
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

A GEORGIA CONNECTION

INTRODUCTION

In the closing lines of chapter 17, I included some remarks about my general psychological state in the 1990 to 1991 time period following Esther's death. I was aware that such a state was unhealthy to say the least as well as downright destructive to one's satisfaction in life. Something had to change and I was well aware that only I could accomplish that, hence, my investigation into serving a mission. This ultimately led to my decision to go to Georgia and work a more intense schedule in the Atlanta Temple. I had been working in the Denver Temple one day a week but found that such activity coupled with my consulting work wasn't bringing the satisfaction I desired. I missed Esther terribly and though my children did their best to help me adjust to my new situation, it simply didn't fill the vacuum I now felt in my life. In addition, as I also mentioned, I intended to get better acquainted with my grandsons as well as spend a little time with Valerie and Jared.

I certainly wasn't sure just what this change would bring but at least it was a new path to travel. Something deep inside seemed to urge me to become more involved in the gospel. I had a testimony. I had a sincere belief that Joseph Smith's first vision was a reality: that the Father and the Son did, indeed, appear to him and that the Book of Mormon was a second witness of Jesus Christ. Even so, I wanted more scriptural understanding as well as a secure spiritual witness of that glorious event.

I had often thought how marvelous this first vision was, in addition to the ensuing events required in the Church's founding. Given these claims and the rise of the LDS Church since, it

had been hard for someone such as me to ignore them. At the very least, they warranted investigation by any honest seeker of truth. If false, fallacies would show up in such an effort. If true, those claims, in my opinion, were second only to the first advent of Christ and of course, his second coming, which will usher in the promised millennium.

Obviously, there was much that I didn't know or really understand but this seemed to be the season of my life to study the gospel more seriously. I wanted a greater understanding of its principles as well as the roll the temple played in the restored Church. Such understanding would involve principles similar to those required by any serious discipline in our

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secular lives. I would have to study the scriptures more seriously, apply their counsel more effectively in my daily life and

spend more time in the temple. At this point in my life, I had learned that hands on or application of a given discipline's principles in life defined the path to knowledge and expertise in the same. A cursory study would never do unless followed with effort sustained through faith that I was engaged in a worthy field, having value to me. It was contrary to the path I had followed to date in the restored gospel even though I had some involvement in all I spoke of. I had to make a real, more intense commitment.

Such thinking precipitated my decision to spend two years working in the Atlanta temple before returning to Arvada. I felt Paul was describing me when he spoke to the Hebrews 5:12-14 saying; *"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For everyone that*

useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil". I believe Paul's term use is the equivalent of my foregoing term of application, i.e. we have to make the principles part of our being.

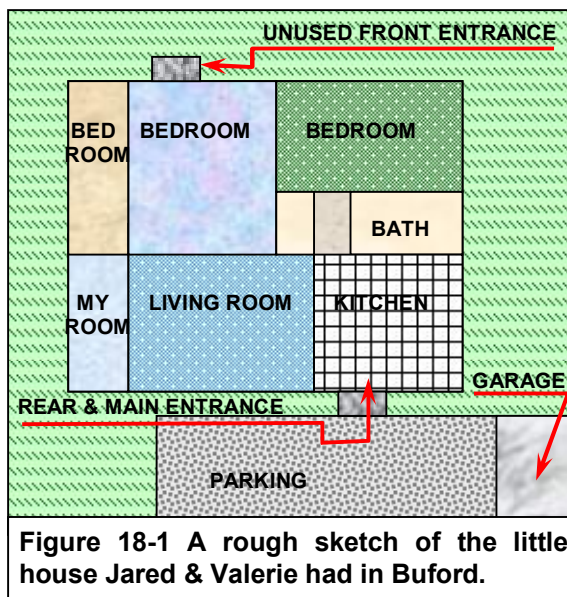
I was aware of my status as a babe and wanted to grow up in my understanding. Even then I had pictured the gospel or plan of salvation somewhat like a 10,000 piece crossword puzzle. I had but a few pieces put together and could only glimpse a small part of that beautiful picture of salvation I could only imagine. Adding to that puzzle, it seemed, would provide the most satisfaction for me in the years I had remaining on this earth. I could then peacefully join Esther with faith and satisfaction when that time came. Hopefully, a two-year mission, even though self-made, would provide the impetus I seemed to need in my quest for greater understanding. After returning to Arvada, I would then make that particular residence my retirement home. Would such a move solve my problem? Only time would tell me but I must try.

HEADING SOUTH

I decided against the shortest route to Georgia and opted to travel back through Louisiana and visit some of our friends there for a time. As I remember, I traveled down through the northeast corner of New Mexico and then to Amarillo, Texas. From there, I took U.S. 287 through Wichita Falls to the Dallas-Fort worth area and then I-20 east to Jackson, Mississippi. There, I would grab I-55 and then head south to intersect I-12 just east of Baton Rouge where I would continue east to the Mandeville area. I really don't remember how long it took but I suspect I reached Mandeville on the third day. I must have called ahead to Roy and Ellevieve Jenkins because they insisted I stay at their house while I was there, just as Esther and I had earlier. While there, I expressed an interest in seeing Johnny Bankston and his family. I thought a lot of the Bankstons and was almost as close to them as the Jenkins. I also wanted to visit Arthur, Roy's brother. I believe the latter had passed on but we set out for the Bankstons the next day. We visited a while with his wife and learned he was up north helping his son on the dairy farm near Folsom. Roy, of course, knew where the farm was and we set out arriving there in about an hour. Johnny and his

son Larry were hard at work when we arrived but Johnny took time to show us around the farm as well as the surrounding area, telling us a few of the Bankstons' experiences there. I suppose we spent a couple of hours with Johnny before heading back to Roy's house. I spent another evening with them before taking off for Atlanta the next morning. I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the Covington area and headed northeast in rather high spirits. I was about to begin my two-year stint in Georgia.

The trip from Covington to Atlanta is all interstate and about 500 miles in length. I arrived in Buford at Jared and Valerie's home late that afternoon. I had no trouble locating their house, as I did when they lived in Flowery Branch. I believe I made it about dinnertime. At least that would have been my intentions, considering my Scottish tendencies. They had a small room off the living room where I set up



residence, as shown in figure 18-1. As I remember, it was empty except for an air mattress and maybe some kind of a dresser. Consequently, establishing satisfactory living conditions for me became my first order of business thereafter.

SETTLING DOWN IN BUFORD

As I remember, I went shopping during the next few days and bought myself a single bed, which fit nicely in the room along with a cheap dresser that I found. There was also a desk in the room, which I may have bought as well and I had a telephone installed for my own communication needs. I wanted to be comfortable and be able

to do my thing without interference from the boys, when necessary. I knew things could get rather chaotic at times and I would prefer to hibernate, read or work at whatever I had going.

Within a few weeks after my arrival I attended a computer show with Jared and bought a lap top computer with somewhat more power than the one I had left in Denver. I decided then to begin a serious effort on my life's story while in Georgia, to help while away the time. Though I intended to work in the temple, there would be a good deal of spare time for pause and reflection, at least during the school year, when I would be by myself. Valerie and the kids would be in school and Jared at work. Valerie taught in Cumming, a little town about 20 miles to the west but the boys attended school in Buford while Jared was on the road selling.

CHURCH INVOLVEMENT

At that time, church members in Buford attended a small branch in Cumming known as the Sugar Hill Branch. The Branch President was a young man by the name of Dave Willey. I was welcomed in by everyone and found the people most friendly. I suspect the average attendance was around 80 or so. Before long, I felt like I was one of them. Oddly enough, the new stake, formed just a year earlier, was named the Sugar Hill Stake, even though there were several wards much larger than the branch we attended in Cumming. I suspect someone had the foresight to see the booming growth that would take place in the Sugar Hill area in the next few years.

Soon after my arrival in Buford, I visited with Dave Willey and asked to be considered as a temple worker. I had learned from another high priest in the branch, Tom Shumard, who was a temple worker, the process necessary for such service. The request had to be approved by the branch president as well as the stake president. It was then forwarded to the temple president who would issue the call after an interview. The whole process might take three months or so according to the branch president. I then settled in to a routine of trying to stay busy with the family as well as church service while I waited. It was during this time that I attended the computer show with Jared and made my decision to buy a better computer. Thus, cogitating about writing a more comprehensive personal history also became part of the waiting

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process. My reflections about just how to approach this project are contained in the final form of the preface to this marvelous work so I won't subject you to them again. Let me just repeat the thought that I tried several different approaches before I felt I could maybe produce something that my posterity would read. As a result, my progress to this point had been slow, to say the least.

HIGH PRIEST'S GROUP LEADER

Roughly three months after my arrival, I was called as the High Priest's Group Leader, a position I had served in while in Arvada. It was a stake calling and involved an interview with a member of the Stake High Council. I was familiar with the problems involved and went right to work. Interestingly enough, we had about 10 high priests in the branch, which were as many as most wards. A man by the name of Skip Smith was called as my assistant. I found out later that his father was a sealer in the Atlanta Temple. Our main problem was the improvement of home teaching, a challenge that exists in many wards. Skip and I went by the manual and began to conduct home teaching interviews each month along with the reporting process. Oddly enough, I'm being facetious, the manual's suggestions worked as they had in Denver. The home teaching, which had been hovering in the 40% range, immediately began to climb. By the next spring, some 6 to 8 months later, it was consistently in the 80s. It's amazing how following the tried and true procedures of the manual breed success.

TEMPLE SERVICE

About the time I was called as the high priest's group leader, I began to wonder why I hadn't heard from the temple president. It had been a good three months. I talked to Dave Willey and we decided to submit a second request. Somehow, it seemed, the request had been sidetracked, lost in the shuffle or whatever. This was done around late September or early October of 1991. In December I was called by the temple president's secretary and set up an appointment for the next week. I was set apart as an ordinance worker in early January, right after the temple re-opened, and began working the afternoon shift on Tuesday through Thursday, I believe. I quickly learned the necessary ordinances and was pronounced trained within a month. I found my service there

tremendously satisfying, working under a supervisor by the name of Ralph Klucken. I truly enjoyed the friendship I developed with several of the workers on my shifts and looked forward to my days in the Lord's House.

In June of 1992, a new Temple President was called whose name was Gerald Scott. I found out later that his brother, Richard, was one of the current apostles. Things seemed to go well for me in the temple and I was soon qualified in all so-called "director" positions of the time. In December of 1992, I was called as the shift supervisor on Thursdays and Fridays and soon found myself involved with the challenges of that particular calling. I continued in that position for about 6 years with a six-month break as a trainer in late 1994 and early 1995. During much of that time, Lethia also served as the sister's shift supervisor on the same days and we had opportunities to closely coordinate our temple assignments.

A CALLING TO THE STAKE HIGH COUNCIL

In May of 1992 I was released as the high priest's group leader and called to the Sugar Hill Stake High Council, another calling I was somewhat familiar with, having served in that capacity in Louisiana. However, my service in the latter was rather short because of my transfer to Denver in June of 1980. Thus, I was somewhat excited by the new calling and looked forward to the opportunities it presented. I must admit, I wasn't enamored with the thought of speaking on a monthly basis in the various wards of the stake; a responsibility I knew was included. Even so, I felt it was an opportunity for further spiritual growth and though painful, it would be good for me, or so I told myself. I ended up serving 10 years in that capacity, being released at the spring conference of 2002 at the ripe old age of 74.

Just after my call to the council, Valerie and Jared bought a house in Flowery Branch, about 10 miles up the road, which placed them in the Gainesville Ward. Of course, it didn't affect my calling because that ward was still in the Sugar Hill Stake but it did make Lethia and my assimilation into the ward somewhat slow. You see, my calling required me to be gone from my home ward 3 out of 4 Sundays a month, one on a speaking assignment and two on training assignments in my assigned ward, which was Cornelia Branch. Cornelia was located roughly 50 miles north of Gainesville while speaking assignments ranged from Dahlenega 50 miles to

the west to Elberton, which was about 100 miles to the east. We also ranged as far south as Madison some 60 miles away. Thus, high councilmen spent a good deal of time traveling as well as training and speaking. Even so, I learned to thoroughly enjoy that calling and credit it with much of the spiritual growth I have been blessed with over the years. Only the temple has been a greater blessing spiritually and that, I believe, because of the very nature of the Lord's House.

ACTIVATING MY SOCIAL LIFE

About the fall of 1991, Jared began playing cupid under the guise of helping me attain a greater level of satisfaction or happiness during my stay in Georgia. In actuality it was a ploy to get me to establish a commitment to the area and thus change my residence to the peach state. He had tried to convince me of the merits of the state with long flowery dissertations about its beauty, while haranguing the west and in particular Utah and Wyoming. Little did he understand the futility of his efforts, with my

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roots there firmly established through a lifelong residence in Idaho and other western states. Actually, I think he was beginning to understand because of his change in tactics. By fall he gave up his frontal assault and began using subversive tactics such as inviting a nice lady from the church over for dinner. I met one young woman this way, probably 20 years my junior, whom I dated a few times but she wasn't really interested in an old codger like me. We enjoyed some evenings together but it quickly became evident there would be no long-term relationship. About that same time, Valerie tried to get me interested in a schoolteacher she knew at the Cumming grade school where she taught. I drug my feet for a while, realizing she was not a member of the Church. I had enough problems trying to socialize with women of the Church and really wasn't interested in discussing my church activities with someone of another faith. It would be too hard to explain. I eventually dated her, a couple of times and learned she attended a Presbyterian church in Roswell. She was nice enough and was somewhat closer to my age but I soon realized her religious views were quite different from

mine. Thus, I bowed out of that relationship after just a couple of dates.

In that same time frame, that is just after I decided to break it off with the first lady I dated, Jared, in desperation, decided to explore other avenues to find someone I might be compatible with. That would have been late January of 1992. Not knowing anyone fitting his vision of my future wife in the Sugar Hill Stake, he called the neighboring stake of Roswell. Our stake had been part of the Roswell stake until April of 1991 and he was familiar with several of their leaders.

After a call or two, I suppose, he learned the name of the female single adult leader, a lady by the name of Lethia Griffin. He, of course, called and sought information on their single adult activities including firesides, dinners and dances. He sufficiently misrepresented my dwindling attributes to spark a ray of interest in Lethia and she gave him all of the particulars about their activities and assured him that I would be welcome. During his conversation with her, I walked into the house, having returned from who knows where. Jared mentioned her name and calling before asking me to speak with her. Not realizing he had painted a rosy picture of me, which would be hard to live up to, I took the phone and spent a few minutes visiting with Lethia. As I remember, she extended a similar invitation directly to me. I thought, "What can I lose" and got the particulars, including the directions to the Roswell Stake building where the next fireside would be held. Being a diabetic, I got her approval about bringing a salad as my covered dish for the potluck that preceded such events. I ate lots of salad, which had no limit in my diet and I figured no one else would bring one. I was confident there would be all kinds of casseroles and desserts but few, if any salads. The event was to be on the 2nd Sunday of February.

In the intervening time I made no effort to date anyone else. After all, a 63 going on 64-year old man was hardly a prize catch, at least in my mind. I have included a photo of me taken in the back yard of Valerie and Jared's Buford home to illustrate what Jared had to work with. His was a tough sell, to say the least, considering my aging physique and introverted personality.

Jared continued his monotonous diatribe on Georgia's virtues while punctuating it with his ridiculous assertions about the west, even comparing Georgia to the celestial kingdom spoken of in the scriptures and Utah as well as

Wyoming to the desert navigated by the children of Israel for 40 years. I of course, countered with things I found beautiful in the west including the wide-open vista one can see from any hillside. I also kept mentioning the advantages of camping in the west, including many square miles of federal lands, a more comfortable dry climate, etc. Even so, he seemed undaunted and continued his assault as kind of a second front in his efforts to solve the dilemma of my love life. Admittedly, I was no match for his vocal acrobatics. I simply don't have that



Figure 18-2 "Yours truly" about the spring of 1992 at the Buford home.

salesman type personality that seeks to overcome opposition through vociferous bombardment. Seeking respite from his continuing sales pitches and being somewhat intrigued by Lethia's invitation, I became more determined than ever to attend one of those Roswell events. If nothing else, it would get me out of the house until after he was in bed. Of course, in so doing I played right into his hands, which ultimately led to defeat and the loser's prize, which made me a winner in due time.

MEETING LETHIA

The first single adult function, a potluck and fireside, was held in the Roswell stake building, located close to Holcomb Bridge Road. With Lethia's directions, I had no problem finding the

building and showed up on the appropriate Sunday night. With a salad in hand as my contribution, I went in and spotted a few people near the kitchen. Lethia was there to welcome me and anyone else, as well as take the salad. I thought, "She's a nice looking lady but too young for me".

With that, I went about the business of introducing myself to others in the vicinity, being a stranger in these parts. I don't remember whether Lethia sat close to me during the dinner or not but I vaguely remember talking to her a little. There was a special broadcast from Salt Lake following the dinner as well as the normal fireside speaker. I opted to attend the Salt Lake broadcast because of my calling as the high priest's group leader. I really don't remember the topic involved but it wasn't related to the single adult program. At that time, I didn't realize that Lethia had taken an interest in me but found out later that she also attended the broadcast with a lady named Marge Jones. They sat in the back and Marge kept encouraging her to move up and sit by me but she declined, feeling I might be offended. Of course, I didn't find that out until after our marriage. Nothing else of importance regarding that first meeting with Lethia seems to have registered in this gray matter of mine. However, I had enjoyed the evening and decided to attend a square dance a couple of weeks later at the Glenridge building located behind the temple. After all, when it came to social activities, I was a square making this event right down my alley.

SQUARE DANCING

The square dance was on a Saturday night and singles from all the Atlanta area stakes attended for a night of fun. That was one dance I could participate in without worrying much about ridicule. Very few participants were adept at following the caller's directions and thus, my clumsy gyrations fit in quite well. Lethia was there and I danced opposite her a few times as well as with other women. I must have made some remarks about my lack of ability to dance in a conventional manner like the fox trot, etc. because a couple of gals there told me about some free lessons being given on Saturday mornings at the bishops storehouse. I got the directions to the facility as well as the time for such lessons and decided I might try them. It appeared such talent might be useful if I was going to do any serious dating. Anyhow, I had a reasonably good time that night and had enough

women crowding around me that I kind of forgot my age. I decided that there just might be some gal around who would take an interest in me and who also appealed to me. Many women at the dance, though nice ladies; simply weren't my type or they had too much baggage to bring along from previous marriages, both of which became apparent through conversation.

DANCING LESSONS

I believe I attended the dance lessons the following Saturday. After all, it got me away from Jared's dissertations on the virtues of Georgia and afforded me a little peace and tranquility. Much to my surprise, I ran into Lethia there. It soon became apparent that she didn't need such lessons but I was too absorbed in my own lack of skills to worry about her purpose for being there. It seemed that Lethia and I usually ended up as partners in the various dance lessons but then, there were only a few couples involved, so that didn't seem too unusual. These lessons continued through the month of March. In early April, I went back to Denver to visit and celebrate Celeste's birthday and was gone for a couple of weeks. Upon my return, Lethia and I continued with the lessons. I suppose we stayed involved with the lessons through May and had we not quit about then, I might have become half way proficient in that particular activity.

LETHIA TAKES THE OFFENSIVE

Lethia had responsibility for the single-adult fireside during March. Apparently the guest speaker had to cancel because Fred, Lethia's son filled in. I don't remember too much about his remarks but I do remember a little game he set up. It was supposed to be an activity to demonstrate the difficulty of communication or something like that. Anyhow, in the process he had a guy and a gal sit back to back and each try to draw a picture of what he was communicating. Whichever couples' drawings were most alike apparently heard the same message and won the exercise. Needless to say, he stacked the deck so that Lethia and I ended up as partners. She obviously enlisted his help and even I, with my limited perception of psychological manipulation, realized there was a plot of some kind going on. I didn't really mind because the whole thing, though silly, was fun and I enjoyed my association with Lethia. I don't believe anything else of consequence occurred or made an impression on me. I continued my single adult meetings and dance lessons.

As the dance practices continued through March and April after my return, I began to realize that Lethia's interest was more in me than the lessons. She had written me several letters or maybe I should say notes, inviting me to various single adult functions. Valerie convinced me that they were above and beyond the call of her duty as a stake single adult leader. At first I denied this but as time wore on her attention at the dance practices bore that fact out.

Usually, after a particular dance type the instructors would spend a few minutes discussing the important points of a step or dance style while we stood there and listened. We might then repeat such a step or go on to something different. Well, Lethia gave herself away by holding on to my hand during such breaks. You see, she wanted to be sure I would be her partner for the next step, whatever that was. She was also very patient with my awkward movements and constantly encouraged me. Such dedication began to register even on my dim brain as, "I think she likes me".

In addition, she wrote me a rather lengthy note while I was in Denver, which was waiting for me when I returned. That note, whose content was definitely beyond the duties of a single adult leader, confirmed my suspicions. It also gave me the courage to set up our first official date. The next Saturday, after the dance practice, I asked her to lunch, during which time we had a nice conversation. At that time, she agreed to go on a picnic with me the following Friday. In fact, she was so responsive that any doubt I had about her feelings for me fled like the dew on a sunny morning. You see, that was important to an old codger like me whose relationship with women, other than my wife, had been null and void for 40 years. Although I didn't know Lethia's age for sure, I did know that she was considerably younger than I and couldn't conceive of such a lady taking an interest in me. Though she was nice looking and I thoroughly enjoyed her company, her obvious kindness seemed to attract me the most. I liked her style.

The latter trait became especially apparent to me that same Saturday evening. There was a single adult dance at the Glenridge building and we had decided to attend together. That was a mistake for me. The music wasn't my style and what little skills I had developed as a dancer quickly faded into the rather hip-hop theme of the evening. The few times I tried to get

involved turned into disasters, at least in my mind and I quickly took up permanent retirement on the sidelines. Others asked Lethia to dance but she always returned to the table where I sat.

She soon realized I was miserable and suggested that we leave. I didn't want to ruin her evening but after getting her assurance that she didn't mind, I gladly agreed. We went to a hamburger joint, Burger King I believe, where we talked. She soothed my feelings as I poured out my frustrations about my limited dancing skills. We talked for some time and were finally nudged out by midnight closure of the facility. From there we went back to her apartment where we continued our conversation in the car for maybe another hour or so. That evening was the point in time when I knew I liked this lady. She was my type and seemed to like me as well as understand my frustrations with dancing. Before leaving her that evening at the door of her apartment, I asked her to go to dinner with me the following Wednesday, as I remember. I then left with a song in my heart, which more than compensated for the dancing fiasco.

DINNER WITH AN AFFECTIONATE SLIP

Wednesday evening came and I took her to the Marriot Hotel dining room where we had a nice dinner. I believe it was a special seafood buffet. In any case, it was pleasant to say the least. Afterwards we wanted to talk some more and she suggested going to a little park not too far from her apartment. We couldn't go back to the latter because of her kids, i.e. Kathleen as well as Fred and his wife Catherine. We must have walked around the park for a couple of hours, pausing here and there including some time at a kind of picnic spot with tables and benches. I had had no intention of proposing at this point but her pleasant company simply overcame my hesitant nature. Before I knew it, I had made the proposal and if any doubt had been in my mind regarding her feelings, it quickly fled. Before I could even think of a retraction, she quickly accepted. I apologized for my clumsy proposal and assured her that I would make a formal one the following Friday on the picnic. Heading home that evening, I asked myself, "Why did you propose, stupid? It's too early. However, as I thought about Lethia and her family, no fear of unexpected problems arose and I felt quite comfortable with my emotional slip. I had met her family members a couple of times and realized that Kathleen, her single daughter, would be part of the bargain. Adding up the

pluses and minuses involved, I saw no real problem with my blunder. Lethia was my type and she would fill an emotional hole in my life that had existed since Esther's death.

A PICNIC PROPOSAL

That Friday we got an early start and headed to northern Georgia and a little town called Clayton. We had no particular destination in mind other than a quiet place where we might be able to get off by ourselves. I think Fred had suggested a state park just east of Clayton a few miles because it seemed Lethia knew where it was. It was indeed a quiet place with no one else around. Of course, being early Friday, we weren't too surprised. What did surprise me was the name. Of all things, it was called "War Woman Park", I suppose after some Indian legend or something. It hardly seemed the place to utter a proposal but my confidence was high and I had found a woman I could love every bit as much as Esther. I had often thought there would be no such replacement because of the wonderful 40 years we had spent together.

We found a secluded spot a ways from the car where we had lunch and talked a while. I remember walking along a little trail, as well. As time wore on, I managed to get the proposal out. I have long forgotten the exact words I uttered that afternoon but the feeling I had for Lethia then is still there in my heart. Seventeen years with her by my side have proven our relationship is meant to be eternal. My emotional slip the previous Wednesday evening proved to be a wonderful one and has moved me into a situation I find most satisfying and enjoyable. She has, indeed, changed my life. Where I had felt rather sad and alone in spite of my children's efforts, my life has, since that fateful day, been full and meaningful. I now view the future with optimism whereas I had been in a waiting mode to join Esther. How many more years Lethia and I have yet in this life remains to be seen but I know she and Esther will be my eternal companions for which I will ever be grateful.

To help sort out my courting days with Lethia, I asked her about various events so I could portray them as accurately as possible. Besides being very helpful in the question and answer mode, she just came up with a record she kept of our activities together. I decided to insert it here. I don't think it will conflict with the general comments I have made but you'll have to make that decision. This calendar of events also

establishes the validity of her intentions to trap me and for which I'll ever be grateful.

- January 26th – Received Jared's call.
- February 23rd – First fireside.
- March 14th – Square dance.
- March 21st – first dance practice,
- March 22nd – second fireside
- March 28th – Second dance practice.
- April 19th – Tom called after returning from Denver.
- April 25th – Third dance practice.
- April 26th – Third fireside.
- May 2nd – fourth dance practice. Lunch at Shoneys.
- May 8th – First date. Dinner at Marriot.
- May 9th – Fifth dance practice. Lunch At Shoneys & singles dance at Glenridge building.
- May 13th – Pre-proposal.
- May 15th – Picnic and engagement.
- May 16th – Sixth and last dance practice.

So, there you have the real skinny about grandpa's entrapment and fall from bachelorhood, which he didn't like very much anyway, as you have undoubtedly come to understand.

We returned that day and stopped by Valerie and Jared's house, my temporary home near Flowery Branch, where I announced the surprise. I don't remember Jared being home but he would find out soon enough that his well thought out plan had worked to a T. We intended to stay in Georgia. Although Lethia was willing to move to my Denver home, I elected to move to Georgia because of her parents living nearby. They were in their early eighties and she needed to stay close to them. Besides, my ties to Denver were hardly permanent. Tom would soon graduate and move to who knows where. Celeste had already moved to Colorado Springs and it was hard to predict just where she would end up. All in all, Georgia seemed the best choice.

In a way, I would have liked to have gone back to Denver; primarily to deflate Jared's balloon. It would have been nice to first announce our marriage plans and then when his ego was well inflated, puncture it with the statement that we would be living in Denver. To see his smirk of satisfaction change to one of chagrin and vexation would have more than made up for his strategic maneuvers and incessant sales pitches about the glories of Georgia. Though I liked Georgia, he would be the last to hear it. My glory would be with my future bride.

RELOCATING IN FLOWERY BRANCH

As I mentioned a while back, Valerie and Jared had recently purchased a home in the Gainesville ward just east of Flowery Branch in the Hunter's Landing subdivision. The move to Hunter's Landing occurred in May of 1992 and was essentially simultaneous with my calling to the high council. I had been serving in this calling only a few weeks before my ill-conceived proposal. That is, ill-conceived only in the fact that no real thought had gone into it before my spontaneous outburst.

SETTING UP HOUSEKEEPING

We had set August 15th as our wedding day. That would provide the necessary time to locate a place of residence as well as time for both of us to tie up any loose ends. We planned to be married in the Atlanta Temple, which also required some preliminary steps and of course, Tom and Celeste would need time to make their plans to attend. Then there were reception preparations, which Lethia would take care of. The event, being three months away, provided adequate time and establishes my proposal date as being around the middle of May.

Lethia agreed to move up to the Buford – Gainesville area so I wouldn't have to change stakes. As I have mentioned, I had recently been called to the Sugar Hill Stake High Council and would prefer to continue to serve. She didn't mind leaving the Roswell area, so we searched for housing where I now resided.

After looking at several rental options, we decided purchasing a small house would be better. With very little down, I needed to keep the payments within reason until I sold the Denver house, which might be a year away. We quickly found a satisfactory house in the Hunter's Landing subdivision, which fit our needs and was within our financial capability. Houses were more reasonable in Georgia than in Denver, which helped a lot. I closed on the house in late June and moved Lethia and Kathleen in on July 1st of 1992. The house was located at 4679 Quail Pointe Drive with a postal code for Flowery Branch. I had rented a large U-Haul truck and with the help of Jared and Fred, I believe, made the move in a day. Fred and Kathy also had to relocate, so I'm not too sure that he was involved with us but we got some help from the boys. Lethia had sufficient furniture for her needs until I moved in and brought my things from Denver.

I have provided a photo of the house, taken a few years later, in figure 18-4. As you can see, it is a Cape Cod style home, having both a

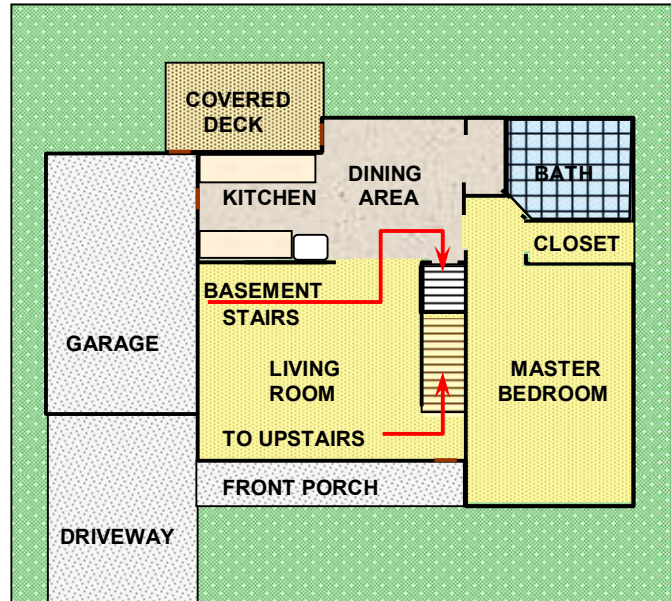


Figure 18-4 Main floor plan for our first home at 4679 Quail Pointe Drive in Flowery Branch, GA.

second story and a basement. The latter provided necessary storage space and some overflow sleeping space when necessary. The second floor had a guest bedroom as well as a room for Kathleen, a little sitting room for a TV and a bathroom. The first floor was sufficient for Lethia and me, having a master bedroom with a



Figure 18-3 Our Cape Cod style home in Flowery Branch after considerable landscaping.

bath, a kitchen with dining area and a living room as displayed in figure 18-3. It also had a back deck with access from the dining area, which overlooked a forested gulch. Being obscured from the neighbors, it provided privacy for dining and relaxation during the spring and

fall when temperatures were agreeable. I had it covered as well as screened in and even added a ceiling fan after moving in that August. This extended its usefulness greatly over a longer portion of the year.

MOVING MY THINGS FROM DENVER

After evaluating Lethia’s furniture, I decided to go to Denver in July and get that portion of my furniture that would be useful to our combined household. We would then have the household pretty well settled by the time the wedding took place. She and Kathleen would accompany me so as to drive the car back while I drove the truck. Lethia was still working but she would take a week off for the trip. As it turned out, I rented a trailer for the car and we all rode in the truck during our return.

I made it safely into a hamburger joint but was going into another sugar low when we arrived. Lethia picked up on it and got me to park the truck appropriately.

Denver. That would give them a real sense of what Colorado was all about. We packed a nice lunch and headed out. Along the way my glucose level dropped below that at which I could reliably function and my driving became erratic. Lethia knew of my diabetic problem and, as I remember, fed me a couple of small Snickers bars to keep me functional until we got to our designated lunch area north of Granby and just west of Rocky Mountain Park. At that time, I was having trouble regulating my insulin with my food intake, which created such sugar lows. I think I scared Lethia pretty well before she got me

back to speed but we made it to the picnic area and I was okay the rest of the trip. I have lifted a map from chapter 14, which illustrates this little side trip and reproduced here as figure 18-5 for your benefit.

A TRIP TO ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

The trip to Denver was uneventful. We stopped one night in Missouri and made it to Arvada the next day. I don’t remember the details but apparently we had allowed sufficient time for me

LOADING UP AND RETURNING

The move from Denver was somewhat stressful for my family. The idea of me remarrying didn’t go over too well with some and when I began stripping the house of furniture, it was rather traumatic for them. However, they weathered the change quite well and any ruffled feelings gradually gave way to reality. I had to go on with my life just as they had to go on with theirs. It took a full day for me to load a rather large U-Haul truck during which I trashed several things in the basement, which hadn’t been used or looked at for years. Tom and Julie took over the upstairs with the remaining furniture, which Lethia and I deemed of no use to us. Tom had a year remaining in school and Celeste had already moved to Colorado Springs. She was there during the move however, to meet Lethia and to come to grips with the rather radical change in her dad’s life.

