

2000

January 3 and we are on our way to Wilderness Lakes where we made the final preparations to pick up our new rig. I drove up to see Mama on the 4th and when I got home, we picked up Roy's Mom and met with Uncle Jack and Maxine for dinner. The next day, we stopped in at C&D RV to take a quick peek at our new girl. It's a good thing, as our salesman had been off and they didn't appear to be aware that we were to pick it up in two days. She was there, however they hadn't even started going through the check out process to make sure everything was working properly. After several frustrating moments, they agreed to do their best to get her ready for Friday delivery. We left C&D feeling a little apprehensive. Apparently Al, our salesperson, had not let anyone know that we would be picking up the rig on Friday. Jess, Karin, and Eric had us over for dinner that night. Since Karin works, they had ordered Chinese take out. It was quite good and we enjoyed our visit with them. Thursday was spent getting the last minute stuff into bags and boxes, and ready to offload.

MOVING DAY

We were up bright and early, neither of us getting much sleep, but ready to hit the road for the last drive in our girl Holly. They had told us to be down there by eight, even tho our 'walk through' was not scheduled until eleven. In looking back, I think it was a good thing. To kill time, and celebrate, we had breakfast at the "Good Egg". Little did we know we would need all of the energy we could muster up for **the move**.

After breakfast and finishing up the paper work, we finally were given the 'walk through'. After that, they parked Holly beside Monica and the move began. Unfortunately, due to their lack of space, they could not get them parked door to door so we had to take everything out of Holly and walk the length of the rig to get into Monica's door. There was no time to put things away so it was a matter of stuffing the bags into the closets, shower, and cupboards. Almost four hours later, Al, our salesperson drove us to the camp ground where they had reserved a site for us. Right . . . another mess up. The camp ground had over booked and they didn't have any sites available with full hook-ups. Luckily he was able to get us into another campground close by. We were up pretty late that night putting stuff away.

RIG WARMING GET-TOGETHER

The next morning, we found a few problems. There was little or no water pressure. When we were able to get water, there was no hot water the washing machine didn't work and we were getting no stereo. They would send over a man on Monday morning to fix them. I was able to get everything put away but ran out of time to get food ordered for Sunday when we are having Jess's family, Jason, Bruce and Teri, Ted and Connie and Phil and Dee over for a rig warming get together. Costco to the rescue. Sunday morning I was at Costco when they opened and was able to get everything we needed. I love that place. We had a very fun time and a great visit with them all.

TO GO OR NOT TO GO

What a frustrating day this one was. The repair guy arrived late which didn't help Roy's attitude. His resolve to the water situation was to remove the regulator. Since they didn't have the part needed for the hot water heater, that could not be fixed. They didn't have the part for the washing machine, so that couldn't be fixed. In the meantime, the driver and his ride back, was waiting to drive us to Yuma. Because we are taking out of state delivery, we were not allowed to drive the rig until we got out of California. The drivers got tired of waiting and left to run errands. By this time, Roy's patience is gone. After talking to the Service Manager, he agreed to make arrangements to have all of our problems repaired when we get to Tucson. They got the drivers back and we were on our way. After we got to Yuma, the driver drove us to a place where we would sign the paperwork stating that we would not be bringing the rig back into California for 90 days. Finely I got to drive our new girl. It was a little scary at first but not as much as I thought it would be.

After spending the night at Yuma Lakes, we headed for Tucson for a week of organizing and getting the work done on Monica.

The RV park in Yuma was top notch, however we really didn't get a chance to enjoy it as we were busy finding new nooks and crannies for our stuff along with getting warranty work done on her. We met with Jim and Sara a couple of times. We had met them at the OCS reunion in San Antonio. They have a lovely home in the hills above Tucson.

The repair people we able to correct many of the problems but not all. The hot water heater still does not heat the water hot enough, however it is much better than it was.

The next stop was Las Crucis, New Mexico. We celebrated my 59th birthday in a quaint restaurant in old town. The day we were leaving, the satellite would not stow. We tried to find the problem for about an hour with no luck. Finally Roy called a RV repair shop in town and they told us to bring it on in. After about three hours of trouble shooting and contacting the satellite dealer, it was determined that we needed to replace the control module. We arranged to have it shipped to a RV repair shop in Hammond, Louisiana which was on our way to Gulfport, Mississippi. Gulfport is about 17 miles west of Biloxi.

We had kind of hurried trip across Texas, as we had lost time getting work done on the Rig. We were able to see Preston and Evelyn, Roy's cousin, on our way through San Antonio. After having the satellite repaired we arrived at the CB Base camp ground in Gulfport for our mini reunion.

MINI OCS RV'ERS REUNION

Our get together with the OCS RV'ers was very nice, other than it being too cold for this California girl. Everyone said this was unusual for the area..... right! There were six rigs at the mini reunion and a couple of the guys drove down just to see everyone. Yesterday was very interesting. One of the guys used to work with the Hurricane Hunters. He arranged for a tour so we had a very nice orientation from a lady Major who was joined later by a very handsome Lt. Col. Because it was raining, we were driven on a bus to one of their WC130, J Model planes, where we were allowed to sit in the pilots seat, kick the tires and ask questions until we were

questioned out. These are the planes that fly into the eye of the hurricanes and gather information to better inform those who need to arrange for evacuations of the public. After the tour we all went over to the base club where we had a small coordinated memorial toast for Geri, Ray's wife, who just passed away three weeks ago. She had a stroke and was rushed to the Parker Hospital. She was later transported back to Las Vegas where her family was. She died there never regaining consciousness. Ray and Geri had planned on being in Gulfport for the reunion. Geri's family had encouraged Ray to make the trip he and Geri had planned, telling him it would be good for him to be with his friends.

The casinos in Biloxi and Gulfport all had fantastic sea food buffets which were to die for. I ate my fill of fresh shrimp, crab legs, oysters, etc. I do not care for buffets, however with all of the sea food, these were great.

BASS MADNESS

After about a week, people started wondering off. We headed for Gautier, (Go shay) Mississippi. We stayed at the Thousand Trails camp ground located on a bayou. Evidence of Hurricanes could be seen here. One inboard was lodged in the trees of a marsh and a three mast sail boat appeared stuck in the shallow water of the bayou. We were pleased to experience the first day of the National Bass Fishing Tournament. What beautiful boats these guys have. While we were watching the activity of boats launching as well as coming in, we saw a set up, similar to a fifth wheel. It backed down the launching ramp into the bayou. Out floated a beautiful boat from the open doors at the rear with engines roaring. On the side of the fifth wheel in huge letters was printed "BASS MADNESS." What a site that was to see.

After two weeks in Gautier, we returned to Gulfport and the CB Base where Gordon and Maxine and Ray still were camping. The weather has warmed up quite a bit. This part of Mississippi is a very pretty part of the country. The beautiful white sand is quite striking against the blue waters of the Gulf. Many trees are draped with Spanish moss which is not a parasite I learned.

On February 24 we left Gulfport and drove to Picayune, Mississippi where we have scheduled some warranty work. While they were working on Monica, we took a long drive through Slidell, Louisiana, and across Lake Pontchartrain which they claim is one of Americas largest brackish lakes. While in New Orleans, we checked out City Park where we will be attending the Mardi Gras rally. We took another route back to Picayune which brought us to the east of the lake where many houses stood on stilts. When we got back to the rig, they had diagnosed the problem with the step and had ordered the part. So, we spent the night in their lot. The next day the part arrived and they got it put in. We are again on our way, this time to City Park in New Orleans.

LET THE PARTY BEGIN!!!!

