

To the West and East and North and South

Monday the 10th of May 99. Waiting some of the morning for the die-hard working class to clear the freeways, we ventured forth into the madness!

After the work force leaves, the truck crowd takes over. There is hardly an on ramp that does not have 2 or 3 trucks entering the freeway. We traveled on to Oxnard where acres and acres of produce are growing, enough to feed LA.

Moving on to the ocean, we camp at Thorn Hill Broom State Beach. The park is virtually empty this time of year. The thought finally comes that you have escaped the rat race this close to home. (We made a good 152 miles today.)

The sandy, rocky, beach beckons one to stroll on the sand, but alas the ankles and legs cannot take the soft sand. The ocean waves are big and they crash upon the rocks and when they recede they make a gurgling sound not unlike rocks moving. The sky is blue and the air is pleasantly warm and the beach stretches on without a soul in sight. A pity we get used to the madhouse we live in.

Tuesday the 11th of May 99. The mesmerizing roar of the ocean made for a sound sleep last night. The morning sun finally broached the coastal mountains beside us, and began warming the beach.

We shuffled off to Pismo Beach where we found a State Park about a block from the beach. This beach is one of the few places in Calif. that you can drive your car upon.

Wednesday the 12th of May 99 The plans today called for following the route of a local trolley to all five cities in the area. This trip really gives an oversight of this area. The trolley only runs weekends and daily during June to September.

It seemed like a super idea to buy a pass to be able to drive on the beach with the Honda. So we did! We were sure we could drive 8 miles, so we missed the off ramp and continued on the way to the off road vehicle section. After crossing a river uneventfully we finally ended up stuck in the sand. After the State Park workers called a tow truck, which charges \$50, we decided we had had enough beaches.

Thursday the 13th of May 99. It is time to say goodbye to Pismo Beach. It is an almost vacant feeling at this time of the year when there are not many tourists about. One can drive down a city street and not have a car ahead or behind.

The inland drive to Redwood City took us through dry country and farm country, as opposed to the green coastal areas. We stay in Redwood City for a couple of days, with the Harris's and then to Sacramento for a couple of days to see the Dangermonds

Monday the 17th of May 99. After a couple of days of a delightful visit with the Dangermonds in Sacramento, we prepared to leave for the North. First we took a day and went to the State Capitol Building. Following the advice of our friends we took the escorted tour and as it turned out the 10:00 tour had only two other ladies on it. Like a personal tour. We visited the assembly and the senate chambers and things in between. We took the historic tour and went into rooms and offices that were restored to 1926, from photographs. The exact placement of the items was from the pictures, and the items in the pictures were found or reproduced and placed as depicted. It looked as if the occupant would return in a minute. The public could look at the rooms from a doorway, but the historic tour went into the rooms and you could look close and even read documents on the desks.

We lucked out and we were the only ones on this tour. This was really a custom tour! We felt that our limit had been reached and we would return another day.

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Tuesday the 18th of May 99. We drove North to Woodland and then turned West to Clearlake. It was a marvelous road that wound through rolling hills and fertile valleys. We passed through old towns that took you back in time to the days of old. Rice and tomatoes were in abundance as well as livestock. A large deer bounded across the road in front of us at one point. Beside the road a herd of elk were grazing peacefully, oblivious of the traffic. We were heading to the coastal green again.

It was Clearlake that beckoned to us. Our terminal point was at the Albatross RV Park and the site allowed us to pull headfirst to within 3 feet of the lake wall. A gentle breeze, a panoramic view of the lake, and a tasty glass of wine, makes one feel as if there is no outer world. The sun is headed on a course to set on a distant hill, and on the way the reflection saturates the lake surface with mirrorlike twinkles.

Wednesday the 19th of May 99. We got up early this morning and the lake out front was calm as glass. At breakfast, we thought, where else in the world could we be eating and having coffee at such an idyllic location. It was as if we were on board a houseboat, watching satellite TV, and all snug in the motorhome looking out at the spectacular view!

We proceeded on around Clearlake, some on highways and some on country roads. We passed through little country towns with populations of 90 people! Up highway 101 through rolling hills and over the mountain into the logging country, where truck after truck passed by loaded with redwood. We spent the night north of Eureka in a cozy park with many trees. It was very quiet.

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Thursday the 20th of May 99 Today we left late in the morning because we only had an hours drive to the Swarners location. As we left, we saw about 50 elk grazing along the road. There were several long grades to traverse over the coastal range, but we made it with flying colors. Bonnie was entranced with the

beautiful azaleas growing wild, through the Redwoods. We plan on staying in Brookings, four days. *

Monday the 24th of May 99 After spending time in Brookings, we left for the Great North via Hwy. 101. Not much of anything happens in Brookings. The local newspaper had a front-page story and picture, one day, of a local policeman chasing a wild turkey out of the downtown area!

One of the things that you suddenly realize, is that in Oregon, the trees start right at the highway. In California there is usually some flat area before the trees start. The downside in Oregon is that once you look through the trees, you see that the countryside has been clear cut and is a total disaster. The lush trees are just a facade!

Farther North the road meanders along the beaches. Many wide sandy beaches with the surf slithering across the shiny wet surfaces. These are melded with rocky, craggy areas where the surf leaps into the air to spray the world.

A neat place to stop is in Bandon at the Cheese Factory. They have so many kinds of cheese that a mouse would be paranoid! And the best part, you can taste them all, which I did. You can then top it off with a gigantic ice cream cup! The day finished up at a beautiful RV Resort, (Whalers Resort, South of Newport).

Tuesday the 25th of May 99 This morning we continued on our way North. In the northern part of Oregon the road narrows considerably with fewer truck lanes and smaller shoulders. This is made up by marvelous vistas at every turn. The coastal shoreline has rocks and cliffs and heavy surf, which when combined are spectacular.

Across the bridge at Astoria we went, to Washington. Reaching the Town of Long Beach, we stopped at our favorite eating place, the Loose Caboose. In the 90's it was as small as a 20-ft. trailer, and now has a walk in, sit down place. The seafood and the clam chowder are still great.