We got an early start the next day after loading the car onto a trailer hooked to the truck. The whole rig was about like driving an 18-wheeler, as far as length was concerned. After the usual goodbyes, we headed east towards Kansas and eventually Georgia. Things went well and we arrived in Hays, Kansas a little after 12 noon. I made it safely into a hamburger joint but was going into another sugar low when we arrived. Lethia picked up on it and got me to park the truck appropriately. You see, I don’t think too clearly under such conditions and may do something rather stupid; I mean beyond my



Figure 18-5 Lethia, Kathleen & my trip through Rocky Mountain Nat. Park in 1992.

to show Lethia and Kathleen around the Colorado area before returning. I don’t believe either had been there before. Besides seeing a little of Denver, I decided to take them on a day long trip over Berthoud pass to Granby and back through Rocky Mountain National Park to

usual antics. After lunch I was fine once again but she kept a close observance of my actions and words throughout the rest of the trip to detect any future problems. None occurred that I remember or that she told me about.

I learned a little about long loads and wide turning radiuses during the trip. Although I was conscious of the length of the combined truck and trailer and tried to be very careful, I had a couple of near misses, which could have resulted in costly accidents. These further emphasized the need for constant awareness of front, rear and overhead with such a rig. In Illinois along I-57 I pulled off at an exit for gas. It wasn't a very busy exit and seemed ideal for a novice such as I. The only gas station near the interstate was a small independent whose name I can't remember. I took the second entrance into the station because it provided access to a path around the back to an open pump and what appeared to be an easy return exit back to the interstate. I made it in and gassed up with no problem but during the process a delivery truck also pulled in. The driver stopped well in front of me but blocked easy access to the wide turn I had planned upon leaving. I decided I could cut sharply enough to clear him and began the process upon leaving. I was moving very slow and clearing the pumps fine when I heard a scraping noise. I immediately shut the rig down and got out to find the problem. The box of the truck had caught the service station overhang. I backed up and checked for damage. I could see none on the truck but I had pulled off a piece of plastic molding of some sort from the overhang. Obviously, I hadn't watched the overhang of the pump shelter. I went in and told the owner what had happened and offered to leave my name and address so as to pay for any necessary repairs. He thanked me but said it wasn't necessary. He would take care of it. There was little damage but for such work on a commercial establishment I figured I might be looking at a hundred dollars or more. After expressing my appreciation to him I carefully made a little wider turn, cleared the overhang and returned to the interstate. A little later, in Tennessee or maybe Georgia, I was in the left lane cruising along at a reasonable speed. After passing some slow moving traffic, I checked my side view mirrors and then moved over into the right lane. In just a couple of minutes a car shot by me giving me the horn and shaking his fist at me. I suspect I had cut back a little early and forced him to hit the brakes. Whatever the case, it was a lesson

on lane changing. Fortunately, nothing else of a serious nature occurred on the trip. We pulled up to the house and the next day Jared and sons plus some other enlisted help from the church helped us unload. Afterwards I had



Figure 18-6 Lethia and I exiting the Atlanta Temple on our wedding day 8/15/92.

Lethia follow me to a U-Haul return in Buford where I gladly turned the monster in.

WEDDING PREPARATIONS

It had been a long summer for Lethia and me. We sometimes wondered whether we should have set the date so far in the future but in reality, there was little choice. Our relationship had grown stronger during this courtship and we both wanted to settle down to the more normal married life. Moving her, then me, coupled with the approaching wedding, her job and my church service, as well as our desire to spend every possible minute with one another had created a rather frantic life style. As August 15th approached, we began to utter sighs of relief. We would take a one-week honeymoon to a little cabin in Tennessee near Cades Cove. Then we would return to begin our new life together. She

would continue to work for the time being, primarily because of medical insurance. I was on Medicare but she had her health insurance through her employer. Once our financial situation had stabilized through sale of my Denver home and Tom's graduation, she would quit work so as to serve with me in the temple and spend a little more time with her parents.

THE WEDDING AND HONEYMOON

The fateful day finally arrived, as did Tom, Julie and their family. They, along with Celeste, were the only people involved from out of town and had come down from Denver shortly before. At that time Tom and Julie had only two children, i.e. Beth and Spencer. I believe we put them up between Valerie's and our house for the short time they were here. Of course, Lethia and I left for our honeymoon after the reception, so I really don't remember how long they stayed. In 1992, all Lethia's kids resided in the Atlanta area.

The wedding took place around 10:00 AM and went off without a hitch. A counselor in the temple presidency, President Guymon, performed the ceremony. All of our children were able to attend the sealing along with a couple of Lethia's brothers and their wives. Right afterwards we gathered in front of the temple for a series of photos, which I'll now subject you to. Figure 18-6 captured Lethia and I exiting the temple. She, as always, had a pleasant smile on her face while I had a smirk of satisfaction, having just completed the capture of my new bride. The first order of business was to get a photo of Lethia and me with President Guymon, which appears in figure 18-7. He was a soft-spoken, mild mannered man whom I grew to respect as I served with him in the temple. Lethia, having known president Guymon for some time, asked him to perform the sealing. Our stair step arrangement in the photo points to his small physical stature but he was a spiritual giant with many "Christ like" virtues. I learned to admire him greatly, during our service together.

With everyone there, we were able to get a nice picture of the combined families, which is shown in figure 18-8. It, of course, was taken in front of the Atlanta Temple where the sealing took place. Only Julia, Lethia's youngest daughter who passed away with cancer, is missing. What a wonderful day that was. It was the beginning of a second life for me and for Lethia and has resulted, as of this writing, in almost 13 years of wedded bliss. Looking back, I could not have made a better choice. She is, indeed, a joy to

live with, seldom complaining, usually upbeat and easy to get along with. We have had many good times together, including trips to each reunion since 1992 and an extended vacation in



Figure 18-7 President Guymon of the temple presidency who sealed us on August 15, 1992.

Canada. There we camped out in various Canadian national parks and soaked up the beauty of British Columbia and Alberta. We look



Figure 18-8 Lethia and My combined families, which are: FR-L to R Preston Pickett, Beth Pickett, Brittany Pickett, Julie (Tom's wife), holding Spencer, Lindsay Pickett Kathleen Griffin, Katherine (Fred Griffin's wife), Johnny Garfield. Next row back - L to R: Celeste, holding Beth Tom's daughter, Tom, yours truly, Valerie, Jared and Fred. Back row L to R: Jared Garfield Jr., and Joseph. What a group!

forward to many more good times, as both of us still seem to be in relatively good health today.

THE RECEPTION

A friend of Lethia's, Becky Douglas had offered her very nice home to Lethia for our reception. It was big and spacious as well as having far nicer

accommodations than the church recreation hall. I did worry somewhat about imposing on such a nice couple but apparently that was no problem. I learned later that they were extremely charitable and though well off, gave much of their time and resources to the needy. In fact, Becky is now managing a children's home in Indonesia, I believe. I'm not sure just how we qualified for the use of their home. They had several children, who were friends with Lethia's children, which may have added to the friendship factor but I wouldn't discount their kindness towards all, either. In spite of any imposition on our part, Lethia's friendship with Becky still appears to be in good condition. As I recall, her husband's name was John.

MEETING LETHIA'S FAMILY

This subtitle refers to the reader and not me, since I had already had the pleasure of such contact. This particular meeting of yours will be through photos as well as limited comments from "yours truly" so you can better identify the various people involved with any stories that may surface in later portions of my life's story. At this particular time, I had barely made their acquaintance, so the majority of such comments are derived from later contact.

I'm going to begin with Lethia's aunt Bessie who baked and decorated the cake for the wedding reception. She seems much like her brother Gordon, having a soft kind personality. I had remembered her as having the major responsibility for organizing and handling the reception but Lethia has corrected me. Regardless, the cake was beautiful, as you will see in a later photo. Apparently Lethia organized things prior to the wedding and Beth, her daughter, kind of acted as supervisor as the donated goodies arrived. I was oblivious to the work involved or the effort to make the event run smoothly, being too wrapped up in the excitement of the moment. In any case, aunt Bessie is shown in figure 18-9 with her husband, Johnny and Keleen, their daughter Lethia's amigo over the years. According to Lethia, Johnny was a nickname her uncle acquired in his early years. His real name is Woodrow Wilson Penn but in his youth he was called honest John, which name he apparently earned through his dealings with people. The name Johnny then stuck throughout his life. Lethia and Keleen grew up together, living next to each other much of their childhood years. They got in trouble together and managed to bail each other

out, it seems, being partners in their childhood crimes. Keleen's son, Doug, provided the wedding photos at no charge, to my knowledge. At least I never saw the bill.

Figure 18-10 illustrates Gordon and Katherine Arrowood, Lethia's parents. They lived near Palmetto, Georgia, which was southwest of



Figure 18-9 Aunt Bessie and her husband, - Johnny & Keleen, their daughter.

Atlanta, on acreage they had acquired some 30 or so years earlier. Both were in their early eighties at the time of the wedding. Gordon passed away in the spring of 2001 at the age of 90. Katherine still lives as of this writing and has now reached the age of 95 or maybe 96. As you can see, Katherine is cutting up a little in the photo, which kind of typifies her personality. She still seems in relatively good health after having a brush with death a little over a year



Figure 18-10 Gordon and Katherine Arrowood, Lethia's parents, in 1992.

ago. I particularly admire her for her spunk. No one will take advantage of her without a fight. She now lives by herself. Michael, one of her sons, had lived with her and took care of many odd jobs associated with a home, which she was unable to do. He died roughly a year ago.

Since that time, Lethia and her brother's families make weekly visits to their mother's home. Ann, Dale Arrowood's wife who lives nearby, stops by almost daily, helping out when and where necessary. David and his wife, Brenda who live in Roswell, stop by weekly I believe and spend

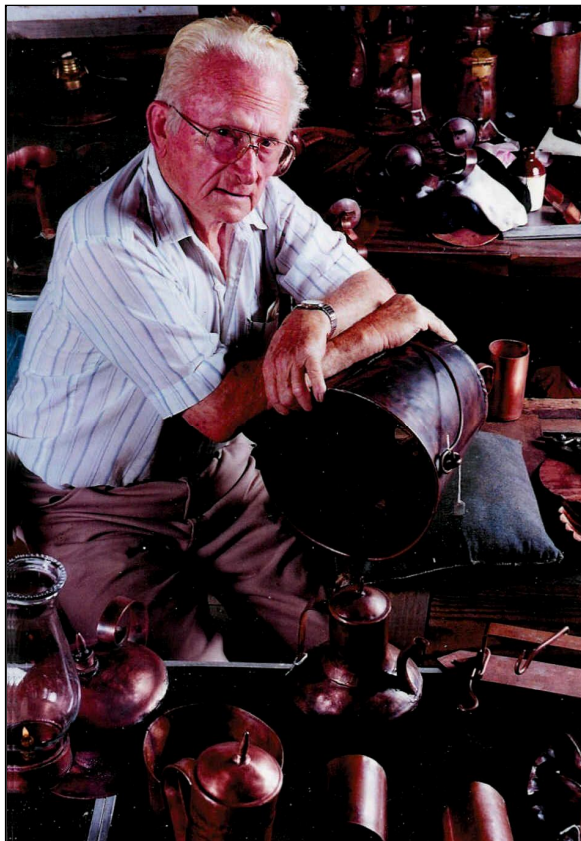


Figure 18-11 Lethia's father, Gordon Arrowood on a break in his copper shop.

some time as well. Though we live just under a hundred miles from Lethia's mother, she goes down each Wednesday and stays until Thursday evening while I spend my time in the temple. This, I believe, is a choice time for both of them.

Gordon was retired when I met him, being about eighty at the time. He had made his living as a plumber and in so doing had become quite a copper smith. Lethia has many of his decorative copper pieces placed around our home today. He and Katherine participated in various festivals around the southeast such as "The Yellow Daisy Festival" at Stone Mountain. His copper work readily sold at a good price at those festivals. I have included a photo of him at work, which I particularly like in figure 18-11. It was displayed on his funeral program in 2001. Gordon was a quiet man but loved to talk about

his work as a plumber around the southeast, as well as his service years and his copper work. Lethia's personality is much like his. Maybe that's why I thought so much of him, even feeling remorse akin to that of his family's at his funeral. Though he was not a church going man, to my knowledge, he was one of those individuals who was thoroughly honest and treated everyone with respect. He certainly practiced Christian principles in his daily life. He was a fine man. I spent many an hour visiting with him before Alzheimer disease took its toll.

The eldest child of the family is David. He lives with his wife Brenda in Roswell, Georgia in the general vicinity of the Atlanta Temple. They are pictured in the photo of figure 18-12. He's a very personable guy who seems to have had his hand in many different businesses even during the time I have known him. He appears to be successful in his ventures but moves around as



Figure 18-12 David & Brenda Arrowood shown at our wedding reception in 1992.

opportunities present themselves I suppose. From time to time he has had his own little musical group and provided the music for dancing in various hotels, some of which are in Atlanta. Lethia and I attended one such dinner – dance evening and found it most enjoyable.

David played the trumpet as well as conducted the band. His wife, Brenda, hails from the Carolinas but whether north or south, I can't say. Prior to their marriage, I understand, she had had a successful real estate business there in which she continued to be involved for some time. However, not being the inquisitive kind, I know little about her other than that she is a very nice person, enjoyable to be around.

Lethia had a brother just younger than she, named Richard whom I never met. He passed away as a youth, about age 18 I believe, from cancer. I have included a photo of him in figure 18-13. Yet another brother, Michael whom I

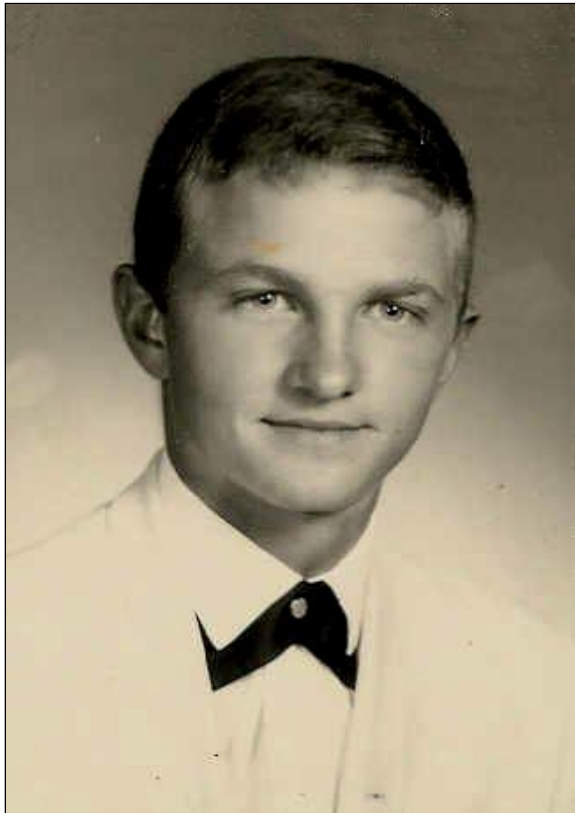


Figure 18-13 Richard Arrowood, Lethia's brother who died at eighteen of cancer.

mentioned earlier, was just older than Dale. He was a divorced father who seemed to love his two daughters very much. He had been a companion and protector of sorts to his mother since Gordon's death but he also is now deceased. He and Lethia are pictured with their parents in figure 18-14 a little before Gordon's death some 6 years ago, as of this writing.

I'll continue this photographic introduction to Lethia's family with figure 18-15, which displays Dale and Ann at the reception. At the time he

was an officer for the Fulton County Sheriff's office. He has since taken medical retirement and works with wild birds. He is somewhat of an

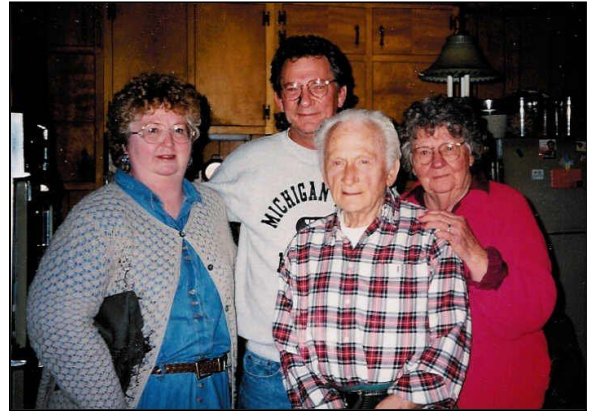


Figure 18-14 Lethia and Michael with their parents a little before Gordon's death.

expert in training wild hawks, eagles, etc. and has worked at such places as Callaway Gardens, putting on shows for the visitors. In



Figure 18-15 Dale and Ann Arrowood at our wedding reception in 1992.

addition he has trained hawks for his own enjoyment and keeps at least a couple at home. Ann is primarily a mother and housewife, finding satisfaction in her family, as well as helping

others out. I believe she also works part time but where, I can't tell you.

Now, let's move on to Lethia's children by beginning with Fred, the eldest child and only boy. He and his wife Kathy are shown in figure 18-16 during the wedding reception. They now live in Dallas, Texas where Fred is employed in an executive position with MBNA, a national banking and credit card concern. Apparently,



Figure 18-16 Fred and Katherine as they appeared at our wedding in 1992.

they have now become a part of Bank America and Fred is now waiting for the fallout from the merger. They have a two-year old daughter, Camilla, who is the light of their lives as well as that of Kathleen and Lethia. She is, indeed, a delight to be around and very smart, I'll admit. I enjoy our visits with them myself.

Beth and Preston, shown in figure 18-17, also live in Dallas and are both employed by MBNA. They have two daughters, Brittany and Lindsay. Brittany has just completed her first year of college whereas Lindsay has a couple of years of high school left, if my memory serves me right. Of course, it has backfired before and this may be no exception. If you want the facts, contact Beth by mental telepathy. When I first met Beth and her family 13 years ago the two girls were something like 6 and 3 respectively.

My, how time passes and children grow. It seems like a quirk of nature to think that they are now adults and I haven't changed at all except, possibly, my identification with reality. In my state of denial I still see a handsome young man of 30 as I gaze with fondness at my reflected image in mirrors and windows. True, my hairstyle has changed somewhat but the same youthful image smiles back as I convince myself little has changed in the last 47 years. You see there are benefits to becoming easily convinced and having an impaired mental capacity. Happy is happy, regardless of the reason.

I guess it's time to move on to Kathleen before I lose all my readers, both of them I mean. Kathleen is next in line. She is shown in the photo of figure 18-18, which was taken in north Georgia the fall after Celeste moved to the Atlanta area, I believe. Kathleen is unusually



Figure 18-17 Beth and Preston Pickett as they appeared at our wedding reception.

photogenic, or so it seems. I don't believe I have ever seen a bad picture of her. I suppose that's because she never puts on an imaginary display or air. Kathleen is what she is and seems to have no need to impress anyone. In other words, she is genuine. I have grown close to Kathleen in the 13 years she has lived with us. I consider her more like my daughter than a stepdaughter. Though her life style is a little unusual, she goes about it with little intrusion

into Lethia's or my life. Sometimes I have to ask Lethia whether she is still staying upstairs. She, along with Fred and Beth, as well as my own children, has taught me to better understand the wide variety of personalities our Father in Heaven has placed on earth. I don't believe any two kids of ours are the same. In fact, Fred and Tom seem more similar than do Valerie and Celeste or Beth and Kathleen. If I understand Lethia correctly, Julia was different from her other two girls as well. Genetics may well determine physical appearance but it doesn't seem to be the answer to personality similarities.

Well, it's time to talk about Julia a little. I say a little because I never had the opportunity to meet her. She passed away October 19th of 1989 after suffering some two years from non-

heard so much about her, I look forward to meeting with her on the other side of the veil but



Figure 18-18 Kathleen as she appeared in north Georgia with Celeste, Lethia and I.

Hodgkinsons Lymphoma, I understand. From Lethia's comments, she was a bright girl with a good voice and a talent for poetry. She apparently was thoughtful, a trait she undoubtedly obtained from her mother who loves to do for others. In some ways, I kind of feel I have met her through my conversations with Lethia. She was a beautiful girl as one can see from the photo of figure 18-19. Having



Figure 18-19 Julia Griffin, Lethia's youngest daughter, now deceased.

I'm not in a hurry. Lethia and I still have much living to do and like any normal (?) octogenarian



Figure 18-20 Catherine Arrowood, Lethia's mother, as she appeared in 2005.

I am content with the present. Life is good and I am staying occupied with such things as writing this autobiography and the temple.

Though somewhat repetitious, I will include another photo of Lethia's mother in figure 18-20. It was taken recently and more accurately



Figure 18-21 Aunt Bessie's master-piece, her contribution to our wedding.

portrays the kind and giving nature she possesses. It seems her frugal upbringing produced both an independent and giving



Figure 18-22 A "goody table" with its small representation of the reception goodies.

nature. She most certainly doesn't like to see her children suffer in any way and will rise up to both defend their actions and bail them out of

their troubles. If I have any difference with her, it is in the excessive application of this wonderful trait but then, that's just a matter of opinion.

BACK TO THE RECEPTION

The reception was really nice. Not only was the home in which it was held extremely nice but the goodies of all kinds were spectacular. It was well attended and I met friend after friend of Lethia's, people she had known since childhood. I couldn't keep them separated and have since had to apologize more than once for not



Figure 18-23 Lethia & myself in the traditional cake cutting photo.

remembering them as additional meetings occurred. My side of the family was minor in numbers but important to my psychological well being, reminding me that I had not been transported to another planet. However, I must



Figure 18-24 Another pose with Lethia and I with my obvious desire of getting this over.

admit that if I were on Mars, which at the time I wasn't sure of, the Martians were nice people. Happiness could well be found among such people. Yes, Lethia had done a first class job of planning our reception, which before this point in time, I had never really appreciated. With that said, I was ready to get it over with.

The wedding cake, aunt Bessie's masterpiece, appears in figure 18-21 and a small portion of the goodies in figure 18-22. As I remember, tidbits were placed all around the main floor of the residence so people could grab a sample wherever they might be. Numerous women were working in the kitchen preparing and re-supplying the various dishes as they were emptied. Even though Lethia must have spent a tidy sum on food, I don't remember seeing the bill. Either she paid it out of her own pocket or she disguised it in some manner. Then again, I was oblivious to reality for some time after the wedding, so the bills could have passed by my face without a spark of recognition.

Since Lethia and I were the leading characters of this gala affair, I suppose I should provide a couple of photos to so indicate. You will find them in figures 18-23 and 18-24. I'm not sure of the origin of the traditional cake cutting ceremony or when it began but someone, maybe Lethia, felt we should continue the tradition. Thus we appear in the first photo in that traditional pose. Lethia is beautiful, of



Figure 18-26 Celeste holding her favorite niece of the time at our reception.

course, in both photos, while I look more like the grinning Cheshire cat of Alice in Wonderland. That may be because I was in some sort of a wonderland and had little control over my

expressions. Then again, I was somewhat intoxicated; with love that is or maybe the look is an expression of, "Just how much longer is this going to go on"? Anyway, I make no excuses for my facial expressions and will let the reader draw their own conclusions regarding the same.

Since my kids, as well as Lethia's, all made efforts to be present for this affair, I thought I



Figure 18-25 Valerie and Jared as they appeared the day of the reception.

should display individual photos of them or be prepared to suffer their wrath when they read this marvelous work. Since I have already done so for Lethia's offspring, the need to present my side becomes all the more pressing. If I have learned nothing else from the second marriage of mine, I have learned to treat both sides equally. Failure to do so is apt to bring on the thunderstorms of favoritism with its associated lightning strikes of disapproval. I don't want to be constantly turning over in my grave as each of my kids come across this particular part of the book. As a result, I now present Valerie and Jared in figure 18-25, Celeste and little Beth in figure 18-26 and Tom and Julie in Figure 18-27. However, I must admit that I am making a rather radical assumption in thinking they will actually get to this point. Their staying power of curiosity will probably lie somewhere between that of our grandchildren or great grandchildren and that of my siblings or some other unfortunate soul who

might pick up these horrendous volumes. Even so, should they get here by chance; I would like to point out a noticeable characteristic of both Jared and Tom, which is evident in the photos. Jared's is a quiet look of satisfaction, having accomplished his goal of getting me romantically involved while Tom's is simply displaying a nice thick head of hair, at least from the front. You may remember that Tom was sporting a little bald spot in figure 17-61 at the end of his mission. Of course, there's a small chance that shiny spot was some sort of defect in the photo but considering his genes, it's more likely to be authentic. At this point, I think it's appropriate to complement him for his keeping it disguised while courting Julie.

OFF ON THE HONEYMOON

First, I'll put your mind at ease by stating that I don't intend to provide any intimate details of this particular part of my life. Writing about such



Figure 18-27 Julie and Tom as they appeared at the wedding reception.

R rated material isn't in my nature. Besides, if I made such a ridiculous error, even in my senility, I would suffer the wrath of my dear wife throughout the eternities. Thus, you can read on with complete confidence that you will come across nothing more than a short overview of this particular stage in my life. Granted, such may be of little interest, as is most of what I have

written but anyone who has persevered to this point deserves some assurance that they won't be booby trapped by what still lies ahead.

Figure 18-28 portrays that part of Tennessee in which Lethia began married life. I had procured a little cabin with all the desirable amenities for a comfortable week of relaxation along a rather remote dirt road in the edge of the Appalachian Mountains. As you can see, we approached the cabin location from the west on U.S. 321 passing through Marysville and moving on towards Pigeon Forge. Just past Townsend, we cut south on a state road to the one shown in blue. It was also paved but I guess the blue

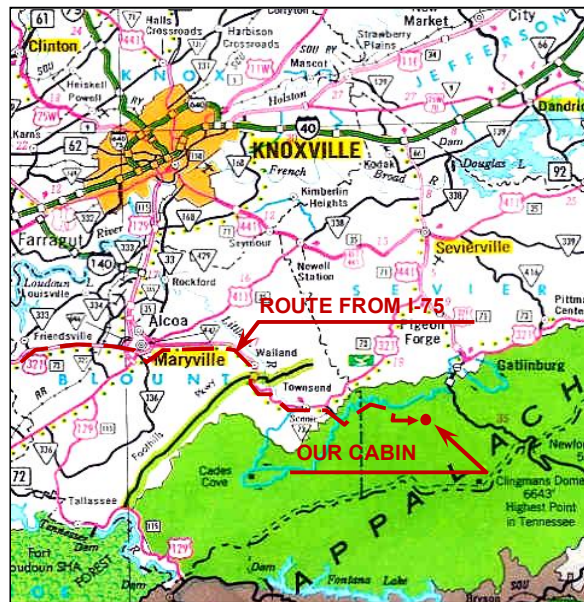


Figure 18-28 Map of the Tennessee hideaway area & our week's honeymoon.

color denotes a scenic road or something. The directions provided by the owner were good and we came to a named dirt road where we turned south again. Don't ask me the name because I forget. There were several roads along that section of highway with names and we got the right one without GPS or computerized road directions like Map Quest. Being an old oil field hand, I could read, write and even follow directions given over the phone. Anyway, I could hardly get lost with the written directions I had received in the mail. Before long we arrived in front of our destination just as planned. It was rustic but once inside we found it nicely furnished including towels and kitchen utensils. We had picked up a week's supply of groceries earlier in either Atlanta or Marysville, and moved in to our temporary abode.

As it turned out, the week was one of miserable weather filled with rain and fog but ideal for newlyweds. As one might expect, we hibernated until the weather improved towards the end of the week. We then took a little trip to Cades Cove before back tracking to the northeast to Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge. I always wondered about where and how that name originated. Did the pioneers of that area forge a pigeon's signature, forge metal images of pigeons nesting in the area or simply forge ahead through a mass of the flying critters. Someone may know but it's not apparent to me; not that it has any relevance to my story. Of course, there is little in my story that is relevant; mostly it's a hard copy of the meanderings of a demented mind. You may already have ascertained this from your reading.

Well, Pigeon Forge was and I suppose, still is a tourist trap looking for pigeons like us who happen to wander in. We, the unwary, looking for a good time and wanting to learn a little about any area we visit, stopped in their little shops to look around. Wham, before you know it, one has bought several pieces of curious and intriguing pieces of workmanship, which we carry back with us. We then have the job of finding some place for them in our house or disposing of them in some appropriate manner. They then become white elephants for Christmas parties or donations to the Salvation Army. Fortunately, Lethia was not a memento collector and after cruising the town a little, we headed northwest on 441, hung a left on U.S. 321 and before we knew it, were back in the vicinity of the cabin. Though we had done nothing exciting during the day, we had had an enjoyable trip. The area is green and beautiful, particularly in the Cades Cove and Gatlinburg areas. In late August, it was peaceful and calm with little tourist traffic.

The next day or maybe the day after, we headed back to Atlanta and reality. I would now move lock, stock and barrel into the residence shown in figures 18-3 and 18-4 with Lethia and Kathleen. It would become home for us for the next ten plus years until its sale in January of 2003. After moving in, I continued to work in the Atlanta Temple 3 days a week or so and Lethia remained at her job for another year, the primary reason for that being her insurance coverage. With the sale of my Denver residence in the fall of 1993 our financial picture improved and she resigned. She then began to accompany me to the temple where we spent two days a week for

several years. At one point, we were called as trainers to indoctrinate new temple ordinance workers and worked five days a week for six months. Our service there was pleasant, fulfilling and it let us spend the days working together as a side benefit.

LIFE IN FLOWERY BRANCH

I don't intend to bore you with our rather mundane life in the bedroom community of Flowery Branch but will just mention a few tidbits

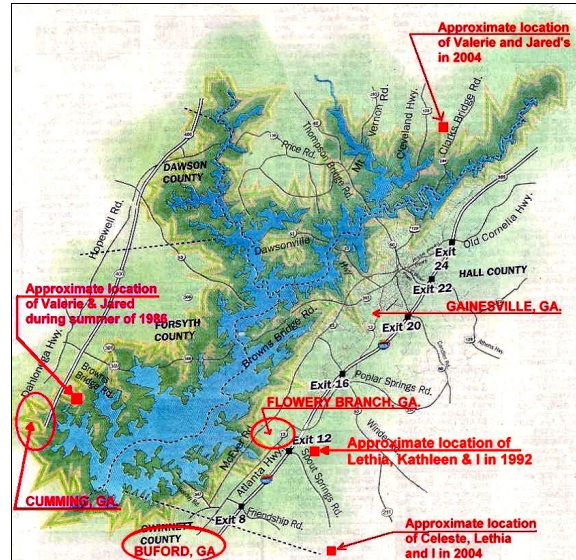


Figure 18-29 Map of the Flowery Branch area Lake Lanier as well as our two homes, Celeste's present home and a couple of Valerie and Jared's homes.

to provide an idea of its flavor in the turn of the century. When we moved in, it was definitely rural in nature; an attribute that attracted us both. Though we had to drive some 5 miles to the nearest grocery store and 10 or so to any kind of a shopping center, life was pleasant with little traffic to raise ones ire. We were about a mile and a half from the I-985 interstate, which gave us a clear shot down I-85 to the I-285 loop and the temple. We could get there, a distance of 40 miles in roughly 40 minutes. Occasionally, traffic problems would result in congestion on either I-285 or I-85. In such cases we could travel GA-400, a limited access highway and bypass the problem. Such a detour added 15 miles of two-lane highway, which made the trip some 50 minutes to an hour maximum.

Today, that is history, as the Atlanta area continues to grow. Now the most challenging part of our lives, as well as the most dangerous,

is negotiating the interstate between the temple or Lethia's folks and our home. Rush hour from 6 to 9 AM as well as 4 to 7 PM clog the interstates in spite of their constant improvement. As a result, I now try to go to the temple about 10:30 AM and return around 7 to 8 PM to alleviate the situation. That works quite well under normal situations but accidents and/or rain can create problems lasting throughout the day and into the late evening. Then, all bets are off and one takes whatever is dished out.

I have often wondered where the term "rush hour" came from. Whoever coined it quite



Figure 18-30 Catherine's father with David and Lethia when she was one or two.

obviously had never experienced the stop and go of that time period. The closest one gets to rush is the spurt of adrenaline that occurs when he or she tries to avoid an accident. Oh well, our forefathers had the wild animals and Indians to contend with while we put up with 18-wheelers, speeders, road rage, drugs and alcohol in our daily trips. I think they might have

had it the easiest; just kidding but one must admit that challenges still exist with ours being somewhat different than theirs.

Figure 18-29 is a reproduction of figure 17-109, which I inserted here to help clarify your mental geography. As an afterthought, I have also added the location of our first home illustrated in figures 18-3 and 18-4 and our present home located five miles to the southeast. This may help you follow my mental meanderings as I cover this last and least exciting era of my life. The southern edge of the area covered by figure 18-28 lies about 30 miles to the northeast of the I-285 loop that circles the Atlanta metro area. A spur off of I-85, I-985, follows up the east side of Lake Lanier and is identified on the map.

A PEEK AT LETHIA'S PAST

To better acquaint you with Lethia, I'll spend a few minutes talking about her earlier life as I understand it when she grew up in the Atlanta area. She was born in 1942 in Crawford Long Hospital in down town Atlanta, she tells me.



Figure 18-31 Catherine, David and Lethia in a little later time frame, I guess.

When she was still very young, her parents moved to an area in Atlanta called west end. There they lived in a duplex next to Mr. Papa, Gordon's father. When she was about three or four, they moved to Cascade Heights where she lived until she graduated from high school.