The next eleven days was non stop fun. Creative World had planned something going on every day. The events started with an orientation party which included cocktails, red beans and rice and king cake. The king cakes usually contain a bean, pea, or a figurine symbolizing the baby Jesus. In 1871 the tradition of choosing the queen of the Mardi Gras was determined by who drew the prize in the cake. It is definitely considered good luck to the person who gets the figure, and that person usually holds the next King's Cake party. The Rex Krewe, chose the festival's symbolic colors, and since 1872 the colors have been used to tint the cake's icing. The colors are purple

(for justice), green (for faith), and gold (for power). Creative World used this tradition to choose the King and Queen of the Mardi Gras for our group. One day we were taken to breakfast at Brennan's and another day to a Jazz Brunch at the Court of Two Sisters. There was a formal Ball Masque tableaux and dinner, where we were treated to all of the pomp and circumstance as the King, the Queen, all of the Maids and Dukes were presented to the audience. This event was put on by the Krewe of Carrollton. Most of the Krewes are social groups who's main objective is to work all year preparing for their Ball Masque and their parade. Some however are political. To be chosen as the King, Queen, one of the Maids or one of the Dukes is a very special honor. There are about 85 Krewes in New Orleans area and about 65 of them put on parades during carnival. We were treated to a night at Pete Fountains night club and truly enjoyed listening to him make his magic on the clarinet. He doesn't talk much during the performance but boy can he play. His group was also very talented. Tours included the Creole plantation of Laura. Even the owners of the plantation had a hard life filled with tragedy and heart ache. The Creole people came to this area from Nova Scotia after being dislodged with no effort to keep families together. I apologize but I can't remember who did the dislodging.. The Creole family who lived in the plantation of Laura had lived there for 200 years apart from the American life-style. From the slave cabins located on the property came the west-African folktales of "Compair Lapin," known in English as the legendary "Br'er Rabbit." The other plantation we visited was a total contrast to Laura's plantation. It was called the Oak Alley Plantation. It was named for the impressive twenty-eight live oak trees in two well-spaced rows, reaching from the original house to the Mississippi River. In 1939 Jacques Telesphore Roman, a wealthy Creole sugar planter, built the present mansion for his bride. One story told by our guide was that the parents would allow their children to ride their horses through the front door, down the hall and out the back door of the mansion. Can you imagine the noise of the galloping horses hooves would create on the hard wood floor? After touring the mansion, which was magnificent, Roy and I shared a mint julep, our very first. We also took a city tour, enjoyed a cruise on the Natchez paddle boat up and down the Mississippi. It is obvious why it is called the muddy Mississippi. One day we were taken to the horse races where we were provided with a nice lunch in our private dining room with an outdoor balcony for unobstructed viewing. We all eagerly poured over the racing forms deciding on which horse would win the next race. It was great fun! Another fun day was our visit to the school of cooking. The chef was so funny he had us all in stitches most of the time. He was a huge man with a huge personality. We all enjoyed his gumbo, jambalaya, Dixie beer and desert. Another tour was to the Blaine Kern's Mardi Gras World where we saw how they made the floats. We all laughed when we saw the bust of Dick Buctus. It had been ordered by one of the Krewes for their float but due to his being fired, it would now not be used. They had a costume dinner dance where we were encouraged to let our hair down and have lots of fun. Most everyone did. Several days, buses were provided to take us to and bring us back from the French Quarter. All and all, it was non stop fun for eleven solid days.

A VISIT TO OUR LEGAL ADDRESS

On March 8, we leave New Orleans and head for Texas where we made a stop at Livingston, TX. where we visited Escapees, our mail forwarding service. We also made a stop in town to pick up our voting registration forms.

MAMA NEEDS ME

We heard from Mama telling me that she will be going in for surgery. Roy and I talked about me flying back, leaving him at Lake Connor, TX but then decided, why not both of us head back, passing on visiting the Thousand Trails Reserves in Texas, we had originally planned to.

OUT IN THE WEST TEXAS TOWN OF EL PASO

We had a nice relaxing trip across Texas, driving a day and resting two nights. The last two days in Texas was in El Paso. We drove to Juarez Mexico one day and took a long walk through the streets just seeing the sights.

FUN IN TOMBSTONE

After El Paso, we spent two days in Tombstone, Arizona. We parked at the RV park in town so we were in walking distance from all of the local sites. We enjoyed seeing a program on the history of Tombstone as well as watching several old cowboys who looked like they had been rode hard and put away wet, act out the saga of the gunfight at the OK corral. Many of the old saloons had live music, which we really enjoyed listening to. After dinner one night, we stopped at one of the saloons where they were playing karaoke. A performer from Nashville called Wolf, along with his entourage, was at the table next to us. We ended up buying his tape and having a picture taken with him.

After two nights dry camping at Quartzsite, we got to Acton. Mama hadn't seen our new girl yet so I picked her up and brought her back to Acton. After us going shopping that afternoon, we took her to dinner and then home.

MAMA GOES UNDER THE KNIFE

On Wednesday, I drove to the hospital where I would be able to be with Mama before and after her surgery. She went through it pretty well except her blood pressure dropped pretty low which concerned me. The next day I went in to see her and was able to take her back to the intermediate care department of the haven. She was doing well enough for us to move her back to her apartment on the 28th.

On the 29th of March, we left Acton for Emerald Cove where we stayed for two weeks. With having the land line for the phone, Roy had plenty of time to catch up with his surfing the net and downloading upgrades, etc. for our computers. All three of our pyramids have survived the high winds, all standing just the way we left them over two months ago. Other than the Palo Verde trees with their brilliant yellow blooms, our desert is quite dry. The cactus blooms are all but gone as well as the other desert flowers such as the desert lily and the brittle brush. The temperatures ran in the high 90's and low 100's so my walking had to get done before 9:00am.

ROY TURNS 66

We celebrated Roy's birthday by going out to dinner and stopping off at the casino after. On April 12, after one last hike up to our pyramids, we broke camp and headed for Admiral Baker Field in San Diego.

Jess and Karin had us over for dinner on Sunday afternoon and we had a very nice visit. We also had Bruce and Teri over for dinner one night and took Jason out on another night. We also stopped in at the Elephant bar where we had a nice visit with Kenny, our best man and met up with Ted and Phil at the Instant Replay. Between all of these visits, I got all of our cloths, etc. ready for our Panama Canal cruise.

On April 17th, we dropped Monica off at C&D so that they could take care of the problems we have with her. We stayed in a hotel near the airport that night and had a nice Mexican dinner in old town. At 4:00am, we got up, loaded up the Tilly and drove her to the car storage place. After a short ride to the airport, we got checked in and had plenty of time to enjoy a cup of coffee before boarding the plane.

OFF TO CELEBRATE OUR 13TH ANNIVERSARY

After a change in planes in Dallas, we arrived in San Juan, Puerto Rico at about 7:00pm and were directly driven to the Sun Princes. Our state room was quite nice with a queen size bed, refrigerator, TV, and best of all, a private patio. Coming from an RV, we felt we had plenty of room but some people who had never been on a cruise before found their quarters a little cramped.

After touring the ship, it was time to go to dinner where we met our table mates. Everyone seemed very friendly and no time was lost learning every ones name and where they came from. When we got back to our room, the bags had been delivered so the rest of the evening was spent putting everything away. Wow, I managed to put everything in the closets, on shelves or in drawers.

THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Our first stop was St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The only tour we were interested in was sold out so we spent a few hours just walking and seeing the sights close to the pier. Roy was able to download email, etc. at a local bar which as nice. I didn't see anything to buy except post cards which I quickly wrote out and mailed.

What is now the Virgin Islands was discovered by Columbus on his second voyage to the new world in 1493. Flags from Spain, France, England, Holland, Denmark and the United States have all flown over these islands. In 1685 the Brandenburg American Company established a slave trading post on St. Thomas. At about the same time, approval was given to the local merchants to conduct open sales of pirate booty. From 1700 to 1750, piracy was on the way out and legitimate trade was on the upswing. Legitimate traders now were replacing the buccaneers on Main Street. By 1800, St. Thomas was the trading center of the West Indies. The governor-general granted freedom to the island's slaves in 1843. This began a decline in the economy which continued on a downhill slide when sail power was taken over by steam power. The Virgin Islands were no longer necessary as stopover points for the sailing vessels. During WW1 the Americans became fearful that Denmark would fall to the Germans, making the Virgin Islands a German base in the Caribbean. In 1917, the U.S. bought the islands for a total of \$25 million in gold. After WW11

eminence returned to the islands due to free port status and the increased availability of air and sea travel. In the late 1950's began it's move to high status as a tourist mecca.