We spent time walking along the longest boardwalk in the world, here in Long Beach. Spent the night in a nice 5 star Coast to Coast Resort. Pacific Holidays. Most RV Parks are nearly empty, even this close to Memorial Day. We plan to reach Tacoma and stay a few days with the Milligans.

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Thursday the 27th of May 99 While visiting the Milligans, we went to a place called Wolf Haven. This 90-acre reserve was home to 38 wolves of various types. The tour took about 1 hr. and was very interesting. The beautiful snow covered peak of Mt. Rainier looks down condescendingly upon all that behold it. It dominates the skyline everywhere you go. Here, as well as Oregon, there are homes, and properties profuse with Rhododendrons and Azaleas'. They only bloom about 3 or 4 weeks and we are here just in time. The weather has been spectacular! Also one of the spectacular sights along the highways are the acres of what we thought were mustard plants, but are actually Scotch Broom. This is considered a pesky weed.

Saturday the 29th of May 99 We left early this morning to go to a town called Leavenworth and another called Roslyn. Both towns are on the East Side of the Cascades. The drive through the snow-covered mountains was the highlight of the Tacoma stay. The town of Roslyn was where they filmed Northern Exposure. We ate in the café depicted in the show, and generally looked over the whole town of 900.

Leavenworth was a town similar to Solvang California, but a tad smaller. Very quaint! We visited a museum of Nutcrackers. They had 3,500 different kinds and shapes. It was an interesting place to visit. We ended up driving about 340 miles in the car.

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Monday the 31st of May, 99 We left Tacoma with their gorgeous weather, and headed north into the rain! Actually it did rain a little bit, enough to dirty the car and windows. After a night in

Bothel, (not brothel), to visit Elaine & George Anderson, we headed east to the Cascades.

Tuesday the 1st of June 99 Our schedule called for some rest and relaxation. We parked in a RV park, in a town called Concrete, then took the car to Wal-Mart to update our pictures. While waiting, we drove out to an old fishing village named La Conner. It was a tourist trap, but what the heck, we're tourists!.

The road to La Conner traversed a lot of flat farmland at this end of the Skagit Valley. Here they are famous for raising tulips and bulbs. The blooming season is from March to mid April so we missed it, as usual! The area was speckled with glorious old barns and rich fertile farmland.

Wednesday the 2nd of June 99 We left to cross the Cascades to Eastern Washington. This route was the most scenic route we have driven. It had the right amount of trees and the right amount of clouds and beautiful snow covered mountains. The winding road brought untold beauty at every turn. Waterfalls abound, at every canyon and sidehill, cascading down by the roadside. They ran the gamut from lacy wisps of shiny water to some real rip-roaring falls. At the passes, we had snow on the roadsides.

As we traveled the road we found an interesting little town called Winthrop. This town has been kept in the 1891 condition, complete with wooden sidewalks and antique storefronts. The sidewalks creaked when you walked on them.

We decided to stay the night in this environment. Partly because we liked it, and partly because we had not driven more than 100 miles a day since we left, so we didn't want to break our record! It took us 10 days just to get out of California! The forest Camp we stayed in had only one other camper in it. The temperature was 39 deg in the morning.

Thursday the 3rd of June 99 Leaving the camp this morning, we traveled north to Canada and crossed the border at Osoyoos. We did not get a bad agent and the crossing was painless. The route went through the Okanaga Valley along the river. There were

many large lakes with the towns being built on the shores. We stayed the night at Kelowna, at a nice park. *

Friday the 4th of June 99 It was a beautiful morning and the sun was shining brightly on the lake. We wakened at 5:45 which was too early. It took a while to realize that we were back one time zone! So it really was 6:45.

The road to Banff goes through 4 National Parks including the Canadian side of Glacier Park. For the most part the road follows rivers and lakes. There were all kinds of rivers, rushing, and placid, and they kept our attention as we drove. Two or three passes, about 4-5 thousand feet, were traversed with no pain. For miles the road wound through the base of towering snow covered mountains. We had lunch at the base of cascading waterfalls. Later we came across a mountain goat scrambling up a vertical cliff right at the roadside. We ended up in Banff at the Tunnel Mountain RV park for a couple of days.

Saturday the 5th of June 99 Today, while we were in the motorhome eating breakfast, there were a half a dozen elk just outside, grazing away. This is our day to cruise Banff. We drove to the famous Banff Springs Hotel for a breakfast snack. This place is a study in rock construction. Large beautiful public rooms, and lots of money for private rooms. After doing the main street tourist things we came back to the park and it started sprinkling from the skies. We entered the motorhome to the aroma of fresh bread we were baking!

Sunday the 6th of June 99 We decided that instead of going to Calgary, we would take the road north to Jasper. We said goodbye to our private elk and prairie dogs and headed out. The road goes through 2 National Parks, Banff and Jasper. What a spectacular drive! The weather gave us sunshine, rain, and even snow! Yes, snow! Beautiful flakes blowing horizontally, loading up the outstretched arms of the fir trees. The majestic mountains marched beside the road ahead of us, each with its own rugged personality. At every turn was a lake or a glacier, or a forest. The

mountains were covered with pristine snow. They were capped with fluffy clouds and blue sky, accentuating a contrast.

We arrived in Jasper during a light rain and stayed at the Whistler Camp.

Monday the 7th of June 99 The temperature this morning was a lovely 38 degrees. Not like California! We wandered aimlessly through Jasper for about 1 hour, and then headed out for Edmonton. In the short distance of 100 miles, the majestic mountains that surrounded us, disappeared as if by magic. In their place the countryside morphed into rolling hill country. We are starting to see farms and ranches, as opposed to National Park lands, rife with trees and lodgepole pines, that look like giant pencils stuck in the ground.

We had our first rain while driving. You could see as many as three cells of rain at one time, with blue sky peeking through between them.

It is hard to tell if they have any night here. It is still light at 10:00 at night, and it is light at 5:45 in the morning and we were sleeping in between.