LETHIA'S PROGENITORS

Figure 18-30 pictures her with David and Catherine's father at, I would guess, the ripe old age of 1+ years. In figure 18-31 she appears with David and her mother in probably a little later time frame. I believe David is eight years older than her and I would guess he is 9 or 10, making her about 1 or 2 years of age. I have included a picture of Keleen and Lethia along with two other cousins, Lloyd Smith and Kenneth Arrowood in figure 18-32. I really like this photo and regard it as an especially precious snapshot in the early life of Lethia. I don't know who was responsible for the clothes but they're all cute.

Apparently she and Keleen were inseparable companions and partners in crime. You see, Lethia's mother insisted Lethia eat all her vegetables at dinner, which Lethia hated. Keleen didn't mind them, it so happened. To expedite Lethia's release from the dinner table, she would eat the vegetables on the sly. Lethia's mother would observe their disappearance and let Lethia go out to play for being such a good girl. Of course, Keleen wasn't always there and Lethia needed an alternate plan for the vegetable disposal. This she found in the potted plants that sat on the dining room table. She would quietly bury them, a little at a time, in the pots when her mother left the room. After several trips to the kitchen, Katherine, Lethia's mother, would observe their disappearance and release her to go out and play. Needless to say, Katherine had some of the healthiest, thriving potted plants in the neighborhood, becoming the envy of her friends for her green thumb.

When Lethia was in the third grade, her father built a brick home further out in a suburb called Cascade Heights. There she grew up, finishing high school and eventually marrying before her parents moved on to an acreage or "the farm" as they termed it. It's not obvious what farming they did but it was a nice sized piece of land, about 50 acres, on which they still lived when I met Lethia in 1992. I visited them with Lethia many times, at that home while participating in family affairs. I often sat on the porch with Gordon and talked about various experiences of his and mine. They sold it in the late nineties and bought the home Catherine now lives in.

Figure 18-33 is a photo of Lethia as a young lady, probably taken while she lived in Cascade Heights. The picture caught her in a somber mood, which doesn't really express her

optimistic view of life or her happy and pleasant nature. It does, however, bring out her rather quiet and unruffled feelings regarding the events

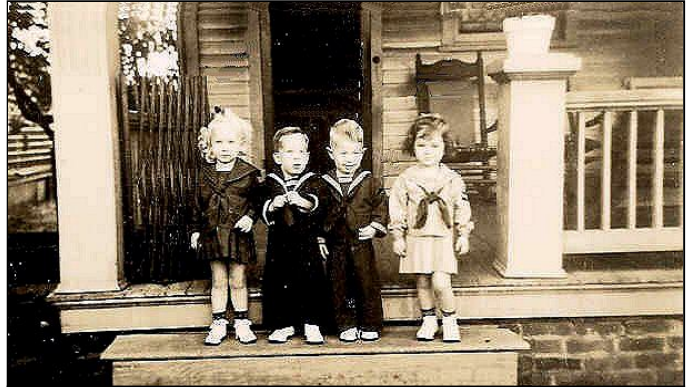


Figure 18-32 Lethia and three of her first cousins, taken as tiny tots in 1944 at their grandpa's house. From L to R Lethia Arrowood, Kenneth Arrowood, Lloyd Smith and Keleen Penn.

taking place around her. Figure 18-34 displays Lethia with her third child, Kathleen, which means it was probably taken around 1968 when



Figure 18-33 Lethia, as a young lady in her teens and living in Cascade Heights.

she was roughly 26. I particularly like this photo because of her hairstyle and pleasant expression. It seems more representative of the

Lethia I know and love. She is quiet, thoughtful and kind to almost a fault. She will seldom enter into a dispute with anyone but will stand up for things she deems important issues.

I have sometimes chided her a little about being too nice but she quickly emphasizes that she will



Figure 18-34 Lethia with Kathleen, her second youngest, around 1968.

save her comments for things she deems important. This, I have found to be true when I have trespassed on items in her domain



Figure 18-35 Gordon and Catherine during his years of WWII service.

regarding things she feels strongly about. When I make such an error, I quickly backtrack because I know the item is important to her and I

would never knowingly hurt her feelings. Though she and I have had a few differences of opinion in our thirteen years together, we are still waiting for our first real argument. Not that we look forward to such a situation but if it is to ever occur, it will be in the future. We both feel that unity in married life is of prime importance and when accomplished, solves a multitude of problems. I suppose we are fortunate because we seem to think alike on important issues while lesser ones simply aren't worth arguing over. We both give way quite easily, which is probably a product of our love and respect for each other.



Figure 18-36 Gordon on the right with his parents and older brother Doss.

In any case, we are quite compatible, one might even say very compatible.

Gordon used to tell me about some of his WWII experiences. I don't believe he ever spent time overseas but he served a couple of years in the army. Of course, he had a family when inducted, which probably had a bearing on his time of induction as well as his service experiences. He talked a little about his service years but mostly his experience getting home

when he was released. In any case, I have included a photo of Catherine and him in figure 18-35, which was probably taken while he was on furlough. To complete the episode covering Lethia's progenitors, I am including a photo of Gordon with his parents and brother Doss in the photo of figure 18-36. We'll then move on to the main subject matter, namely Lethia and me.

A FALL TRIP TO NORTH GEORGIA

Georgia may not have the variation and quality of fall colors that has made New England famous but in a good year the colorful scenery is indeed beautiful. In the early years of our marriage, such was the case every fall. Then several years of drought set in, which apparently limits the intensity of the fall colors. Leaves seem to fall earlier before any real cold snaps occur. Just what the botany involved is, I don't know. I only know the result. We seem to be breaking out of the drought now and we look forward to more pleasant fall picnics in North Georgia. By the way, a drought in this part of the country means an annual rainfall in the forty-inch range rather than 55 inches or so. This may appear ridiculous to westerners but I suppose the plant life lives in expectation of the extra ten inches. In any case, the drought is detrimental to tree foliage because the pine beetle begins to run rampant and the fall colors become degraded.

The first fall after Celeste was transferred to Georgia, I believe, we set out on a fall picnic to the northern mountains or hills by western standards. Celeste and Kathleen accompanied us on a wide circle illustrated on the map of figure 18-37 in pink. As you can see from the map, we traveled up I-985 from Flowery Branch passed Gainesville where the interstate becomes just a federal highway, U.S. 23, which we took on up to Clayton. We saw a certain amount of color all along the way but the woods became really beautiful as we passed through the Tallulah Gorge area. We went on up to Clayton where we turned east a few miles to visit the War Woman Park, which, you might remember, is the location of my official proposal. With Celeste and Kathleen along, however, we were careful not to re-enact anything. I believe we just took a rest stop and enjoyed the surrounding colors, which blanketed the area. Next, we backtracked to Clayton where we headed west on U.S. 76 to Hiawassee. I believe we dropped down south on GA 197 a few miles to Lake Burton where the photo of figure 18-38

was taken. We then returned to U.S. 76 to go on in to Hiawassee. From there we went on over to Blairsville where 76 intersects U.S. 129,

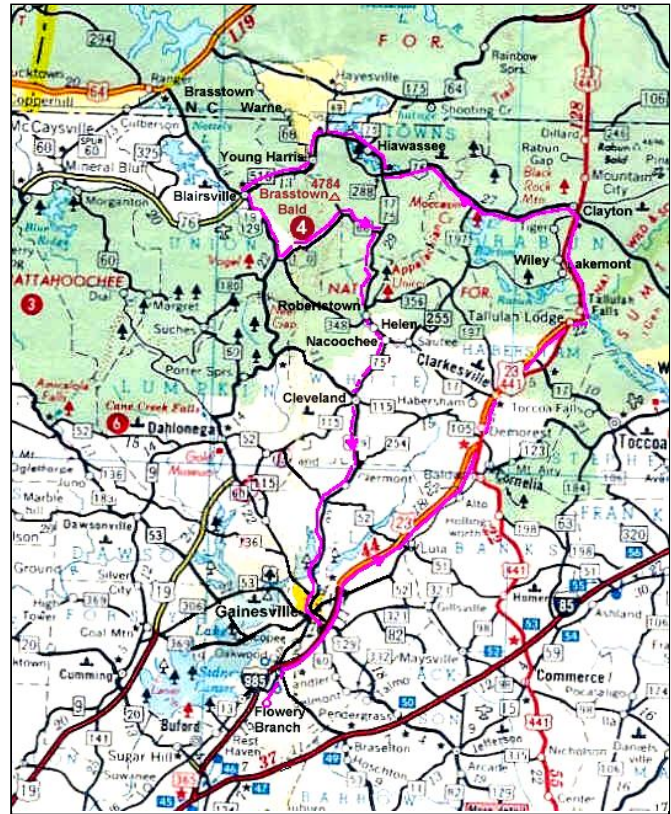


Figure 18-37 Map of a fall trip and picnic in north Georgia after Celeste's transfer to Atlanta.

which took us south to GA 180. At that point, in an effort to maximize our exposure to fall colors, we headed back east to Brasstown Bald. That

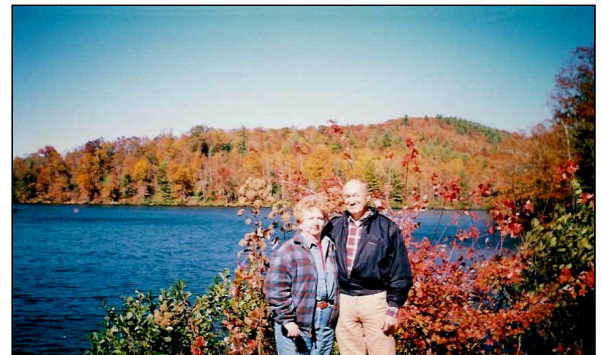


Figure 18-38 Lethia & I near Lake Burton in the Georgia Mountains in 1995.

particular peak indicated on the map, lies on the spine of the Appalachian Mountains and is high enough to oversee quite an area. Because of time, however, we didn't take the road up but continued on GA 66 to intersect GA 17 & 75.

We then went south to Helen, a tourist town where they have an Octoberfest celebration each year and enjoyed the scenery all the way. I'm not sure just how many people of German ancestry live in that little town but the festival brings in a lot of people every year, which sustains the shops, I suppose, through the remaining slower months. Actually, it's a nice little town and one can spend quite a while there, just looking around, eating lunch or dinner, etc. After a short stop, we continued on south to Cleveland where we intersected U.S. 129 again and continued on into Gainesville and ultimately home.

We made several stops along the way to get out and take time to soak up the colors at various



Figure 18-39 Celeste, Lethia and I enjoying the great outdoors in 1994.

scenic points. One such point between Clayton and Hiawasse, I believe, is where Kathleen took the photo of figure 18-39. It's the same location where the photo of Lethia and me was taken to adorn the title page of this historic work. One can get some idea of the beauty involved from these pictures but the average photo just doesn't do the scenery justice. We also stopped for lunch south of Blairsville along U.S. 129 where the photo of figure 18-40 was taken. These might give the reader an idea of the

pleasant atmosphere existing in the north Georgia Mountains during the fall. Truly, the east with all of its hardwoods has fall colors that the west, in general, can't equal. The scenic overlook where figure 18-39 was taken provided a beautiful view of the surrounding hillsides. As you might suspect, we spent considerable time there, enjoying the various hues and colors before moving on. In the Georgia Mountains one is often boxed in by foliage and getting a panoramic view is difficult to say the least. In fact, this particular spot turned out to be the most picturesque in terms of a panorama.

The first few years after our marriage, we made trips in the fall to the mountains to enjoy the colors and they became somewhat of a family tradition. Then the drought struck and we haven't been back. In fact, the year we made the trip with Celeste was the beginning of the drought and the colors, though beautiful, were not what we had experienced in earlier years. Now that the weather is becoming more normal, we'll probably begin the annual treks again to enjoy the colors.

ADDING TO THE FAMILY

Soon after Celeste's arrival in Georgia, one or two years I would say, her companion and pet dog, Gandolf, died and she began looking for a replacement. Soon, she acquired not one but two dogs to assuage her sorrow. They were both Bishons, brother and sister, which she named Henry and Honey respectively. That breed didn't shed and they seemed very even-tempered, so Lethia and I considered picking a puppy from a second litter they had. It should prove better than the poodles Esther and I had



Figure 18-40 Lethia & I preparing for lunch and a little relaxation along U.S. 129.

enjoyed over the years. Though neither shed, the Bishons didn't seem to have the need to bark every time something out of the ordinary occurred. Lethia wasn't too dog prone but gave

her approval when she saw that both Kathleen and I were in favor of adding to the household. Thus, we purchased Charlie, a male Bishon, who brought us all many hours of friendly companionship over the next 7 or so years. Lethia even took to him as evidenced by the photo of figure 18-41. He, indeed, was quiet, only barking when a stranger came to the door. However, as soon as said stranger entered, Charlie was the first to welcome him or her as a friend. In fact, he would pester them so much that we had to put him in the bedroom most of the time if they stayed for a chat. I'm confident that they could steal anything they could lay their hands on, as long as they took time to pet him a little. Charlie was not a watchdog but an animal that loved people. He made friends throughout the neighborhood. Kids and adults alike would ask about Charlie when I went for my usual walk without him. They never asked about Lethia or me but always seemed concerned over their friend Charlie.

Even though he had an endearing personality, Charlie was not without his faults, in terms of being a housedog. His quiet nature got him into trouble from time to time. You see, even though we housebroke him rather easily, he made no signs of need when Mother Nature called. If we weren't on our toes, he would simply do his duty and then slink off to some corner, knowing he had violated the terms of his pet contract. Thus it became our responsibility to determine just when his biological need arrived and let him accomplish the task. All our other dogs over the years always barked, sat by the door or gave some type of signal that they needed to go outside but not Charlie. He simply endured the wrath that always followed and then weaseled his way back in to our good graces. His charming personality guaranteed his success and soon things would be back to normal.

Charlie was extremely allergic to fleas and various pollens in the neighborhood. When bothered by some reaction to an unknown stimulant, he would chew himself raw, even drawing blood, to try to satisfy the itch. As a result, we had to give him a daily dose of an allergy medicine along with a monthly dose of heartworm medicine and seasonal flea and tick eradicators. It wasn't until we had claimed him as a pet and he had secured a spot in our hearts that we learned of these problems. A vet we used told us that white dogs were unusually prone to allergies as well as the biting of fleas and ticks. I don't know that an advanced

understanding of such problems would have changed our minds about acquiring him but I would be careful in the future. The white color, though beautiful when clean, was not particularly desirable overall because of said allergies.

Charlie's friendliness to neighbors was his Achilles Heel. When we let him out he would stay until he was ready to come in. If we were in



Figure 18-41 Charlie & Lethia in front room of our home in "Hunter's Landing".

a hurry, no amount of coaxing with treats would do any good and an effort on my part to get him was met with quick evasive maneuvers. I could never quite defeat them but proving I was smarter than he was became a challenge. I capitalized on his weakness. Knowing he loved our neighbor, who did nothing but pet him and feed him treats; I enlisted her in his capture. I would call her on the phone and she would get him to her door where she held him until I could get a leash on him. I then dragged him home so we could leave. Fortunately, he never caught on to this means of his capture, which I used only when in the direst need because of our desire to stay in our neighbor's good graces.

Charlie slept with Kathleen unless he was having a series of plumbing accidents. She didn't get up early and let him out for his morning constitutional, so I took on the responsibility. Often, he wouldn't respond to my

calls in the morning, preferring to remain comfortable alongside Kathleen. Consequently, I began going upstairs and carrying him down to put him out. It was simpler than waking up the neighborhood with my calls of "Charlie, Charlie, come on, let's go". This obstinacy on his part eventually led to his demise.

As he gained weight and size, he became more of a problem to carry. Not that he was particularly heavy but his weight could throw a person off balance when negotiating the stairs. About eight or ten months after we moved to our new house in the Legend Falls subdivision, I managed to fall with him in my arms roughly half way down the stairs and we both landed in a heap at the bottom. I was unhurt but I landed on Charlie, breaking his two rear legs. After consulting with the vet, I decided to have him put to sleep. Repair would have been \$2,000 or more and there was no guarantee that he would walk again. Thus, we all went through an emotional period over his demise. Needless to say, I really felt bad but what was done; was done. The house seemed empty for a while and I still, at times, look around and almost call out for Charlie when I come home. Considering the many problems with owning a dog, we elected not to replace him. As a consequence, we now do without wagging tails, licking tongues and friendly welcomes when we arrive home.

MEDICAL CHALLENGES

I consider myself quite fortunate to be as healthy as I am at this stage of my life. At 76 I passed my driving test without a problem, including the need for glasses. The next challenge in that department comes at 80. I still find myself quite comfortable negotiating the Atlanta interstates or should I say speedways? Though I am somewhat slower than the majority of the traffic, I still drive the speed limit or even a little over at times. The overage stems primarily from my desire of self-preservation. You see, one can get run over by 18-wheelers, numerous types of SUVs, Hummers and the like as well as the younger set in smaller cars. In my early days, only the young men drove like they were on a racetrack, weaving in and out of traffic in the various lanes blocking their progress. Now, the young ladies are every bit as bold bringing their mortality statistics in line with those of the young men and proving their equality in terms of

After discussing my situation rather thoroughly, he gave me some literature to peruse and suggested I talk to an Oncologist about radiation treatment.

wisdom deprivation. There seems to be no solution to slowing down people in a rush to accomplish their responsibilities of daily life.

In spite of my general good health, I have had some medical challenges. In 1980 I began treatment for Hypertension, a condition I had had, apparently, for some time. I spoke of that in chapter fifteen and won't belabor your patience with repetition. The same can be said for the diabetic condition I was diagnosed with in 1982. I mention them here only to point out that they continue to be ongoing medical challenges, which I have learned to deal with. Either through obedience to doctors' instructions or the grace of God, I have suffered no serious repercussions from either condition in the intervening years since their inception. I will admit, however, that either they or my 77+ years of age do limit some of my physical activities.

CANCER COMES KNOCKING ON MY DOOR

In December of 1994 I was diagnosed as having cancer of the prostate. Being 66 years of age, my Urologist said I had three options. First, I could leave it untreated. It would probably progress slowly and I would exit this world from other causes before it would take its toll. Second, I could have elective surgery and he could remove the prostate. Thirdly, I could take radiation treatments, which had about the same success rate as the surgical procedure. At the early stage of my condition, each had a rather low mortality rate after ten years. After discussing my situation rather thoroughly, he gave me some literature to peruse and suggested I talk to an Oncologist about radiation treatment. He also gave me the names of three such physicians.

I made an appointment, had a long discussion and once again, received a handful of literature to peruse. After a good deal of study, I decided to proceed with the radiation. The odds of living a full life seemed somewhat better with treatment and the radiation appeared to have a lesser chance of serious side effects, such as incontinence. I began 37 radiation treatments, three per week, roughly the first of February 1995 and completed the series some three months later. In the fall of 1995, my PSA had dropped to 1.0 from 4.6 at the time of diagnoses and has remained well below 1.0 since that time. I now have such tests on a yearly basis and all

seems well, almost fourteen years later. Life is good and hope still seems to extend its comforting hand on a daily basis.

A SLIPPERY SLOPE

In the fall of 1997, I was the painting the house and was roughly half done when I broke my leg just below the hip joint, the femur I believe. It was a freak situation, which brought about the dastardly deed. I had completed painting of all parts of the house above roof level including the fireplace chimney. Lethia was worried about me climbing around the roof but I had rigged a safe platform for the more difficult areas including the chimney. These were all completed safely and I must admit, I breathed a sigh of relief at that point. I hadn't been worried about falling because I was extremely careful but it was hard, hot work climbing around up there. Once I began the porch and sides of the house, I felt it would be all downhill from there. I had rented some scaffolding, which provided safe footing

When Lethia said she thought my leg was broken, the paramedic said he didn't think so because I would be yelling in pain when they moved me. Little did he know that it was all I could do to keep from yelling.

for that part of the job. The front went well as did the higher parts of the left side of the house. I had just come out of the house to begin a new day's effort when circumstances lowered the boom. The scaffolding on the left side of the house was situated on a grass-covered hill with a pretty good incline. The grass was covered with morning dew. As I approached the scaffolding, my feet went out from under me. I grabbed for the scaffolding but to no avail and found myself lying on my left side under the scaffold. Upon trying to rise, I felt a sharp pain in my left hip area. I realized something was broken and I needed to get Lethia's attention. I tried to slide myself up hill but found the pain excruciating. Even so, I was able to work my way up a few feet to the edge of the driveway where I lay pondering my next move. I realized it might be a couple of hours before Lethia would come out to inquire about my status. I did yell a couple of times in hopes she would be in the kitchen and be able to hear me. Then I decided to lie there until someone came within earshot, such as the mailman or a neighbor. I was reasonably comfortable as long as I didn't move but I kept struggling towards the garage door to see if I couldn't raise Lethia.

About a half hour later, Kathleen drove in from work. She got out of the car and as I remember, asked me what I was doing laying on the ground. I said, "Well, it looks like I broke my leg. Would you get Lethia out here"? If I'd have had more presence of mind I might have said, "Oh, just having a break" but humor really wasn't on my mind at that point. Needless to say, she scurried in and soon Lethia was by my side. I explained what had happened and that it appeared that my leg was broken. She immediately called 911 and in just minutes the ambulance was there. After a brief examination, they loaded me on a stretcher and moved me to the ambulance. When Lethia said she thought my leg was broken, the paramedic said he didn't think so because I would be yelling in pain when they moved me. Little did he know that it was all I could do to keep from yelling. Soon we were bouncing down the road and I do mean bouncing. That was the roughest riding vehicle I have ever been in. I believe I felt every imperfection including pebbles along the various roads we traveled and had I had a pencil and pad with a view of the odometer, I could have listed the necessary places in need of repair. Though only about 15 miles to the hospital, it seemed like a hundred. Lethia confirms my impression of the vehicle's ride, saying she had never ridden in such a rough riding ambulance.

Soon I was lying in a room next to emergency services waiting for a physician. They still hadn't administered any pain medication because, I suppose, I wasn't screaming like a wounded banshee. No one even asked if I was comfortable or was experiencing pain. I'm not sure just how long I lay there before the doctor finally came in but it seemed like a couple of hours. If anyone had looked at my face, they would have seen sporadic grimaces of varying degrees, as the pain rose and subsided. I just asked Lethia whether she was in the room or not and she answered in the affirmative. When I asked her why someone didn't ask me if I was having pain she said, "Well, I guess, because you weren't yelling. You need to take lessons from someone on how to express pain". She confirmed my impression of the passage of time as being 2 or more hours.

I remember stifling my cries as the doctor examined me. Though I know he was being careful, at that point, any movement seemed to bring the pain to a peak. Soon after, they wheeled me into an operating room and I remember nothing from that point until I woke

up. Lethia told me the operation took place about 1:00 AM and lasted 3 to 4 hours, which means I arrived in the room at about 4 AM.

I awoke a few hours later in a room with Lethia by my side. All had apparently gone well and I found myself comfortable for the first time in roughly 24 hours. However, the old adage, "There's no rest for the wicked", seems to apply here, in that they had me up walking with a walker and a nurse that afternoon. I repeated the exercise each day for a couple of days and was released on the fourth day, I believe. A therapist had given me some counsel on exercising as did the physician, an orthopedic surgeon. The latter told me he had inserted a metal plate to connect the two pieces of the femur together, which would hold them securely until the bone knit. When healed, I could leave the plate in or have it removed. He said I could move around normally in so far as the pain would allow and encouraged me to take walks as soon as I felt like it. My first few walks were short and with a walker but soon the leg felt good enough to put the latter in storage. Before very long I was taking half mile walks and a little later began mowing my lawn. Being late in the season, I only had to mow it a couple of times before winter set in and then only the fescue, which grows best during cooler periods.

BECOMING A PARTY TO GRAFT

As I remember, I went in for checkups with the orthopedic surgeon about once a month at first



Figure 18-43 A side view of our first house demonstrating the hilly nature of the yard.

and then every six weeks or so. As time wore on he became concerned because the bone didn't seem to be knitting. Everything felt fine to me. I had a little limp because my left leg was now a little shorter but I had no pain. He encouraged me to remain active and we would

wait a little longer for the bone to knit. In March, the lawn began to grow in earnest. Needless to say, I began mowing it on a regular basis, every



Figure 18-42 "Yours-Truly" enjoying the spring sunshine at our home in Flowery Branch.

couple of weeks at first and then every week. I inserted figure 18-42 for a couple of reasons. The first shows off some Azaleas, which I was proud of and secondly it provides a hint of the hilly nature of our yard. Though I don't know the exact date of this photo, it could well have been about the time of my recovery from surgery #1. I just found another photo, displayed in figure 18-43, without my lovely countenance, which illustrates the hilly nature somewhat better.

Along about April, the surgeon decided the bone wasn't going to knit. The X-Ray indicated no knitting as yet, some 6 to 7 months after surgery and the screws holding the plate to the bones were beginning to work loose. Since the bone hadn't knit, the plate was supporting all my activity, which was apparently too much for it. He scheduled a second surgery after explaining to me that he would have to graft the two pieces of bone together to insure they knitted. Normally the bones would knit without a graft but for some reason mine didn't. He didn't believe it was my level of activity even though such activity had worked the screws loose. It wasn't too much of a surprise because I have often been accused of having a screw loose. In fact, finding out it wasn't in my cranium provided me with a sense of relief, it being far removed from my head.

In any case, the surgery was scheduled for some three weeks later. He would take bone from my pelvis to use as a grafting material. He might have used another source but my own bone provided the best odds of success. I selected that source of material even though he

warned such a procedure would probably cause more discomfort than the actual graft, when healing. I wasn't too happy about going through the procedure a second time and would gladly put up with the discomfort to maximize the odds. I certainly didn't want a third operation, which in my mind was unacceptable and would take all necessary precautions to prevent the possibility.

I went in for a preoperational meeting a while before the surgery and returned early in the morning on the scheduled day. The surgery was to take about four hours considering that the material had to be taken from by pelvic area before the actual graft could be accomplished. As it turned out, the operation took about seven hours because of a hardware modification and some trouble keeping me under anesthesia. I also required several pints of blood, so they said. The anesthesia problem occurred because my mouth wouldn't open far enough to get some anesthesia device in place. In fact, they broke a false tooth, which I had to have repaired. After the four hours passed, Lethia became uneasy even though I slept through it all. By the end of seven hours, she was somewhat frantic. I guess they were so involved with me that they couldn't tell her what was going on. All ended well and they returned me to my room being no worse for the wear.

After learning about my small mouth in later conversation, I felt relieved once again. It appeared I didn't have a big mouth after all, as I had so often been accused of in my youth. Although I can't be sure, Dan may have been the culprit who coined that phrase when he whipped me and I went screaming to mom. Although it has taken me a lifetime, I now have medical proof that such a disparaging remark is false. Unfortunately, I will have to wait until I reach the other side to inform mom.

The results of the second effort paid off. The bone knit and the leg is about as good as I could ask for at my age. I was going to say as good as new but I realized none of my parts are new except for the metal plate they used. The leg is a half to three quarters of an inch shorter than the right but a little lift in my left shoe takes care of that. I now move around without a limp and take my daily mile walk without difficulty. Of course, the metal strap remains in my leg and I'm not about to have it taken out. My only concern now is, "Can I get through a metal detector at the airport or will they strip search me"? Those familiar with my annual trips out

west will now understand why I drive. I simply can't bear exposing my "Adonis-like" body to the public without a fee of some sort.

DUPUYTREN CONTRACTIONS

Being of northern European descent, it seems I am subject to a little known problem named after, who else but Dupuytren or maybe Dupuy. In any case, I had been duped for several years into thinking I had some strange malady brought on by my tendency to grasp whatever food that happened to lie within my reach. You see, over a period of about 15 years a couple of fingers on each hand had been drawn half closed by the tendons, which manipulate them. School kids might have called me "The Claw". Those fingers would only open to about 90 degrees from the

It seems her husband called the doctor saying, "Doctor, doctor, my wife is going around the house talking gibberish". The doctor asked, "What's she saying"? The husband replied, "She just keeps saying can't, won't, shouldn't wouldn't, didn't and so on". The doc said, "Oh don't worry about that but bring her right in, she's beginning to have contractions".

palm of the hand. No discomfort was involved and I could still grab any food that was necessary, so I did nothing about it. Finally, I met a couple of guys in the temple who were familiar with it and in fact, one had just cured his with a simple operation. It seems a substance lying between the skin and the flesh of the hand called palmar fascia tends to harden with age in those people who are unfortunate enough to have northern European ancestors. That's us Obenchains, so beware you yunguns having those genes. The fascia apparently hardens around the tendons and prevents them from relaxing to open ones hand.

In any case, in 2004 I took the bull by the horns and got my left hand straightened out. That worked so well that I had the right hand done the next February. Now I am complemented for going straight, being straight forward and even walking the straight and narrow, while I win hands down for straight forward improvement. Well, I suppose I should straighten out my story before the book goes straight into file 13.

By the way, while I'm on the subject of contractions, have you heard the one about the expectant mother? It seems her husband called the doctor saying, "Doctor, doctor, my wife is

going around the house talking gibberish". The doctor asked, "What's she saying"? The husband replied, "She just keeps saying can't, won't, shouldn't wouldn't, didn't and so on". The doc said, "Oh don't worry about that but bring her right in, she's beginning to have contractions". Well enough of that and on to topics of more interest, I hope, which really shouldn't be much of a challenge.

A CANADIAN VACATION

Lethia and I go west every year to spend a little

time with my family, as well as her family in Dallas, because, we both realize that such trips will cease sometime in the future. I feel I have been blessed beyond measure in being able to function as an independent human being at my age. Though younger than half of my siblings, I felt my diabetic condition might limit my driving as well as other aspects of life at an early age. However, it seems the good Lord has seen fit to generally bless the Obenchains with genes of longevity and I have been able to limit the deleterious effects brought on by diabetes.

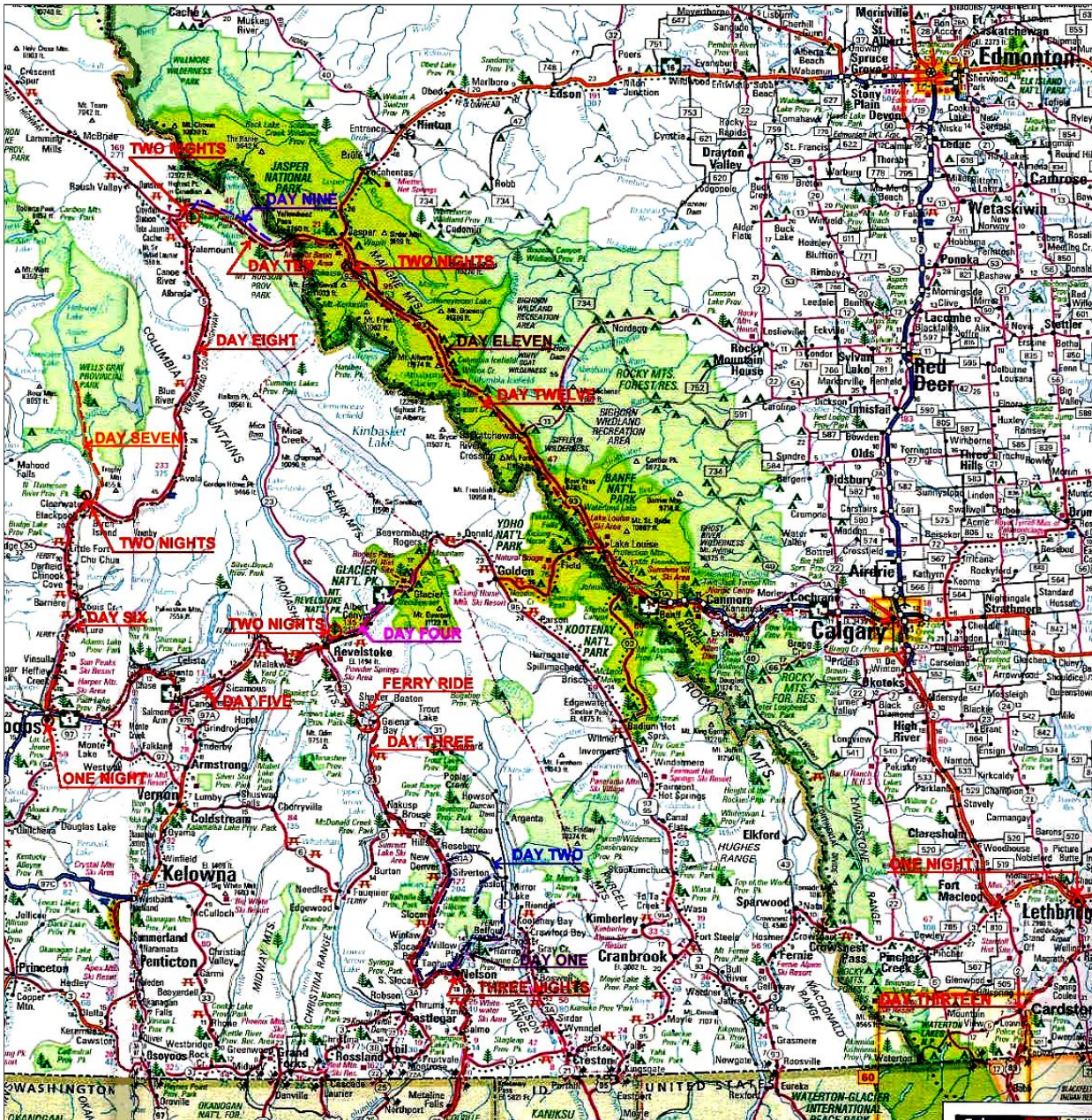


Figure 18-44 A map illustrating our daily wanderings through the two Canadian provinces.

