



Revised History

“The Land of Sleeping Rainbows”

By Al Benson Jr., July 22nd, 2022

The title of this article is what the Navaho Indians call Monument Valley. The first time I ever “saw” Monument Valley was when I was ten years old and I was watching the Western movie “Stagecoach” with John Wayne. That movie was made the year I was born so you can tell how old it is, When I saw it, it was a rerun in the theater I saw it in.

Even at the age of ten, the scenery in Monument Valley awed me and I thought “I want to go and see that someday.” In the intervening years I saw several more John Wayne movies filmed there. This only increased my desire to see it in real life.

For those who may not know, Monument Valley is on the Navaho Indian Reservation and is partly in Utah and partly in Arizona. You never know exactly which state you are in. I don’t know about now, but there never used to be any signs telling you. It was Navaho land and state lines made no difference to them.

In 1965 I finally got to actually go see Monument Valley, with its majestic red sandstone rock formations. I was not disappointed. It was truly a wondrous area, I have been able, over the years, to go back three times, and other years, with some good Christian friends, we were able to get close enough to Monument Valley to spit, as they say. My wife and I learned to love that country and its rugged beauty.

The road down into Monument Valley is paved now, has been for several years. But when we first went in 1965 it was still dirt—that interesting fine red dirt so unique to the Monument Valley area. So, you drove down into the valley enveloped in a cloud of red dust, which my Dad was never entirely able to get cleaned out of his van. A couple years later he was still finding places in the van where “that damned red dust” from Monument Valley had settled in.

That whole Four Corners area where Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado come together is worth a trip to see it if you have never been able to go. There is desert, mountains, canyons, and Indian ruins, and all manner of things to see there. We’ve spent enough time there over the years that the minute I see a picture of that area I can pretty much tell where it is even if, as often happens, the picture is mislabeled. I’ve seen pictures of Monument Valley mislabeled as Death Valley or some other place not even close. The mislabeler had a picture of someplace “out west” and he had no clue where it was and so he called it whatever came to mind. And usually what came to mind was wrong.

If you have ever been in that country and observed the grandeur of the rock formations, you will not forget it. And if you do, then you passed through it, but you never really saw it.