowy Range, Bernie painted at glacial Mirror Lake, Bellamy Lake, and Lake Marie. Martha and Sugar hung out in BluCon (reading, napping), but Martha also enjoyed hiking around the lakes with her camera, shooting an amazing array of alpine wildflowers, plus too-cute rodents (golden-mantled ground squirrels) and larger game (bull mooses). Along the way, she kept a photo record of Bernie painting... and the great spots where he painted.

Bernie paints from two spots at Mirror Lake (right) and (at the top of page 2) in a field of wildflowers at Bellamy Lake.



Bernie paints the town of Centennial from the road to Laramie, using dust-covered BluCon as a partial shield against the fierce wind that still almost blew him and his easel off the road.





Once we came down from the mountain and returned to Cheyenne, we spent four days exploring (and painting) the historic district and botanical garden, and the nearby Wyoming Hereford Ranch.

For the plein air exhibit, Bernie

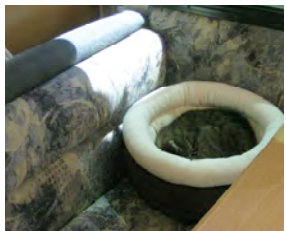


"Farmers Market, Cheyenne" was purchased by a local couple the very day it was painted.

were available, but there was also a lively farmers' market as well as fine 19th century buildings in the downtown depot area. Bernie set up his easel near a busy section of the market and captured the scene in a painting that was sold to a couple from Cheyenne later that same day.



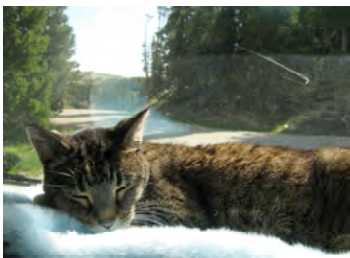
Sugar loafs in BluCon with Mirror Lake and its glacier in the distance.



Saturday afternoon—after the "quick draw" and before the opening of the plein air exhibit—the sky turned dark and blustery. So, following lunch at a downtown restaurant, we retreated to the comfort of BluCon (parked alongside the Cheyenne train depot) and whiled away three rainy hours playing Scrabble, reading our Kindles, and getting dressed for the nearby evening event... right in the middle of groups of people coming and going, not noticing us inside. It's neat to be so totally self contained!

On Sunday morning, we started moseying home.

In case anybody wonders how well Sugar handled her first two-week RV outing, we'll provide some typical scenes here. She has her own blue fake-fur throw (great for napping on the dash in the sun when BluCon is parked) and a new bed, which she took to quickly. She climbs/sleeps all over, but this high-sided, cushy



luxury—which is always there for her on a dinette bench—has become her "safe spot" once the rig starts moving. At age 18, she's a remarkably good traveler.



Three of Bernie's plein air paintings—of Centennial and Mirror Lake—hang on the wall at Deselms Fine Art. (The flat gallery light doesn't do justice to the color of these images.)



Sugar sits beside Martha's feet, which are snug on a cool mountain evening in Patricia Marks' hand-knitted socks (a gift to Martha for her birthday).

You can see more of Martha's and Bernie's art on their websites:

www.MarthaMarks.com

www.BernardMarksWatercolors.com

For those friends who haven't heard what we're up to these days... **BluCon** (it's blue, and Bernie says Martha conned him into it) is a semi-custom 27' Class C "mini-motorhome" made just for us in the spring of 2009 by **Lazy Daze, Inc.** (lazydaze.com) in Montclair, CA. Lazy Daze's reputation for making the best Class Cs on the road is well deserved. We love this rig!