Consequently, I still drive with confidence, though others on the road may question its worthiness. I don't find a trip out west particularly tiring. All this rambling is to bring to light the fact that we generally include some relaxation time of our own when making the visits spoken of. One such vacation included a two-week trip into British Columbia, Canada with a couple of stops in Alberta on the way back.

I had enjoyed the trip, to primarily Alberta, with Esther and the kids back in the late sixties and convinced Lethia we should take another such trip by ourselves. British Columbia had appealed to me ever since that first trip because of the many national and provincial parks situated therein. I simply wanted to tour much of the area and enjoy the majestic scenery I was sure would be there. I was no longer particularly interested in fishing but wanted more to soak up the natural beauty and serenity I had experienced earlier. As always, Lethia was game and we decided to couple such a trip with a family reunion in Idaho. Though I don't remember the exact year, I feel sure it was 1997 because it was a reunion year prior to my hip incident and we took the new 1996 pickup.

CANADA, HERE WE COME

After the reunion, we took I-84 west to the Payette exit and then headed north on US 95. Just north of Lewiston, we grabbed US195 and drove into Spokane where we stayed for the night. It was Spokane where we first came across Cosco. We stocked up on camping supplies so as to minimize our purchasing in Canada, not being sure of pricing or the availability of some foods. I remember buying some cinnamon twists there and some dehydrated potato soup, as well as several cans of clams. You see, I love cinnamon and these had very little sugar, so I had my treats for the trip. Later, when we felt like soup, we would add a can of clams to the potato soup and enjoy some great clam chowder. How's that for foresight? We also loaded up on canned goods but very little fresh stuff, not knowing whether the Canadian customs would reject such items. All in all, I would say we probably bought 90% of the food required for the trip.

The next morning we headed north out of Spokane to W 20 and later W 31 to Metaline Falls and the Canadian border, where we pick up our wanderings in Canada in figure 18-44, a map of portions of British Columbia and Alberta. I'll use it to chart our travels through those two

beautiful provinces. Note that our major route of travel is shown as red dashed lines, while side trips are shown as dashed lines in some other color. Thus, as we entered Canada we traveled

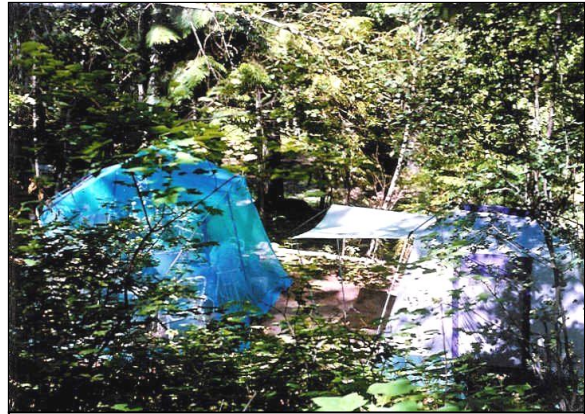


Figure 18-45 Our cozy campsite south of Nelson, Canada on a mountain side.

north on Canada 6 to Nelson where we spent three nights. Notice the length of stay in any given location is also shown.

Nelson is a pretty little town setting on an arm of Kootenay Lake. As luck would have it, there was a campground just south of town on a rather steep hillside. We found a nice camping spot and set up the tents for three nights. Our campsite is shown in figure 18-45. Notice we had our sleeping tent and a mosquito netting tent set up side by side. The latter would protect us from the ornery little critters, should they decide to join us, as well as protect us from the rain, if and when necessary. A water faucet lay



Figure 18-46 Lethia relaxing in the screen tent with table, food boxes, coolers.

just a few yards from camp and a new outhouse just a few yards further on. The camp had a few strategically placed electric lights including one in the John. However, the campsite itself had no

power and there were no showers. We solved the latter by going into town where we found a public facility with showers, which were clean and free of charge. All in all, our setup was quite nice though, admittedly, the showers were a little inconvenient.

By the time we got things set up the first day, it was suppertime. We ate well, having our complete stock of food to choose from. As you can see from figure 18-46, we had all of the comforts of home except the beds in our screened enclosure. I don't remember the mosquitoes being very bad anywhere we went in

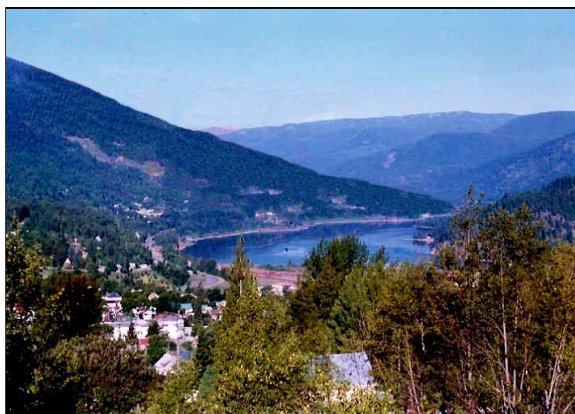


Figure 18-47 Nelson & Lake Kootenay as seen from near the camp south of town.

Canada but the screened enclosure gave us a place to relax after a meal as well as a place to read in the evening. Our gas lantern gave plenty of light for such activity and assured us that no nasty little bugs would come visiting us. Also, I could place the gas stove on the table to cook and still have plenty of room for Lethia and me to eat. Though not as luxurious as a motor home or even a small trailer, it fit our needs well and allowed us to camp in places where one couldn't take a motor home or trailer of any size. In fact, this particular campground wasn't made for anything other than tent camping.

DAY ONE IN CANADA

The first morning, we took our time getting ready for the day and even explored the remaining camps around us a little. After such exploration, I was confident that we had the best site for us. Some were a little cozier, maybe, but didn't have the necessary level ground for both tent and screened enclosure. The campground was new and still had some work to be done. We were the only campers using it at this particular time. Although I remember Lethia walking around with

me for a while, I believe I did most of the exploring and in fact, took the photos of figures 18-45 and 18-46 while nosing around. I also walked down the road a little to a point where I



Figure 18-48 View from the north side of Lake Kootenay looking back at Nelson.

could see the valley below with Nelson and Kootenay Lake. A shot of that particular scene is shown in figure 18-47.

After lunch, we decided to explore Nelson a little and drive up the lake a ways. Needless to say, it didn't take too long to explore Nelson and soon we crossed the bridge over Lake Kootenay



Figure 18-49 View of beautiful Lake Kootenay looking south from highway 31.

and followed highway 3A along the north shore to the Belfour Ferry. We stopped along the way to enjoy the scenery and I took pictures of scenes that grabbed my interest. In figure 18-48

we were looking back at Nelson with a nice view of the bridge. We had thought about taking the Belfour Ferry across the lake to Kootenay Bay, drive south on 3 A, take highway 3 west to 6 and then north to Nelson once again. However, considering the time of day, we decided against it. We would go back to camp instead, relax and plan our next day's activity. I was intrigued by the Kokanee Glacier Provincial Park and drove a ways north from 3A on a dirt road. We couldn't see much and it was getting into late afternoon, so I turned back at a convenient spot. However, I wanted to see more of that park. Lethia was game for anything and let me set the agenda. I decided to do some exploring the next day. We would take a picnic and make a big circle to the north on highway 31A to Kaslo, then west on the same road to New Denver before turning south again on 6 to Nelson. Between Kaslo and New Denver we could take a side trip into the Kokanee Park, if time permitted.

After dinner, we spent a relaxing evening, once again, with nothing to do but clean up the dishes and read. We both brought reading material because Lethia is a voracious reader and any vacation for her includes some reading. Though I like to read, I need some other activities as well and need to break such sessions up with other



Figure 18-51 Flowers gracing the doorway of the Kaslo visitor's center.

things. A little walk to loosen up the muscles and start the blood flowing again will enable me to get back into a reading mood as will a little work around camp. Lethia, on the other hand, can read almost non-stop from morning to night. She is constantly on the prowl for a good book at a reasonable price. I believe we could start our own library of used paperback books. Of course, it would contain only those books she thought were of interest. Even so, I admit the choices would be quite extensive.

CANADIAN DAY TWO

I awoke soon after daybreak on day two. I guess the relaxing day before made the needed



Figure 18-50 A view of the east shore of Lake Kootenay with a boat moving south.

nights rest minimal. Then again, it might have been the birds' cheerful morning tune, which was reminiscent of "Zippity Do Da". It did,

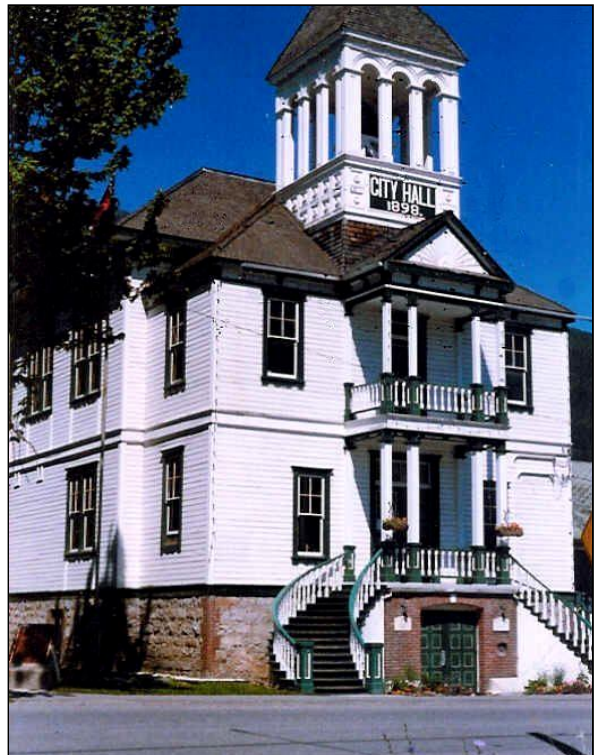


Figure 18-52 The Kaslo Town Hall, built in 1898 and still in operation.

indeed, appear to be a wonderful day and I found myself wanting to get started on our day's excursion. As was usually the case, I heated some water, shaved and went through other

morning rituals including heating more water for Lethia, before waking her up. Just washing ones hands and face does wonders by removing the sandman's sleeping powder of the night before from your eyes. By the time she was dressed and had overcome here sleepiness, breakfast was ready. We usually had a hot breakfast, which often included a hotcake along with some eggs and sausage or maybe just some hot cereal and toast. Needless to say, hot chocolate was my morning drink of choice while Lethia seemed to prefer Postum. With breakfast out of the way, we got lunch and Lethia spent a little time with her hair and makeup while I cleaned up the remnants of breakfast. Soon we were off to an early start.

We took the 140 mile loop shown as day 2 on the map of figure 18-44 with a side trip to the trail head leading to Kokanee Glacier, about 15



Figure 18-53 Kokanee River, flowing northward from the Kokanee Glacier.

miles one way. We didn't dally along 3A to Belfour Ferry, having seen that country the day before. However, as we headed north on 31, we made frequent short stops to admire the view. British Columbia is absolutely crammed with beautiful scenery. I will now bury you with photos in the next few pages to try and illustrate this fantastic beauty. I realize photos, and particularly mine don't do justice to the actual

scene but they are better than any verbal description I could make.

As we moved north along highway 31, we were treated to a view of that arm of Kootenay Lake,



Figure 18-54 View of the Kokanee Glacier country about half way up the river.

as seen in figure 18-49. At another stop along that road, we saw a boat plying its way southward and I snapped the photo seen in

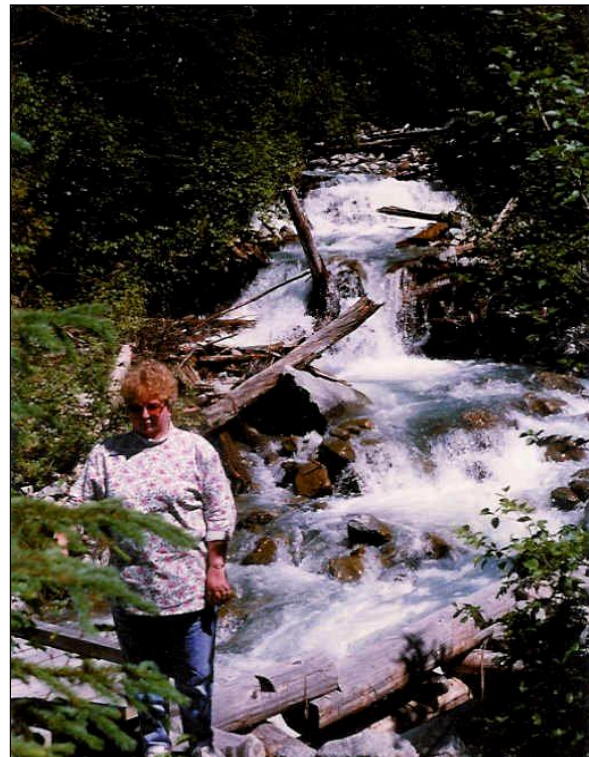


Figure 18-55 Lethia returning over the trail's bridge crossing a beautiful stream.

figure 18-50. It seemed we were treated to views such as these around every bend of the road. Including all of the photos I took would be

repetitious and would only add to the deluge you have experienced and even more to come.

We arrived in Kaslo well before noon and spent a little time walking around the main part of it. There was a stern-wheel paddleboat called the S. S. Moyle, tied up at the dock, which was touted as the oldest passenger sternwheeler in existence. Because it looks similar to those of chapter 15 in New Orleans, I decided not to burden you with a photo. The visitor's center nearby contained some interesting information about the construction of cross-country highway Canada # 1. Several photos that they had illustrated the severe conditions workers underwent in that historic project.

I was attracted to two pots of flowers gracing the doorway, one of which I have included as figure 18-51. The photo doesn't do the subject justice but take my word for it; the flowers were truly striking and if little else, it will provide a change in your perspective.

As I remember, we ate a little lunch while in Kaslo before walking around the town. I took a

tower. There were many other old buildings around, many of which were well kept. People were still living in many of the old houses and walking around the town was somewhat like

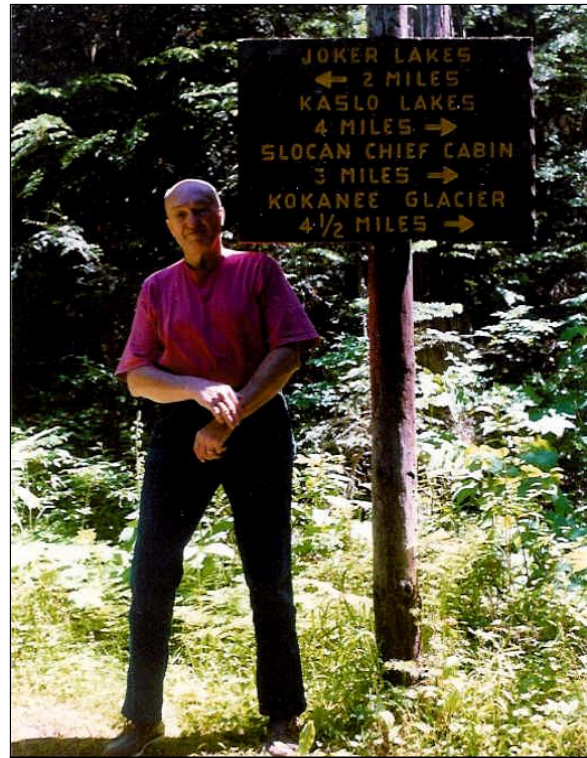


Figure 18-56 “Yours-Truly” in a bewildered state trying to blend into the wilderness.

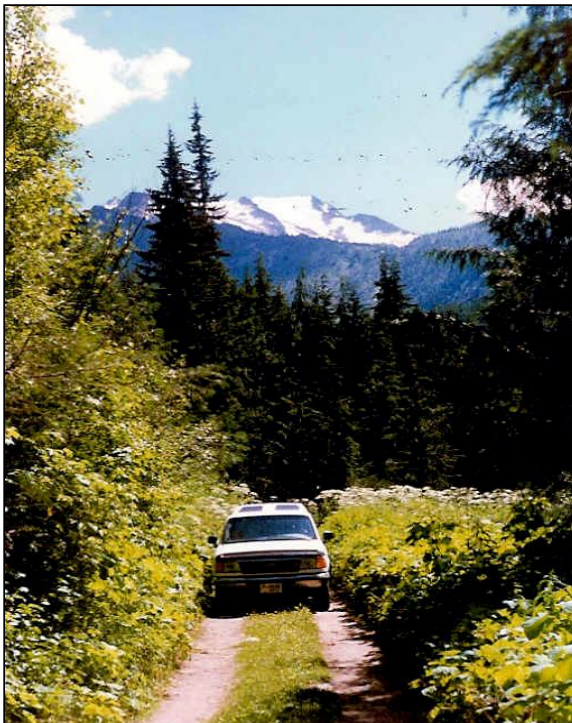


Figure 18-57 Looking back south at the Kokanee Glacier, truck and roadway.

picture of an old, 1890s vintage, church as well as the town hall. The latter is shown in figure 18-52. Notice the date of its construction, 1898, is clearly visible above the doorway on the bell

taking a step back in time. I found our time there very interesting. We might have toured the S. S. Moyle for a fee, had we more time but I was determined to go into the Kokanee Glacier Provincial Park. I was confident that the side trip would be spectacular. My optimism was not to be denied, as you will see.

From Kaslo, we traveled west about 5 miles before coming to the dirt road leading into the Park. As we turned in and headed south, we were treated to a little different aspect of beauty from the Kaslo area. Instead of the lake we had a beautiful stream and rugged hillsides with a narrow road. At first the road was wide enough to pass an oncoming car but soon it narrowed down to a single lane road. We stopped a couple of miles up the road and got out to better enjoy the scenery. We walked a ways through the woods to get a clear view of the river, which appears in figure 18-53. After driving about halfway to the trailhead, we entered a treeless area full of rather tall plants with white flowers. Neither of us knew just what they were but I got

out and took a picture of the mountainous area supporting the glacier that lay ahead. It is shown in figure 18-54.

Many places along the road were rough and the rocky areas made me glad that I had a pickup with some road clearance. There weren't many places to turn around and one would have to back up for a couple of miles if he couldn't go forward. We passed through some beautiful cedars and passed a nice waterfall on our left. Though I took a picture of the latter, I won't include it because the stream's drop isn't



Figure 18-59 A woodpecker “high-rise” on the hillside of the Kokanee River valley.

obvious. Poor photography, I guess. I also photographed the cedars, which I'll display a little later. We arrived at the end of the road where the trailhead began after an hour or so. I know it took longer than I expected. There we found a nice parking area and got out to survey the area. We walked up the trail a ways but it became rather steep right away. We sat down and simply relaxed as we looked over the surrounding country. A little later, I got a picture of Lethia coming across the little stream, which the trail followed, at least for a ways. Her beauty graces figure 18-55. The glacier was still some 4 ½ miles further up the trail. Had I been younger, in better shape and had more time, I

would have been tempted to hike to the glacier. I'm glad Valerie wasn't along or she would have insisted, I suspect, like she did in Colorado that day with mom. Of course, she's a little older



Figure 18-58 A view looking across the Kokanee River valley from our road.

now and would probably be more realistic about such hikes. To verify that Lethia didn't make the trip alone, she got a shot of me displaying my beauty by the trailhead sign in figure 18-56.

I suspect that we spent a half to ¾ of an hour there, before starting back. I knew we had a



Figure 18-60 View of a beautiful stand of red cedars along the way.

ways to go after reaching the highway and didn't want to have to travel in the dark and miss the scenery. I wanted to soak up all of that beautiful

countryside I could, so we began the return trip early. Some scenes going back seemed more spectacular than when we came up the road. Consequently, we took every bit as long getting back to the highway. When we got back to the open area spoken of earlier, I decided to get a better shot of the truck and road along with the scenery. I needed that to testify of the type of road we had traveled. Lethia, as always, was a good traveler and if she had any apprehensions, she didn't show it. The truck, road and Kokanee are displayed in figure 18-57. Somewhere along there I got a nice photo of the mountains just across the valley from us. Figure 18-58 reveals the rugged countryside laying all around us and it is typical of what we saw throughout the day.

I must admit, I stood in awe, as we made our way around the loop that day. As we crossed the open area referred to earlier, I saw an old rotted tree trunk absolutely covered with woodpecker holes. They either found a feast of some sort within the old tree or maybe it was a



Figure 18-62 Koch River drainage from the pass between New Denver and Kaslo.

woodpecker high rise, built to shelter the poor things from the Canadian winter. I couldn't resist taking a picture of it, never having seen such a sight before. It is shown in figure 18-59. Just across the clearing, the road disappeared into a grove of beautiful red cedar trees. Though a photo can't do real justice to their beauty, I will present a couple of shots to help you imagine the sight we were treated to that afternoon. They are displayed in figures 18-60 and 18-61. The first gives more of a general view while the second provides a better idea of the size of some of the trees. Some were at least 4 feet in diameter and maybe more.

I have since visited the Giant Cedar National Monument in northwest Montana just below Libby where we saw a comparable stand. They are beautiful trees growing in thick stands in an

area with a good deal of moisture. I don't have a photo of the latter but they reminded me of our



Figure 18-61 Another view of the beautiful Kokanee River red cedars.

Canadian trip. Some of those in the Ross Creek Park in Montana were 500 years old according to the park service. The older ones have



Figure 18-63 Summit Lake between Nakusp and New Denver along Canadian highway 6.

survived more than one forest fire and are significantly scarred. I suppose one would find a similar history of those we saw that day along the Kokanee River.

After stopping for the cedar trees, we drove straight to the highway, Canada 31 and headed

west to intersect Canada 6. We were treated to more beautiful scenery as we climbed out of Kokanee River and over the divide to New Denver, which appears to be on a fork of Koch River. Right across the river from New Denver is the Valhalla Provincial Park. It seems that in every direction one turns; a new park springs up. I have included a photo of the Koch River drainage west of New Denver as taken from the top of the divide to the east, just before one drops down into the valley of the Koch. It is displayed in figure 18-62.

We stopped a little while near the top of the divide at a little lake to enjoy the view but began

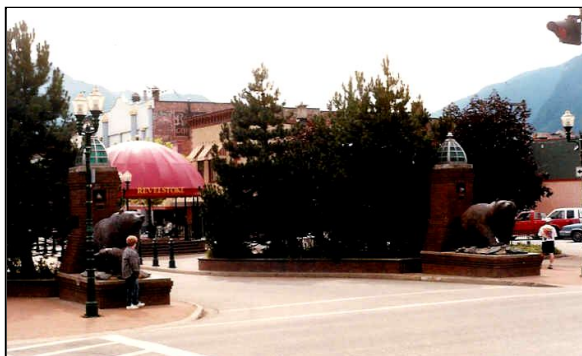


Figure 18-64 Lethia challenging the grizzly on the left at Revelstoke's entrance.

our journey again realizing we still had a hundred miles to cover. We didn't waste any time as it was getting dark and the scenic vistas were fading from view. Besides, we would cover this same stretch of highway 6 from the south to New Denver, as we made our way up to the Revelstoke and Glacier National Parks the next day. It was dark by the time we arrived in Nelson and made our way up to our camping spot. Fortunately, everything was ready to go. We made a quick supper of clam chowder, as I remember, talked a little and headed for bed.

CANADIAN DAY THREE

Knowing the work involved in setting up and breaking camp, I had vowed to stay at least two nights in each camp. Otherwise, I would be spending my vacation making and breaking camp, which is hardly exciting. Although I was up early on our day three in Canada, we didn't get away until about ten AM. One kills about 2 hours getting breakfast along with completing the details of waking up and personal grooming. After that, comes the disassembly of tents, repacking of groceries and other items and loading all that back into the pickup. If one

carries enough stuff to have a reasonably comfortable camp, there's a lot to cram into a limited space, which adds to that required time.

Around 10 AM, we were headed down the mountain to Nelson where we gassed up before heading north on highway 6. We covered the 50 miles to New Denver in a little over an hour, not stopping along the way but driving slowly



Figure 18-65 Scenic photo of the countryside near Glacier Park on Canada 1.

enough to take in the beauty that had been obscured the night before. We passed through New Denver and finally stopped a few minutes at Summit Lake between there and Nakusp, 30 miles to the north. There was a field of Bachelor Buttons between the road and the lake, as seen in the photo of figure 18-63. I guess I was taken by their pleasant and profuse natural lavender color, which sparked the photo. There seemed to be a lot of homes across the lake, which may have been summer homes.

After our brief stop at Summit Lake, we hurried along to Nakusp where we intersected highway 23, which traversed the eastern shores of Upper Arrow Lake. Once again we were almost mesmerized by the beauty of that lake as we made our way to the ferry at Galena Bay. Unfortunately, I ran out of film at Summit Lake and couldn't get to my supply without unpacking

half of the pickup. How's that for planning? Of course, one can look at the photos of 18-49 or 18-50 of Kootenay Lake and have a virtual copy of Upper Arrow Lake. If there is anything boring about British Columbia, it's the beauty of its profuse lakes and majestic mountains. What a subject of boredom for a morning drive.

A FERRY-TALE LAKE CROSSING

We had to wait a while at Galena bay for the ferry but soon it came chugging into dock and we loaded on. The crossing to Shelter Bay took some time, which we utilized by walking along the deck and enjoying the view. It was a beautiful sunny day and the water sparkled from the few ripples, which marked its surface. One could see for miles in any direction. About 30 minutes later, we tied up at Shelter Bay and after a few minutes, we were offloaded and on our way to Revelstoke. We arrived in the town of Revelstoke, which lay just outside the southern boundary of Revelstoke National Park, a distance of 30 to 35 miles from Shelter Bay. It lies on the Illecillewaet River.

We found a nice campground on the east side of Revelstoke and pitched our tents for two more nights. The campground was full of RVs but we found a little quiet place well removed from the worst of the chaos. Showers were included with the overnight fee, which made the morning ritual a little easier, easier that is if one beats the crowd. We then toured the little town of Revelstoke and even got out to visit a few shops and take a picture or two. The place was known for its grizzly bears, of which they were quite proud. That didn't worry Lethia, as you can see in figure 18-64. She just walked up and looked that grizzly in the face, daring him to make a move of any kind. Fortunately, he cooperated, not wanting to disturb the tourist trade. After visiting a few shops and picking up a few groceries, we headed back to camp where we spent the evening.

CANADIAN DAY FOUR

That morning, as I remember, we drove east towards Glacier National Park. We had nothing special in mind other than seeing the associated scenery. Needless to say, we were not disappointed. Around every bend in the road we found a new beautiful scene, differing from the previous in detail only. We got out a couple of times at scenic view sites but I took few pictures because there was nothing unusual or different to photograph, just more beautiful scenes. We

drove just past the little town of Glacier to Rogers Pass, a national historic site but didn't go in. I wanted to get back and spend some time in Revelstoke Park that afternoon. One



Figure 18-66 A view to the west as we climbed to the parking area in Revelstoke.

photo taken from the highway in Glacier Park is displayed in figure 18-65. It provides some idea of the surrounding beauty.

Somewhere along the line, we stopped for a picnic lunch. I vaguely remember pulling off the main highway into a roadside park but I can't place exactly where it was. I suspect it was near Albert Canyon on our return trip but that's of little consequence. That afternoon we traveled up



Figure 18-67 Revelstoke situated on an arm of Revelstoke Lake or maybe it is Illecillewaet Lake connected to Revelstoke.

into Revelstoke National Park, which basically encompassed a mountaintop or tops. I took several shots of the surrounding country as we gained altitude because of the view we commanded. Unfortunately, the day had turned cloudy and it's difficult to appreciate the view from the photos. Even so, I'm not one to shirk my duty of submerging you with photos of scenes I deemed beautiful. Your impression

may be different but you can blame it on the cloudy day and my minimal photographic talent. Figure 18-66 was taken primarily for the distant view of snow capped peaks and to demonstrate, by the inclusion of our pickup, that it wasn't a postcard. Of course, the latter would have been a more beautiful rendition of the same scene, probably taken on a sunny day but it wouldn't be an authentic view of what we saw. A little further up the road we had a nice view of Revelstoke and its associated lake, which appears in the photo of figure 18-67. As we continued our climb towards the top of the park, I took yet another photo of the same lake from a different perspective. It becomes figure 18-68.

Finally we reached the park's visitor center and its associated accommodations. They were situated near a small lake, as compared to the



Figure 18-69 Lethia taking five near the little lake at the top of Revelstoke Park.

massive lakes we had been seeing. The next few photos will display this area with surrounding views and once more give you some idea of this part of British Columbia. Since our trip, I have often thought that I had seen similar beauty in the states, as in Glacier Park in northwest, Montana but not on such a massive scale. This will become more evident to the reader as he or she follows our trip on the map

of figure 18-44. The beautiful little lake I mentioned and whose name I don't remember, is shown in figure 18-69 with Lethia as the main



Figure 18-68 A view of Highway 1 and Revelstoke Lake, I suppose.

focal point. She sat there and rested a little while I wandered up to a little shelter on a hilltop near the parking lot. On the way, I managed to get a cute photo of a Canadian Marmot who



Figure 18-70 Canadian Marmot posing for tourists on a wall in Revelstoke Park.

posed quite graciously for the picture. It looked as though he was used to tourists taking pictures of him and sought such photo

opportunities to make his day. He continued to pose, as shown in figure 18-70, for some time.

As I looked out from the hilltop, I saw beautiful mountain ranges in all directions. Though I took several shots from that location, the photo of figure 18-71 is maybe the best. The mountains stand out from the sky somewhat more clearly than they do in the earlier pictures I have shown. I guess the cloud cover wasn't quite as dense or as low as it had been in them. That being said, this photo was probably of a mountain range to the north where the clouds didn't blanket the mountains quite so profusely. Compare the sky in figure 18-71 to that of figures 18-68 or 18-66 and you'll see what I mean. One could work his way out of the rain by heading northwest.

The top of Revelstoke Park had relatively gentle hills as compared to the valleys below. There were several groups of people taking advantage of the trails while we were there. Some were taking pictures but many were simply hiking. There were sufficient changes in relief to get one's heart rate up but none were particularly taxing to a person in reasonable shape. The photo of figure 18-72 would be to the south once again, illustrating the little valley that the lake drained through to the Illecillewaet River. I thought the near portion of the picture was rather pretty and typified the immediate area surrounding us. I suppose we spent an hour or maybe two before deciding to return to the town of Revelstoke and camp. As I remember, it was getting dark as we approached the valley below and drove into Revelstoke. We would relax tonight and get a leisurely start in the morning. We only had about 150 to 160 miles to travel for the day and planned to get a motel in the town of Kamloops. We would then head north the next day to Wells Grey Provincial Park.

CANADIAN DAY FIVE

We certainly couldn't sleep late in this particular campground. I believe they started firing up the big RVs at daybreak. The showers were free of people for the late risers, though well used. Consequently, Lethia and I had no trouble getting cleaned up for the day. Of course the RVs all had their own showers, I suppose but there were a bunch of people like us who were camping in tents or little pop up trailers. Though I may seem jealous, I remember telling Lethia I was glad I didn't have to pull or drive one of those things around. It would limit us to the larger campgrounds and restrict our travel to primarily blacktop. I wanted to get off the main

road and go to some of the more limiting campgrounds to get a better view of British Columbia. As we headed west, we passed two



Figure 18-71 Mountain ranges northwest of Revelstoke Park's visitor's center.

arms of Lake Shusway before dropping down into the valley of the Clearwater, which flowed south past Kamloops. As we lost elevation into the Clearwater valley, the land became



Figure 18-72 The valley downstream from the lake where Lethia rested that day.

noticeably drier. That is, the forests were scattered over the landscape instead of covering all slopes of the mountains. The terrain began to look much like the intermountain west of the United States. It was still pretty but didn't have

the magnificent panoramas we had experienced the first several days.

We got into Kamloops early enough to look the town over. It appeared to be about the size of



Figure 18-73 Spahat Falls as seen from the roadway just below the major drop.

Casper, Wyoming, though it may have been a little smaller. We checked into a rather nice



Figure 18-74 A view from above Spahat Falls looking out of the canyon at the road.

motel and found ourselves on the second floor near the back. That was fine because it was removed from the traffic. After settling down, we

found a rather decent restaurant to eat in and enjoyed someone else's food for a change. Here, we would get ourselves in shape for a few more nights in the tent. Our first stop would be in N. Thompson River Provincial Park near Clearwater where we would stop for a couple of nights to explore Wells Gray Provincial Park to the north. So far, staying two nights in a given campground was working like a charm, giving us opportunity to rest and explore before moving on and providing me with a break in moving.