Found a nice campground just outside Edmonton, and went into town, guess where, Wal-Mart!

Tuesday the 8th of June 99 Leaving the city this morning, we drove East on Hwy. 16. The mountains are far behind us, and the vista before us is pastoral. Herds of cattle are grazing on farms on both sides of the road. They speckle the green carpet of grass that is everywhere. Puffy white clouds decorate the sky ahead, and the sight of blue, portends an excellent day ahead.

One of the benefits of driving this far north is that there are few cars and trucks. In fact it's almost a time to rejoice when we get passed!

Tonight four hundred million mosquitoes and we shared a campsite at Battleford Provincial Park.

The campground is situated on Jackfish Lake. A very large lake, with summer homes along the shores. The lake had the only lighthouse to operate on a freshwater lake in the country. It is now non-operative.

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Wednesday the 9th of June 99 Leaving Battleford this morning we had another day of green prairie driving, and we got to the Prince Albert Provincial Park. This afternoon we were driving to places around the lake and found many creatures. First we saw the areas white pelicans swimming on the lake, then in flew a gorgeous Bald Eagle who settled in a treetop.

On the way back we stopped and observed two male elk with horns. Then we stopped beside the road and saw a mama red fox and four kits. They were so close we felt like we could touch them.

Thursday the 10th of June 99 Outside The Pas, the Provincial Park provided us with a secluded place to camp. We left Prince Albert Park, in the morning, and had a day of nothing but gigantic farms along the highway, and away as far as you could see. At one point through a forested area, we saw our first brown bear of the trip.

We had wished for a break in the monotony, and we got our wish! In Saskatchewan, our paved highway abruptly turned into a dirt road, a narrow dirt road with sometimes only one track down the middle. This road lasted for 60 to 75 miles! When we crossed the Manitoba border, voila, paved road again.

Friday the 11th of June 99 After leaving The Pas, we drove a long boring road, and had a car come or go every 20 miles! This is considered a traffic jam up here. We drove into the evening, and settled down at the rear of a gas station.

Saturday the 12th of June 99 It rained all night long, but stopped in the morning. A very unremarkable drive through farm country with the exception of a National Park. The Park road was about 30 miles long and we finally saw our moose. There was a big bull moose with antlers and farther on was a cow moose with a baby moose. So far we have seen most of the animal types that live here. Stayed outside Winnipeg at a nice Coast to Coast Park. The wind has been blowing fiercely all day out of the west. *

Monday the 14 of June 99 Yesterday North Dakota, today, Minnesota. On the way to Minneapolis, we stopped at marvelous museum type park. It was the Minnesota Historical Society Center, which had tours of a 1901 logging camp. It was a tour where the people working, were 1901 people. Their stores about their work were 1901.

The day being shorter, we stopped at a camp on Hickory Lake, and had a campsite right on the lakeshore. Southern Californians would kill for this site!

Tuesday the 15th of June 99 Today is the day that we attack Minneapolis, specifically, The Mall of America! Coming to the city we experienced traffic! We have not seen so many cars and trucks for 20 days. The Mall is gigantic, and loud. It was built for kids and young people. The amusement center was a cacophony of sound and activity and rides.

We went through a nice exhibit called Underwater World. It was a large collection of aquariums including one that you walk in through a tube, with the fish swimming all around you.

Still, the activity level, the noise, and the distance take a toll on us old folks.

Wednesday the 16th of June 99 We are treating ourselves today, to another green day, as we travel through Wisconsin. The countryside is rolling hill type terrain similar to parts of Texas.

As far as you can see, there are small farms. In the previous states, the farms were measured by the thousands of acres. In this state, they are measured by the hundreds of acres. One can see eight farms at once. The barns, with their silos brandishing their silver domes, to the fluffy clouded sky. Herds of dairy cows, congregate in the best possible places, talking and eating, I suppose. Tonight we will grace a Coast to Coast Park in Door County. We plan on having a Fish Boil tomorrow evening. *

Friday the 18th of June 99 Today's drive through the never-ending vistas of America, followed the beautiful shoreline of Lake Michigan. There are extensive areas along the shore that are privately owned and are graced with beautiful homes. The area is dense with softwood trees, and there were several pulpwood paper mills along the way.

Saturday the 19th of June 99 This morning we crossed the Mackinac Bridge into the main part of Michigan. It has come to my attention that anyone, who lives in Minnesota or Michigan, has to have a boat to pull behind a pickup truck. We have had hundreds of them pass us in the last few days.

A few miles past Saginaw, we turned and found the town of Frankenmuth. This town has the ambiance of a Bavarian town. It is also the home of the world's largest Christmas store, Bronners.

This store has an incredible stock of Christmas items, so many in fact, that I pooped out after the first mile!

The town has two of the world renowned chicken dinner restaurants. We only tried one of them. Tomorrow we head for Kalamazoo. *

Friday the 20th of June 99 We arrived at the Fullers home, and accepted their offer of their driveway. Having never seen them before, I asked Bonnie, "what if they don't like us?" She said, "don't worry about it". The stay with them was one of the highlights of the trip! We each liked so many

of the same things, and it felt that we knew them all our life. We will stay there about 3 days.

On one of those days, we went out in the country to their son's home. They have owned this home about 11 years, during which time they have completely remodeled it. The property it sets on is 60 acres. Would you believe it is 360 ft wide and 1 mile deep! They have developed walking trails back and forth around the property, and established feeding stations for deer and birds. One year they planted over a thousand Fir trees along the property. The house has many beautiful antiques, garnered along the way.

In the rural setting, it is a very comfortable home. We were glad to have had the chance to see it.

Wednesday the 23rd of June 99 Today we drove to the Indiana Dunes National Park on the shores of Lake Michigan. We were lucky to find a place along the beach road to park the rig and be able to gaze out the window at the lake vista, while eating lunch. There were not too many people on the beach. The sky was cloudy and the sun could not dab its rays on the golden sandy beaches.