MARTINIQUE

Our next stop was Martinique, one of the Windward Island of the French West Indies. We started the tour in an eight passenger van starting out in Port De France, the capital city. The first stop was at the Balata church which is a mini replica of the Sacred Heart Basilica on Montmartre in Paris. We then began our drive through the rain forest.. One of the stops was at a botanical garden which was quite beautiful. Trying to follow signs in french through a maze of paths however, was a challenge. I almost panicked when the time we were to be back had come and gone and we still had no idea of how to find our way back to the starting point. I truly believe the French get a kick out of frustrating us Americans. We finally made it back to the van, arriving before most of the others. The van portion of the tour concluded with a tour of a Distillerie Depaz, a rum distillery. We were able to see the process from sugar cane to the finished product, even getting a taste at the conclusion of the tour. After that, everyone who had been in vans, loaded onto busses for the remainder of the tour. which took us near Mount Pelee. On August 30, 1902 over 30,000 people in Saint Pierre were killed in when the mountain erupted. Cyparis, a prisoner in an underground dungeon was the only survivor. Even tho he was severely burned he was able to make a living, telling his story and showing his disfiguring scars, which all but covered his body. There was a volcanological museum there which had photos and many household items that had been dug out of the ruins and put on display. As the bus began its trip down the coast towards Port De France, Mount Pelee, which had been cloaked in a cloud cover, became visible. Several passengers pointed this out to the bus driver who pulled over to allow those who wanted, to take a picture. Most took them from inside the bus, but Roy, wanting to get a good shot with the movie camera stepped out the back door and began shooting as he narrated the history of the eruption. The bus driver closed the door and I began yelling at Roy and pounding the window trying to get his attention. You should have seen the look on Roy's face when he turned around, saw the door closed and the bus moving forward. Naturally, many people on the bus, including myself began yelling at the driver to stop. When Roy got back on the bus, I asked him why he didn't realize the bus driver had closed the door. He said he was so busy telling the Mount Pelee eruption story, he didn't hear it. The bus continued down the coast passing through Le Carbet, a fishing village where Columas landed in 1502, Bellefontaine, a fishing village where numerous artists live. The town also boasts a boat shaped house that had been built by a sea captain. Further on we went through Case Pilote, a fishing village, one of the oldest on the island.

GRANADA

Our next port was Granada. This island was discovered by Columbus in 1498 but because of the hostility of the Carib people, was not colonized until 1650 when the French founded St. Georges. The British captured the island in 1762 and recaptured by the French in 1776. Hay, the same year that our Declaration of Independence was signed. In 1783, do to the Treaty of Paris, Grenada was ceded to Great Britain. In 1974, Granada became one of the smallest independent countries in the Western Hemisphere and still remains within the Commonwealth of Nations. In the early 1980's, Grenada became politically unstable. Intervention by the United States and several Caribbean countries resorted order in October, 1983. Granada is continuing its economic base in

tourism and light manufacturing sectors and is known as the Isle of Spice. The harbor is too small for large ships so all of the passengers who wished to go ashore were tendered via the Sun Princes's life boats. Due to it being Good Friday, the town was all but closed up. We decided to just walk around and see what we could see. After running the gauntlet of taxi drivers begging to show us around, we visited one of the few shops that remained open. Continuing on our walk, a very persistent but pleasant young man, began walking with us. We told him several times that we didn't need a tour but he just continued telling us of his country's history and pointed out things like the government building still scarred with bullet holes left by the fighting that occurred in 1983. In the meantime a lady joined us who had been walking alone. Because the city was so deserted, she had become uncomfortable and thought it best to walk with fellow cruise mates. The young man was so knowledgeable of his country and made sure we got back to the harbor, I gave him \$10.00. He immediately said the price was \$10.00 per person. I reminded him that we had never agreed to a tour and certainly never talked price. Trying to hide his disappointment, he flashed a weak smile and thanked us. Can't blame him for trying.

LA GUAIRA, VENEZUELA

Our next to last port before the canal was La Guaira, Venezuela, a busy commercial cargo port located 18 miles from Caracas, the capital of Venezuela. We made a big mistake by not taking a tour of Caracas. La Guaira had been recently ravaged by horrendous rain storms which caused mud slides which devastated the countryside killing hundreds of people. We could see what was left of houses piled at the bottom of the mountains from our patio. We were warned repeatedly by the staff to take care if we ventured into town and to always stay in site of other tourists. I guess due to so many people being left homeless due to the storm, cruise passengers were good picking for purses, wallets, anything they could grab and run off with. We did venture out but were immediately turned off by the site and smell of a dead dog laying on the sidewalk. The rest of the day was spent on the ship enjoying ship's activities. Caracas was founded by Santiago de Leon de Caracas on July 25, 1567. Spanish colonists began arriving soon after. Venezuela is the richest country in Latin America and remains one of the largest oil producers in the world.

CURAQAO

Our last stop before the canal was the island of Curaqao, one of the Lesser Antilles group located 35 miles north of Venezuela. There is no record of its first settlers, possibly the Caiquetios, a band of Indians related to the Arawaks, who settled most of the Caribbean. Anthropologists speculate that the fierce, cannibalistic Caribs had conquered the coast of South America forcing the Caiquetios to paddle for their lives from Venezuela to Curaqao. Colonization did not occur until 1527, when a small troop of treasure-hunting Spaniards arrived. In 1634 the Dutch West India Company, backed by the Dutch Crown, claimed Curaqao. The Dutch have maintained possession of the island fighting off several French and English invasions. In 1915 the Royal Dutch/Shell Company built one of the world's largest refineries to process crude oil from Venezuela. Workers from around the world came to Curaqao representing some 40 nationalities. We started our day with a snorkeling trip. As usual, I forced myself to go out and view the fish as well as a sunken fishing boat. I just can't get used to breathing under water. The boat trip to and from the snorkeling site was very enjoyable. The buildings are so colorful with a definite Dutch influence. Because it was Easter Sunday, the town closed down at noon. As soon as we got off the boat, we high tailed it into town and had enough time to see several blocks. It was very clean

and pretty with all of the brightly painted buildings.

THE CANAL AT LAST

At 6:00am, April 25, after a day at sea, we arrived at the Panama Canal. It was more than I had expected. To actually watch us enter the locks, be lifted up, and move to the next lock, and then the next, and finally sail onto the lake, was quite an experience. What made it more enjoyable was a ship, heading in the same direction as us. I was able to film that ship and more easily see what was actually happening. We were lucky in that we didn't have to leave our room. Everything was quite visible from our patio. It was wonderful. The ships photographers were put ashore prior to entering the locks and took pictures of the passengers from their patios or the decks as we went through the first set of locks. The Sun Princess only had one foot on each side clearance in the locks. We had been raised a total of 85 feet and after leaving the third lock, we entered Lake Gatun, which is 37.8 kilometers long. After crossing the lake, we entered the Gaillard Cut which is 13.7 kilometers long. This is where most of the excavation was required. The cut is currently in the process of being widened. While going through the cut, it began to rain lightly. After getting through the cut, there is one lock that raises the ship up to Miraflores Lake, a small artificial body of water that separates the Pacific locks. At this point the rain began to get quite a bit heavier and continued to build as we traveled through the two Pacific locks. As we left the last lock it had turned into a full blown lightening and thunder show. One hit was probably not more than 100 yards from our patio. You can believe I quickly moved inside the room only venturing out briefly to take a picture of the friendship bridge which separates Central America from South America.

HAPPY 13TH ANNIVERSARY TO US

April, 26, a day at sea, we celebrated our 13th wedding anniversary. Three balloons wishing us a happy anniversary were attached to the wall outside of our door. There was a scrumptious dessert and a congratulations note from Captain Pietro Raiola brought to us after dinner. There was enough of the dessert to share with our table mates.

We had two days at sea after going through the canal, running up the coast of Central America. We were not close enough however to see land. We did see at least a dozen sea turtles a few, dolphins, a shark and lots of interesting sea birds. I think the ship cutting through the air gave a little more lift for the birds as they would soar very near the water surface, for a very long time without flapping their wings. Periodically, they would dive coming up with a small fish. As I watched, I also thought that maybe the school of fish swimming like crazy to get out of the way of the Sun Princess may also attract the birds. Granted, these are just thoughts I had while watching the going ons from our patio. Other than sea and critter watching, there was so much more to do. There were after dinner shows, movies in a proper theater environment, wine tasting parties, painting auctions, lectures, lounge entertainment, Bingo, card tournaments, golf, dancing, the casino and countless other activities. A ships newspaper called the Princess Patter was delivered every night. In it we would find the schedule of activities for the next day, information regarding our next port, interesting information about the ship and its crew and anything else they felt we should know. In the morning over our coffee, we would plan our days schedule. Since we have cruised Princess before, we were invited to the Captains Circle formal cocktail party. Of course there was also the Captains welcoming cocktail party which also was formal. This one

included all passengers. What gala events these were with all of the beautiful gowns and tuxedos, waiters serving drinks and hors d'oeuvres from silver trays with beautiful music in the background. It was just like the movies!