CANADIAN DAY SIX

We had a rather leisurely breakfast before our start for Wells Gray on day six because it was only 90 miles away. After backtracking on Canada 1 five miles we turned north on Canada 5 to Clearwater, which lay on the southern edge



Figure 18-75 Lethia on her way back to the car from the creek above Spahat Falls.

of the park. As we drove up the Clearwater River, we gained elevation and were soon in a forested area once again. We found a nice campground a few miles to the south of the town of Clearwater where we set up camp. Like all of the Canadian campgrounds, it was very nice and we had no trouble placing our tent and screened shelter side by side. Later, we went to Clearwater and spent about a minute exploring its various streets. I believe there were about

ten houses, a couple of gas stations, a store and a post office. It could hardly be called metropolitan, though it was an oasis for the traveler. The little store had a good supply of essential groceries as well as numerous camping articles. Of course, we replenished our food supply and bought a couple of tarps to add protection to our sleeping facilities. I could place one under the tent to insure a dry floor within and one over the tent, as needed, to fend off heavier rains. We had gotten a little damp in our Revelstoke camp, as I remember. However, there was little need for either at our Wells Gray camp. The evenings were beautiful so we sat up late reading or discussing the day's events.

CANADIAN DAY SEVEN

We had a big day planned for day seven. We would make our way into Wells Gray Provincial Park as far as there were roads and enjoy several sites on the map along the way. As it turned out, there was more to see than we anticipated, which will allow me to submerge you in photos once again. Though the photos describe the countryside better than I can, they can't replace an actual visit, as you probably know. So be patient, put on your visionary glasses and imagine you are there.

Our first stop was at Spahat Falls, just a few miles into Wells Gray. One could see the falls from the road, as well as drive to the creek or river just above the falls. The photo of the falls, shown in figure 18-73, was taken from near the main road into Wells Gray while that looking out of the gorge in figure 18-74 was taken from the creek side a ways above them. I don't remember the height of these falls or whether that particular aspect was listed but they were unusual in the manner of their formation. The parking area above the falls was some distance from the creek proper, which required a little trek through some beautiful woodland. Figure 18-75 provides a glimpse of the path and Lethia, as well as an idea of the beauty that surrounded us. Once seen, however, there was little to invite our stay. Consequently, we backtracked to the main road and headed north once again.

It was late morning when we left Spahat Falls. Almost immediately, we came across the Murtle River and found an inviting trail to the west leading to its confluence with the Clearwater River. The beauty of the countryside as well as the description of the two rivers piqued my curiosity and I convinced Lethia that we should walk a ways down the trail to see what we could

see, kind of like the bear that went over the mountain, as you may remember. I suppose we walked about a mile along the trail to a point



Figure 18-76 Confluence of the Murtle and Clearwater rivers, a couple of miles to the west of the main road into the park.

where it dropped into the Clearwater canyon where I took the picture of figure 18-76. The majesty of the confluence amid the panoramic

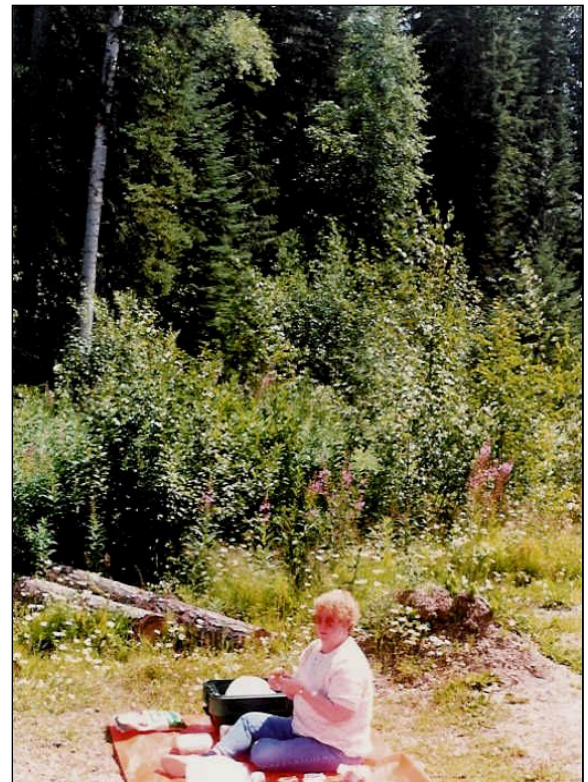


Figure 18-77 Lethia fixing lunch next to the Murtle River in Wells Gray Prov. Park.

view of the countryside made our little trek worthwhile from my viewpoint. I'm not sure about Lethia's, however. She was a good sport

but I suppose our marriage, being relatively recent, gave me a little more leeway with my somewhat weird exploration requests.

After getting back in the car and driving just a little ways, we found ourselves back alongside the Murtle River, which presented a quiet but rather beautiful scene. Being on the hungry side, I suggested we stop for our planned picnic for the day. Lethia is attesting to that activity in figure 18-77. I'm not sure whether lunch was finished at this point or whether I'm waiting for her to complete its preparation. Though our

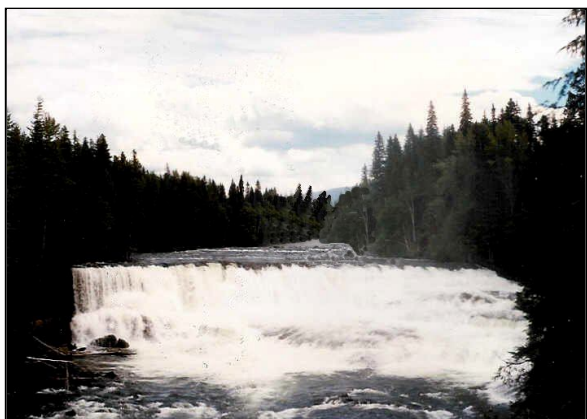


Figure 18-78 Dawson Falls on the Murtle River in Wells Gray Provincial Park.

picnic spot was relatively close to the roadway, I don't believe a single car passed the whole time we were there. That should give you some idea of the relative solitude we felt throughout this day. In fact a large part of our trip had the same peaceful air about it and might well have surpassed that of our retreat on our honeymoon some three or more years before.

After lunch we wandered up a short trail to Dawson Falls on the Murtle River. The falls weren't especially spectacular but seemed worth a photograph, which is displayed in figure 18-78. As you can see, the day was kind of cloudy but interestingly enough, we had periods of sparkling sunshine, which one might surmise from figure 18-77. After seeing the falls, we wandered back along the river a ways where I took the photo of figure 18-79 because, I deemed it as simply being a beautiful scene. As you can see, I'm stuck on beautiful scenery and Lethia. I believe any beautiful scene of nature is accented by her presence, not that I'm biased or anything like that. Of course, she also demonstrates the reality of such events in our relationship. Her kindness and easy going attitude were among her attractions for me.

We probably killed an hour along the Murtle counting lunch and our meandering to and from the falls but soon we were back in the car moving northward once again. I'm not sure just

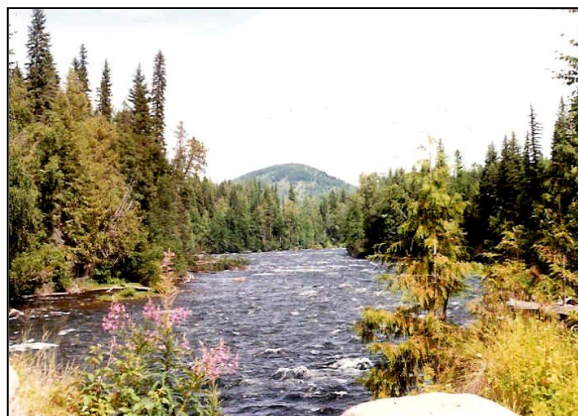


Figure 18-79 A view of the Murtle River from near the spot of our picnic party.

how far we drove before we came across a sign pointing to Helmiken Falls. These falls were a must see from the brochure we had picked up,



Figure 18-80 Lethia enjoying the view and thunder of Helmiken Falls in Wells Gray.

being quite a tourist attraction. Consequently, we turned in once again to see just what they had to offer. There was a fairly lengthy trail

leading to the viewing area of the falls. Lethia, once again, is shown in figure 18-80 at one of the primary viewing points, as she enjoys this wonderful marvel of nature. The falls are 145 meters high (roughly 475 feet) or 3 times the height of Niagara Falls. Of course, there isn't anywhere near the volume of water cascading over them, which I suppose, makes them less spectacular. Even so, they are rather breath taking. Besides Lethia's photo, another view of the falls is displayed in figure 18-81, which is one of several other shots I took. A couple of others show the cavity produced underneath the falls somewhat better but this one encompasses the complete 145-meter drop. Only the head of the canyon below can be seen with two massive remnants from the undermined plateau..

We actually spent more time at Helmiken Falls I believe, than anywhere else other than Clearwater Lake, our last stop of the day. One could walk down the path along the edge of the gorge for quite some distance to get differing

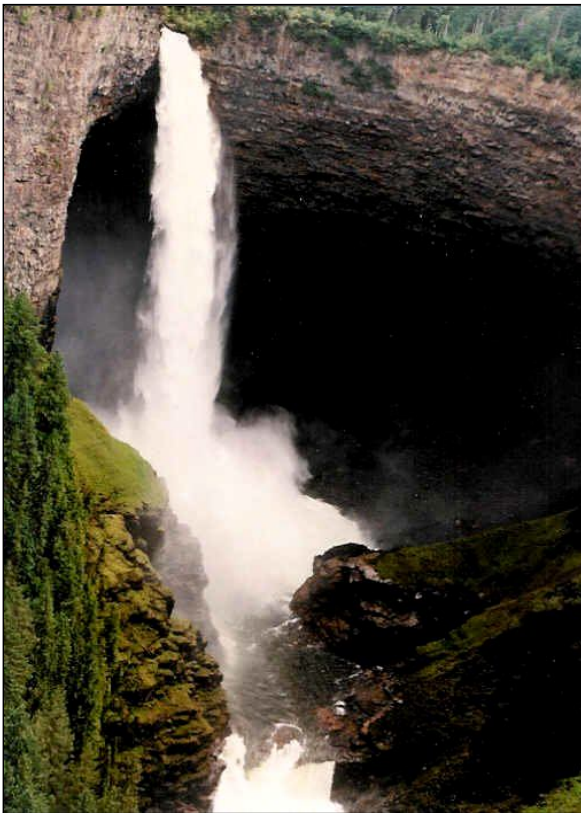


Figure 18-81 C" A view of Helmiken Falls, covering the complete drop from wooded plateau to the bottom of the rocky canyon.

views of the falls. I believe we went the complete distance from parking lot to the end of

the trail. There was a slight incline going back to the car and we took our time, stopping to admire the falls and canyon again and again. After an hour's stop, we headed for Clearwater Lake.

We arrived at the Lake rather late in the afternoon but still spent an hour or so admiring the view and watching the boats with, I suppose, their fishermen. The lake didn't seem to be a recreational lake in terms of water skiing and other water sports. Occupants of the few boats on the lake appeared to be anglers, looking for



Figure 18-82 Clearwater Lake, which lies at the end of the dirt road leading into the Wells Gray Provincial Park.

their tribute to Caesar. The parking lot was on the southeast corner of the lake with a road of sorts leading down to the lake for boat launching. We took time to walk down to the southern tip of the lake to get a better view. Actually, this effort didn't really change the overall view but simply provided a change in perspective. There continued to be water with

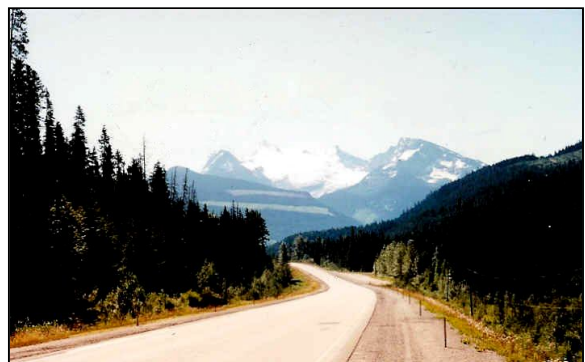


Figure 18-83 A view from Canadian Highway 5 to the northeast of Clearwater.

forested shores as far as the eye could see. Figure 18-82 provides a view of the lake, demonstrating, once more, the beauty of the British Columbia countryside. We headed back

to our camp near the little town of Clearwater before dusk but arrived after dark. Even so, with camp all set up, we were able to prepare dinner, clean up the remnants and spent a little time reading before retiring for the evening.

CANADIAN DAY EIGHT

This day, we would travel to Rearguard Provincial Park and stay in a campground called Mount Robson. Mount Robson Provincial Park and Mount Robson lie just to the east with the mountain proper being the focal point of that park. Mount Robson is the highest point in

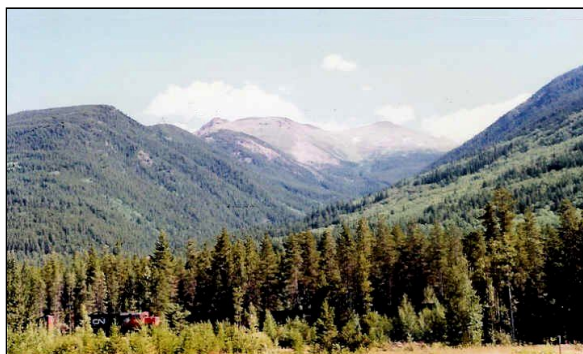


Figure 18-84 A view looking west from Canadian Highway 5 near Blue River.

Canada at 12,972 feet. After preparing for the day and breaking camp, we managed to be on our way around 10:00 AM, which was typical for moving days. Being a rather wise old man as well as somewhat on the lazy side, I always planned where possible, rather short moves. This allowed sufficient time to break and make our next camp as well as time to relax a little in



Figure 18-85 A view looking east from Canadian Highway 5 near Blue River.

our latest abode. As we moved northward through the Columbia Mountains along the Yellowhead South highway, we continued to be treated to magnificent scenery along either side of us. Needless to say, I will shower you with

more photos as a substitute for my limited writing ability, which you probably tired of many chapters ago. It would seem obvious that you would be elated over such photos, knowing there will be little attempt on my part to add any description other than where they were taken. Figure 18-83 provides a view of what lies ahead as we moved northeast from Clearwater. Would it be more or less spectacular than that to date?

We stopped at a roadside park a little north of Blue River and ate lunch while admiring the view in every direction. The photo of figure 18-84 was taken there. Notice the train in the lower left corner making its way along the track to the west. Other than the highway and railroad track along with an occasional town, there is little that speaks of civilization in this part of British Columbia. Truly, the countryside provides a glimpse of nature at its best considering the



Figure 18-86 Mount Terry Fox east of Canadian Highway 5 north of Blue River.

limited extent of such areas in the US these modern days. The photo of figure 18-85 was taken in the same area and typifies the unspoiled country to the east.

After stretching our legs at the roadside park, we continued north along highway 5 and marveled at the continuing display of natural beauty. A photo might be worth a thousand words but one could hardly take a sufficient number along this stretch of road to adequately describe the beauty surrounding us. We made another stop further up the road to study a sign, which described a historical sight commemorating the effort of a young man named Terry Fox. He had become the victim of terminal cancer and walked across Canada to raise money for Cancer research. The mountain shown in figure 18-86 is named after him as a tribute to that outstanding effort. His 3000 or so mile walk, expressing his concern for others in similar circumstances, apparently raised a good deal of

money for research and treatment. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we all had that attitude?

Toward late afternoon we drove into Rearguard Falls Provincial Park and made camp in a campground called Mount Robson. Though not strictly in the park by that name, the mountain was clearly visible to the east, which, I suppose, was the reason for the campground's name. There were several other campers in the park

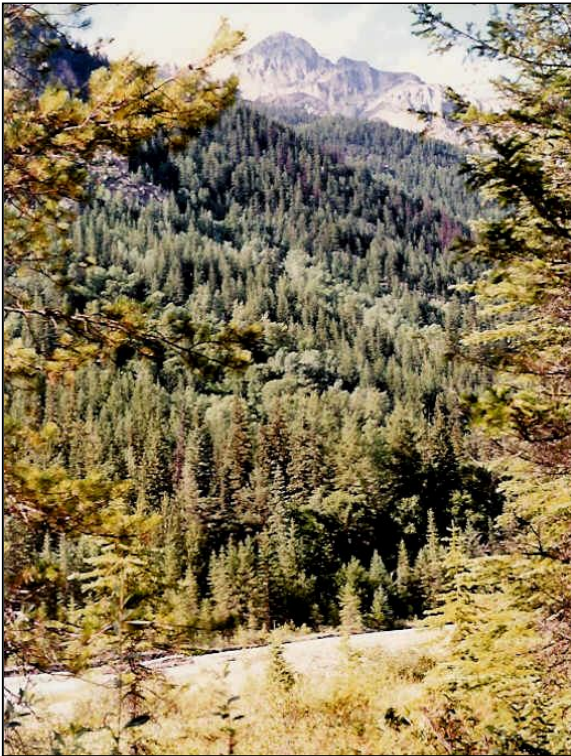


Figure 18-88 Frazier River from camp with Mount Cinnamon in the background.

but we managed to find a spot with no one next door to us. Thus we could raise all the hell we felt like, which at our ages and temperaments was something like talking out loud in Sunday school class. Actually, we just wanted to be isolated enough to be able to do our thing without disturbing others and without their antics disturbing us. Soon I had camp set up once again as attested to by figure 18-87. Camp was right next to the edge of the ravine through which Frazier River flowed. We only had to walk a few yards to the trail leading down to the water's edge. Figure 18-88 is a photo looking down on the Frazier River with Mount Cinnamon lying west of Mount Robson in the background. Though I challenge you to find her in the photo of figure 18-87, Lethia had already made herself at home and was reading in the sunshine next to

the screen tent. She seemed to enjoy the solitude coupled with the warm weather and beautiful scenery.

After dinner, we had a little time to wander down by the river where we could get a better view of it as well as Mount Robson situated off to the east. Figure 18-89 portrays Lethia alongside the Frazier River with Mount Robson in the



Figure 18-87 Frazier River campsite, with pickup & Lethia reading in the sun.

background. Actually, the major part of the river was on the other side of the little island directly

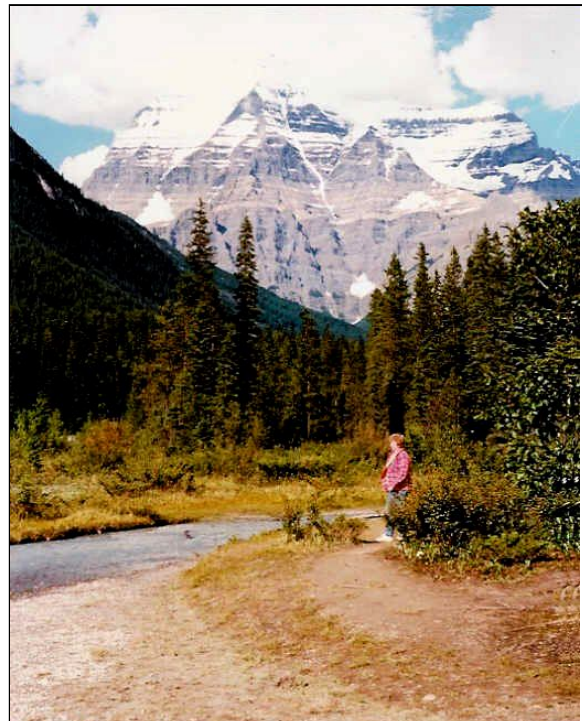


Figure 18-89 Lethia at the river with Mount Robson forming a scenic backdrop.

in front of Lethia. Mount Robson is truly a magnificent peak with sides so steep and rocky that trees only grow on the lower slopes and in a

few protected and gentler areas at higher elevations. I must admit, the beauty of Mount Robson was breath taking, prompting me to include it in any photo where I was able to squeeze it in. Figure 18-90 illustrates Lethia climbing from the river back to camp.

Figure 18-91 is simply another picture of the Frazier River. One can see additional peaks to the south of Robson as well as the lower reaches of Cinnamon Mountain in the foreground, which lie to the west of it. The



Figure 18-90 Lethia making her way back to camp on the trail to Frazier River.

stream appears a little milky in this photo as it was in reality. All glacier fed streams seem to have a milky color from the finely ground rock or so-called rock flour held in suspension.

Lethia, becoming somewhat self-conscious about the number of pictures I was taking of her in the Canadian settings, decided she wanted one of me and, as usual, prevailed. I tried to convince her that my image superimposed on nature's grandeur would simply detract from an otherwise beautiful scene. I think she might have said something like, "Oh well, the contrast should make Canada's beauty even more pronounced". She probably won't admit to such a statement but you know I don't exaggerate. I did manage to get her to squeeze it in while I was on the river trail to camp in figure 18-92.

CANADIAN DAY NINE

The next day, we drove up towards the continental divide, stopping at several places along the way. To prove we were really near Mount Robson, we had an amiable tourist take

our photos together with the park's sign in the background, as shown in figure 18-93. Of course, there is a commanding view of Mount Robson behind us. As you can see, we had one curious spectator wondering why anyone would want to take our pictures. He climbed up on the

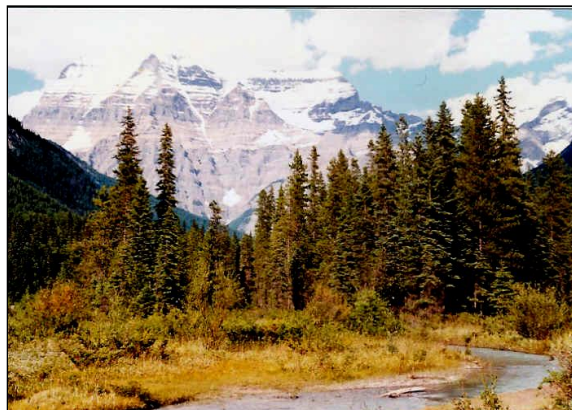


Figure 18-91 The valley of the Frazier River with Mount Robson in the background.

sign and peered down at us the whole time the photo session was going on. I tried to ignore him but his constant snorting made me smile. If



Figure 18-92 Dad, stopping for a rest, as I climbed the trail back to our camp.

you have a magnifying glass, take a close look at the goat. You can verify my smile as well as see the smirk on the goat's face. If not, you'll

just have to take my word for it, which you know is unimpeachable.

From this same point, we then saw an elk grazing just off the eastern end of the parking area. It was a grand old bull with a nice rack of horns. To prove that's no bull, I have included the close up in figure 18-94. I took a couple of photos from a distance at first because I thought he might be a little ornery. I wasn't ready to be picked up on those antlers like a pallet on a fork lift. As my confidence increased, I decided to get another picture from a different angle and walked up the road a ways even though I wasn't sure I could get back to the car before he got to me. However, he still didn't act too concerned,



Figure 18-93 Lethia & I at the park's entrance while trying to ignore an onlooker.

so I slipped in rather close behind a bush and then raised my camera up to get the photo I have displayed.

By this time, it appeared he, the elk, was a publicity hound because he seemed to be enjoying the photo session. Then again, maybe he was just as leery of me as was I of him. Whatever the case, he continued to keep me in his eyesight as long as I prowled around him. I got another decent picture of him from the road behind him but his head turned and his eyes followed my every move. However, I opted for the one displayed, it being the better of the two.

As we moved up the valley, it became more rugged and we soon found ourselves well above the river. We could catch glimpses of the water as we drove east, which was becoming more and more turbulent with the increasing steepness of the countryside. I stopped at an overlook and snapped the photo of figure 18-95. It provides a nice view of the valley we were negotiating. A little further on, we dropped down

nearer the river and I spotted a sign indicating that there were some falls a short distance from



Figure 18-94 A bull elk sensing my presence as I slipped up on him for a photo. He didn't seem too concerned.

the road, a half-mile I believe. We decided to walk over to them because the Frazier was such

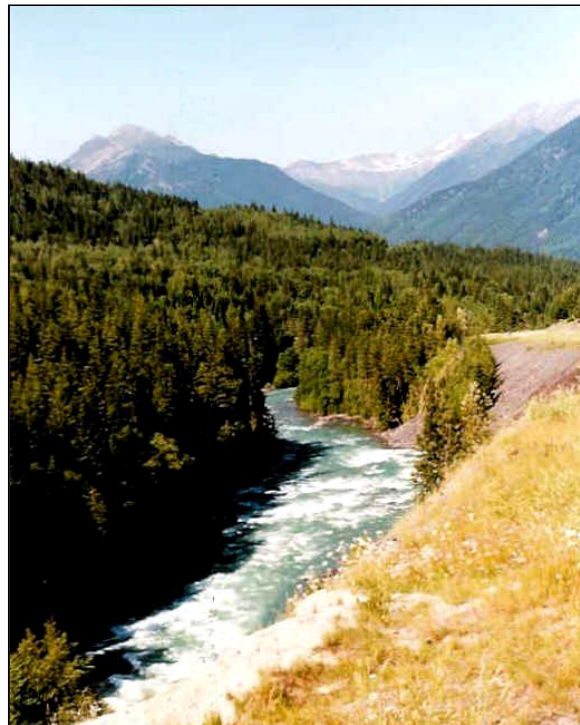


Figure 18-95 Looking down the Frazier River valley in Mount Robson Nat. Park.

a beautiful stream and we expected the falls to be worth the walk. Although the falls weren't particularly high, we were not disappointed and I

have included a photo of this wild and wonderful river in figure 18-96. A footbridge spanned the river just downstream from the falls, which provided an excellent spot to snap a picture. We wandered around, alongside the river, for a while enjoying the peaceful solitude provided by the area before returning to the car. Today's schedule was an easy one and we were in no hurry to get back on the road. We or at least I, intended to enjoy such leisure to the fullest, which meant, primarily, stopping to smell the roses and even pick a few if we saw any.

Several miles further on we came to another viewpoint overlooking Moose Lake. Like all of the lakes in Canada, it was beautiful. Even though we had seen others, which were more picturesque, I decided to include a picture I had snapped, shown in figure 18-97, to document

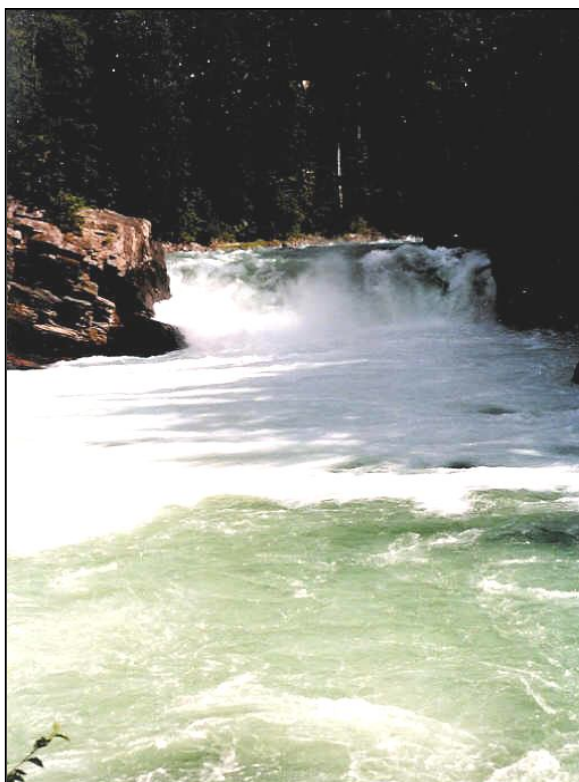


Figure 18-96 The Frazier River as it tumbles over Overland Falls in Mount Robson Park.

the fact that, "we were there". The valley of the Frazier at this point was rather wide and the surrounding mountains were not quite as rugged looking, though definitely displaying a commanding presence. The highway followed the edge of the lake.

After returning to the pickup, we continued east almost to the continental divide before turning

around and heading back to camp. We stopped several times at various viewpoints to more fully enjoy the scenery, not having visited them all. There was quite a bit more tourist activity along this stretch of road than we had experienced heretofore. Even so, the traffic was rather light and most of the tourist stops were only pleasantly peopled. I remember eating lunch at one such stop and relaxing at one stop before continuing on our way. There was a little park with tables next to a visitor's center, Mount Robson, I believe. We arrived back at camp by mid-afternoon and spent the rest of the day lounging around and reading. I believe I even visited the river again to get a few more pictures. I thoroughly enjoyed such days, having no need to tear down or set up camp. Not that I hated such activity but two days at a campsite certainly had its advantages.

CANADIAN DAY TEN

On day ten in Canada, we got our usual late start, about ten o'clock, after preparing for the day and packing up the pickup. We planned to cross over the continental divide today and find a campsite near Jasper, Canada, which lies



Figure 18-97 Moose Lake lying in the Frazier River valley of Robson Park.

within the Jasper National Park. We would spend at least two nights there, providing time to tour the east side of the Canadian Rockies. You may remember Esther and I had visited that area of Canada in 1968 with the kids but we got rained out in Jasper and did very little sightseeing. This would be a good time for me to view the east slope under better weather conditions. It was only 45 miles to Jasper and having seen all the sights the previous day, we motored right along arriving in Jasper in plenty of time for lunch. It didn't take us too long to find a quiet little restaurant, which was to our liking.

I remember buying a few groceries in Jasper as well as visiting a restaurant for our evening meal. I guess we grabbed a burger before



Figure 18-98 A commanding peak south of our camp, Mount Brazeau I guess.

looking for a campground. It wasn't like me to visit a nice restaurant for lunch. We were somewhat surprised by the amount of tourist



Figure 18-100 The Athabasca Falls, which are plunging into the gorge down river.

traffic in Jasper. Things were crowded and parking was difficult to find unless one wanted to park outside the city limits.

The campgrounds near Jasper were also inundated with people. The one we had used in

1968 was overflowing, so we dropped a little further south and found a decent site just off the road to the west called Wabasso Campground.



Figure 18-99 Mount Alberta south of Jasper, Canada to the west of highway 93.

There were plenty of people in camp but it would have to do for a night. We spent the remainder of the day around camp relaxing, reading and preparing the evening meal. I don't remember anything special about this camp except that it

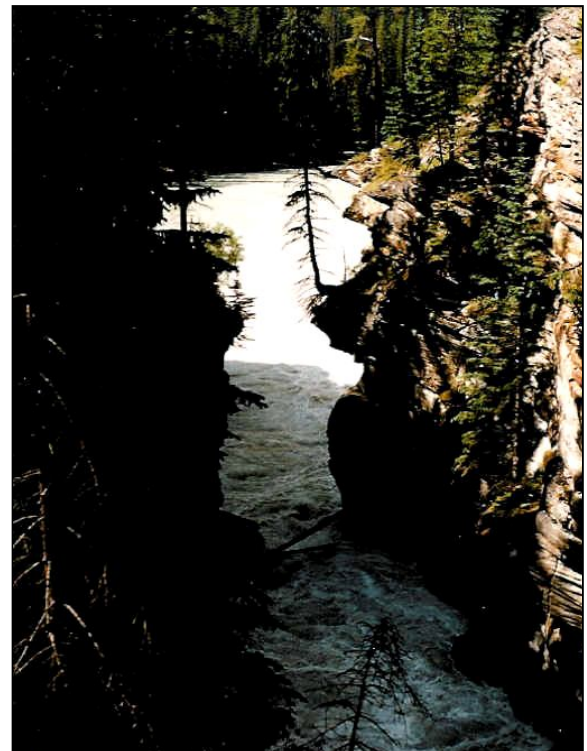


Figure 18-101 The Athabasca River and gorge below the falls of figure 18-100.

did rain the second night and the extra tarps I bought in Clearwater fulfilled their purpose. They paid off in a big way, making the job of

breaking camp the next day quite easy. The scenery continued to be glorious around the campground. The major mountains seemed to be to the south and west with the area around camp being hilly but not rugged. To the north it was relatively level all the way into Jasper.

CANADIAN DAY ELEVEN

We had a full day planned for day eleven. We wanted to see the Athabasca Falls as well as the Athabasca Glacier. If we had time, we might range a little further south but that remained to be seen. To the south of the campground the highway split into 93 and 93-A. It seems the latter was the original road but continued to be used for scenic purposes after the new 93 was built. We headed south on 93-A rather early in the morning because of our plans. I hadn't gone far before I saw this commanding peak, probably

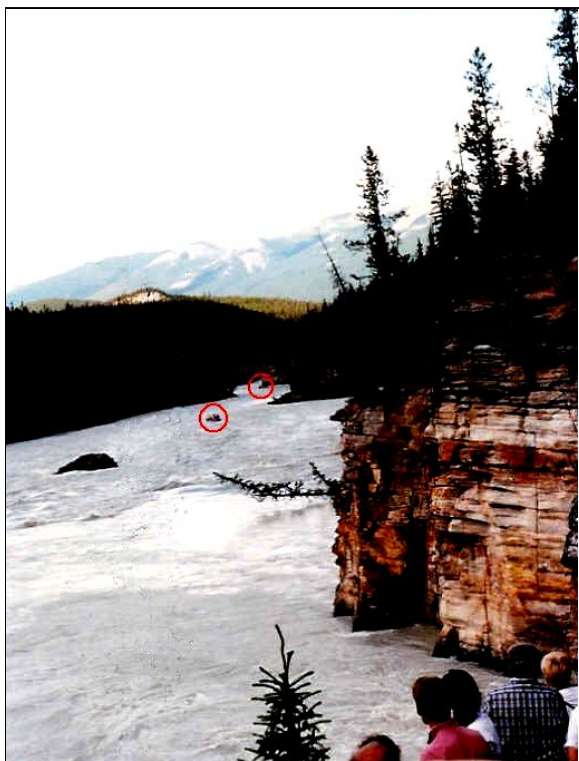


Figure 18-102 Two rafts negotiating the Athabasca River below the gorge.