After miles of farm countryside, growing corn, which is now as high as the eye of a prairie dog, we arrived at Lafayette IN.

We found the old house Bonnie had stayed in with her Great Grandmother. Next door was the former home of Margene, the folks we just visited in Kalamazoo.

We then toured around Purdue University. Wow, that is almost a city in itself!

Thursday the 24th of June 99 Before leaving Lafayette, we took a drive out to the Tippecanoe Battlefield. This was the place where Gen. William Henry Harrison defeated Tecumseh's Indian Confederacy. They had an interesting museum that gave a great explanation of the pre and post war conditions, which were the prelude to the War of 1812.

We had one of those tough days today, we made 58 miles. We found a site at Raccoon Lake. It is a gorgeous park, manicured to perfection along the roads. The sites, for the most part, were all under gigantic shade trees.

After setting up in a rain, we went about the countryside in the car, in search of covered bridges. Rockville, IN is the covered bridge capital of the world! They have 42 covered bridges still in use or retired. One can see them on a 30-40 mile jaunt through the back roads of Indiana. It is like stepping back in time. Settlements with a city name, have maybe a general store and a garage, which constitutes downtown! Fields of corn and potatoes dominated our field of vision, and the recent rain converted mediocrity into a myriad of smells and sights to behold. *

Friday the 25th of June 99 Traveling around this country, with its inherent beauty, rolling farmlands, with the crops just testing our world, stately oak trees standing over a hundred feet high, with houses taking up residence beneath their outstretched arms, lovely lakes and parks, should be enough, you would think.

However one wonders if there is really anything to do here. Fear not. Today's travels took us to the home and museum of Ernie Pyle. This was a very poignant experience, and it was done very well. Then to Turkey Run State Park for a look. Then a trip out to the historic town of Mansfield. It is noted for having a waterwheel flour mill, circa 1880's.

The backcountry of Indiana thrives on Festivals. Last week was the Bluegrass Festival, next week the Gospel Festival, the Mushroom Festival, the Covered Bridge Festival, the Maple Fair Festival, and more. Tomorrow we will head the rig to the Land Between the Lakes area. *

Saturday the 26th of June 99 We had an almost 300 mile day today. By now, this seems like the equivalent of going around the world. Traversing mile after mile of trees and farmland, we arrived at Henderson, Kentucky. Here they have the James

Audubon Park and museum. We had lunch amid an empty parking lot!

The afternoon consisted of rain cell after rain cell, while a storm front moved east. We camped right on the edge of Kentucky Lake. We had some heavy evening rains. We are planning to stay a couple of nights here, and browse the area.

Sunday the 27th of June 99 The morning waxed beautiful, with the chirping of birds and cool wafts of breeze. We plan to tour the Land Between the Lakes. Kentucky Lake dam was an imposing structure. Everyone here has a boat of some sort.

Next we went to the Elk and Bison Prairie. This is a reserve that contains herds of each, all to be seen from the safe interior of your automobile. We went around the 4-mile road, twice, and only saw one elk, away off under trees.

The highlight of the day, was an accidental finding of a restaurant in Grand Rivers, KY. We decided to go into Patti's 1880 Settlement. The food was delicious, and the setting was a beautiful garden. The restaurant has received acclaims as the best small restaurant in a small town. I would recommend that if you are in the area, you try it. Just before dark, a big storm generated thunder and lightening, with lots of rain. *

Monday the 28th of June 99 We left this morning as Old Sol peeked through the lingering clouds. We made a stop in Perris TN and had lunch with a friend of Bonnie's, who she had not seen for 47 years!

When we left, we ran into a little spit of rain on the windshield, which turned into such a torrent of rain, that we thought we were in Noah's Ark. Us poor California people have never witnessed such a downpour, for such a long period of time!

It was so much, that we had to pull over into an abandoned station. The thunder and lightening spoke with authority, every few seconds. One lightning strike was so close that the

motorhome shuddered. Several times when we were on the road, when the thunder clapped, it felt like the rear wheels ran over something in the road. We were one with the rain, even when we parked at an RV park in Nashville. We have probably seen more rain in the last few days, than Redlands gets in a year!

Tuesday the 29th of June 99 We spent the day getting lost in the madhouse called Nashville. I don't know if it is the city or whether it's us old folks! We try to avoid big cities, like the plague! We did spend the evening visiting Bonnie's long time friends.

Wednesday the 30th of June, 99 Arriving at the location where the Hyde reunion will take place, we set up in a most beautiful spot, under the pine trees and other type local trees, with a view out the window of lush green fields and forest. We even lucked out and were able to aim the satellite between the trees! The place is over 18 acres and we are all by ourselves.

Saturday the 3rd of July, 99 The big day has arrived. We leave to go see the polar bears! I suppose that now we are able to exercise hindsight after the trip, we probably should have stayed home.

Our first inkling, was Northwest Airlines, who announced when we were on the take-off line that they had re-calculated and we were too heavy, and we had to return to the gate. Just before we went to the gate, we suddenly became lighter and they gave permission to take off. Subsequently, after take-off, the attendant announced that the peanuts and pretzels were left at the terminal!

We had an overnight at a hotel near the airport. When we arrived, it was under construction in the lobby and a wedding monopolized the restaurant, so we ended up eating at the bar on makeshift tables.

Entertaining ourselves, for the day, by a city tour and a paddleboat river trip, we found out that the water was too high and the boat couldn't make it under the bridges. The route was then taken in the opposite direction. The only problem was that there was nothing to see in that direction!

Finally in the middle of the night, we boarded the train and selected our chair car seats. Having not ridden many trains, I soon discovered that no matter how one turns, to get some sleep, there is never quite enough room unless your body is twisted into an unhealthy position. This situation existed for two nights and a day.

Arriving at Churchill, we were met by the Tour Company, but not the company that had the bear tours. We took the city tour that we apparently paid for, now remember that the city has currently 750 residents, and this was a 4-hour tour! The guide arranged for us to get on the tundra buggy at 1:00.

