

2004 Travel Summary

Tuesday 11 May 2004

Just a quick update to let you know we are back at Quad D for a while. Unfortunately, my address book crashed so some of these may not go to the correct URL. If you receive, please verify and send along your address and other particulars.

We went to Bend, OR to have a chair lift installed in the motorhome. Although I can usually get up the steps, there is great difficulty and a few times I have just not had the strength; so the chair lift is a great help for us to continue the RV life style for a while. We also had some other improvements, e.g., some more cabinets, done while there.

In our normal manner, we took a couple of weeks to get home, mostly via Washington and Idaho. Went to the Grand Coulee Dam, the largest hydro-electric facility in North America (and once the largest in the world, still probably the largest concrete structure). Unlike hydro-electric facilities near us, the reservoir has not silted up and the river is at expected capacity; therefore, the plant runs at reasonable levels (not the 15% or less of capacity at Hoover). Tried to see the Shoshone Falls at Twin Falls ID, but the drought and irrigation means no water over the falls, even in spring time. The area is nice and there are good river canyon views, as well as fossils.

Other than a major wind storm causing visibility due to dust to be less than 10 feet (3 meters) when stopped, we had very pleasant driving conditions along an number of 2-lane state and US highways in the motorhome.

Donna will take her mother Wanda on a trip in June, so I get to cat-sit at Quad D during that time. Donna really expects me to get a lot of work done!!! We are expecting some visitors in July and August, then we will take a trip in the motorhome back East during the fall. Harvard MDA thinks they have found the mutant gene, so I am going there to more fully investigate what they have found. We will also make the rounds with my brothers and sisters.

Tuesday 1 June 2004

We had (for us) an unusual Memorial Day, we actually went to a celebration. One of the local (quasi) ghost towns (Gold Point, NV) put on a show. We "dry-camped" in the motorhome, which was a first but worked out fine. The weather was great, the first night we almost had to start the heaters, although by Sunday afternoon we put on the air conditioner. I activated the satellite, so we taped then watched both basketball games (OK, so we really do not "rough-it" too much).

There was excellent food and lots of characters (some in costume, some not) and we heard some live music from some NV bands. There was a very touching flag ceremony, lots of raffle prizes (Donna won two t-shirts, a bottle of wine, and a bottle of Sloe Gin), and chances to meet other people from the vicinity. There was a "chili cook-off", but we did not spoil our appetite for dinner, tough choice.

For those of you that have not responded to the last couple of e-mails, please let me know if you are getting these???

Attached are some pictures (note, before being called Gold Point, a name chosen to entice investors, the town was Horn Silver, and even that was not the original name). All photographs are by the expert, which is not me!!!





Thanks,

David & the Expert (Donna)

Thursday 26 August 2004

We made the trip to Abilene, Kansas from Quad D in 3 1/2 days of fairly lengthy driving (for us). I-70 from the beginning off I-15 in Utah until just outside Denver is one of the finest highways in the world, both scenery and driving surface. Donna was originally not thrilled about spending a few days in Kansas, but there are a number of sights I wanted to see. She will get her spots later, although just like she originally negatively thought about Ohio, she is now changing her mind about Kansas.

We thought we had started the trip with no problems, but once we turned the radio on, something cropped up. Fortunately, only had to tighten the grounding nut on the amplifier to fix things. Donna is doing most of the work to make connections (I can still help a little), but when we work together things go faster and easier.

We visited the DD Eisenhower home/memorial museum. Quite interesting (of course, since a museum), especially about items from the 50's when DDE was president and we were in grade school. Donna even noted the references to popular TV shows of the era, "I Love Lucy", "Gunsmoke" (she watched TV even then, I did not). Lots of good history of our times, as well as of Ike's years leading to the presidency. We also visited a local museum, mostly local history, but also an excellent museum on "Independent Telephony". Amazing how many companies tried to make phones once Bell's patent expired. Lots of peripheral items, like wire insulators, wire types, exchanges, and the very first phones (some companies really ran the equivalent of tin cans and wires for as long as 4 blocks).

Visited the Cavalry Museum at Ft. Riley, in addition to impressive collection of cavalry items, e.g., insignia, training methods, saddles, there was some art work, i.e., paintings and bronzes. The fort is still active, so almost all the limestone buildings are in use. We found a number of antique stores in Abilene, but mostly window shopping (prices are good, but not our kind of stuff).