LAND HO

After the second day at sea, we came into the port of Acapulco. Roy was coming down with a cold so we walked into old town in search of a pharmacy. Not like the tourist portion of the city, this area mostly served the locals. We had quite a time trying to explain to the lady behind the counter what we needed. Finally with the help from a local man, she came up with Co-Tylenol. Roy was not feeling up to par so after a brief walk through a marketing area, we headed back to the ship. That night was our last on board and there was lots of good-buys, hugs and slaps on the back during our final dinner. Other than one of the ladies at our table for 10, who was an incessant complainer, we truly enjoyed our table mates.

A TUB, A TUB, MY KINGDOM FOR A TUB

On April 29, we left the Sun Princess and were bussed to the Hyatt Regency. Boy was it busy. Acapulco is one of the most popular vacation spots for the Mexico City crowd. Gringos were probably outnumbered at least ten to one. It was about two hours before they were able to get us into our room. Wall-Mart was only a block and a half away so we walked over there to kill time. We love going through stores in foreign countries. Just walking up and down the isles is so interesting. We finally got our room and the wait was worth it. It was huge with a large patio which looked out over Acapulco harbor which seemed to always be full of boat traffic. Oh happy days, our bathroom HAD A BATH TUB!! You can believe I took a long soak each night before dinner. The next day we took a tour which took us out into the countryside and a brief walk through the Princess Resort (not associated with the Princes Cruise Lines). The Princess Resort is considered as one of the most beautiful and expensive resorts in Acapulco and it was quite lovely. The tour took us past one of Sylvester Stalone's homes. After a stop at a discount jewelry store, he began the climb to the cliffs where we would see the cliff divers. The van began to heat up as it limped its way up through the narrow streets. The driver was determined to get us there and just as we pulled into the parking area, the steam pored out of the engine. He calmly climbed out of the front seat and led us to the patio seating where we would be able to watch the divers. After getting us safely in our seats, he announced that he had already called for a replacement van and it would be waiting for us when the show was over. We saw five divers including the champion and two young men in their teens. The teens were in training and didn't dive from the top of the cliff.

SENIOR FROGS, APPROPRIATE FOR OUR LAST NIGHT IN MEXICO

That night, we took a taxi to a delightful dinner at Senior Frogs. The restaurant is located high above the harbor affording a beautiful view of the high rise hotels, including ours. The rest of the evening, we sat on the patio enjoying the city and harbor lights. Our trip was drawing to an end and I was already looking forward to getting back to San Diego and our Monica. Lurking in the

back of both of minds was, how much had C&D managed to get done in the two weeks.

HAPPY CAMPERS WE WERE NOT!!!!

Because our flight home didn't land until 6:00pm, we had made arrangements to stay in the same hotel we stayed at prior to starting our trip. The next morning Roy called C&D to let them know we would be coming in that morning to pick our girl up. Well, as we both had feared, they were no where near getting done and wanted to keep her for an indefinite period of time. Happy campers, we were not!! They had pulled up over 70 tiles in the kitchen and bathroom and the replacements had been ordered. Roy explained to the guy that they had been told when we needed it back and we were coming in to get her. The Service Manager was reluctant to let her go and it very soon became apparent that he and Roy were at a stand off. After a lot of discussion and seeking alternative solutions to our problem, we made the decision to take her as is, and make an appointment with the factory in Oregon. We are scheduled up there in July.

ROY COMES TO THE RESCUE

We headed for Fiddlers Cove, where we would meet up with our Poinsettia Camping group friends who would be arriving the following day. Early the next morning, Roy said, "Let's go over to Home Depot and see if we can't find a rug to lay over the floor to hide the missing tiles." We really lucked out. For less than \$30.00, we found a runner and backing in a color that blended in quite well with our color scheme. Roy did a fantastic job in putting it down and I can say again, I am a happy camper.

We had a fun time at the camp out and treated everyone to Champaign to celebrate our new rig, before dinner on Friday. We had to miss the Saturday dinner with the group as we had to drive to Riverside for Chris and Jennifer's wedding. That was the first Catholic wedding either of us had attended and in many ways the actual ceremony was quite different. The reception was quite nice. It was nice to see Roy's Mom, brother and sisters. After the reception, we drove back to Fiddlers Cove, arriving in time to visit around the fire pit. Sunday morning, after saying good-bye to our camping friends, we relaxed until around 3:00pm when Bruce and Teri came over for a visit.

A MONTH IN IMPERIAL BEACH

On Monday, we broke camp and took a very short drive to Imperial Beach, where we stayed at the Bernardo Shores RV Park located at the bottom the San Diego Bay. Here, we got a phone connection where Roy had a no limit to accessing to the net. I was able to take my hour walks on the strand bike trail and we were able to take several bike rides in and around Imperial Beach. We enjoyed the dance put on in honor of Mar Vista's 50th anniversary. There were about 400 people there who had graduated from 1951 through 1999. We found two classmates from my class of '59' but I only recognized them because I had seen them at our class 30th and 35th reunions. We also got to see all of the kids except Roy Dean, who was on the road. We also had another nice visit with Bruce and Teri at the Imperial Beach Chili Cook Off & Jazz Festival.

On Monday, May 22, we left the San Diego area and headed north to Lake Elsinore where we

hosted a picnic for Roy's family. When we pulled into the RV park, which was located on the lake, we were shocked. It was over 100 degrees. Luckily, the following day and the day of the picnic, it cooled down considerably. Roy's Mom, Sisters, Brother, Uncle and Aunt all came and we had a very nice visit with them all.

On the 24th, in a light rain, we broke camp and headed up the mountain to Idyllwild. At about 4000 feet, we broke out of the rain and into a beautiful cloudless sky. The Idyllwild Thousand Trails camp ground is wonderful. The only negative is we don't have a sewer connection, in fact only about ten sites do. Most of the camp sites are a little rustic, many snuggled into nooks and crannies of the trees. They do however have water and electric hook ups. We were able to find a site where we got five bars of AT&T cell coverage. Most of the sites had zilch. Roy had no trouble at all getting his email. Mama has been ill and I have had no problems calling her every day. There are short hiking trails in the park and I really got a work out on my walks with all of the hills. Because both Roy and I had put on some weight during the cruise and our San Diego stay, we went on our Dr. Atkins Diet.

While in Idyllwild, I got a lot of walking and Roy and I got in a good bit of hiking. One hike on the Ernie Maxwell Scenic Trail, we really exhausted ourselves and decided a two and a half hike up a grade may be a little much. The hike back down was great and the area was very picturesque but we were pretty well wiped out for the rest of the day.

Mama was admitted into the hospital with pneumonia so I drove down to see her. The hospital was about a two and a half hour drive from Idyllwild. The second day I drove down, Roy accompanied me down to the Los Angeles Fairplex where a huge computer show was taking place. He picked up a combination printer, scanner and fax machine.

On June 7, we left Idyllwild and headed for Acton and the Soledad Canyon Thousand Trails, which is about forty-five minutes from Mama. They released her from the hospital but she will not be able to come to Nevada with us for the reunion. She is very weak and there was not enough time for her to recuperate before we needed to leave.

ANOTHER OSBORNE FAMILY REUNION

After a stop at Topaz Lake, we got to Dad's on June 10. Danny, Haydee and Govi drove over that evening and we all had a nice visit. On the 15th, we drove over to Dan's and began to prepare for the reunion. Jess and family got in on Friday afternoon. Jeff and family got in around 8:00pm and Jason got in around 10:00pm that night. On Saturday we were joined by Daddy, Mom, Kathleen, Vic, Michelle, Uncle Roy and Aunt Jean. Unfortunately we got a call from Forester Haven. Mom had a relapse and was back in the hospital with pneumonia. The next day we had everyone over for Daddy's 81st birthday and to also celebrate Father's Day. It was another good day of lot's of visiting and enjoying everyone. We were able to get hold of Mama so several of the family members were able to wish her well. One night Vic cooked up a batch of rainbow trout and as usual it was so good.