The buggy was stashed about 12 miles away, at the end of a road from Hell! Our schoolbus must have had no springs to accompany no roads. We were in the air about half the time and close to hospitalization the remainder of the time. We ended up at the tundra buggy, which was so big that we walked up a high platform to board it.

Anticipating lift-off, as the tires were about 4 ft. wide and 7 ft. tall, this 4 wheel drive machine waddled, and I do mean waddled, to points unknown, to see all the polar bears. To make a long story short, It turned into a bird watching trip, without a clue as to what a polar bear was.

While we were waddling with the buggy, the bus that picked up a group that had been whale watching, saw a polar bear that even came over to the bus! We resigned ourselves to looking at pictures of the bears.

The return trip on the train was better because we upgraded to a sleeper car. It was better but the tracks were so bad that you felt that you were sleeping in a washing machine.

We had to wait at the airport for 6 hrs. before flight time. Bonnie's knee had given out earlier and she was relegated to a wheel chair, all day and on and off the plane. Arriving at Minneapolis, the flight was delayed, and it was also re-routed around some storms. Our 8:30 arrival in Nashville stretched into 1:30 in the morning, driving home until 2:30!

It became a contender for the Vacation from Hell! Tomorrow we will be here for the Hyde reunion in Lewisburg. *

Tuesday the 13th of July 99 After having an enjoyable time at the reunion, meeting all the relatives, we left Lewisburg TN and headed south to Huntsville AL to stay with the Mayes' We also had an enjoyable time there. We were provided tickets to attend the 30th anniversary of the lunar landing. The astronauts who did this feat were there to talk about it. We also went through the NASA Space Museum. One has the sudden realization that all of these guys are now 60+ years old! We are experiencing the typical eastern humidity and fast rainstorms every few days.

You'all gotta hep me now. I been here so long ah'm startin ta talk lak these here folks. Now ah'm fixin to carry Miss Bonnie down yonder ta the stower as soon as she pulls the door to. Heah!

Monday the 19th of July 99 We left Huntsville AL and headed North towards Ohio. Our route took us by the Saturn auto factory. Let me put this in perspective. On our return from the invisible polar bears trip, I called the factory for a tour, and was told that the last tour for two weeks had just gone. They were shutting down the plant for 2 weeks vacation. Oh well! Now that we rerouted our trail and could go there, we went in to reserve a seat and were told, "Yes we are open, but we are starting up the line today and will not be having any tours today!" In frustration we found a RV park close by and stayed the night.

Tuesday the 20th of July 99

We had made a reservation and we took a very interesting tour of the facility. The guide told us they had only three more days of plant tours this month because they had to prepare for a 60,000-person homecoming event just down the road.

Leaving the car plant we discovered an antebellum mansion named Rippavilla, which was open for touring. There was a lot of history there, and the house and furnishings were restored beautifully. Rappivilla is deeply embedded in Southern history. During the Civil War, troops of both armies camped here and fought the battle of Spring Hill on the plantation. Both Union and Confederate generals used Rippavilla as their headquarters. It was a good stop. Needless to say, these diversions provided us with another tough 125-mile day. The roads today wound through the wooded hills of Tennessee. The area has clear meadow areas where there are large horse ranches with white criss-cross fences contrasting with the green grassy roadside. It was strictly a picture book for the eyes.

Thunderheads were the order of the day, and the sky was glorious, and as long as you stay in the air-conditioned vehicle, you are OK. Step out and you are humid rotten meat! *

Wednesday the 21st of July 99 The road from Spring Hill north to Bardstown KY was certainly an interesting drive. The highway for the most part was exactly like the roads in Mexico, without potholes. Small farms dotted the countryside, many of them were growing tobacco. The road wound through minuscule towns and gave a roller coaster ride, for no extra charge.

Kentucky has many State Parks, and a lot of them have 30 amp electric and water. We chose to stay at My Old Kentucky Home State Park. There was a musical playing in town, about the life of Stephen Foster, and of course was called the Stephen Foster Musical. We had booked tickets earlier in the day by phone.

Arriving at the park we were delighted to discover that the show picked up patrons by bus right from the park front lot.

At the appointed time, 7:00pm we were dutifully standing out in the heat and humidity. As the pickup time passed by without a sign of the bus, I finally got smart and asked someone. He seemed puzzled why the bus hadn't arrived because it was 8:00 pm and the show started at that time. Of course, it turned out, we were on a different time, due to daylight savings time. Getting the directions, we took the car and got there after the first 10 minutes of the show.

The show was held outside under the stars, or I should say under the clouds. The performance was punctuated by thunder and lightning, but luckily, no rain. Looking down the amphitheater at the people, was a rather comical sight. The weather was so hot that everyone was fanning themselves with \$1.00 cardboard fans. It reminded me of a box of bugs moving continuously. The show was 2 1/2 hours long, and was very good. *

Thursday the 22nd of July 99 This morning we stopped and toured the house dedicated to Stephen Foster. It was believed to be where he wrote "My Old Kentucky Home". His cousin owned it and as it finally passed down through the family, it was sold to the State with the proviso that it be dedicated to Stephen Foster, and that it not be sold.

Tonight we are camped in Lexington, KY at the Kentucky Horse Park, State Park, It is a beautiful setting and we are parked beside a tall fir tree, and a clear shot for the satellite tv. In the last few weeks, I must have put a hundred thousand miles on the air conditioner. It really wrings the moisture out of the air. This was a real bad day and we are tired. We went 57 miles today!

This morning we went to Hodgenville, KY, which is the place where Abraham Lincoln was born. We visited that house and also went to the site of the cabin he lived in for 7 1/2 years before moving to Illinois. I don't know about you all. But no one told me that he was born in Kentucky. The ranger told me that Illinois

was capitalizing on it by not saying anything about his birthplace in Kentucky!

We plan on staying here for three days, looking around at the horse farms and such. *

Friday the 23rd of July 99 This morning we took a tour van and visited several horse farms, and had a city tour. We got to pet the colts through the fences. The guide was excellent and we learned much history of Lexington and the horse industry. The day grew increasingly hotter and we were glad we took the morning tour. We have retreated to our air-conditioned cave, away from home!