Monday 30 August 2004

Please do not respond to this e-mail, as we will be quite busy for a while. We had a blow-out on the passenger side front wheel and then explored some of the Missouri countryside. No (physical) damage to us, but the motorhome will be in for repairs for quite a while. We do not know our plans for the rest of the trip yet, but we will try to go as many places, e.g., Harvard, Duke, as originally scheduled.

Will let you know as soon as we get more details.

Wednesday 15 September 2004

We are now in MA visiting Donna's brother and seeing some sites. The motorhome should be repaired by sometime next spring, insurance has promised to take care of everything (after the deductible). We still plan on getting home in early November or thereabouts.

I have been having some problems with this computer, so if you have not received some e-mails (or gotten duplicates or whatever), just let me know.

We spent last weekend in Newport, RI. I went to a reunion of the DE I was on for a short period of time, other than the captain I did not know anyone, but we had a very good time anyway. We did tour Fort Adams, one of the largest and oldest coastal fortifications in the USA, built between 1824-1857. Although abandoned in 1950, restoration is in progress. The scooter worked very well, even going up and down some slopes.

Newport has a fantastic collection of 19th century mansions. You can tour some of them. Floor space is in the neighborhood of 1-2 acres (40,000+ square feet) per building, along with manicured lawns, etc. Unfortunately, the town has lost a lot of character, used to be a sailing mecca (and Navy town), now just an expensive tourist attraction.

While driving around, we did visit Misquamicut (sp??), RI a beach Donna & I went to when dating. The whole area has changed a lot, many new homes, \$10 for daily beach parking, etc.

We have been seeing some of the western MA countryside, lots of hills and trees. Serendipitously, we found in North Adams the museum for the Hoosac Tunnel. During its 25+ year contraction (25,000 feet or so through mostly granite) a number of engineering items were developed or refined, including one of the first tunnel boring machines (lasted for 10 feet), TNT (improved form on nitro-glycerin), and compressed air jack-hammers. The tunnel is still used by trains today, so you cannot go inside to visit with the ghosts (~200 men died during construction).

Wednesday 29 September 2004

We are now near Hampton Roads VA, visiting museums. We did spend some time in MA visiting Donna's brother and had a very informative visit at the Harvard MDA clinic. They have found the mutation that causes the problem, but there is a lot more work to be done to find a treatment, much less a cure. We also visited Donna's aunt and cousin in NY and her cousins in NJ.

Having never been to Cape May, we drove down the Jersey shore. There is probably not a more developed coast line anywhere, with virtually no views of the ocean or the beach. We did see two lighthouses, but stuck in between dingy towns and dirty (but large and impressive) houses. Not a place we would recommend to visit. On the positive side, we have consumed a lot of good food. First the "grinders" in MA (so much better than what you can get at Subway), then some Italian food in NJ, and finally for Donna, some good seafood (NJ, DE, MD, VA). Donna appears to have learned how to glean crab meat from the legs, she insists she must practice that art whenever possible.

We have found some antique stores, but most are over-priced and do not have many of the things we like. We did find a good one, surprisingly enough, outside of Williamsburg, VA, could not resist an item when the label is "gadget" (actually some sort of RPM sensor), we also found a very old Bosson's Koala Bear wall mask, which we did not have (and have looked for for about 20 years). We were going to Williamsburg, VA but the location is operated like a large amusement park and is very expensive and crowded, so decided to go to the antique store instead.

The Hampton Roads area has a number of interesting museums. We visited the Mariner's Museum, where the turret and engine parts recovered from the wreck of the USS Monitor are being restored, as well as lots of interesting other stuff, e.g., the best old equipment on navigation since Lisbon. We toured the Yorktown battlefield site. We have visited the Norfolk Maritime Naval History museum, which happens to have BB-64, the USS Wisconsin moored along side (we have now visited two of the four Iowa class battleships, like the New Jersey, the Wisconsin is still on inactive reserve). The Portsmouth Shipyard museum has interesting items from the oldest US Navy shipyard and site of the first dry-dock in the Americas, in continuous operation since 1833.

We are modifying the trip some more (i.e., not just since now in the van), because Harvard MDA contacted UK about some additional research that can be conducted regarding some other possible effects of the mutation (turns out the mutation is in a gene to make a very complex protein that has a lot of functions), so we are going to Lexington after the SC visits to let them run some more tests.