Mount Brazeau 11, 286 feet high, in the middle of the road just staring at me. Of course, I had to photograph it, which picture appears as figure 18-98. A little further on we saw another beautiful peak off to the west, which I surmised was Mount Alberta, 11,874 feet high. Admittedly, my evidence was scanty, being based on our position and a map. I have included its photo in figure 18-99.

Although we made several stops along the way to enjoy special scenes, we arrived at the Athabasca River and later the falls rather early in the morning. The area was a regular tourist stop for tour buses and was overflowing with sightseers. Interestingly enough, it seemed the majority of the tourists were Japanese or at least Oriental. One couldn't move around too freely, that is, the trails and viewpoints were somewhat

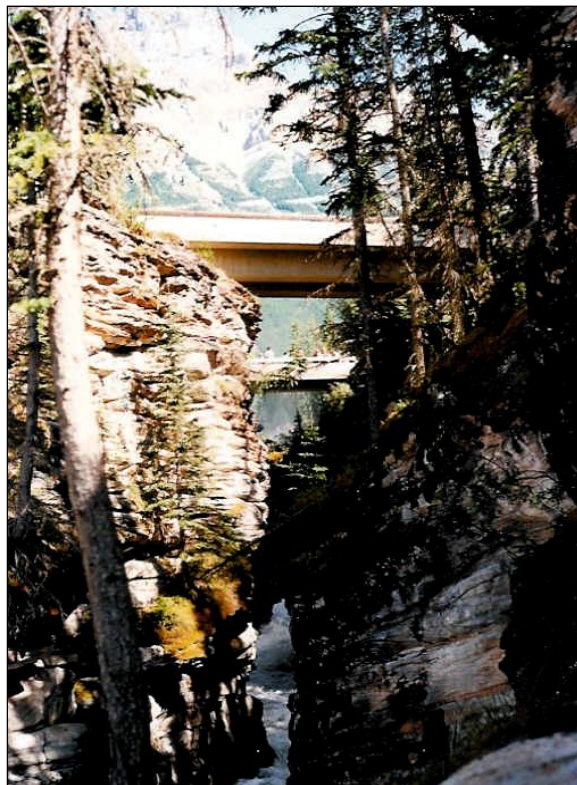


Figure 18-103 Athabasca River gorge as it appeared to us from the lower end.

like the Atlanta freeways during rush hour. Even so, we managed to negotiate the traffic and see the various sites available, many of which I photographed. I have included several as figures 18-100 through 18-105 for your enjoyment. I'll try to minimize my comments for each of them and allow them to speak for themselves.

The falls were only a short distance off highway 93 and there were plenty of parking spaces. People were getting on and off tourist buses and cars were moving in and out on a continual basis. First we moved over to the falls, which were quite high but I don't remember how many feet or meters. The stream is a good-sized river and the roar of the falls was significant. One had to speak rather loudly to be heard. I

couldn't find a good spot to capture the complete drop of the stream into the canyon below but figure 18-100 displays their size rather well. It was taken from a down-stream bridge over the gorge. The photo of the gorge in figure 18-101 was taken in the opposite direction from a second bridge just downstream from the first and clearly displays the canyon leading into less rugged countryside.

The river had formed two gorges with the earlier one being abandoned when the new one was cut. The park service had used it (the first) as a means to walk down-stream to a viewpoint below the gorge where one could see the river in gentler terrain. We walked down that gorge, first

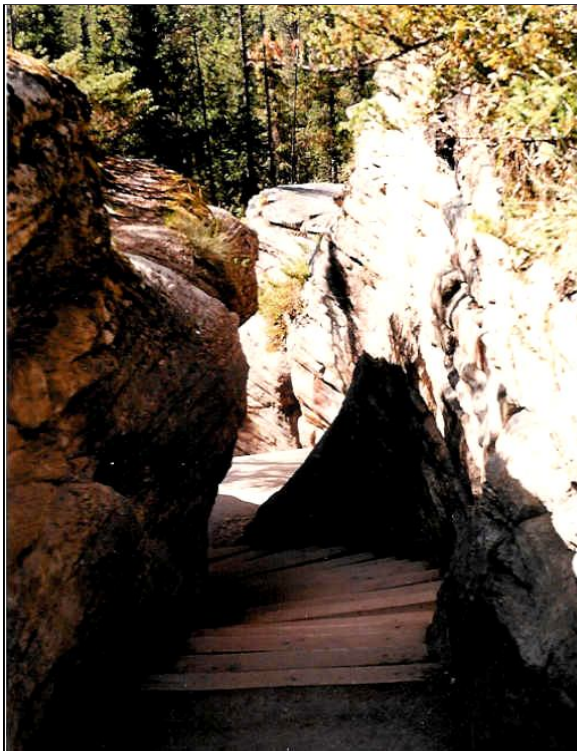


Figure 18-104 Steps traversing the long climb out of the old Athabasca River gorge.

on a path and then on some steps cut into the rock and finally on another path, which led to the viewpoint. The walk down was easy enough but the return trip caused a little huffing and puffing before we got to the top. The viewpoint was somewhat crowded but with time we were able to negotiate around it to see everything of interest. There were a couple of rafting parties getting ready to float the river below, which appeared calm enough but I don't know what lay ahead of them. We watched them from their preparation and cast off right up until they

disappeared from sight around a bend. I grabbed a couple of photographs of them at both points and have displayed the latter in figure 18-102. The nearest raft is quite easy to

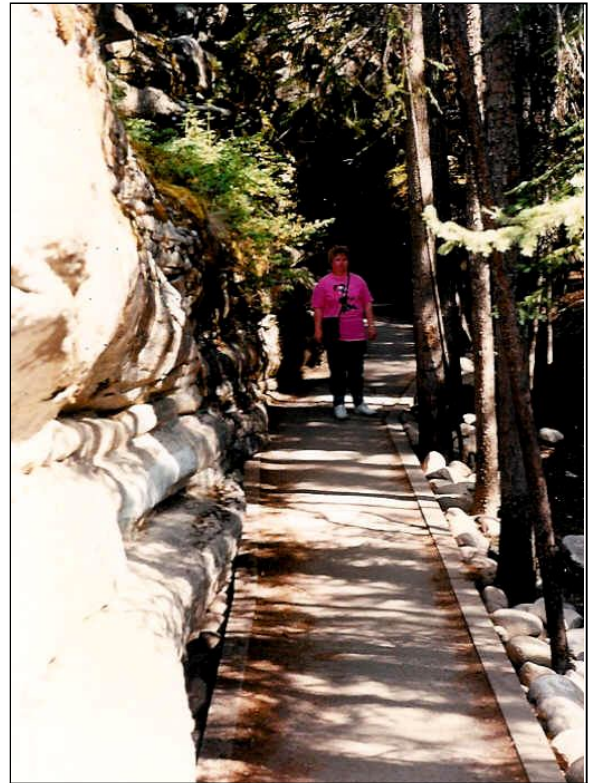


Figure 18-105 Lethia making the climb up the old gorge of the Athabasca River.

see but the further one downstream is just barely visible before going around the last bend. I circled them with a red loop to make them more obvious and minimize your searching. Aren't I helpful? This photo also gives one a better idea of the amount of water going over the falls in figure 18-100.

From the viewpoint, I could look upstream into the gorge and see the bridges that spanned it, which I mentioned earlier. Being an interesting shot, at least from my viewpoint, I have included it here as figure 18-103. You can compare this photo with the one of figure 18-101. In that case, we are standing on the bridge and looking at the far end of the gorge. In this case, we are at the far end of the gorge looking back at the bridges.

After spending a half hour at the viewpoint, we began the trek back to the top of the gorge. The path was interesting, to say the least, because it traversed the old gorge and gives one an idea of the new gorge's architecture without the water. I

also wonder just why the gorge is so narrow and deep considering the volume of water flowing through it. Did it begin with water seeping through a fracture or does the volume of glacial flour carried by the water dictate its shape? Some geologist studying such erosional action probably has an answer but I can only wonder.

We both wondered, as well, whether we would make it back to the top, having been on the

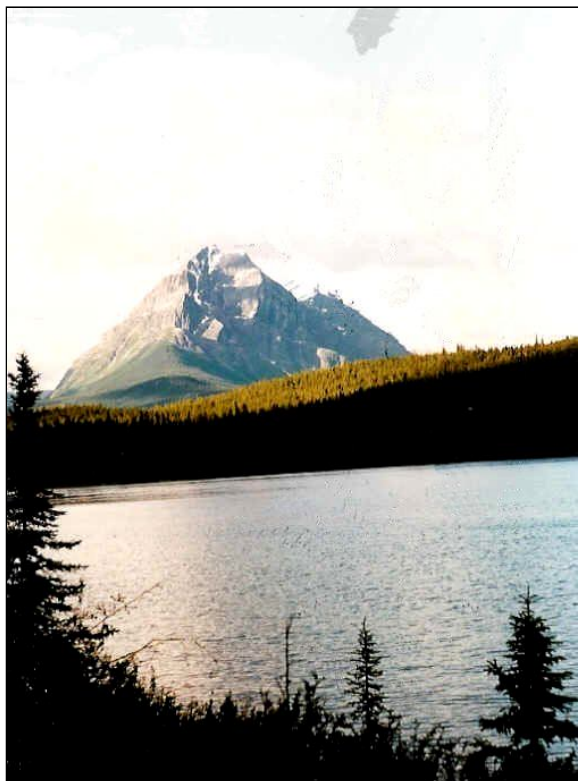


Figure 18-106 Pristine mountain lake near H.W. 93 between Athabasca Falls & Glacier.

downhill side of life for a goodly number of years now. The fickle finger of fate did not, however, dictate our demise in the mountains of Alberta and we soon found ourselves at the top, looking down once again. Of course, we took our time during which I snapped another couple of photos of the old gorge, which are displayed in figures 18-104 and 18-105. They will help you understand why we were huffing and puffing when we finally arrived back at the car.

We had spent a good deal of time at this first major stop of the day. Knowing Athabasca Falls is located several miles north of the Columbia Ice fields wherein the Athabasca Glacier is situated, we moved out soon after arriving back at the falls proper. We expected to spend considerable time at the glacier because, I

wanted to ride one of the buses up on the glacier itself, rather than simply view it from a distance. We were now in the more rugged part of the Canadian Rockies, at least as compared to the Jasper area. We constantly focused our attention on the majestic scenery as we moved south, making our progress rather slow but interesting. I continued to snap pictures here and there along the way but after displaying a couple of scenes south of the falls, I will concentrate the results of my limited photographic skills at the Columbia Ice fields. As you might expect, the next scene displayed in figure 18-106 includes a lake of unknown name. There is something about lakes and



Figure 18-107-Canadian Rockies as seen from HW 93 north of the Athabasca Glacier.

mountains in combination that calls to me like a voice from the past saying, "Peace, be still". When coupled with beautiful forests, I can sit for hours and soak up the solitude that the good Lord has made available to us. I do indeed love the mountains with their serene beauty and the quiet surroundings.

As we made our way south, we began to climb up to the Columbia Ice Fields. At one particular walled turnout I captured another mountain scene, which is displayed in figure 18-107. Even though it may seem that I'm submerging you in photos, you should understand I'm only displaying the ones I feel are significant. It could be worse, you know, even though you may question my judgment and/or my photography. Of course, each of these characteristics is an element you must accept and even understand in the makeup of old grandpa Tom, if you choose to become acquainted with him via this questionable work. Don't blame me because you chose to begin reading this book and apparently have now made it to this point.

Of course, we didn't stay long at any scenic point. There was too much to see and too much to do. We arrived at the Athabasca Lodge,

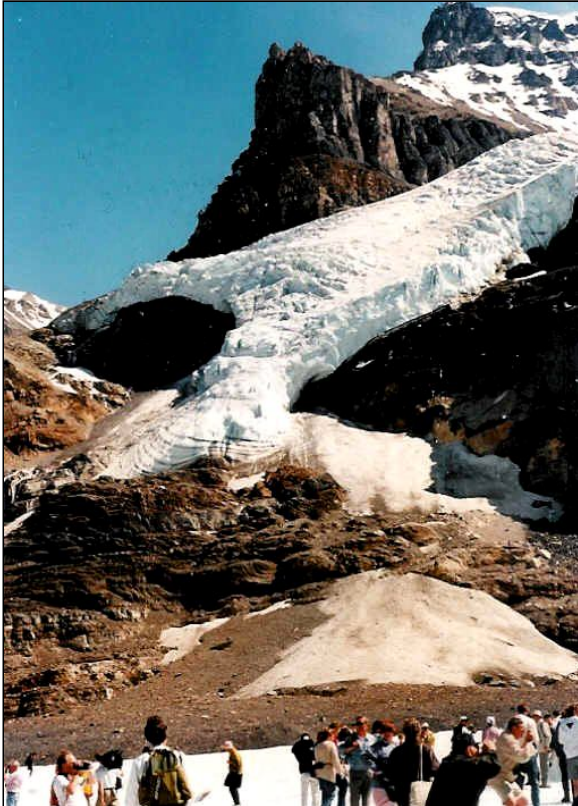


Figure 18-109 One of several side glaciers feeding into the Athabasca Glacier.

which is situated on highway 93, a little before lunch. After making our way around the facility, we grabbed a bite to eat after getting tickets for a ride to the glacier. You see, there was a waiting line for the many buses, actually snowcats fitted with steel tracks, which they had enlisted to handle the many tourists visiting the area. Like Athabasca Falls, the place was overrun with people of all nationalities. As I remember, we grabbed a sandwich and went out on the balcony to view the Athabasca Glacier or primary part of the ice fields. In fact, it was from this balcony that I was able to get a decent photo of the glacier, which I have displayed in figure 18-108. It seems we waited about a half hour before our appointed time arrived. I vaguely remember walking around the outside premises of the hotel to occupy my time and see the sights while waiting.

There was a constant stream of buses coming and going to the glacier. Finally we loaded up and the bus moved slowly out of the parking

area and headed up the valley toward the glacier. We traveled a dirt road for quite a distance before coming to the actual glacier. At that point, they transferred us to a so-called snowcat wherein we began our crawl up the



Figure 18-108 Athabasca Glacier, as seen from the hotel on the east of the road.

glacier. I say crawl because they did just creep along much like a bulldozer. However, we only had to travel to the first little fall or scarp, which

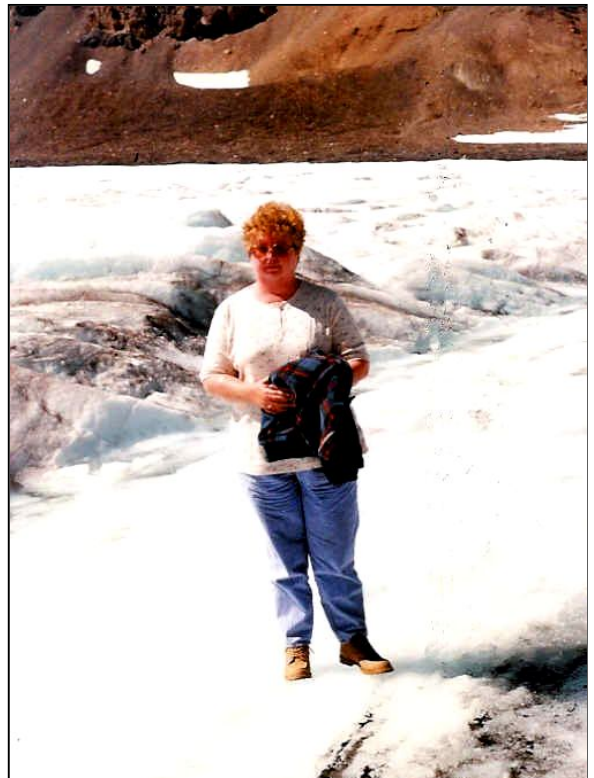


Figure 18-110 Lethia softening the glare of the ice while surveying the glacier.

is visible in the glacial photo of figure 18-108. We probably traveled about a half-mile on the actual glacier before piling out among a host of

other buses to observe the glacier and its surrounding progeny. I'm not sure that term is correct in that the side glaciers feed into the main Athabasca Glacier and were undoubtedly part of it before the present era of melting ensued.

Needless to say, I snapped many pictures while on the glacier as well as on the way to and from it. I'll only bore you with three that seem of

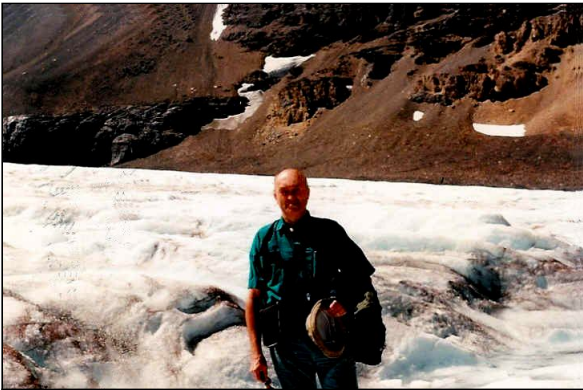


Figure 18-111 "Old Dad", oblivious to the glacier's icy glare as he surveys its extent.

interest to me and maybe Lethia. At least she's guilty of snapping the one of yours truly. Figure 18-109 is a side glacier I spoke of while the photo of figure 18-110 portrays the love of my life while she tries to adjust to the glare of her surroundings. Of somewhat less interest is the



Figure 18-113 A view of the surrounding countryside as we awoke on day twelve.

photo of yours truly, which is included as figure 18-111 to pacify Lethia, so she won't think I'm picking on her. It wasn't until I inserted these photos that I realized the glare Lethia was shielding herself from may well have been my chromium dome rather than the ice field surrounding us. I'll have to see if she wears those glasses while she's around me here in

Georgia. If she does, that will be a dead giveaway. Finally, I had to get a close-up of the buses or snow-cats as they were called. I believe they really were buses modified with the steel tank like tracks for the glacier. They, along with the crowd, are shown in figure 18-112. The hotel isn't visible in the background of the photo. It may be obscured by the snow-cats or the angle of the scene isn't exactly right. However, in the photo, we are now at that first scarp or ice ledge I tried to point out in the photo taken from the hotel in figure 18-108.

We might have spent as much as an hour on the glacier as everyone walked around to catch a glimpse of the various scenes rising up in all directions and capture photos of those that appealed to them. Lethia and I were ready to go



Figure 18-112 Some of the buses or snow-cats and crowd at Athabasca Glacier.

before the crowd, I believe. It didn't take that long to take in the available sights but I suppose this was one way to make the crowd feel like they got their money's worth. Finally, however, we were on our way back down to the lodge. Upon our arrival, we headed north to camp. The day was well spent and we were ready to eat and relax. In fact, I believe this was the night we went on in to Jasper and found a nice café for our evening meal. We then headed back to camp to ready ourselves for the last leg of the trip in the morning.

A rainstorm moved in that evening and I thanked my lucky stars that we were well prepared. I had dug a little ditch around the tent as well as placing a new tarp under it to protect us from dampness. Having purchased two more tarps in Revelstoke, I believe, I rigged them up over the tent as well as the screened shelter to ward off the worst of the rain. The tent tops were OK but in a heavy rain they would sag and allow water to collect. Eventually it would begin to drip

inside. The system worked like clockwork and we spent a comfortable dry night. It quit raining sometime during the night and we awoke to a somewhat foggy day but with the scent of freshness in the air. However, after breakfast I experienced the joy of packing up a wet camp. As you might expect, the water acts like glue and one has dirt, pine needles, etc. sticking to every exposed surface that touches the ground. However, I couldn't complain too much because the rain had quit, at least for the moment, and we had had a relatively rain free trip to this point. Even so, Lethia and I weren't sure just what kind of a day we were in for. Would the clouds break to the south or continue on in to Montana?

CANADIAN DAY TWELVE

I needed to document the weather for unbelievers and took the photo of figure 18-113 near camp. You must admit, the picture fits my description even though it was taken after we left the campground. We headed back towards Athabasca Falls and Columbia Glacier but this time I didn't intend to dally around and take

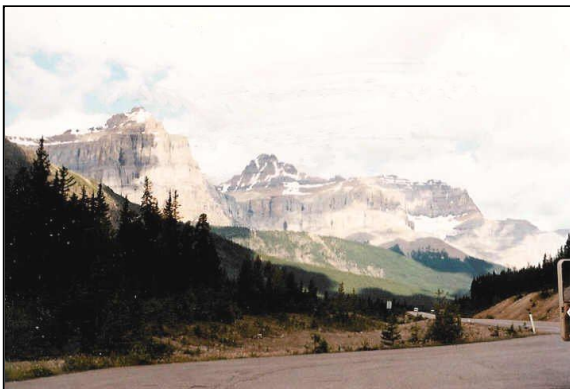


Figure 18-115 Alberta Canadian Rockies south of Athabasca along highway 93.

pictures, at least until after we passed the glacier and ran into new scenes. It wasn't long, however, until we came across a very picturesque scene along the Athabasca River. I couldn't resist and took the picture displayed in figure 18-114. It struck me as being particularly beautiful with its interplay of sunshine, low hanging clouds and fresh colors.

Well, I was true to my vow to refrain from more scenic photos until after we passed the Athabasca Glacier and we moved rather rapidly southward towards Lake Louise and Banff. Our objective for the evening was to stay in the town of Lethbridge so we would be in position to visit Cardston, Canada the next morning and the

temple situated there. We planned to attend a morning session before moving on to Montana and our next campsite. Thus day 12 would



Figure 18-114 The Athabasca River and countryside as we moved south on day 12.

involve driving about 375 miles. However, at least we wouldn't have to make camp. A motel

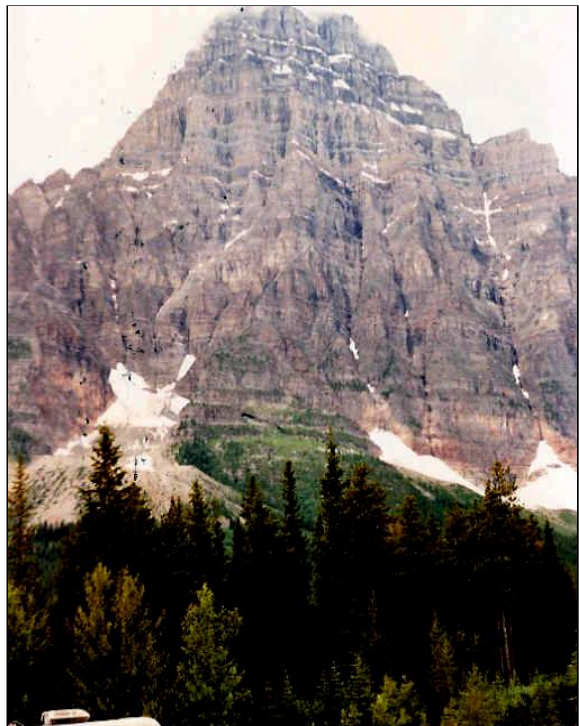


Figure 18-116 An unknown mountain peak between Athabasca & Banff, Canada.

of some sort and a restaurant would make up our camping facilities this night.

Even so, I would be somewhat less than candid if I have given you the impression that no more pictures were in store for the day. The Canadian Rockies simply contain too much

beauty to ignore. Admittedly, a more expert photographer would help the reader appreciate such beauty to a greater degree but unfortunately I was the only one available. Consequently, you have a few more photos to wade through from which you may further judge my expertise in the field of photography. The Canadian Rockies from the Alberta side are truly magnificent. The photos shown figures 18-115, 18-116 and 18-117 are samples I selected from the many taken along the way south on highway 93. Had the day been clear and sunny, the photos would probably be more striking and the reader would be less apt to judge my ability in that field too harshly but you and I will have to do with what I am able to make available.

As we moved southward over the Bow Pass, which is 6785 feet in elevation, we dropped down near a beautiful little lake named Emerald. It was unusual, that is different from other

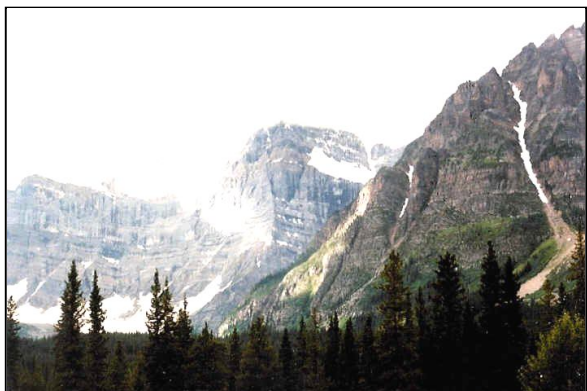


Figure 18-117 Another view of the beautiful Alberta Canadian Rockies along highway 93

Canadian lakes, in color only because all seem beautiful. The Emerald color is somewhat apparent in the photo of figure 18-118 but probably would have stood out better on a nice clear day amidst plenty of sunshine. In any case, it caught my eye and I decided I needed a picture of it. We didn't linger here, other than for a couple of photographs and to have lunch. We had some rather demanding mileage for the day, you'll remember and Lethia wanted to see Lake Louise as well. Lake Louise, besides being a beautiful little lake, is also a little community full of tourist facilities and in my opinion, spoiled by tourism. I don't remember spending any amount of time there either. Lethia might have gone into a couple of shops but if she did, I have blotted out such memories due to my disdain for mementoes or my rather cheapskate attitude. Either could be responsible for my memory loss.

It was still a couple of hundred miles from Lake Louise to Lethbridge and once we were on our way, I don't believe we stopped except, probably, for gas. The beautiful scenery ceased a short while after we headed east from Banff and we found ourselves staring at Kansas type plains. Only an occasional glance in my rear view mirror reminded me of what we were leaving behind. We had traveled from Lake Louise on Canada Highway One, which extends from Vancouver all the way across Canada to the border of Ontario Province where it apparently becomes Canada 17 or maybe Ontario 17. In any case, it loses its identity. I mention this because Canada 1 was the first road completed across Canada from French dominated Ontario and Quebec. I suspect, but I don't know, that the highway's loss of identity can be attributed to the French. Anyhow, getting back to my story, we left Canada 1 at Calgary, turning south on Canada 2 intersecting Canada 3 at Fort McLeod, which took us to our destination, Lethbridge, for the night. I suspect the foregoing travelogue from Lake Louise to Lethbridge was about as exciting for you as the Canadian prairie was for us, but heck, I had to

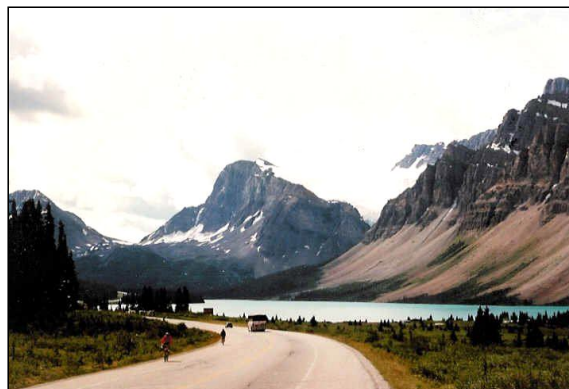


Figure 18-118 Emerald Lake by Canada 93 north of Lake Louise in Alberta.

get Lethia and me to Lethbridge so we could get a night's sleep. Having arrived therein, we found the town on a par with the prairie, nice but hardly stimulating. Consequently, we grabbed some dinner and a motel where we drifted off for a welcome night's sleep.

CANADIAN DAY THIRTEEN

We had planned day 13 so we could take in a session in the Cardston temple, both to see it and add its name to the list of temples we had been privileged to visit. It is one of the older temples, built in the early 1900s to meet the needs of the growing Canadian LDS community

of that area. We arose early, grabbed some breakfast and headed south for Cardston, arriving there around 10:00 AM. I took 3 or 4 pictures of the temple for memory's sake and found the one displayed in figure 18-119 the best of the lot. Even though it was a rainy day, I can't say the photo speaks well of my photographic skills. One I have showing the temple proper somewhat more plainly, had other shortcomings, so this will have to do. At least, it verifies our presence there. The temple was open and we went inside fully expecting to participate in some ordinance work but found they didn't begin until 1:00 PM. I'm not sure why it was open, considering the time of the first session. Anyhow, we couldn't wait that long and still make our destination for the night, namely Lake Bowman on the west side of Glacier National Park in Montana. After talking to the attendant, we left somewhat disappointed but were glad we had at least stopped by.

From Cardston, it was only 14 miles to the border of Montana where we arrived around 11:00 AM. The US Customs wasn't near as picky as was Canadian Customs at our entry. I guess we looked honest enough or maybe harmless enough. I'm confident such would not be the case in today's world. However, regardless of the reason, we were detained only a few minutes and continued on south to Babb and St. Mary. I don't believe we even stopped before we arrived at St. Mary's Lake just to the west of that little town. I remember having a picnic lunch there along side the lake. It was also a little chilly with a breeze coming off the lake. We had escaped the rain clouds of Canada but were now faced with a cool, windy day. I have included figure 18-120, taken from the shore St. Mary's Lake near our picnic area.

We probably killed a half to three quarters of an hour at the lake but didn't dally any longer than was necessary because of the breeze. We continued west over Logan Pass on the so-called "Going to the Sun" highway. I hadn't been over it since we left Cutbank for Farmington, New Mexico, way back in 1961. It was one of my favorite drives and I wanted Lethia to experience it. I planned to camp at Lake Bowman on the west side of the continental divide, some 35 miles north of Lake McDonald. The east side of the Rockies at this point is beautiful but still doesn't compare to the west side. We took our time so as to be able to enjoy the view without stopping. We would stop at the top at that viewpoint, however, where we

had stopped in the sixties when we came back from camping at Bowman Lake.

Much to my surprise, they had built a lodge on the summit complete with paved parking. I



Figure 18-119 Cardston Temple, situated southwest of Lethbridge some 50 miles.

hated to see such commercialization but I guess we can't stop so called progress. We did get out and enjoyed the view before going inside the lodge and store for a while. I told Lethia the bear story described in chapter 11 on page 530, should you want to review it. Soon we were on our way down the west side of the divide. There were no changes in the road that I could remember. It still twisted and turned along the edge of a vertical drop in places. We were on the inside lane and Lethia didn't seem concerned. We stopped a few times to enjoy



Figure 18-120 St. Mary's Lake on the east side of the continental divide in Montana.

the view and needless to say, I snapped a couple of pictures as shown in chapter 11 on pages 529 and 530, if you care to look. Soon we arrived at Lake McDonald and continued along the southern shore to the little community of Apgar, a resort area. There we turned north on a short stretch of pavement, which eventually turned into dirt as I had remembered it in the sixties. As we approached the turnoff to the

lake, we entered an old burn area of maybe 20 years ago but still some time after my earlier experience. I was saddened by the destruction because it had been such a beautiful area. We continued on to the lake and a couple of miles before our arrival, we came out of the burn.

We were please to find the camp and the area around the lake as beautiful as ever. Now,



Figure 18-121 The landscape near our motel in Missoula, Montana.

however, there was a nightly charge for camping and a caretaker to look after things. We found a nice spot and checked in. Rules were now in force, which required one to keep all food in the vehicle unless actually eating. There was concern about attracting grizzlies now, something I hadn't worried about the first time.



Figure 18-122 The St. Louis Temple as it appeared during our visit in 1998.

We made camp and soon found our protective screened tent very beneficial. The mosquitoes were everywhere. We ate in peace and decided to take a walk. Both of us plastered ourselves with repellent and even wore long sleeves. As we walked in the campground proper, the repellent seemed to do the trick but as we made our way deeper into the woods along the north shore, the Kamikazes arrived. We killed mosquitoes right and left but for every kill, ten

more arrived. It didn't take long to figure out this would not be an enjoyable walk and we headed back to our screened in tent. In the sixties we had obviously come up to the lake at a different time of summer because we weren't bothered by such beasts. It reminded me of our experience on Grande Mesa with Gene and Theresa. Anyhow, we settled for an evening of reading.

RETURNING TO GEORGIA

One night at Bowman Lake was sufficient. I didn't even argue about packing up camp in such a short time. We would make our way on to Kalispell this day. Fortunately, the mosquitoes weren't too bad the morning of our departure. I packed up with little trouble after enjoying a nice breakfast. We bid farewell to mosquito haven and headed back out into the old burn. The road was more than just a little dusty from the main dirt road to the lake. It seemed the holes, which were frequent, were all filled with dust and it flew all around us as we slowly ambled down to the Flathead River and the main road out. We continued on to Kalispell and then south along the east side of the Flathead Lake. I had mentioned the marvelous cherries grown in that area to Lethia and I think she was looking forward to experiencing them as much as I was. We soon found a stand and loaded up on Lamberts or Bings, as I knew them, and Royal Annes, which also went by another name. I believe they became our lunch for the day. From there, we traveled on down to Missoula, a distance of 90 miles or so, where we got a motel for the night. I only mention this stop because I want to include a photo of the Montana countryside around Missoula. Though not spectacular like Canada or the Logan Pass area, it is none-the-less beautiful in my estimation. I have mentioned before that Montana is one of the more beautiful states. So don't be too harsh when you judge from the photo of figure 18-121.

From Missoula, we headed east across Montana and South Dakota to Sioux Falls before turning south on I-29 to Kansas City and I-70. There we went east to St. Louis where we spent the night. No, we didn't make it all the way to St. Louis from Missoula in one day. I simply left out a few days. I only mention St. Louis because we stopped and went through the new temple there. Our motel was near I-70 west of St. Louis proper. The temple is facing east near the west I-270 loop a little north of I-64 as I remember it. We packed up the next morning in the motel,

ready to hit the road and headed to the temple where we were able to attend an endowment session. Having found a photo of the St. Louis Temple, which had opened in the last year, I decided to include it here as figure 18-122. No, the temple isn't tilting so as to compete with the leaning tower of Pisa. I guess I wasn't careful with the camera but that's par for the course.

