

A Not So Good-Night

Once upon a time majestic hotels provided temporary comfort for cattle buyers in town to do business at one of the major stockyards that once dotted our landscape. The motels cattle buyers stay at these days aren't near as grand, and over the course of 35 years on the road, I have made a list of the 10 worst. Fearing lawsuits, I will not use their names but will only tell you what town they were in. (This is no reflection on the towns mentioned as they are among my favorites in the entire country.)

#10. Prescott, Ariz.: There are many fine motels in this town, unfortunately I've never stayed in any of them. This motel makes my list for having the distinction of being the cheapest I've ever stayed in. I paid \$9 for one memorable night. Although there was no spa, the room did have a bathtub that, I believe, was made of stucco.

#9. Gainesville, Texas: I was in town for a horse sale and, believe me, the horses had better accommodations than I did. The bathtub was full of cockroaches and the room smelled like a wet chicken coop. Although it was not nearly as clean as one.

#8. Billings, Mont.: Actually this was a nice place but I was given a room directly above the bar and in the room above me was a guy who wore lead diving boots as slippers. There was a soccer tournament in town, an all night wedding reception and a very bad band playing in the bar. When the band finally quit I still couldn't sleep because the scuba diver above me snored like a Berkshire boar.

#7. Rock Springs, Wyo.: Wyoming is one of my favorite states but I'm too wimpy for it. One October night we were flying in a small plane to Ogallala, Neb. when we had to land due to snow and ice. It was 10 degrees but I had no heat or hot water in my room. Apparently they don't turn on such luxuries in Wyoming until it gets "cold."

#6. Duluth, Minn.: I was a late check-in and the only room available contained a waterbed. This was the only time in my life I've ever slept on one and I was seasick the entire night. I also found the mirrors on the ceiling to be slightly disorienting.

#5. Connell, Wash.: There was one decent place to stay, and this wasn't it! I had a black and white TV, a lumpy bed and a phone that was always busy. Luckily, a previous guest had stolen all the light bulbs so I couldn't see how bad the room really was.

#4. El Centro, Calif.: There were several things I needed worse than the massaging bed in the room. Like a towel, soap, HBO, ice and a working air conditioner. (It was 114 in the shade!) When I complained about the non-working air conditioner the night clerk told me to just turn on the heater. It didn't work either, but it might recirculate the air.

#3. Redmond, Ore.: The motel dates from the '20s but I couldn't tell if it was the 1920s or the 1820s. My room had flocked wallpaper with matching bedspread, concrete pillows and a shower curtain that hadn't been changed since the Eisenhower administration. I'm not saying the place was old, but the Bible in my room was a first edition. The walls were so thin I could hear people talking in sign language next door.

#2. Fallon, Nev.: When I checked in at this "no-tell motel" the clerk was surprised I wanted to rent the room for an entire night. Instead of a lobby the clerk stood behind bulletproof glass. I don't know which was louder: the crickets, the heater that sounded like a 747 taking off or the trucks and trains that passed right through my room. I was also puzzled by the presence of ash trays in my "nonsmoking" room.

#1. Sayre, Okla.: This motel was as welcoming as a Mexican jail and is the worst room I've ever had. The rug was so dirty we put newspaper on the floor to walk on, the towels were as thin as tracing paper and they looked like a feedlot cowboy had cleaned his boots with them.

It's the Pitts

Written by Lee Pitts

□ Fortunately, I had to work and could escape while my wife had to stay in the room all day. After I forgot to feed and water her, she slept in the car the second night. But I let her back in the room when the tornado siren sounded.