Saturday the 24th of July 99 This morning we awoke to a night time temperature of 75 degrees! It got hotter from there! We drove into Lexington to visit Thoroughbred Park. There are statues of a horse race and plaques to honor persons important to the genesis of Kentucky Horses and racing.

We then visited Kentucky Horse Park, of which our campground is a part of, and spent the day there. The park is about 1700 acres and has a horse history museum, restaurant, barns and stables and a huge show ring.

The museum has displays and history which are arranged so that a non-horse person can develop a sense of why horses have been important to mankind throughout history. Also interesting items from history, like understanding the "Horse Latitudes". This area of the Atlantic was very rough, and resulted in many deaths of horses while crossing. The number of dead horses thrown overboard, eventually coined the name, Horse Latitudes.

It takes a good half a day to see most of the exhibits *

Sunday the 25th of July 99 Full of new knowledge about horses, we left the Horse Farm Park and proceeded North to Ohio. We passed by many farms and saw only a lot of cows! The farms in this area are smaller and more of them. The towns in this area are smaller and more of them. The people are regular size!

Driving through an area where there were a lot of antique stores, we passed one that had a sign that said, “Antiques made while you wait.”

We are in a State Park, named Dillon, between Zanesville and Dresden Ohio. The park has electric power and is beautiful, and as usual on this trip, is less than half full!

Tomorrow I will commence to research the family, which was a main reason to come to Ohio

Wednesday the 28th of July 99 Today we finished up our research on the family. We spent the last two days in and out of the Zanesville Library, researching Birth dates and obituaries and marriages. Very time consuming.

We also spent time in Dresden where the family lived. No one from our family is alive there. Today we even walked the cemetery looking for certain gravesites, and accompanied by lightning and thunder and large sporadic raindrops!

We are still in Dillon Park.

A trip down the backroads through small villages is a trip back in time. People actually live here without a supermarket and maybe not even a gas station! The highway still runs through the center of town. The twentieth century traffic still has to cope with nineteenth century towns. No storage lanes for left turns! No wide shoulder for passing a left turner, just wait!

Zanesville has the only bridge over a river, with a “Y” to go different directions. It is the only bridge you can get on and get off of and still be on the same side of the river

I may have learned this in geography class, and have forgotten it. Ohio had a canal that ran from Cleveland on Lake Erie, all the way south through Dresden and then down to the Ohio River. We saw the remains of a few locks on the canal in Dresden. *

Thursday the 29th of July 99 We left Dillon Park this morning and journeyed about 15 miles towards Dresden, to a large basket factory. I had never heard of Longaberger baskets until this day. This factory tour has to rate right up there with the Saturn car tour. Imagine two buildings of 880,000 sq./ft, yes, I said 880,000 sq./ft each. Add in 1900 employees, most of them making or weaving baskets of all sizes and shapes. They all work piecework and make good money. Husband and wife can work together, baby-sitting or childcare is available and a doctor is in the plant for free appointments, and health care, every day.

The tour is self guided, in fact the walk down and back on the carpeted observation deck, is a half a mile! Each building!

Then throw in a huge gift shop and several restaurants, all of Walt Disney quality, historical data and tours, a complete non-smoking facility everywhere, and you have a world class operation.

The employees make 40,000 baskets a day, about as much as the company sells. They only sell through consultants like the Tupperware sales process. It is fascinating to see how these baskets are woven and processed all the way to shipping.

Tonight we will stay a few days in a Coast to Coast Park near Bellefontane, OH *

Friday the 30th of July 99 We are staying about a mile out of Bellefontaine Ohio, at a rustic Coast to Coast park, which is about $\frac{3}{4}$ empty, as usual. I guess that Bellefontaine is not a tourist attraction, and the locals don't travel anywhere, so all the RV parks are like that. In fact the woman who works in this park has never been farther west than Indiana! Bellefontaine used to be a small town, but now there are 12,000 people here.

I don't know what direction the town is going, but after asking 4 different people where the Post Office was, no one knew! In fact driving through town I spotted the Fifth Third Bank. Go Figure!

Watching the news tonight we find that we have the privilege of being here on the hottest July 30th ever recorded, 100 degrees. I passed by the hospital where I was born. I think Marti was born there too. We are going to find the Salvation Army Hospital for Nancy.

Honda Car Plant is outside Bellefontaine a ways and has contributed to its growth. *

Saturday the 31st of July 99 Today is supposed to be hotter than yesterday! We left early to go the 12 miles to Indian Lake, and then to Orchard island, where the house I remember, was gone.

I found out that Indian Lake was not originally dammed for recreation or drinking water, but was a buffer water supply to keep the Ohio Canal at its four-foot depth constantly, for barge traffic. The once empty shoreline is graced with wall to wall houses with front yard docks and swimming areas.

Houses like the old cottage have been razed to build new ones. Having no luck finding the house or anyone I knew, we headed back to Bellefontaine. The old adage is right, you can't go home.

Bellefontaine has three exciting attributes. It is the site of the first concrete road in America in 1861, and it is the site of the world's shortest street, twenty-nine feet! And last but not least, it has a hill that is the highest point in Ohio, 1549 feet. How about that!

The elevation of our home in Redlands is 2000 feet!

Last night, around 7:00, we began hearing a faint thundering sound. It was not long before the rain started, and the lightning, and the claps of thunder. The rain was torrential, the lightning

was blinding and intense, and the thunder vibrated the very frame of the motorhome. The wind bent the very soul of every tree. The news had tornado warnings for Dresden and area. (We had just left the area). It left us as quickly as it started. It was traveling at 30 mph.

*

Monday the 2nd of August 99 After the storm Saturday, the weather cleared up and was noticeably cooler. We slept the first night in a long time, without the air conditioner running.

This morning we fled Bellefontaine, the place of my birth, now relegated to a line on our map with a circle.