ANOTHER SNAKE ENCOUNTER

On June 22, we left Nevada and headed for Snow Flower near Donner Summit. The Thousand

Trails camp ground is so pretty with lots of trails, a lake and lots of critters to watch. One day on a hike around the lake I heard that rattle sound. A close encounter of the second kind. I yelled to Roy to watch out. He was ahead of me on the trail but hadn't heard the rattle. We both stood frozen in our tracks trying to locate the slithering serpent. There he was, under a bush just off the trail. He was between us and fully coiled. Do I go to Roy or does he come to me? We must have stood there for a minute trying to decide what to do. Finally after checking out the area on the other side of the trail, Roy carefully came back to me. We both were too snaky to hike any further that day. We did hike several more times while at Snow Flower and really enjoyed the beautiful area. Mama was released from the hospital but is still so very weak.

OUR FIRST OOPS!!!!

On June 29, it was off to one of our favorites, Lake of the Springs. In maneuvering around the tight loop to get to our spot, we scraped a rock. It took paint and put a hole on the bottom of one of the cargo doors. Roy was able to patch the hole and put some paint on the scrape so it is hardly noticeable. We didn't do too much the week we were there. I think we were just taking a week off of non-stop running.

After leaving Lake of the Springs, we spent a few days in Redding, California.. One day we drove up to see McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park. To save the Burney Falls, from power developers, Frank and Ethel purchased the falls and the area around them and presented the property to the people of California as a gift, on the condition that the State preserve and care for the land as a park for the use of the public in the memory of his parents, John and Catherine. The falls at 129 feet high were quite beautiful.

After we left the park, we drove to the Lassen Volcanic National Park where we enjoyed a nice lunch prior to driving through the park. It was a beautiful drive, however it became quite cold so we didn't get out of the car very often. Summit Lake was still covered with ice. It was quite a beautiful sight. Lassen Peak, standing at 10457 feet was still covered with snow and quite impressive.

On July 10 we headed for Medford, Oregon. Lucile, Roy's sister drove out to the RV park that night and we had a very nice visit. The next morning she and her daughter Patty picked us up and we drove to a quaint restaurant for breakfast. After breakfast, they drove us back to the RV park. Patty brought us a bag of veggies from her garden. Boy were they good. After our good-by's we were off to Colburg, Oregon where we will get the warrantee work done on the rig.

LESSON LEARNED....THE SQUEAKY WHEEL GET THE GREASE

At 8:00am on the 12th, we arrived at the Monaco service facility and got checked in. We knew that we would be there at least a week. There were 18 items on our list. After our service person documented all of our concerns, they came and got the rig and took it to the repair shop. After that, they would come each morning at about 7:30. We could either wait in the lounge where all of the other people getting their rigs worked on would share their Monaco war stories or we could run errands. We were allowed to go out to the rig in the repair shop between 11:00am and

1:00pm to get things we might need and to speak with the people working on it. Between 5:00 and 6:00pm, they would bring the rig back and park it in our spot in the parking lot. We would then get a briefing from the service rep. There was water and electricity but no sewer at our spot. There were about 15 coaches having work done at the same time. The day they laid the tile, they put us up at the Double Tree Inn. On Monday, while waiting for our replacement satellite system, we drove back down Interstate 5 about 99 miles to the Seven Feathers Casino for a night. We stayed at their RV park and had an excellent dinner at their restaurant. After a week of fighting to get some of the items on our list repaired, butting heads with service people, department heads and even our service rep, we drove out of the Monaco service facility just glad to be on our way. I must say they were probably glad to see us go. It was a very stressful time for both Roy and I as we both hate confrontation and there was plenty of it. It did pay off tho. They eventually agreed to upgrade our television, satellite system, kitchen faucet, VCR, and firmware on the inverter. What's that saying, "the squeaky wheel gets the grease". Hay it worked!

OUR QUEST FOR OUR JEEP

We almost bought a Jeep Cherokee but the law had changed in Oregon due to Washington and California complaining about their people purchasing cars and RV's in Oregon to escape paying sales tax and also to take advantage of their inexpensive registration fees. After talking to the DMV we put buying a car on hold to give us time to do a little more research.

After a stop in Salem where I renewed my drivers license, we headed for the Mount Rainier Thousand Trails RV Park near Packwood, Washington. One day we took a drive up to the Mount Rainier Visitor Center. The 14410 foot peak is just as impressive as it was the last time we visited it. We also drove into Yakima, Washington and ended up buying a 2001 white Jeep Cherokee. The people at the dealership were so very nice. Even the negotiation on price was relatively painless. It's going to be a little sad to say goodbye to Tilly. She has been a good car, never giving us any problems. On Friday, July 28, we drove Tilly down to Yakima and picked up our new Jeep. Our salesman had arranged to have the bracing for the tow bar put on at a local shop and after that was done, it was good by Tilly, thanks for being such a good girl and hello Jeep, hope you treat us as well Tilly did. As we drove back to Packwood, I realized the Jeep was not a girl. We definitely need to come up with a boys name. After a short time, we came up with J.C. for Jeep Cherokee. At the same time, we decided that Monica just did not fit our girl. Hay, why not Windy II. I had always loved that name and she is a Windsor. It was done! When we hooked up to head for Spokane we stood back to look at Windy and J.C. They sure do look nice together.

ROCK CHUCKS?

Our first week near Spokane, we stayed at the Clear Lake FAMCAMP which was about 17 miles west of Spokane. One morning we visited the Spokane River Walk where we saw Canadian Geese and Rock Chucks. They look the same as a Wood Chuck but because they lived in the rocks near the Spokane River, they were called Wood Chucks. The grounds were beautifully landscaped including several sculptures made of various materials. We also took a small sky tram ride above the Spokane Falls. The play ground for the little ones had a huge red wagon that was a slide. It was so cute. We also visited two Indian Casinos. One was across the boarder in Idaho and the other was north east of Spokane. Being used to Las Vegas type casinos, these just

didn't hack it so the visits were short ones. We purchased a new flat monitor for Roy which really makes his office area look nice. We also got me a wireless keyboard and mouse. Boy does that make it easier when it's time to move to our next spot.

GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

After a week at Clear Lake, we moved up to a Thousand Trails RV Park north of Spokane. We were not impressed with this park and decided to head for Kallispell, Montana, south west of Glacier National Park. We had a concern about being able to see Glacier. The forest fires in Montana were getting bigger and bigger and the Governor of Montana was making plans to close down a lot of the forests to visitors. As it turned out, the fires were south east of Kallispell so Glacier National Park was not presently in danger. The camp ground we stayed at is owned and operated by one of my distant cousins that Roy had been communicating with via email. I never got a chance to meet her but Roy did take some genealogy to the office for her which she appreciated. The first day we visited Glacier Park, we took a side trip on a dirt road to Polebridge. Due to forest fires taking out many of the trees in the area, we were able to get a good view of glaciers in the northern part of the park. The fire burned right down to the Polebridge Mercantile. The post office along with it's 36 PO boxes was located inside the Mercantile. Glacier Park was beautiful and very large. We put a lot of miles driving from one point of interest to the next. There were countless trails so we did get some hiking in. The Logan Pass was quite interesting with it's narrow windy road clinging to the side of the mountains. The highlight was the day we took the drive through the park, back out of the park and back into the park through the Many Glacier entrance. Here we took a boat across one of the lakes, disembarked and hiked over land to another lake where we boarded another boat which took us across that lake to a great hiking trail. As we were boarding the second boat two bears were spotted on the side of the mountain. We had the binoculars so we got a glimpse of both, one a black bear and the other a grizzly. Our guide said that sightings in that area were not rare as the area they were spotted in was thick with berry bushes. She said the Rangers called the area the bears picnic ground.

SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES

After leaving northern Montana, we drove to Anaconda and a camp ground we had visited several years before where we had enjoyed an excellent dinner at the resort next door. As we traveled on I90, we saw many areas still burning. Due to the fires the camp ground was almost empty. The smoke was so bad that we lost the satellite signal for the TV. The sun was a orange ball through all of the smoke. That night we had a delightful dinner at the resort and after dinner went into the lounge where we played the poker machines. I got very lucky and before the evening was over, I had hit two royal flushes and one straight flush, winning about \$2000. The casino had to pay off my last jackpot off in five dollar bills. Wouldn't it be nice if I was always that lucky. We had originally planned to drive across Montana and down into Wyoming but decided to get out of the smoke and head down to Salt Lake City traveling through Idaho.