After the session we headed directly for Atlanta and home. We drove all the way that day arriving in the rain well after dark. I remember this because of a harrowing ride down I-75 from Chattanooga in the rain. It seems 75% of the vehicles on the road were 18 wheelers. The highway is three lane from the state line and gradually increases to 4, 5 and 6 as you approach Atlanta. We were mostly on three lane road with the right two lanes jammed with trucks. With the rain coming down, the continual spray from the trucks and the lights reflecting off the wet surfaces, one had to squint like a hunted coon in a searchlight. Though I'm quite used to such conditions, I have never liked them and at 70+ years and counting, the trip was no joy ride during the last 150 miles. We pulled off for a while and ate to take a break and hopefully, give the rain time to stop. Needless to say, we were both thankful to arrive home safely.

VISITING FRED, CATHY, CARL AND GINNIE IN WASHINGTON DC

In the late spring or early summer of 1998, Fred and Cathy invited us to meet them at an RV park located on the northern edge of the I-495 loop. Besides visiting, we had planned to attend the Washington DC Temple with them. Lethia and Fred had been to that temple for his endowments prior to his mission some 17 or 18 years before but I had never had the pleasure. We were both excited over that prospect. I also knew Ginnie and Carl were in Washington where he was doing consulting work of some sort. Thus, I decided to contact him and see if we couldn't hook up with them as well. That would really make such a trip worthwhile. Carl and Ginnie were pleased and invited Lethia and me to stop by for a couple of days. They were living in an apartment in a community along the I-270 corridor northwest of Washington DC near Germantown, I believe. Though most of my contacts with Carl and Ginnie over the years had been at family reunions, he as well as Ginnie had attended Valerie's reception in Logan, Utah and Carl had also visited Esther and me in New Orleans, Louisiana while on a business trip. We

had visited Fred and Cathy a year or so earlier at a similar RV park south of Washington near Sandy Point, Virginia east of Fredericksburg but that was the extent of our familiarity with our nation's capitol. This would be an interesting and informative trip as well as a joyful one.

Lethia and I had just purchased a new Honda Accord to replace our ailing Honda Civic. Thus it would really be a pleasure to make the drive and try out our new vehicle. If I remember the timing right, we arrived at Fred and Cathy's on a Thursday afternoon, taking the better part of two days for the trip up. Fred and Cathy had a nice

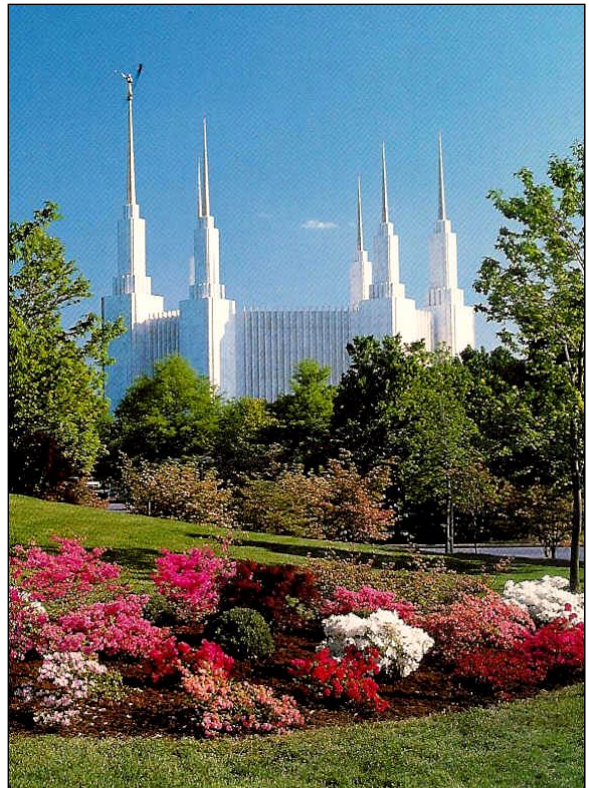


Figure 18-123 The LDS Temple in Washington DC on the north of I-495 loop.

average size trailer, which he pulled with a nice Ford diesel pickup. However, he was mingling with the rich in that park. Oh, I guess there were other rather average RVs in the park but he was parked next to several monsters. He said they would go for over a million apiece and I wasn't about to argue. Besides being huge, they had pullout entertainment sections where they could sit under an awning and listen to music or watch TV. I watched their evening relaxation from a short distance with some envy, though I was glad I didn't have to drive such a beast on the freeway. I would have loved to see the inside of

such a vehicle but none of our neighbors seemed inclined to ask a commoner over. Even in my somewhat envious state, I could understand that and now realize I'm no worse off for the lack of such an invitation.

Friday morning, we enjoyed breakfast with Fred and Cathy in their trailer before we all headed for the temple. It was to the west alongside the I-495 loop at a point where the freeway takes a

idea of this beautiful edifice, though it doesn't illustrate its sudden appearance and the breath taking view we saw from the I-495 freeway. Such a view is not just sudden but stunning as one tops a rise coming from the east.

Upon going into the temple, the gentleman checking my recommend said, "Obenchain, Thomas no less. That's interesting because I went to high school in Boise, Idaho in the forties

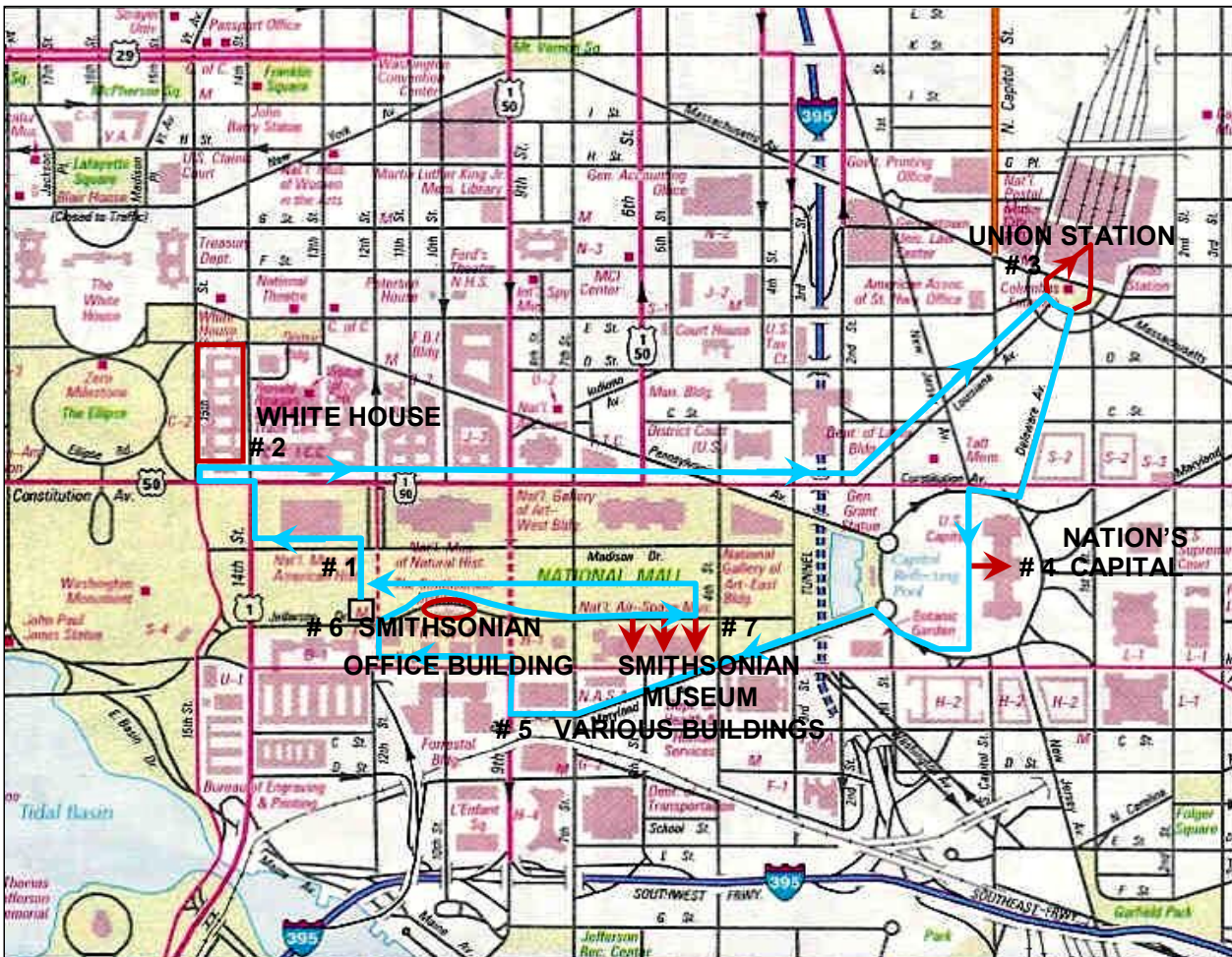


Figure 18-124 Map of the Washington DC Mall with our designated path to surrounding sites.

dip to the south. It was so located that one sees it right in the center of the freeway after coming over a rise. It's as though the temple sits on the freeway and is truly a stunning sight. We took the next exit after passing the temple on our right, 33 I believe, made two right turns and followed the two lane road back to the temple nestled in a wooded area. What a beautiful sight, being more so than I had even gleaned from the several photos I had seen. I have included a photo in figure 18-123, which is obviously not of my making. It provides some

with a kid by that name". I replied, "That is interesting because I'm that kid". We chatted briefly and I found that he was living in Ohio and came down monthly to work a couple of days or maybe a week in the temple. What a coincidence that his trip should occur on the one day we visited the temple and even more so because he was the one checking recommends. He mentioned he didn't realize that I was LDS at the time we went to high school and of course, I said, "I wasn't but joined in 1962 in Farmington, New Mexico". We went on in, attended an

endowment session and later a sealing session before leaving to head back to the trailer park.

We had arranged to meet Carl and Ginnie at a restaurant on the northwest freeway at an area I'm not sure of, maybe Germantown but probably south of there a little. Anyhow, Cathy and Fred joined us and met them while we all enjoyed a great meal with pleasant conversation. After dinner we left with Carl and Ginnie while Fred and Cathy returned to their trailer. Following Carl back to their apartment relieved me of any need to remember the route taken but the trip was relatively short. Ginnie was suffering from a headache and retired early. Lethia stayed up for a while with Carl and me as we talked about numerous things including making plans for Saturday. Finally, she also retired but Carl and I talked for some time, going to bed around midnight.

TOURING THE CAPITAL

Saturday morning, as I remember, Carl had a couple of things that needed attention at his office and went in early. Ginnie, Lethia and I followed later, around 10:00 AM I would say, on the rapid transit system, which is similar to Atlanta's MARTA. Carl would meet us later for lunch, it seems. Ginnie probably remembers this more clearly. We were able to disembark near the capitol area, the National Mall I believe they called it and do our limited touring on foot. I know we exited into the mall proper because that's the first thing we saw as we emerged from the subway. I can't remember the exact order of our touring that day but I'll do my best as long as you recognize that such isn't necessarily very good. I will also mention some of the sights that impressed me with the same qualification. To provide some organization and help the reader follow my mental meandering, I have included a map of the area with our path of travel and numbered sites (sights) in figure 18-124, as modified and taken from an Atlas. So, hang on tight and bear with me as we make the tour.

As mentioned, we exited the subway directly into a grass-covered area (stop #1), which I suppose was the National Mall. Without Ginnie as our guide, we would have been lost from the start and probably would have seen only about 50% of what we saw that day. The view of the mall and capitol at the end impressed me and the resulting photo is displayed in figure 18-125. I believe from there, we went directly to the White House (stop #2), it being the closest to the subway station. I also believe the gun incident

in which a White House policeman was shot had occurred there earlier that year, though I'm not sure. In any case, the White House was fenced off and no visitors were allowed in for the time being. Apparently, I failed to take a shot of the



Figure 18-125 View of our nation's capital at the point we exited the subway.

White House because none exist in our photo collection. I could get one from another source but its inclusion would hardly be worth the effort.

Anyhow, we didn't stay there long because of the no tourist policy and quickly moved along Constitution Avenue towards the Union Station where we were to meet Carl for lunch. Ginnie pointed out buildings of interest all along the way



Figure 18-126 Lethia and I just outside the Union Station in Washington DC.

but I am unable to recall anything other than Union Station, which is numbered as 3 on the map. It may well have been the food that fed my memory because we have a couple of photos of it, which Ginnie obviously took. The close up shown in figure 18-126 includes Lethia and me, if you examine it closely. Lethia appears to be admiring the view behind us while I'm either looking at the tour bus, which is hard to imagine, or trying to get across to the food. Whatever the situation, Ginnie soon caught up with us and we

went in where we met Carl and enjoyed a very nice lunch, complete with real cloth napkins. That really impressed this small town boy.

After Carl returned to work, we headed for the capitol building to take a peek at whatever was being allowed for tourists to see at this time.



Figure 18-127 Lethia and I displaying our lovely countenances at the capital.

Ginnie snapped a close up of Lethia and me just before we went in to commemorate the occasion, which is included as figure 18-127. We went inside where we were able to tour both the Senate and House chambers. That is, we were allowed in the balcony where we looked down on the desks and seats of our elected officials. Of course, neither body was in session, it being Saturday but the time was well spent anyway. There were various interesting items to see in the capitol rotunda under the dome. We spent some time there but exactly what we saw escapes me now. It seems we also walked down each hallway leading from the rotunda to observe whatever was there. I believe one of the four hallways contained statues and busts of the various presidents but Lethia thinks that was part of the Smithsonian. It

may well be because everything now runs together in one big blob for me. Either we spent some time in the capital viewing these items or in one section of the Smithsonian. Anyhow, I found that particular experience extremely interesting. Because of my interest, one would think the when and where would be somewhat clearer but such is not the case.

We left the capital building and headed for the Smithsonian. I'm not sure of the exact route we took but I remember Ginnie showing us several buildings of interest along the way. Though I had heard of them, in various news articles, I suppose, they were really just buildings with nothing special to register in my mind. We then passed the Smithsonian office building, which was an old landmark of sorts. Carl and Ginnie were members of the Smithsonian and I believe she made a stop and inquired regarding their membership. From there we moved on down to the museum buildings and began to tour the various collections within. I think we may have split up here and agreed to meet at some given point later but I wouldn't swear to that. I say this because I remember spending an inordinate amount of time in the museum of minerals and gems. Lethia said she stayed with me or at least within the same museum while Ginnie may have wandered elsewhere, returning from time to time to check on our status.

I believe we may have toured the historical museum first wherein we saw everything from the various first ladies' gowns to remnants of the old frontier. Lethia and I stayed together pretty well through this section but I must admit, when we got to the first ladies' gowns I got a little impatient. I was more in tune with the frontier while the gowns were right down Lethia's alley. Oh, the sacrifice we men have to make to maintain a reasonable relationship with the

I mentally tried to classify each mineral in its proper crystallographic category, namely, cubic, monoclinic, triclinic, orthogonal, hexagonal and maybe octagonal, who knows?

women folk. I must admit, I enjoyed this section of the Smithsonian a great deal and would even describe some of my unforgettable memories if I could only recall what they were. Unfortunately, such a dilemma is typical in some older folks such as I and can be ascribed to the gradual solidifying of the fluid portions of their craniums, i.e. senility. Is that even close, Ted?

I believe our next stop was the museum of rocks and minerals or something to that effect. There truly were some fascinating crystals of various types in that particular museum, as well as immense gold nuggets and beautiful gem collections. I could have spent the day there. Undoubtedly, you have all seen the Smithsonian sometime during your lifetime including this display but maybe your fascination level was a little lower, not being an ex-geologist.

Lethia's interest was also somewhat different than mine and we wandered in and out of contact while in this section. She must have been looking at the gems while I spent a couple of hours ogling the various types of crystals. Many struck a chord of recognition in my old brain because of my geologic studies in mineralogy but I had never observed anything quite like these. I mentally tried to classify each mineral in its proper crystallographic category, namely, cubic, monoclinic, triclinic orthogonal, tetragonal and hexagonal or something like that, who knows? Anyhow, I gave up, not being sure of even the 6 different crystal classes. To think, I once had to take tests, looking at each crystal and identifying not only its class but also its hardness, luster and composition. I remember feeling rather pooped by the time we finished in this section, either because of standing on my feet all this time or maybe trying to remember 6 mineral classes. We still had the air and space museum to take in, so I found Lethia and we wandered to the next building.

The air and space museum was just as fascinating to me, bringing back childhood memories as I gazed at the various old prop driven planes. Considering the way I was beginning to feel after leaving the mineral museum, I was now beginning to feel like an old Ford Tri-motor I saw hanging up nearby. My prop was barely turning due to sluggish pistons or else I was just plain running out of gas. Certainly there were as many items of interest in this museum as in earlier ones, probably even more but my attention span was just about closed off. Mainly, my feet were killing me. Had there been a place to take a snooze, I would have utilized it. Anyhow, I was ready to leave when Ginnie brought up the subject.

As you can see from the map of figure 18-124, we went directly to the subway from the air-space museum where I crawled into a seat and relaxed for the ride home. I don't remember anything more about the day other than a good

dinner and a relaxing evening wherein we discussed the events for Sunday including a trip



Figure 18-128 Carl, Lethia and I being captured in a 1998 photo taken by Ginnie.

to Gettysburg. I also concluded that Ginnie was a good cook. Who is a better judge than I?

A DAY IN GETTYSBURG

After breakfast on Sunday morning, we headed northwest on I-270 to Fredrick and thence

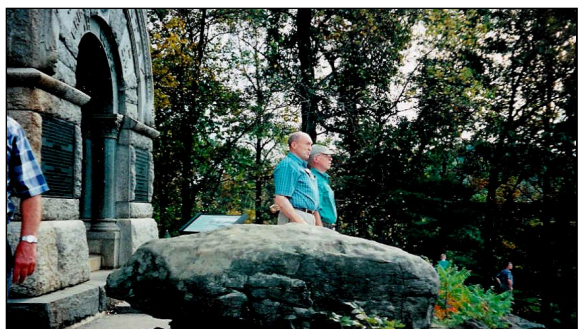


Figure 18-129 Carl and I looking over Gettysburg battlefield from a monument.

northeast into Pennsylvania and Gettysburg, which lies near the state line. A night's rest had done wonders for me and I was in good spirits. I had never been to Gettysburg and was anxious to take in a little civil war history. I'm not the history buff Tom or Jared are but I do find some

of these historical sites interesting and can spend a significant amount of time there.

We spent several hours wandering around the battleground and trying to relive the events that went on there. Little did I realize that this would be the last time I spent any amount of time with Carl let alone the last time I would see him. Looking back, I'm truly grateful for having made this trip and spent some choice time with him and Ginnie. I have included a couple of photos of us together to commemorate the occasion in figures 18-128 and 18-129. It would be nice if I could have mentioned the monuments' names and their significance that are seen in the two photos but unfortunately, I'm not that well

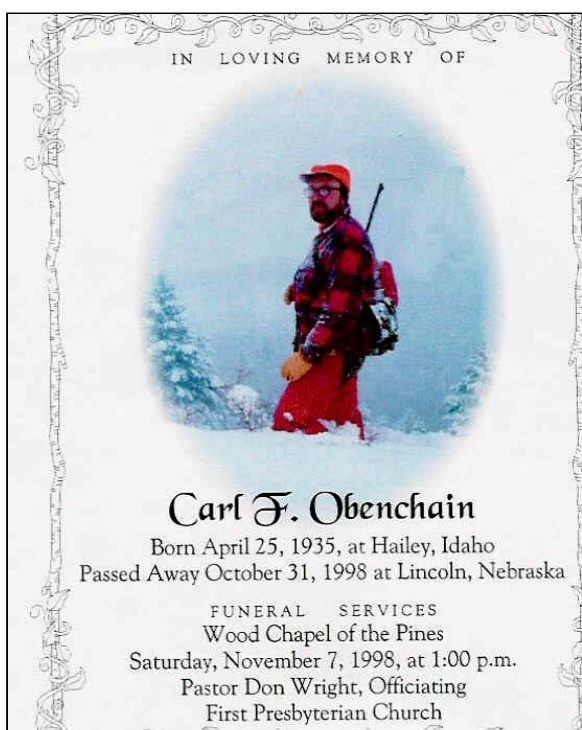


Figure 18-130 A portion of the program for Carl's funeral in November of 1998.

organized. I usually think of such things after the fact. In defense of my thoughtlessness, I had no idea at the time what I would do with these photos in the future. I probably figured they would be relegated to the photo archives of our household, never to be looked at again. I'll admit I was in the process of writing this prodigious work but I simply didn't realize just how windy I was or how extensive my use of photos would be. Fortunately for you they have cut down on my verbiage to a small degree.

We headed back to the apartment late that afternoon; stopping along the way at a roadside

fruit stand located a little north of Fredrick. Actually, they had all kinds of fruits and vegetables as I remember as well as a host of memorabilia for tourists. We bought several jars of sugar free jam and I picked up a belt that I felt was a bargain. Soon we were back on the road again, arriving home a little after dark. Once again, we spent a nice evening in general conversation. Carl seemed to be a picture of health to me, lean and energetic. He always seemed to watch his diet closely and I would have thought he would be the last of the boys to have heart problems.

It seems one never knows just when he or she will be called home. That, in itself is a good reason to use our time productively and to strive to maintain good relations with those we love, if not all mankind. I'm confident that Carl did that. I know of no individual whom I have admired more for his or her individual effort in that regard. Though an accomplished person, he displayed no vanity and accepted everyone; it would seem, for his or her individual talents and effort. His example of self-reliance, humility, a marvelous work ethic, as well as the virtues of being a good husband and father has certainly provided strength for his family. All of his siblings as well as his family mourned his passing but look forward to seeing him again when we make our own transition through the veil that separates us.

The next morning, Monday, Lethia and I headed home. We would make a stop along the way for the night, probably in South Carolina, rather than push ourselves to get home. The total distance was about 700 miles, which included a few areas of traffic congestion. Those areas would add significantly to the travel time. Having done so, we continued our trip on Tuesday and arrived home in a more positive frame of mind as well as not quite so travel weary.

NEWS OF CARL'S PASSING

We received news of Carl's death in Lincoln on November 1, 1998, I believe. At any rate, we had time to drive to Idaho Falls rather than fly, which was helpful considering Lethia's desire to be there too. As I have intimated previously, we were stunned but extremely thankful we had had the opportunity to spend a few days with him and Ginnie in Washington. I'm not sure just when we left Flowery Branch but I believe we arrived in Idaho Falls the day before the funeral or on November 6, 1998. I remember visiting with the family that evening with each of us

trying to console the others. Such deaths are difficult in that they are unexpected but I personally would rather go the same way than suffer for some extended time. I believe the dying individual not only suffers more in such a situation but those who love them also. Also extended suffering often depletes one's finances and leaves those remaining in financial difficulty. Thus, if Carl had to go, his sudden death was a blessing to the family, in my opinion.

As a somewhat permanent record of his death and funeral, I have included a copy of a portion of the program in figure 18-130. I think the



Figure 18-132 Sawtooth Mountains, which lie to the southeast of Grand Jean.

photo Ginnie included was an excellent choice considering Carl's love for hunting and the out of doors. Carl was cremated according to his wishes and as I understand it, his ashes were scattered somewhere near Galena Summit, an area we sometimes count as our origin and he apparently loved it as well. Each of Carl's siblings was presented with a large brown teddy bear at the funeral, to secure his memory, I would guess. Though very thoughtful of his family, such was unnecessary for me because I often think of him and our last visit in this life.

SOME MORE ON FAMILY REUNIONS

Family reunions continue on an odd year basis, that is 01, 03, 05, etc. The odd year basis seems in keeping with other family traditions and our conduct when we get together, which to an outsider must seem odd to say the least. Who cares though, if you're having fun? Having spoken of these reunions during periods when Esther was alive, I now include a few experiences from those times Lethia was able to accompany me. She and I just returned from the 2007 reunions this last August, our eighth together and she's still holding up quite well in spite of the Obenchain psychological battering.

GRAND JEAN

Lethia and I make a trip west every year to see Tom, Julie and their kids. On odd years we couple that visit with a trip on up to Idaho for the



Figure 18-131 Cabin that Julie, Tom, Beth, Spencer, Lethia & I occupied in 1997.

reunion and maybe work in some other sightseeing such as our trip to Canada. I'll try

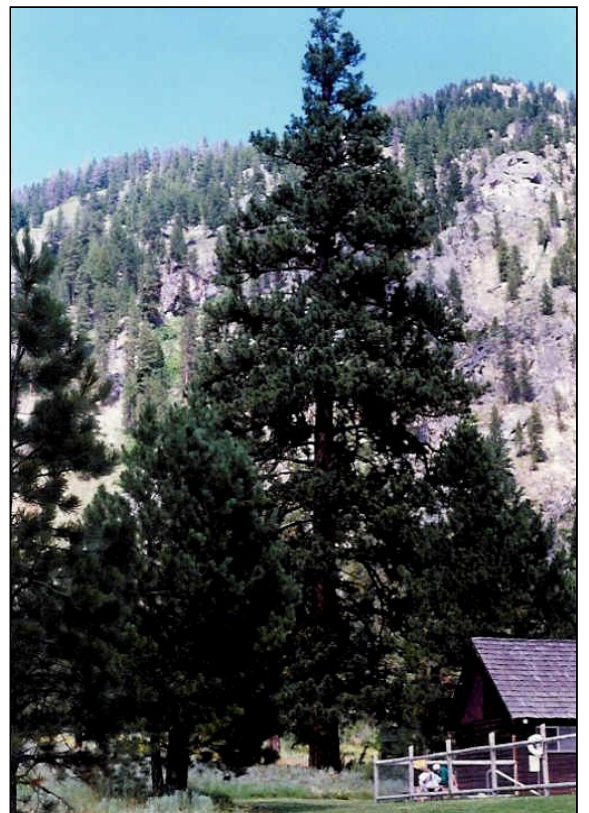


Figure 18-133 Pool edge, a majestic tree and the mountain as a backdrop.

not to bore you with details of our eight reunions together but I would like to include a few photos taken during a couple of those visits. They will further acquaint you with our odd pleasures.

Let me begin with our first visit to Grand Jean sometime in the nineties when Tom, Julie and family accompanied us. We rented one of the bigger cabins that year to accommodate the



Figure 18-134 Julie, Beth and Spencer to the left with two unknowns in the pool.

group. For some reason, I was in a picture taking mood that year and managed to record several incidents. We'll begin with a photo of our cabin as displayed in figure 18-131. Note Tom's little Honda Civic and my trusty old pickup. This trip had to have occurred in 1997 because Britta wasn't born yet and I bought my pickup in 1996. Since Britta entered this world in May of 1998, that event limits the year to one, 1997. How's that for nailing down a date with engineering logic?

Besides several cabins and a lodge, the Grand Jean facility has a natural hot water swimming pool and saddle horses. The only real negatives

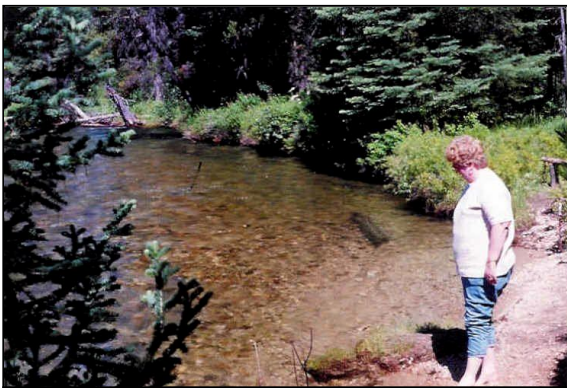


Figure 18-136 Lethia trying to gather courage to wade in the S. F. of the Payette.

are the lack of a protected gathering place for the group and some rather sorry cabins. The one we had in 1997 was fine but others are somewhat more than rustic, to say the least. That's why Lethia and I have settled for the Sour Dough Lodge, which is situated about ten miles

downstream from Grand Jean. The positives of the reunion site are availability, a beautiful area, acceptable facilities, a pool and the right price



Figure 18-135 Looking downstream on the S. F. of the Payette near Grand Jean.

range. Additionally, there is a nice walking trail to the southeast along the valley floor, which passes by the south fork of the Payette River.

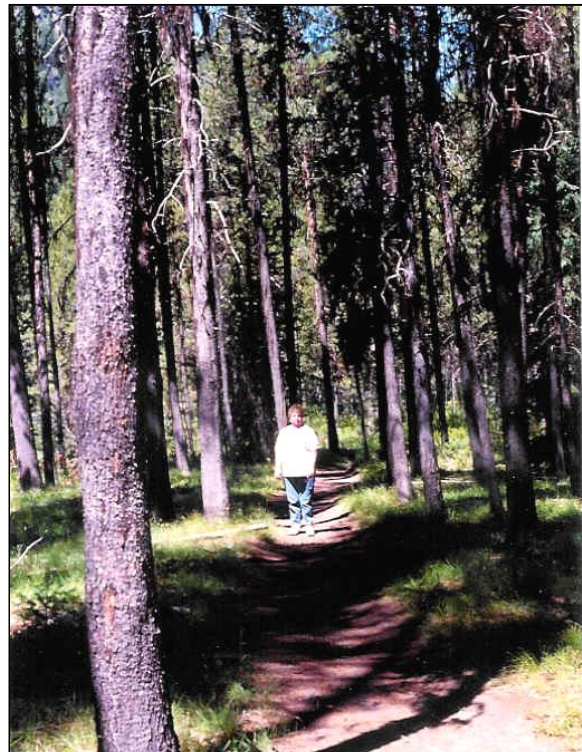


Figure 18-137 Lethia trudging along the path through the trees of the nature trail.

Some of the following photographs were taken along that trail.

Figure 18-132 portrays a scenic view looking southeast from the lodge, while figure 18-133 captured a rather majestic tree and the corner of

the pool with the nearby mountains as a backdrop. Figure 18-134 portrays the pool proper with Julie, Beth and Spencer enjoying a swim and Tom relaxing on the sidelines. The pool is rather warm and saps one's strength if you stay in too long. Of course, that didn't bother Spencer and Beth but that's probably why Tom is on the sidelines. Lethia and I had taken a dip on a previous visit and decided we didn't want to participate. We preferred to gather with others near the lodge and simply chew the fat, swap lies or whatever.

These small or A & V reunions are always held on the Monday and Tuesday following the big or J & L reunions because the latter are scheduled on the weekend. Actually, we arrive at the second reunion on Sunday evening, spend all day Monday and then depart Tuesday about



Figure 18-139 A view from near the top of the Morse Creek Summit south of Lowman.

noon. On this particular Monday in 1997, Lethia and I decided to walk the nature trail. We arrived at the river and spent some time just watching, wading and relaxing. The south fork of the Payette River is really quite beautiful and I managed to get a pretty good shot of it as displayed in figure 18-135. Notice the deep blue color of the water and the sparkle on the ripples as the water glides over the rocky riverbed. We were the only ones in the immediate vicinity other than a few of nature's creatures. I think we spent a half hour or so next to the stream just soaking up the peace and solitude of the riverbank. Lethia did a little wading in a shallow cove along the east shore of the river. I managed to capture her somewhat thoughtful and questionable decision in figure 18-136. This spot at which she waded was about a third of the way around the loop the nature trail made at a spot where it came near to the river. Thus we decided to hurry along to get back on time.

After leaving the river we continued on the path. I got a little ahead of Lethia and managed to get another shot of her trudging along the path as it wound through the trees just after we left the river. It is shown in figure 18-137. As the trail



Figure 18-138 Horse barn and corral with a few horses, if you look closely.

curves back to the northwest, it follows along side of a little meadow and eventually breaks out into it. From there we could see the horse barn and corral with several horses in it. If one feels so inclined, he or she can go horseback riding. Whether a guide has to accompany one, or not, I don't know, not having so indulged. If I were to take such a ride, it would have to be up on the mountain where I could get a better look at the scenery below. Since I like horses, I decided to



Figure 18-140 Uncle Marvin amidst a group of his nephews at the 1997 reunion. L to R Jim, Dan, Bob, Mark, Yours Truly, Marvin, Dewey, Phil Maurice or James (all Obenchains) with Jim Mallory far right.

include a photo of the corral with its horses, displaying the same in figure 18-138.

Well, we left Grand Jean Tuesday morning and separated from Tom and his family. They headed back to Colorado Springs while we, I believe, made our Canadian trip, which is already documented. I will drop this subject after one more photo of the country surrounding

Lowman, which is just down river from Grand Jean. At that point one can either follow the Payette to Horse Shoe Bend to get to Boise or leave the Payette at Lowman and cross over onto Boise River drainage. I think the summit involved is called Morse Creek Summit but I may be mistaken. Whatever the name, as one climbs up out of Lowman, a rather beautiful view presents itself to the traveler. It was more beautiful prior to the big Lowman fire but is none-the-less still impressive and is presented in figure 18-139. Notice the winding highway down below, a part of which almost looks like a small lake or pond unless you use a magnifying glass.

We sailed on down to Boise and didn't even stop but headed west for Weiser where we would turn north to Spokane to begin our Canadian trip. Though the documentation is somewhat out of order, it's too much work to try to re-shuffle things for better compatibility.