Thursday 21 October 2004

We finished off Hampton by visiting the Army logistics museum, lots of trucks, planes, boats, trains used to transport supplies. The neatest thing was the prototype for the Star Wars walker, stood only about 8 feet high and could carry about 500 kilos, but definitely a walker. Saw Ft.

Monroe the largest brick and stone fortress in the USA, but never actively engaged in warfare. Also the prison was used to hold Jefferson Davis after the end of the war. On the way to visit my LPO from the submarine, we did pick up some dry roasted peanuts in the shell, which are very good.

After several enjoyable days, including lots of food and a visit to a local craft museum, we went to Greenville SC for a family reunion with all my brothers and sisters, and some nieces and nephews. With my sister, we took a tour of the BMW auto/SUV assembly plant, a large amount of which is automated. We then visited with my brother before our mutual visit to the Duke MDA clinic. Some more interesting items were discovered and some more possibilities for research. We then headed to UK for some research setup by Harvard, these included a lengthy session in a MRI machine checking brain operation while doing various mental functions.

On the way, we did go by Oak Ridge. Unfortunately a number of the original buildings are either no longer available (more over reaction to terrorist concerns) or being destroyed. Fortunately there is a pretty good museum on the history of the Manhattan Project, the establishment of the Oak Ridge uranium 238 to 235 separation facilities, and life while building and living in the "Secret City". There are exhibits on research into various forms of renewable and nonrenewable energy resources.

We have been judiciously visiting antique stores and flea malls (a new term we recently learned). We found a few books, some gadgets, and even a some Bossons wall masks that we did not have. Donna will be shipping some boxes back home to free up room in the van, just another thing we miss about not having the motorhome.

We visited the Kentucky Horse Park, which has changed since the last time we visited about 17 years ago. Lots of white fences, although in the countryside we see a lot of black fences. Went to a model train museum, mostly Lionel, with some American Flyer and other brands. A very complete collection and included other neat items, e.g., Erector set constructions and other toys from 50-100 years ago. Note, Lionel at one time has made fishing reels, compasses (for the Navy), and other toys than trains.

Wednesday 27 October 2004

We are getting close to the end of our visiting of new locations; from now on we should be visiting friends and relatives at known locations closer to home. We have learned a few lessons recently about traveling in a car, including trying to reserve handicap rooms ahead of time. We are also eating more in chain restaurants while in the Southeast, since local restaurants do not have no-smoking areas. We have concentrated on Outback (always a favorite for dinner, although now we are learning to share one dinner), Hardee's (Carl Junior in the West) have a great Thickburger, and of course DQ (Dairy Queen), especially now that are in TX.

While in KY, we visited the L&N Train museum, a great Lionel and American Flyer toy train museum, and found some more antique/flea malls. Of course, we could not miss the opportunity to visit the Wild Turkey distillery and aging barns and the Bourbon Heritage Center at Heaven Hill. I did learn that Bourbon county of VA eventually became most of central KY; hence, the

name for the uniquely American distilled spirit once called "red licker" and discovered (invented??) by a Baptist preacher. I have become more "edicated" about my favorite liquor, which only enhances the imbibing.

Once back in TN, we visited some more "David" sites, including Ft. Donnellson and Shiloh historic (Civil War) battlefields. We then went to Corinth, MS Civil War heritage center. All 3 locations clearly showed how US Grant became a great general and set up the decisive Union victories in the west. The Shiloh site is very well done. We took part of the Natchez Trace through MS to get to the Mississippi River crossing. Visited the Casey (properly spelled Cayce) Jones museum, to see more of the true story behind the legend (and the song). Some really beautiful hiways through MS, good surfaces, little traffic, no billboards, lots of swamp/forest. We had some rain on a few days, but did not interfere with traveling.

We traveled back roads (still state or US highways) through LA and east TX. First time ever driven through the area between the Sabine and Trinity Rivers. Did go through Leesville, LA where started 4th grade, but did not recognize anything (although the forest and swamps do not appear to have changed much). The weather turned hot and humid (i.e., both in 80's which makes a heat index much higher than we are used to), so did not stop to do much in that area of LA; Donna did not even want Cajun seafood (if that meant going out from air conditioning).

We did sent home a few boxes to help clear out the van, amazing how many books one can collect at various locations, along with other gadgets and gewgaws. Should leave a little room for our normal TX shopping locations.