A BIG BOO BOO

Boy did we do a bobo. About fifty miles after we had left Anaconda, a truck pulling a trailer

came up beside us and after getting my attention honking their horn, I saw the lady wildly signaling us to pull over. They pulled in front of us and also parked. The young man came running back to us. Roy had already gotten out and had seen the damage. The wheels on the Jeep had locked in a turning position and the tread in a few spots was down to the steel belt. Thanks to the young man, they had not blown and we were able to get into Idaho Falls. There we found a dealer that had two used ones which he gave us. He called to his shop in Salt Lake City and had them order two new tires for us. An expensive lesson but it could have been much worse.

WHAT IS IT WITH OUR FAMILY?

On August 18, we got into Salt Lake City. Roy spent several days doing research at the Mormon library while I got the house back in order and spent some time catching up with computer stuff. One day I took a bus tour to the casinos in Nevada. I enjoyed the day and met some real nice people who live in Salt Lake City and maybe take the Casino tour once a week. Roy made a find on my line on Daddy's side that confirms a Mayflower connection, John Billington. Unfortunately John was hung about ten years later after being convicted of murder. One of his sons almost blew up the Mayflower by shooting of a pistol near the gun powder. What is it with our family? LOL

ANOTHER TIGHT SQUEEZE IN OUR TRAVELS

Our next stop was Grand Junction. Roy misread the instructions on how to get to the camp ground and we ended up on a road no outlet road. We were able to go through a gas station which was not built for a 40 foot rig and tow to go through. We inched our way through passing many cars with an inch to spare. It would be safe to say we got a lot of peoples attention. We were glad to find our camp ground and get settled. The next day we visited the Colorado National Monument, which is 23,000 acres of rock formations, arched windows, canyons and exposed layers of earth. From several points along the 23 mile rim rock drive there were spectacular views of the Grand Valley and Grand Junction below

AUNT MAE MISSES THE TURN.

The few days in August, we stayed in Golden, CO. We drove into Denver to visit Aunt Mae and took her out to dinner. The next day she drove out to Golden and we took a tour of the Coors Brewery. It was interesting to learn about how beer is made. After the tour, we were treated to samples of the different beers they brew there. After lunch we drove up the mountain to see Buffalo Bills grave. Poor Aunt Mae was so frightened on the drive up. She has a great fear of heights. We then started out to meet with Mae's daughter, her family and a niece for dinner. Mae was to follow us until we got onto the road she was familiar with, then she was to overtake us and we would follow her to the restaurant. We took the turnoff to the freeway she was familiar and we watched in horror as she kept on going. At that instant it began poring buckets. I pulled off the road hoping that she had discovered her mistake and we sat and waited. We had no idea of where the restaurant was so we had no choice but to wait. About 20 minutes later, she drove by honking her horn at us. I was able to finally catch up to her about 10 miles down the road. It was still poring down so hard that the windshield wipers were all but useless. We finally got to the restaurant where we enjoyed a delightful visit with everyone. Golden was not far from Black Hawk, an upcoming casino area. One night we ate at the Isle of Capri casino restaurant. It

was just like the one in Biloxi with a fantastic seafood buffet. The only difference was rather than plates, they had Coors buckets on the tables for the crab leg shells.

GARDEN OF THE GODS

On September 1, we drove down to the Garden of the Gods RV park in Colorado Springs where we spent a month. We got to the park and Roy went to get his wallet so he could check us in. After tearing the rig apart, we realized that it was no where to be found. It must have fallen out at the restaurant, however a call to them was to no avail. Credit cards had to be stopped and reissued, drivers license, military ID, Social Security, and countless other cards all had to be replaced. It took over a month to have most of everything replaced. We had hoped that whoever found it would just take the money and send us the wallet but that was not to be.

The month we were at Garden of the Gods, we did a lot of sight seeing. One day we drove the Jeep up to Pikes Peak which. The elevation is 14,110 feet above sea level. The drive up was a little unnerving as the dirt road was full of hair pin turns with no railing. All you could see was sky. When we got to the top and got out we were hit with very cold winds. We had jackets but not heavy enough to allow us to stay outside for any length of time so we high tailed it to the coffee/gift shop. Boy was my head light. I felt like it was a balloon an a string. About half way down, there was a break check station where everyone had to stop and have their breaks checked. The guy had a meter that measured how hot they were. If you failed, you had to park and wait for them to cool. I had been in 1st and 2nd gear all of the way down so our breaks were fine. Another trip took us to the Royal Gorge Bridge, the worlds highest suspension bridge. We had no idea of all the things they had to see and do there. Not only did we walk over the bridge but also took the Aerial Tram across the gorge, went down the Incline Railway to the canyon floor, and saw a movie on the building of the bridge and why. Seven Falls was another fun day. After climbing up the stairs to the top of the falls, we hiked to the edge of the mountain where there was a spectacular view of Colorado Springs. Garden of the Gods was about a half mile from our camp ground so it afforded me a great place to walk in the morning. It was quite beautiful with deer and other critters. Roy and I also drove through it a few times taking several hikes. We learned by seeing a movie at the visitors center that these formation were formed by the erosion of the first Colorado Mountains and the later upheaval of the second creation of the mountains. During that upheaval, all of the layers of different colored rocks were pushed up creating all of the beautiful formations. Next to the Garden of the Gods was Rock Ledge Ranch Historical Site. This was a living history farm where the volunteers worked the gardens, and raised the live stock They were very knowledgeable about the history of the homestead cabin 1868-1874, the Chambers Farm and Rock Ledge House 1874 - 1900 and the Orchard House 1907 which were all located on the property. There was also a blacksmith that was making all kinds of hardware that was sold in the General Store. We also took a ride up to Cripple Creek, to an old mining town that had converted many of the old buildings to casinos. The drive up was beautiful as the trees were changing colors. In addition to sight seeing, we had several great visits with the Grand kids, Wayne, Sandy and Carolyn. One Sunday we planed on having Michelle, David , the kids, Aunt Mae, her daughter and family and niece and husband over for a BBQ. The night before, we had a snow storm which was beautiful but not conducive to a BBQ. As it turned out, Aunt Mae and the others from Denver canceled so it was just Michelle, David and the kids. We went ahead with the BBQ but ate inside. We gave the kids money so that they could play the games at the park arcade. After dinner the girls got in their heavy coats and made smores. They had a ball.

One evening, we took Michelle up to Cripple Creek with us. She had never been to a casino and wanted to see what it was like.

After our stay at the Garden of the Gods campground, we drove the short distance to the Air Force Academy where the five other OCS RV'ers would be camped. The Official OCS reunion began on October 5 with a reception that night at the Embassy hotel where the rest of the folks were staying. The next morning we awoke to snow on the ground. It was beautiful. That day we took a bus trip with the group up to Cripple Creek. That night we boarded a bus to the Flying W Ranch a western theater/dinner house. After a good steak dinner we enjoyed a western show. In the meantime Mama was having her procedure to determine if the lumps in her breast were cancer or benign. I was not able to talk to her that night as she was sleeping but the ICF nurse said she had come through it ok and was doing fine. On the 7th we all attended the Navy/Air Force football game. Boy was it cold. Air Force won!!!! It was quite fun watching the energy bursting from those young cadets, both on the field and in the stands. When ever there was an Air Force touchdown, a third of them would rush down to the field and do pushups. At about half time the wind increased and we lost about half of our group before the game was over. That night we attend a banquet which was followed by speakers in our group. The next day we took a tour of the Academy which concluded with a church service at the chapel. I was able to get hold of Mama and she sounded pretty good and felt confident that all would be ok. ICF released her to go home on Monday. After stopping off at the hotel to say our good-by's we headed south towards Texas where we hoped to get the rigs inspected and also to get our driver's licenses.

After a night stay in a little town in New Mexico, we drove into Texas and stopped at the first town, Delhart to get the rigs inspected. With both of them being brand new, they didn't even inspect them other than noting their existence, took our money and gave us the inspection tags. Our plan then was to head for Amarillo where we would take the driving tests. We found out however that the Delhart DMV was open so we headed over to see if we could get everything done there. As it turned out we lucked out. Their DMV is only open every other Tuesday and this was the day. I maxed the Class B written test and then the lady examiner took me out for the driving test in Windy. Delhart is a very small town with narrow cobble stone streets. After four successful right hand turns, I hit the curb on the fifth. I thought for sure I had failed but she continued on with the test. After what seemed to be forever, she directed me back to the starting point. After mentioning that I didn't come to a total stop a couple of times and that I had hit the curb, I figured that was it. I was going to have to take it over again, she ended her statement with "you passed". Oh happy day. On the way back into the office I was going to try to look real sad to tease Roy but I couldn't stop the grin on my face. Since Roy does not drive the rig he decided not to go for the class B and was issued a class A. It was a happy drive onto Amarillo, Tx.