We have driven through more miles of corn and soybeans. Some are showing the ravages of drought, at the peak of their water need.

Something that registers, after miles of freeway driving, across the flat Midwest countryside. Where do they get all the fill dirt to form the approaches to overcrossings? This question occupied our minds until we discovered the answer. In our area, there is always a hill or mountain to excavate for fill. In this area and throughout the flat Midwest, they excavate an area close to the bridge and when they are finished they make a small lake out of the excavation.

Sometimes the lake is on private property, and sometimes on state property, made into a picnic area. There is a lake for every freeway overcrossing and access ramps.

Closer to towns, they sometimes use the lake as a decorative centerpiece in landscaping a business center. We are spending the night in Lafayette IN, and point to St. Louis tomorrow.

Tuesday the 3rd of August 99 Gliding down the narrow backroads of Indiana and Illinois is a peaceful process that puts your mind at ease. When you see a covered bridge sign your mind springs to action. A right turn off the highway is immediately discovered to be a narrow single lane road and no turnarounds! Proceeding

carefully we come upon a low bridge arch that says 10ft. 6 in. max. height. Being that we were 10 ft. 11 in. high we proceeded to go through the tunnel. With Bonnie watching, and by keeping to the left side, the satellite and the ladder missed by 2 inches! Of course we had to come back that way again. We were old hands at this and we breezed right through.

We had decided to stay by the river at a RV park owned by the Casino Queen. This is a new gambling paddlewheel riverboat that now is tied up permanently, instead of having to sail for a few hours by state law. It was close to the two families we will visit.

One of the prime considerations when traveling is being able to decipher what they mean by their road signs! Around St. Louis and vicinity, freeways abound everywhere, but are hard to navigate when one does not live here. It took us 4 tries to the RV Park and several tries the next night.

When we related the ghettos and bad areas we were lost in, both Marie and Dave figured that we were very lucky not to have been assaulted or even killed!

The three or four days we spent in St. Louis and area were interesting. The Arch, the Union Station, the Historic District, the Cahokia Mounds. The Mounds are the remains of a sophisticated Indian culture that existed from 700-1400 AD. It was the largest city north of Mexico.

We had wonderful visits with both families we came to see, and tomorrow we set sail for Kansas City, MO. *

Sunday the 8th of August 99 It feels strange to be on the road again, after visiting all our wonderful friends here. Once again we cruise along flat, table country. Well, maybe they call it rolling hills, but out west they are driveway entrances!

We suddenly find ourselves longing for a mountain fix! A tall mountain, a beautiful mountain would do. Like an ice cream cone,

dipped in crème de pines and topped with clouds, and sprinkled with leaves, the sight of such splendor would run down our chins.

I guess we are preparing ourselves for Iowa and Nebraska lands, where even a water tower or silo, is better than nothing!

Wednesday, the 11th of August 99 The last several days being non-remarkable, we find ourselves at Grand Island, Nebraska. We drove in a big time storm today and there is a tornado warning, maybe. If so, the owners of the KOA drive through the park and blow their horn and even knock on doors! The shelter is the concrete block office. There has been not much to write about except corn, corn, and soybeans.

We did find out that in Nebraska the wind stopped blowing one day and everyone fell over! We might avail ourselves of the Pioneer Museum tomorrow.

Thursday the 12th of August 99 We had never heard of The Pioneer Museum in Minden NE, in fact, we had never even heard of Minden! Here, they have a museum of the past that is on par with the House on the Rock and other fine collections on view.

The founder, Harold Warp, made his money in plastics and this was his hobby. He has over 300 antique cars, a lot of antique farm machinery, airplanes, buggies, living rooms and kitchens furnished with décor of the times, from 1830 to 1950. Each in its own display room. Many old time buildings, such as his school building, he bought and moved to the museum grounds. It takes more than a day to see this attraction.

There were also shops recreated for the crafts of the old days. Dentists, stores, doctors office, pharmacy, etc. It is really an experience to see all of this.

Friday the 13th of August 99 This day has really lived up to its reputation. Traveling along IS 80, in the middle of nowhere, we were about to turn into a rest stop, when blam!, a front tire blew

and we coasted flapping into the stop! It even had a phone with which to contact our only thread to civilization, our roadside service insurance. I have it because I am an “old guy” and changing a truck tire is tough, especially with no tools.

Would you believe that the guy who came from far away to do the job was older than me! We managed to reach Cheyenne and find a RV Park.

Saturday the 14th of August 99 Why does everything happen on Friday, Sat or Sun? Everybody here is closed on weekends.

Resigning ourselves to a stay until Monday, we took a tour of Cheyenne on a trolley bus. We found out a lot of information we would have just passed by had we not been on the tour. Things like, that the Air Force Base, H.E. Warren is the only AFB that does not have a landing field! To reach it you have to land at the city airport and take a bus or car to the base itself.

We finished up the day at a movie, Runaway Bride, and a dinner at the Red Lobster. *

Sunday the 15th of August 99 Since we have driven around 9,000 miles so far, we took a busman’s holiday to drive 278 miles in the car. It was told to us that when Cheyenne was established, there were only 12 trees in town. The residents have planted every tree that exists today.

Driving to the Snowy Mountains, we passed over miles and miles of prairie land without a tree in sight. The scenic route that we took rose to an elevation of 10,000 ft. From the prairie, we rose to the trees, they were all lodgepole pines. Nary a limb, knot, or a woodpecker hole graced the trees to 60 ft. high. If all goes well we will head west again tomorrow.

Monday the 16th of August 99 Arrived early at the tire shop and had to wait until 10:00. Then when the new tires were mounted, and they had it on the front-end rack, they discovered that a coil

spring air bag on the front had ruptured, and that caused the unusual tire wear and hence the blowout. Well about a thousand bucks later we decided to flee Cheyenne and make it to Rawlings.