We were in Amarillo from the 10th through the 12th. One day we drove to Pampa, TX to meet Aunt Kate for lunch. We had a nice visit but I must say, the Texas panhandle is the most boring drive I can remember.

On October 13, we left Amarillo and headed for Albuquerque, New Mexico where we got a nice spot at the Fam Camp at the Kirkland Air Force Base. Gordy and Maxine from the OCS RV'er group were also camped there. The next day the four of us were up before dawn heading to the Kodak Albuquerque International Balloon Festival where we watched the launching of over 500 balloons. The public is allowed to be on the field walking among the balloons as they are inflated

and finally launched. Along with the many traditional colorful balloon shaped balloons, there were pigs, ice cream cones, a stage coach, dragon, shoe, snoopy and so many others. It was well worth getting up early to see. Albuquerque is excellent for ballooning because of the "box", is a combination of upper and lower level winds created by the Rio Grande Valley and enhanced by the Sandia Mountains. The box enables a balloonist to back track their flight pattern and land close to their launch site. Cool air from the north near the surface will take pilots one direction while higher winds blow in the opposite direction. A pilot needs only to change elevation to fly back along their original course. Some winds patterns allow pilots to dip their gondola in the Rio Grande for a "Splash and Dash"; other patterns will move balloons towards the majestic Sandia Mountains. The next day the four of us took the tram up Sandia Crest which gave a grand view of Albuquerque. We could also see the balloons that had launched that morning. That night we all enjoyed a nice dinner in Old Town.

On November 16 we continued across New Mexico and into Arizona where we stayed two nights. Even tho we had visited the Petrified Forest and the Painted Desert several years ago, we wanted to see them again. We had more time on this visit and took several walks along several trails where petrified logs lay. We didn't realize how much we had missed the first time. There was Newspaper Rocks where we saw Petroglyphs, Puerco Pueblo, the remains of a 100 room pueblo built before 1400, and Agate House, a partially restored pueblo built of petrified wood.. The day was overcast so the Painted Desert was not as colorful as it was the first time we saw it, but beautiful anyway. When I called Mama after her doctors visit she told me no cancer. What a relief for us all. She was so happy and now can start looking forward to going to San Diego with us for Thanksgiving at Jess and Karin's.

On the 18th we got an early start as we wanted to stop off at the Meteor Crater before meeting Betty Sue, one of Roy's cousins for lunch. They had a nice RV parking lot which made it easy. We got there just in time for the first rim tour and with only five people in our group, we were able to hear the guide quite well. We learned that in 1902 Daniel Barringer, a Philadelphia mining engineer, became very interested in the crater, believing that this was an impact crater and not a volcanic crater, which was the belief at the time. If this was an impact crater, surely there must be a huge quantity of iron at the bottom.. What he didn't know was that when the 150 foot meteor hit with an explosive force greater than 20 million tons of TNT, the meteor was mostly reduced to small fragments which were thrown as far as several miles away. There is a piece about two feet long on display in the museum. The impact caused the 700 feet deep and 4000 feet wide hole in the desert floor. All living critters were killed in a five mile radius. Mr. Barringer didn't falter from his belief and continued his search until 1929 when all funds ran out. Although he died later that year, he lived long enough to see his theory of the impact origin of the crater begin to be increasingly accepted by the scientific community. The site has also been a training site for astronauts. We truly enjoyed our visit to Meteor Crater. The next stop was Flagstaff and lunch with Betty Sue. Her daughter Jacque also joined us. We had a nice visit. Then it was off to the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. We had a little trouble finding our camp ground. We turned into the wrong one and after trying to make a tight turn to get out, we realized we were not going to make it so we had to unhook the JC. The Grand Canyon was just as beautiful as it was the last time we saw it. The first day we drove east to the Desert View Tower, stopping at all of the overlooks on the way back. The next day we caught the shuttle into the village. Here we caught the bus for a tour to the west. They no longer allow private cars on that route. We ended up getting off the bus and hiking the rim for a while. The bus makes several stops along the way

so we walked until we got tired, then caught the next bus which took us to Hermits Rest. After a brief layover, we caught a bus back to the village. After a last walk along the rim there we stopped in at the El Tovar Lodge for a glass of wine and a light snack on their outdoor deck. The waitress took a liking to us and brought us another snack and later a desert to share. She said the chief was creating new dishes and wanted our input. While we were sitting there, three men from the train dressed in clothes of the time sat down next to us. They worked on the train and were waiting for the return trip. They were such colorful characters that Roy took a picture of me with them.

On November 21 we were off to Las Vegas. Sunday morning Dan and Haydee dropped by for a short visit before heading home. They had attended the Rochester Reunion of everyone had been invited who had ever served on her. They had a real nice time and are already making plans to attend the next one. While in Vegas, we had a little incident at one of the casinos near the park. I had gotten a good payoff which called for a hand pay off. They paid me off as I began playing at another machine. I then went back to the original machine and realized that I had another hand pay off. Well they came again and after looking at the history, they paid me for that one. Feeling that the machine will probably not pay out again for awhile, I moved to another machine. After a while, I was approached by one of the floor manager who was accompanied by several casino employees. He explained that the second pay off was an error, that they had rechecked the records upstairs and there should have only been one pay off. They went on to say that I would be responsible for the person that made the mistake for getting fired if I did not return the money from the second payoff. They were very insistent and finally I agreed to give them the money. The whole incident upset me so that I began to cry. Roy had been at the 21 table and when he returned to see me in tears. I told him what had happened and needless to say, he became very upset and went looking for the floor manager. Well to make a long story short, Roy insulted the floor manager who called security and we were asked to leave. By now I was mad. I was on a winning streak and were being told we had to leave. Not only leave but leave out of the side door. After I collected my winnings the security guard repeated that we needed to go out the side door. I told him I would go out the door of my choice and Roy and I, hand in hand, walked to the front and out the front door. In thinking back, it's possible the machine mal functioned but if that was the case, they should never have paid off the second time. Oh well, hopefully that experience will not be repeated again.

After Las Vegas it was on to Yerington, NV. with a stop over in Tonopah where we parked in the Casino's RV and Truck parking lot. After walking up and down the main street, we found an excellent Mexican restaurant about a block from the casino. The next day it was off to Daddy's. We had a real nice visit that night. The next morning I went with Daddy to one of the local nursing homes where he and his partner entertained the group, Daddy on the sax and his friend on the keyboard. Hearing Daddy play made me a little teary eyed. He enjoys it so, I hope he can continue for a long long time. After that, Uncle Roy and Aunt Jean came over for lunch. It was good seeing them again. That night, we had Daddy and Tommi over to the rig for dinner. After taking them to lunch the next morning, we hooked up JC and headed over to Dan and Haydee's. As usual, we had a grand time with them. They have become good friends. On Saturday we donned warm clothing and drove over to Carson City for the Nevada Days Parade. A storm was on the way and it was cold. Because of the weather, the turnout was real light so we had an excellent spot to watch from. We stuck it out for about two hours before we all decided that we had seen the best part and it was time to head for the car. We stopped off for lunch and later hit

the slots at Topaz Lake. Sunday, I attended church with Dan and Haydee and afterwards, Daddy and Tommi came over for early dinner. We had a good around the table visit and they didn't leave until after 5:00pm. It was hard to say good-bye but knowing we'll get back up there in February made it a little easier.

Monday morning we prepared to leave and slid in the slides. Something wasn't quite right with the bedroom slide so we went out to investigate. There was a large piece of ice stuck between the awning and the side of the rig. This caused the slide not to close tight. We went back in and tried to run the slide back out to no avail. There wasn't even the sound of the motor trying, nothing. Oh darn, we'll have to get it fixed in Bishop before we head into Death Valley. We were able to put in the braces that won't allow the slide to come out and got on the road. Because of the storm that had gone through on Sunday, the mountains were absolutely beautiful. We stopped at the rest stop in the mountains and enjoyed a nice lunch. On a whim, Roy went back to try the bedroom slide again and it worked. We were able to slide it out and back in again all the way. Great, no down time in Bishop. We spent the night at Boulder Station RV park in Lone Pine, CA, one of our favorite one night stands. There is a beautiful view of Mount Whitney and their pull through's are long so there is no need to disconnect.

The next morning, October 31st, it was off to Death Valley and Stovepipe Wells where we planned to camp. We really enjoyed our stay there. I hadn't realized how much there was to see. The first day, we drove up over and down to Badwater, the lowest elevation in the United States, 282 feet. Along this route, we saw Devils Golf Course, a dried bed covered with large solid mounds of salt rock. Also there was a nice loop called Artists Drive where one of the turnouts gave a beautiful view of Artists Palette, rocks in blue, red, yellow, gold and turquoise. We also took a hike up through a riverbed to see Natural Bridge, an arched rock bridging the two canyon walls. The bridge was quite impressive but also seeing the aftermath of the huge bodies of water that surge through the canyon during a flash flood. We stopped at Furnace Creek to visit the Visitors Center. There was a neat saloon there where we wetted our whistles. We also walked the interpretive trail at the old Harmony Borax Works where there was still machinery and one of the old 20 mule wagons complete with the water tank. It brought back memories of the old TV series Death Valley Days with Ronald Reagan. The sponsor was the Borax and the program began with a shot of the 20 mule team traveling through the desert. As we passed the Dunes, the sun was setting so Roy got some nice shots. On day two, we drove out of the park to Beatty, NV, for breakfast and stopped off at Rhyolite, now a ghost town. My Grandma Grace lived there several years as a teenager. She worked as a telephone operator as well as other jobs to help with the family expenses. There was a couple that lived there and were gathering information about the town. She pointed out the telephone exchange location which was near the old bank. Grandma's building was gone but much of the old bank's walls remain standing. It was very strange to stand in the spot Grandma used to work. We have since sent Grandma's recount of her time in Rhyolite to the caretakers promising to send a picture of grandma after we get back to Daddy's who should have something. She emailed us back, very happy to receive the information. After leaving Rhyolite, we took a 4-wheel drive road back through Leadfield, another ghost town and Titan Canyon. The road took us across desert terrain, up steep grades with hairpin turns and through the canyon which also showed signs of rushing water. It was a good thing the road was one way, especially over the mountains and through the canyon. After 28 miles of a rough but fun drive, we dumped back into a nice paved road in Death Valley. We then drove up to Scotty's Castle, a vacation home built in the late 1920's by Bessie and Albert Johnson, a couple from Chicago who had grown to become very fond of Scotty, an eccentric desert rat. They included living quarters

in their home for him, and even allowed him to call the home Scotty's Castle. Our last stop was the Ubehebe Crater, which was volcanic. It was getting late so we began the drive home. We spotted a coyote just trotting down the road. As we approached, he headed to the road side. I stopped the car and he remained at the side of the road seeming quite curious about us. Roy was able to get his picture.

November 3rd, and we're off to Acton, CA and the Soledad Canyon Thousand Trails Preserve. I picked up Mama and brought her to the rig Sunday afternoon. We took her to dinner that evening and then drove her home. She and I went shopping a couple of days however she was not feeling well. She didn't want to give up shopping with me so she hung in there. Roy and I took her out to the Odyssey Restaurant to celebrate her Birthday on Saturday. The restaurant overlooks San Fernando Valley and we had a marvelous view from our window seat. She really enjoyed it and the waiter remembered her from the last time and paid her so much attention. He got a real nice tip.

Sunday, November 12, we're off to Menifee, CA where the Wilderness Lakes Thousand Trails is located. That night we had dinner with Roy's Mom and Uncle Jack and Maxine. The next day we drove over the mountain to Mission Viejo where Roy did some genealogy research and I did a little shopping. I got us an Ab Slide which we will begin using when we get back on the river. That evening we met Vern in San Juan Capistrano for dinner. It was good to see him again and he seemed in very good spirits. Roy visited his Mom one day while I shopped the Outlet stores in Lake Elsinore. Ended up with some paper goods. A real inexpensive shopping day for sure. On Thursday, I drove up to Mama's to bring her back. She was coming to San Diego with us for Thanksgiving and would be staying with Jess and Karin. That night we picked up Roy's Mom at Lawrence Welks where she had seen a play and then on down to San Diego to meet Derald, Kim, Alan, Marge and Larry at Boll Weevil's. We hadn't met Derald's new girlfriend. She seemed very nice. It was a great visit with everyone.

November 17th, the three of us got an early start for San Diego. We had an appointment at Camper World to install a new heating system in the rig. As it turned out they were missing some parts so we finished our Camper World shopping and headed to Admiral Baker Field. We had just gotten set up and I was in the pantry picking out a soup for lunch when Roy said, "There is something wrong with you Mom". I ran to her and found her totally stiff and shacking. I held her and then got her laid down on the sofa. She wasn't breathing and began turning blue. I was so scared and just kept crying "Mama, wake up, wake up". Roy was on the line with a 911 lady who told him to try keep her from hurting herself. After about a minute, she went limp and we thought we had lost her. Suddenly she began gasping for air. She's back, I cried. The lady from 911 told us to try and keep her airway clear by tilting her head back. Before we knew it, we heard the sirens and in less than five minutes from the onset, we had an ambulance and a fire truck parked in front of the rig. When the paramedics came in one of them told the others, "Better wait outside, there's not much room in here." After about six hours in ER, they sent her home with us saying that it was a seizure. She was pretty much out of it for the next 24 hours. The dose of anti seizure medication they had given her was pretty strong. We kept in touch with her doctor who agreed to allow us to keep her with us and not bring her home until after the holiday. He knew how important it was to her to spend Thanksgiving with the family. She came with us when we met Jason for dinner. You could tell she was trying really hard to stay awake. She was able to enjoy Thanksgiving with her family and we certainly did enjoy having her with us. Jess and

Karin really felt that they could care for her and Mama really wanted to have a visit with them so we left her with them that night. They gave her lots of kind and attentive care. They are such great kids. Derald and Kim invited us over for their Friday Thanksgiving dinner. We had a nice visit and after dinner, Derald played the movie, The Perfect Storm. It was a pretty good movie. Saturday night we treated Jess and Karin to dinner at the Brigantine, a real nice restaurant real close to their home. Mama stayed with Eric and Karin had rented, Toy Story 2 for them to watch. She really enjoyed that movie.

Sunday, November 26, we picked up Mama and headed for March ARB, stopping off at Bruce and Teri's to see all the work that has been done on their loft. It looks real nice and even tho it is not complete, we could tell that it was going to be wonderful when the whole project is complete. After getting set up in the dry camping area of the Fam Camp at March and getting lunch, I drove Mama home. I hated to leave her alone but she would have no part in staying at ICF. We did check in with them so they knew she was back. The next day it was off to Quartzsite and a night of dry camping in the desert.

November 28 and we are back at Emerald Cove, our winter home, however they changed the rules and we are no longer allowed to stay on the second row longer than two weeks at a time. I was expecting this so it wasn't too disappointing, especially when we decided to take a spot with a phone with a beautiful view of the desert mountains. In addition, our cell phone coverage is much better away from the river. We are getting back into our routine, however Roy's computer crashed on Tuesday and a lot of his time was consumed reformatting and doing a clean reinstall. He got it back pretty much to normal and because he was able to get all of his files transferred to my computer, he lost very little information.

We took a hike up to see our pyramids and found two of them had fallen down. They get pretty high winds out here so It could have been that or maybe some mean people did it on purpose. Hopefully it was the wind as I would hate to think that someone would be so mean as to knock them down on purpose. Am I naive or what? We rebuilt one of them the first week we were here.

On one hike into the hills, we saw a mama burro and her little baby. Boy she sure didn't want us there. She gave off a warning sound like a loud snort and then trotted off a ways with the little guy right beside her. She was right in our path so every time we walked towards her she warned us again as she and the baby trotted off. Finally she took a trail off to the right and we took the one to the left. That baby was so darn cute.

We had a very pleasant Christmas Eve and Day. We stayed home, cooking special meals for the holiday. I had decorated our tree that we had bought last year with the Mardi Gras beads but it just didn't look like Christmas to me so I bought some real pretty gold and white ornaments and along with the little figures I had painted a couple of years ago, the tree looked real good. Unfortunately we had to cut some off of the top as it had grown so much this past year. We decided to give it to Danny for his yard when we are there this coming February.

We decided to stay home for New Years Eve. Roy cooked my favorite, Chicken with green peppercorn sauce, roasted potato slices and a fresh dinner salad. We watched the ball fall in New York at 10:00pm our time and were in bed and sound asleep shortly after that.