Tuesday the 17th of August 99 Driving west on 80 at 7,000 ft., is not a real experience. We have never driven so far, and seen nothing at all. Bare, lightly vegetated land that stretches for miles. Not a tree in sight

There is plenty of time to reflect, however, on the differences between them and us! Back home, the papers and the television, blast us every day with killings, rapes, robberies, etc. We always wish that they would print good things. Well, let me tell you, that good things stink! Up here, the total lack of anything happening requires all the good things be told. Mrs. Jones dinner party, every sport contest, weather reports by the hour, kids cartoon programs, old sitcoms, you name the good stuff. It is so boring, we don't even watch TV.

In the short space of 100 miles we are transported to the beautiful quiet mountains. Here at the Gros Ventre campground, in Grand Teton Park, the evening is deliciously cool and the only sounds are the sounds of nature. This makes up for the trials and tribulations of yesterdays.

Changing plans for the hundredth time, we thought we would go to Yellowstone Park tomorrow. The tourist season must be over, this campground is only about a third full. *

Wednesday the 18th of August 99 The road to the South entrance to Yellowstone winds through the valleys and follows the rivers. When you enter the park, one must pay \$20.00. The Golden Age pass really saves money now.

Driving through the park, the sight one beholds, is of millions of trees, bare and dead, standing in mute testimony to the fierceness of the disastrous forest fire in 1988. At their feet are

tiny trees that will grow to replace the dead. We have been to Yellowstone many times and we are just using the road through to reach West Yellowstone.

Here we saw “Yellowstone” at the IMAX Theater, and took in the Grizzly Discovery Center. This exhibit features 8 grizzlies and also 11 wolves. All are on display in a natural habitat that allows pictures to be taken from a platform without wire fencing in the way.

A few short miles brought us to Ennis, and to the home of Don Mittica, a friend of ours. Camping in his rather large front yard was made easy with water, and electricity. After dinner we all set out, in swings and chairs, on the bank at the rear of his house, overlooking the Madison River.

At first glance it's a river. Then things begin to happen, a small deer crosses the river to feed on a spit of land, a large gray owl settled into a tree next to the river. An otter rolled around on the bank and proceeded into the river. Then the first deer to cross saw its mother and another fawn crossing the river and jumped in the river and swam out to meet them.

The sun sets gracefully, and the evening temperature begins to fall. The stars burst forth with intensity never seen by us city folks. This is truly the Land of the Big Sky.

Saturday the 21st of August 99 This morning we are leaving the Land of the Big Sky, going west to Portland. The last two days visiting Don Mittica and his friends from Pennsylvania, we toured the area, going to Bozeman CO and to the University of Montana Museum and Planetarium. Returning home in his friends' van, two deer jumped out and ran across the road. We hit one, causing a big dent in his door. The deer fell down and got up and ran away.

Last evening we saw a magnificent Bald Eagle, and a beautiful Heron standing in the river.

We finished off the visit by seeing the new movie Star Wars, this being a town of 660 people, and charging \$3.00 admission! The mother sets at the entrance and takes cash and there is no tickets or ushers. She knows everybody in town, because this is all there is to do here!

Yesterday morning as we sat eating breakfast, the rig began shaking big time, we were having an earthquake! Later we found out it was a 5.3 magnitude and the epicenter was about 30 miles from us. No damage in this sparsely populated area.

Today we left Interstate 90, and proceeded down State Hwy. 12. After a few miles we encountered a sign that had a snakelike line for the road and it said sharp curves for the next 77 miles. They were right! We dropped from over 5,000 ft elevation to 500 ft in that 77 miles, all the while driving beside the Clearwater River.

It was the most gorgeous drive that we accidentally came across on the whole trip. It was all through the Clearwater National Forest, so the trees were untouched and still magical to adorn the steep hills and rock outcroppings. We are spending the night at the town of Kamiah ID at the Lewis & Clark Resort. *

Sunday the 22nd of August 99 The scenery has changed again. The road snakes through the wheat farms, and the harvest is going on. Huge machines larger than the semi trucks thrash the wheat and store it in its belly, only to disgorge it at the end of the row into the trucks. This year the drought affected the crop yield to produce only 15 bushels per acre, instead of 45 bushels in a good year!

The Walla Walla onion season is over. We got one of the last bags to take home with us.

The Clearwater River joins with the Snake River, and then the Snake joins the Columbia River, which flows, tirelessly into the arms of the Pacific Ocean. The road, of course, follows the same, just like a little puppy.

The night was spent at a park called the Western Horizons RV Resort. It was out of a small town called Mosier WA. In fact it was up on a mountain about 4 miles from a paved road. When we got there, we could see the Columbia River Gorge, Mount Hood and Mount Adams. It was so quiet in the wilderness.

Monday the 23rd of August 99 We continued down the Columbia River road in the morning. The sights to see are varied. Bonneville Dam, the Locks, The Dalles, John Day Dam, Multnomah Falls, and the ever-widening Columbia.

A brief stop at the factory, to have our tow bar inspected, and then off to shop for food and gas. Found both at Costco!

We stayed the night at Long Beach, in Washington, so we could eat dinner at our favorite restaurant, which was closed! We found another one and made it our favorite, The Crab Pot. The wind is blowing here and it was about 59 deg at sunset. The Long Beach Kite Festival was just over yesterday. We missed it by one day! We stayed at the same park that we stopped at on the way North, four months ago, The Pacific Holiday Coast to Coast Park. They are now asking for a dollar a night for utilities in addition to the six-dollar fee to camp.

Tuesday the 24th of August 99 Today we will drive to Brookings OR., to stay with the Swarners. There was nothing remarkable about todays drive except the marvelous weather, 70 deg.! We could read and hear about the 106 degree weather at home and are in no hurry to experience it.

Wednesday the 25th of August 99 Arriving back at the busy town of Brookings, we find that we missed the Slug Races by three days! This event is secondary to the sheriff chasing a wild turkey out of town, in a previous letter!

We will stay here until Sunday and will then start the trek home. This will be the last e-mail sent, because we will be backtracking over territory previously written about.

Thank all of you for being so patient and maybe reading all of this.