REVISITING CASCADE

The summer of 1999 the reunion was held at Cascade Reservoir once again. I believe this may have been the last one at that location because of reservoir pollution from McCall. However, this reunion site also had some real pluses including the mess hall where we not only ate but also socialized, held programs, enjoyed good food and were able to enjoy a nice campfire site as well as a beautiful view. I am revisiting this site primarily because of a couple of nice pictures I found that not only typify the good times we had but also identify Uncle Marvin with a group of his nephews, all who were present that year. The first is a photo of Marvin with his nephews in figure 18-140. Therein, I have identified all those questionable characters involved with their questioning expressions, probably wondering just what's going on. Next is Figure 18-141 displaying the mess hall with a typical group of chowhounds standing around waiting for lunch just prior to ringing of the dinner bell. There are too many people present to identify all but I must point out Lethia in dead center with uncle Marvin next to her, facing the opposite way. He apparently was in a hurry for lunch or

maybe he was just protecting his well-earned seniority rights.

We had some good times at these family shebangs. One time Terry Obenchain brought up a Karaoke setup, which many enjoyed, that is

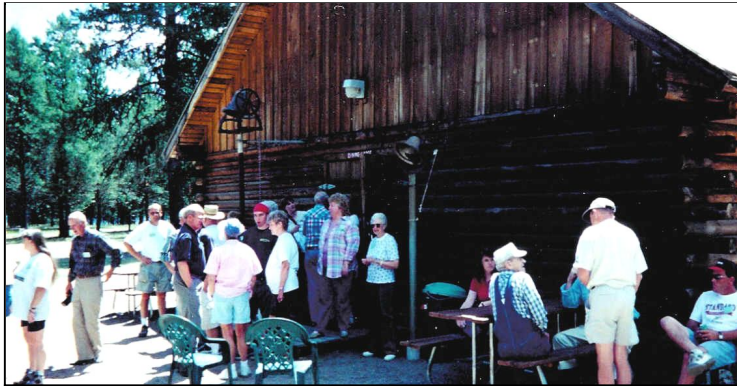


Figure 18-141 A scene in front of the mess hall taken during the 1997 reunion at Cascade, Idaho.

those of us that didn't mind making an ass of ourselves. We have had family history

BEHOLD, THE DOME IS CHROME

THE A- BEND-SCHON CLAN, HAS BEEN CURSED TO A MAN, WITH THEIR
 OR, GIVE ME A DOME, A DOME OF PURE CHROME, WHICH THE
 THE OTH- ERS WITH HAIR, MUST QUICK-LY DE- SPAIR, WHEN THEY
 JUST LOOK AT US FELLAS, WITH GAU- DY UM- BRELLAS, AT- TACHED
 AN EN- GIN-FERED COV-ER, WE QUICK-LY DIS- COV-ER, PRO- TECTS
 THIS BAL- LAD MUST END, LEST PER- CHANCE IT OF- FEND, AND UN-

DOMES LIKE A COM- ET AT NIGHT, BUT LAD- LIES WITH CLASS, SIM- PLY
 GIRLS SO AD- MIRE AND EX- CLAIM, THERE NEV- ER WAS SEEN A MORE
 GAZE ON SUCH WON- DER- OUS MEN, NO HEADS CAN COM- PARE, OR CAUSE
 TO OUR AP- PEN- DAG- ES BRIGHT, A SIGHT TO BE- HOLD, WE HAVE
 HEADS FROM THE SUN AND THE RAIN, WHAT'S MORE MY DEAR LAD, WE OUGHT
 FOR- TU- NATE MEN WITH THEIR WAVE, WITH SUD- DEN IM- PULSE, WITH OUT

MUR- MUR A- LAS, AND GIVE THANKS FOR THAT CRA- NI- UM BRIGHT
 SIL- VER- Y SHEEN, A MOP SHE CAN SO EAS- IL- Y TAME
 PEOP- LE TO STARE, LIKE THE GLOR - Y OF OUR DI- A- DEM
 OPT- EN BEEN TOLD, LIKE A SHIP OF THE NIGHT IN FULL FLIGHT
 NOT TO BE SAD, FOR THE GALS WE STILL DRIVE THEM IN- SANE
 SEE- ING RE- SULTS, TRY TO CRE- ATE THE DOME THEY SO CRAVE

CHORUS

WHERE, WHERE IS OUR HAIR, PER- HAPS WE SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT IT A- LONG SAM.

REIN- HOLT AND ME, WE CAME OV- ER THE SEA, TO A LAND OF A BALD MAN'S SWEET SONG

Figure 18-142 Tune and lyrics to the bald man's ballad.

presentations, singing by some whose family members could actually sing, instrumental pieces by people who could actually play and

even a ballad of the bald by some of the older Obenchain males who can't carry a tune in a bucket. Since I was instrumental in setting up this latter tomfoolery, I will insert a copy of that ballad, which was sung to the tune of "Home on the Range". It is displayed as figure 18-142. You may not appreciate the lyrics but you must admit they are original. At the time this occurred, the people organizing the affair were soliciting ideas for and even participation in the entertainment. It's funny, such requests seem to have ceased since that ballad was sung.

REDFISH LAKE

The A & V reunion that same year was held at Redfish Lake in an effort to find something a little different and some better facilities than Grand Jean. Lethia and I cut across from Cascade through Bear Valley and Stanley to the lake. I'm not sure what route other folks took but ours is well cemented in this old rock block of mine. You see, as we approached Stanley from the west, I was traveling at a pretty good speed. The town limits extend out into the sagebrush

daughter) came by and witnessed the scene. She obviously felt I deserved recognition for the way I handled things because everyone in camp knew about my ticket before Lethia and I arrived. Pat wouldn't let matters rest and there was little I could do but take it on the chin. You have my thanks, Pat.

As we approached the lake proper, the Sawtooth Mountains rose up from the wooded hills to greet us with their resounding magnificence. Like our beloved mother, they beckoned us to come and gather together to enjoy our family's heritage. I couldn't resist taking a picture of such grandeur and have displayed the scene we enjoyed in the photo of figure 18-143. As one sees the panorama before him the name's origin, "the Sawtooths", becomes quite evident. Glaciers had sharpened and set those teeth through the eons past.

A little further down the highway, we came to the road leading into Redfish Lake. We hung a right and continued about 5 miles, as I remember, to the lodge on the edge of the lake. The setting

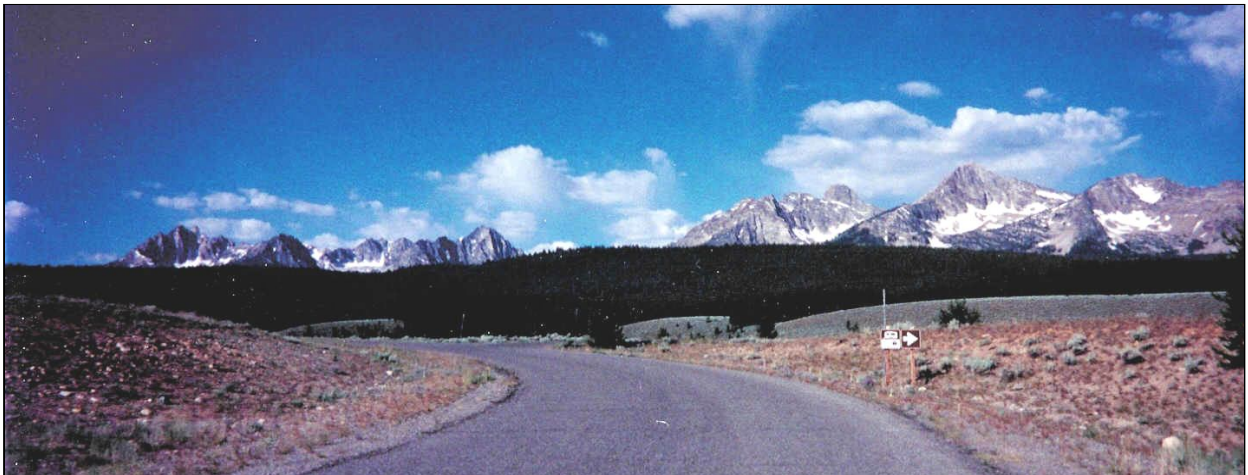


Figure 18-143 Sawtooth Mountains of Idaho as they appear from the highway south of Stanley.

with an obvious speed limit sign of 30 miles an hour, as I remember. The exact limit isn't clear but the following incident is. I was slowing down but not rapidly. I came around a curve found myself face to face with the local gendarme in a pickup as well but it was decorated with red lights. I hit the brakes but too late because I saw the red lights come on, flashing in my rear view mirror. I pulled to a stop while he pulled a U-turn and came up behind me. I got out and met him, making no excuses for my obvious infraction of the law. He wrote me a ticket for \$50, which wasn't too delightful but to make matters worse, Pat (Delight's delightful

was beautiful and the resort's popularity was quickly evident as we pulled in to register. People were milling around the lodge and dock producing an atmosphere of beehive activity. Lethia and I had selected a room in the lodge proper while my siblings had taken cabins to accommodate their families. The sleeping facilities were great in Redfish Lodge as was the food. Unfortunately, we had no place to gather and exchange our stories or outright lies for which we are well known. That, of course, is half of the fun at such gatherings and resulted in our going back to Grand Jean two years later where such activities could prosper.

Even so, Lethia and I thoroughly enjoyed our stay at Redfish Lake. The scenery was magnificent. Lethia and I walked along the lake where I snapped several pictures of the beauty surrounding us. We also took a ride with others



Figure 18-145 Beautiful Redfish Lake nestled in the grandeur of the Sawtooths.

in a motor launch to the far end of the lake and back. Every direction one looked from the launch revealed a scene of beauty and wonder, at least for me. I continued to snap pictures during the ride but will only share one from the boat and a couple from shore with my captive audience. They will help you understand my fascination with the Sawtooth Mountains. The photo of figure 18-144 was taken along the shore a little to the east of the lodge on Monday

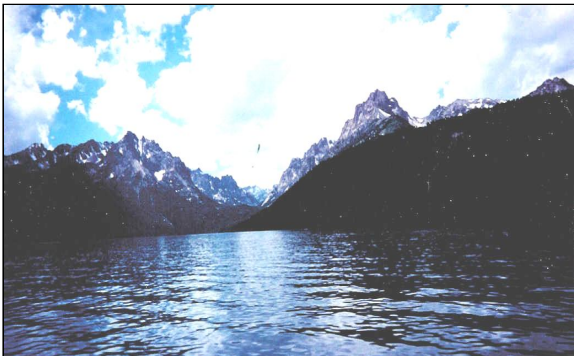


Figure 18-146 Photo looking west to the Sawtooths from the lake at the south end, as seen from the motor launch.

morning, as was figure 18-145. Figure 18-146 is one of the many photos taken during our boat ride on the lake.

I find these reunions, both J. & L. and A. & V. very enjoyable because, I suppose, they take me back to my roots. I know a lot of good people and have had many enjoyable experiences with non-family groups but it seems there is nothing quite like family, both immediate

and extended, to provide meaning to one's life. I'm grateful to be able to make the trip every two years and, as I have said before, will continue to do so as long as the good Lord sees fit to bless my life with suitable mobility. At my age and without thought of vanity or pride but with complete humility and gratefulness, I continue to be amazed at my ability to negotiate the Atlanta traffic maze any time of day. It's not that I like it

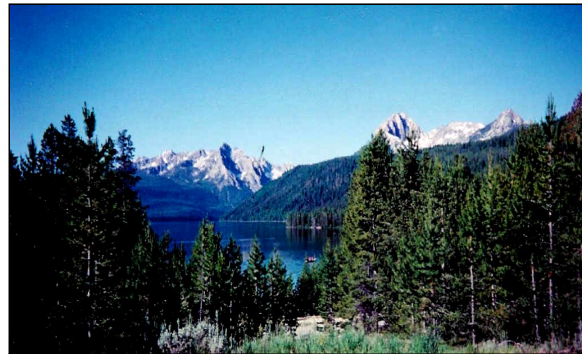


Figure 18-144 A scene taken from a hill east of the lodge showing lake and Sawtooths.

because I do all that I can to avoid it but I know many of the elderly, 70 and above, who won't venture out at night let alone into the Atlanta traffic grid. I honestly don't know how long it will last but I still drive with confidence to and from the temple 3 times a week, coming home after dark even in the rain. I don't doubt that some of the reason lies in the genes I have inherited but I thank the Lord each and every day for that capability. This confidence likewise allows Lethia and I to make the trip west on an annual basis during which I do most of the driving. Lethia is willing and may have to take over

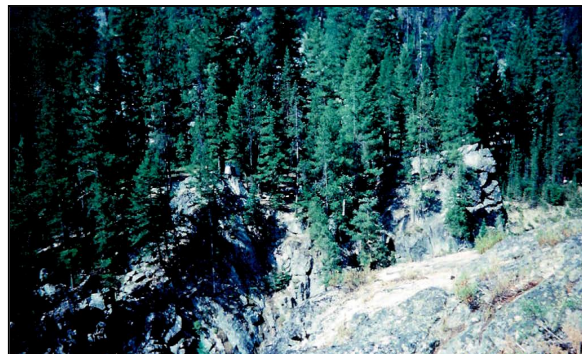


Figure 18-147 Our camp site at Dagger Creek Falls from across the Salmon River.

before our last trip to the reunions but for now, I do most of the driving and I continue to be grateful for that ability as well as my general good health and mobility.

BEAR VALLEY COUNTRY

After the second reunion, Lethia and I (at my suggestion) decided to do a little camping in Bear Valley where I could show her a few of the scenes where my escapades took place as a smoke chaser back in the 40s. She, of course, is always game and maybe even has a little curiosity about some of the events that helped shape my life. I knew of a road leading back to the edge of the Frank Church Wilderness Area, which just happened to cover much of the route I used to travel to Salmon Falls, including the area of my R-rated Horse Wrangling story described in chapter 3. Tuesday, about noon,

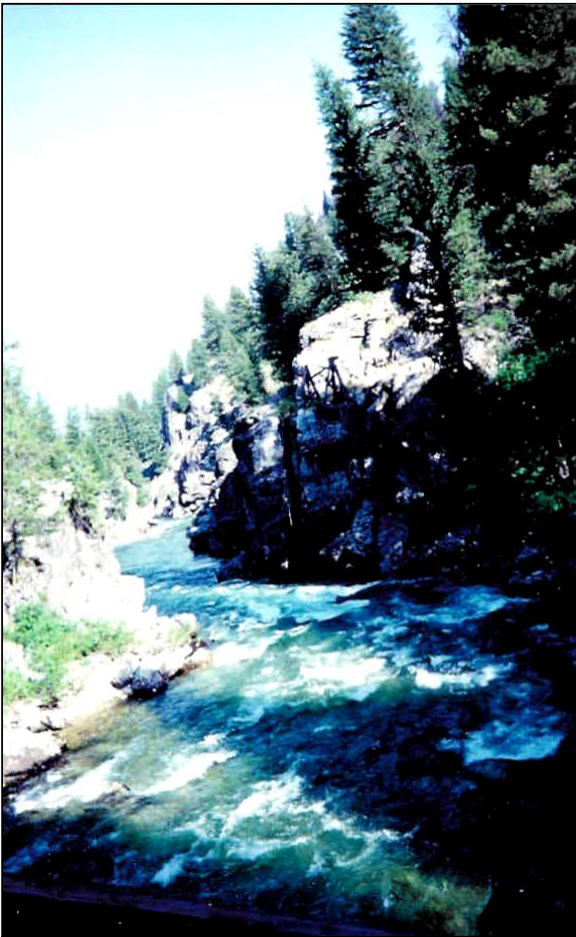


Figure 18-149 The middle fork of the Salmon River downstream from the bridge.

we said our goodbyes to everyone and headed west into Bear Valley country.

We passed over the summit separating the east fork of the Salmon from the middle fork at a point just south of Cape Horn Mountain. Soon we found the road leading to Salmon Falls on the middle fork and followed it north about ten

miles to the falls. There was now a nice government maintained campground near the falls and we found a nice site to put up the tent.

We would stay one night and move on to Deadwood Reservoir, which I wanted Lethia to



Figure 18-148 New stock bridge in 1999. Our camp was just to the right in the trees.

see. It had been one of my favorite haunts during my forest service days in Bear Valley and after all, I needed to provide some physical evidence for the many stories I had told. That afternoon I found the new stock bridge, crossed

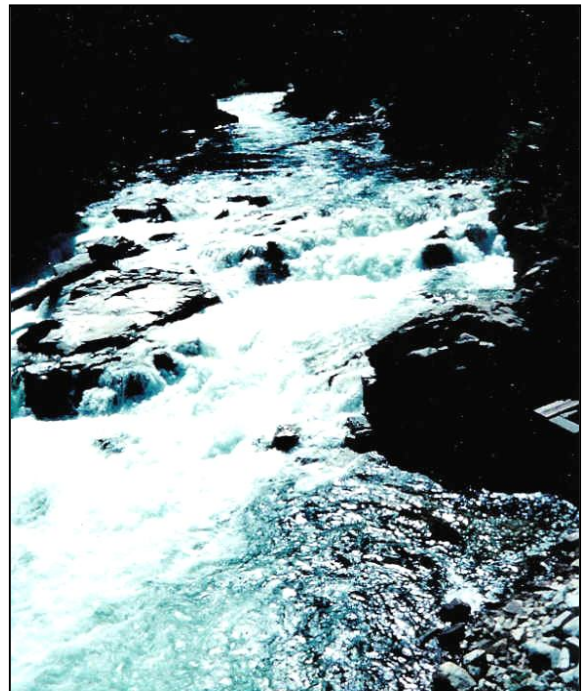


Figure 18-150 Dagger Creek Falls or Salmon Falls, as we knew them in 1950.

over the middle fork and found the remnants of the old bridge just down river. In doing so, I snapped a picture of our campsite just across the Salmon whose presence isn't exactly obvious. None-the-less, our camp was dead

center above the rocky ravine, as seen in figure 18-147, a fact you will have to accept on faith.

I must have spent an hour climbing around on the east side of the river while taking photos I deemed of interest. First I'll display one of the new stock-bridge shown in figure 18-148. I then took a photo looking down river from the bridge, which displays the rapids approaching the falls, as seen in the photo of figure 18-149. The falls

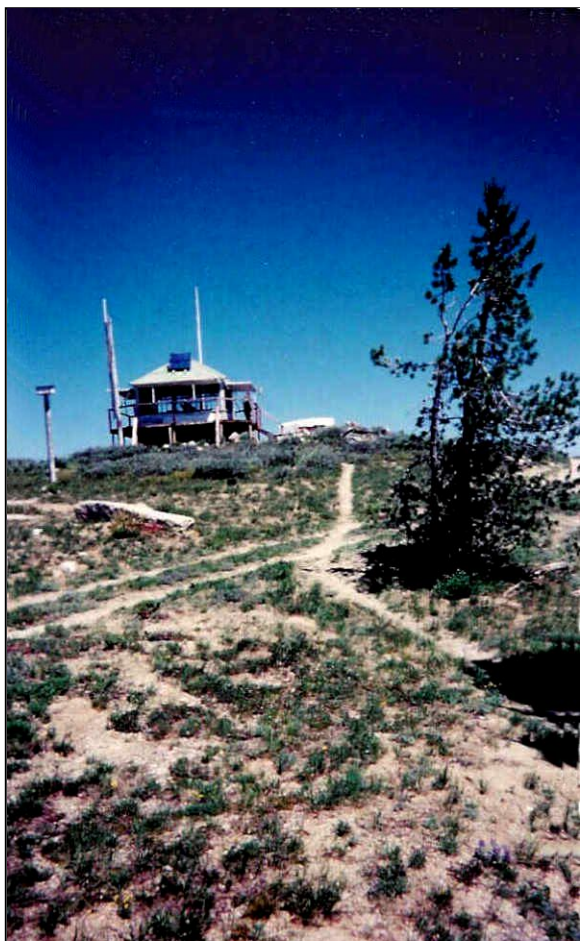


Figure 18-151 Lethia standing on the walkway of Whitehawk Lookout in 1999.

lie just around the last bend you can pick out in figure 18-149.

After spending some time examining the remains of the old bridge, I crossed back over the river and went down stream to a viewpoint to photograph the falls. They appear in the photo of figure 18-150. They really aren't too spectacular, having a total drop of fifteen feet or so but they certainly would provide a thrill for someone floating the river in a kayak. The falls also posed quite an obstacle for the salmon going up river to spawn in Bear Valley. That

may be but the falls didn't seem to stop them. We used to watch them jump up the falls. They would frequently fall back on the first attempt but then give it another try, sometimes even three or four before they made it. I don't remember setting up the screen tent at this camp nor do I remember any mosquitoes plaguing us like they had at the lake in Montana. It was essentially free of bugs. We spent a quiet evening around a campfire reading by the light of a gas lantern.

VISITING WHITEHAWK MOUNTAIN

When morning came we packed up and headed for Deadwood. I found a new road leading from the Big Meadows area around the south side of Whitehawk Mountain, which intersected with a road from the west end of Bear Valley to the Deadwood River. Being naturally curious, I decided to take that road, which can be seen in the photo of figure 3-23 of chapter 3, if you are interested. It was scenic but otherwise just a mountain road.

On the way, however, we took a side trip to the top of Whitehawk Mountain so we could get a bird's eye view of the country. I could also share a few experiences with Lethia along the way. The road to the lookout was in fairly good shape, though single lane most of the way. We didn't meet a soul going up or coming down and no one was manning the lookout. I took a few photos looking down on Big Meadows, which we had just left, as well as the Deadwood Reservoir and Whitehawk Basin to the south. I'll display one of the lookout walkway with Lethia on it in figure 18-151 for your benefit. Once again, you really can't make her out without a magnifying glass. We didn't stay long at the lookout because once you have looked in all four directions there isn't much else to see. It would have been nice to spend the night there so Lethia could see the morning sun rise over the mountains to the east. It occurs early though, when you are on top of the world. Maybe she wouldn't like that early rising forced upon her.

We left the lookout heading for Deadwood and soon we were on the Deadwood River heading south to the reservoir. I was amazed at the condition of the campgrounds along the reservoir. They were in terrible condition, obviously not maintained by the forest service. Though we circled the east and south side of the lake, we couldn't find a campsite fit for camping. We did stop for lunch but that was all. The Deadwood country was greener than I remembered it with new growth replacing all of

the dead trees, which gave the area its name. The lake was as beautiful as I remembered it but the reservoir facilities were so bad I decided to go back to Dagger Falls again to camp for the night. It wasn't much more than an hour's drive and certainly more inviting than what we found along the Deadwood.

VISITING SCOTT MOUNTAIN

The next day we headed for Boise over Scott Mountain. That meant back tracking through the Deadwood area again but I wanted Lethia to see

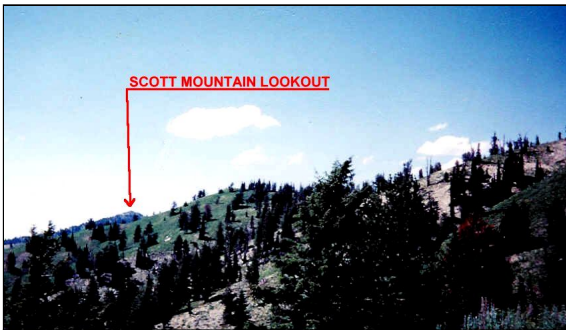


Figure 18-152 Scott Mountain Lookout from about three miles distance on the ridge road leading into it.

some more new country. Besides, the drive down Pine Creek to the South Fork of the Payette would bring back old memories for me again. That was the area that I first worked in with the forest service in 1944, piling brush. We would catch the black top at the confluence with the Payette and go on into Boise for the night. Though we would still have 65 or 70 miles to go, it should only take us a couple of hours.

We topped the ridge between the Deadwood River and the south fork of the Payette about lunchtime, as I remember. We stopped for a sandwich and I asked Lethia if she would like to see Scott Mountain Lookout, which we had just passed. She answered in the affirmative and was obviously not shaken by her trip up to Whitehawk Lookout. We had to back track a mile or two where I had seen a sign pointing to the lookout. It was 4 or 5 miles off the main road. I hadn't been to the lookout before myself and kind of wanted to see it. Soon we were headed up the single-track road, having no idea of just what lay ahead.

We traveled along the ridge at first and the slopes alongside the road were rather gentle. I took a photo of the lookout from about three miles away, which is displayed in figure 18-152. If you look closely, you can see the road we are

negotiating on the right side of the picture near the top of the hill. It doesn't look very imposing at this point but things would soon get more exciting. About the time we crossed over the green peak in the center of the picture, the road seemed to get narrower and wound along the west side of the ridge. I could look out my window straight down to a the hillside falling away at about sixty-degrees. Every once in a while we would come to a washout maybe a foot deep across the road. Crossing them was a bit of a thrill. I considered turning around but there was no place with room enough to do it. I either had to back the truck a mile or so or go forward

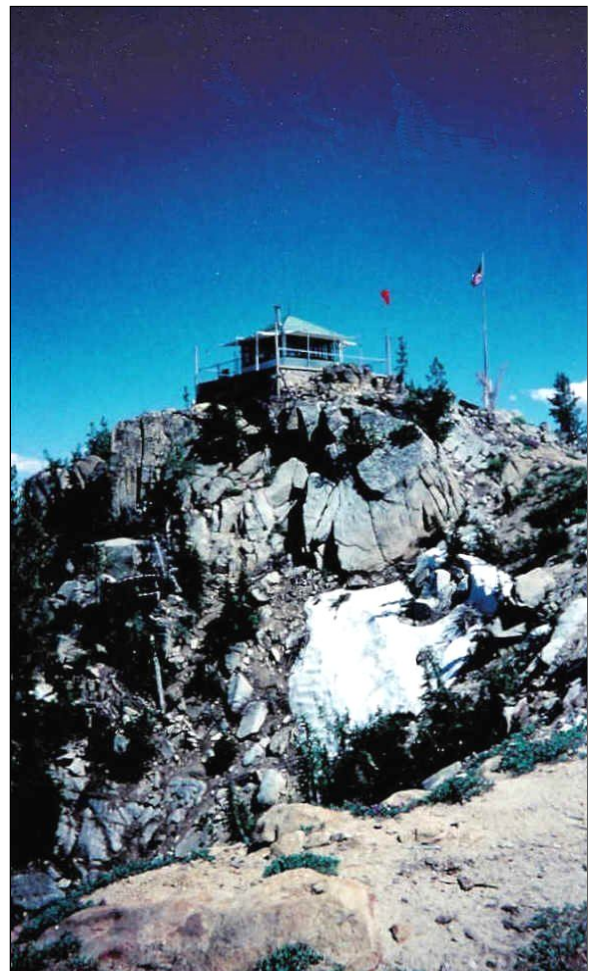


Figure 18-153 Scott Mountain" lookout: as seen on the last leg of the trip.

until I found a place to turn around. We continued alongside the ridge until we were within a quarter of a mile of the lookout where the road finally topped the ridge again. I could have turned around there but being this close I thought, I just might as well go on and see what I could see, kind of like the bear you know.

I got a little closer and snapped the photo displayed in figure 18-153. The road wound around the left side of the peak and then up a rather steep incline to a parking area. In fact, the incline was steep enough that I had my little old four-cylinder Ford in low gear and even had to slip the clutch a little to get to the parking area. It seemed one could see forever from this vantage point except, that is, directly behind us. The highest point of the mountain on which the lookout sat was about fifty feet higher on a rather steep trail. There was a vehicle parked beside us and I decided to go up and talk to the person manning the lookout. Lethia elected to stay in the car. The guy manning the lookout was, I guess you could say, a typical mountain man, unshaven, a little frumpy and on the negative side of cleanliness. Why should he care? No one but an idiot would come up here anyway. Actually, he was a nice guy and apparently hungry for a little company. We talked a while during which time he said I was the only person he had seen for some time. Surprise, surprise, as I said, "no one but an idiot would drive up the road to his abode". Well, they did bring him supplies every two weeks but other than that, he was by himself. Needless to say, the view was magnificent from his little home but we had miles to make and after exchanging a few more pleasantries, I headed back to the car. I had a couple of exciting moments turning my pickup around, since space was limited but we were soon coursing our way back down the ridge. We stopped a few minutes and walked over to each side of the ridge to gather in the view. From one side a person could look down into the Deadwood River drainage and from the other into Pine Creek and the drainage of the South Fork of the Payette. It was really beautiful. We then continued on down the ridge to the main road. Of course, Lethia was now on the downhill side of the vehicle. However, she didn't act scared but neither was she very talkative. With her quiet nature, it's hard to figure out just what is going on in her mind. Anyhow, things were a little tense until we got back down to gentler terrain where she didn't have to look straight down the mountain from her seat in the pickup. Soon we arrived at the main road, dirt of course but also two lanes wide, which comparatively speaking, now seemed like an interstate. A rather steep grade still lay between us and the Payette.

Before long, we hit the black top along the south fork and cruised on down to the Garden Valley,

Crouch area. I remember stopping at a convenience store to grab a little junk food and gas up before heading on to Boise. It was hot

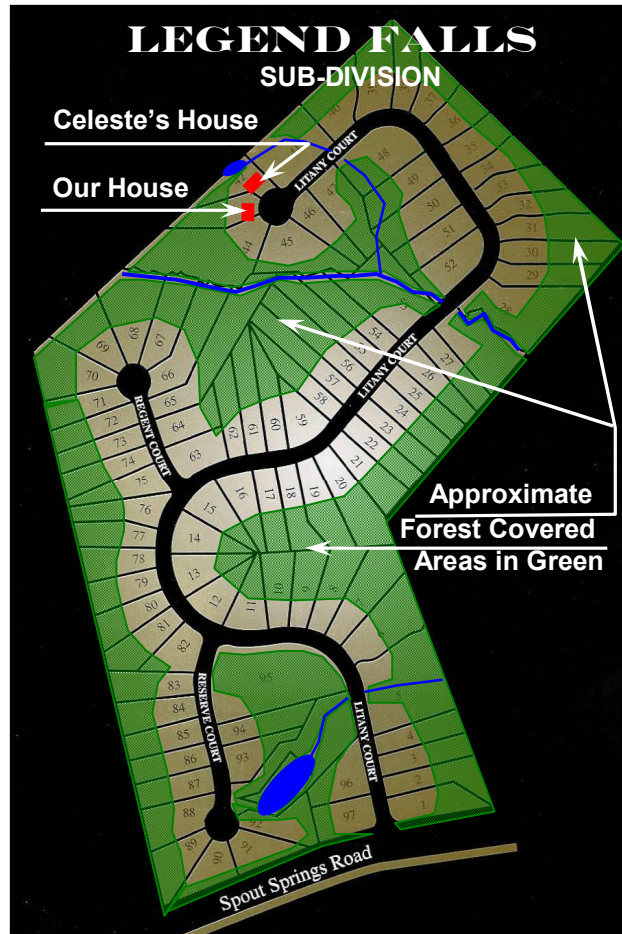


Figure 18-154 A map of the Legend Falls Sub-division five miles southeast of I - 985.

and dusty and we were tired and ready to relax. I believe we spent the night there with Connie and Yale before heading back to Georgia.

THE LAST DANCE FOR ME

In late 2001 just after the summer lawn-mowing season, Lethia and I were talking about what features we would like in a house, as we got older (her age was our reference). She was having trouble going up and down stairs and I was getting tired of mowing my rather large lawn. It wasn't the size as much as it was the hilly nature of the 1.3-acre lot. The steeper hillsides were becoming quite a job for me, particularly in the more humid hot months. She felt we needed a single level and I thought I needed a smaller lot that was flat. The walkout basement we had in our present house was nice for food storage and as a collection site for

things one just doesn't want to throw away. I was negotiating the stairs quite easily and still do today but it doesn't take a genius to figure out that such ability will one day disappear. Thus, I also saw the need for a single level. I hated the thought of moving, which would involve selling and buying houses as well as moving. Ugh, the very thought of it turned my stomach. It also meant cleaning out the basement and throwing away all that good stuff, which we never used.

I think Kathleen must have overheard our conversation because she began looking around at houses while Lethia and I dragged our feet. One day she came in and described some new houses nearby, which appeared to be the kind we would like. In any case, she got us off the dime and with the negatives in mind but reality staring us in the face we began our search. Celeste got wind of our activities and decided she would also like to move because her neighborhood seemed to be going downhill. Before long, we were searching jointly with the thought that she would buy in the same subdivision as we did. We tentatively set spring as the point at which we would place our houses on the market, assuming we could find something suitable by then. I had a good deal of work to accomplish on my house before listing it including replacing the driveway and stabilizing a dirt bank above the draw behind the house.

After much searching for an affordable house that suited us, we placed contracts on a couple of houses in a new sub-division west of Flowery Branch, which were contingent upon the sale of our houses. They weren't quite what we wanted but seemed the best we could do. Well, our houses didn't sell and the houses we had placed contracts on were sold out from under us. We were a little disappointed but kept looking. About then, Lethia spotted a new sign directing us to another new sub-division 5 miles from our present home, which was called Legend Falls. We visited the sub-division and immediately fell in love with it. It was small, comparatively speaking; with winding roads negotiating forest covered rolling hills in their effort to connect three cul-de-sacs with the entrance. We stopped in the sales office and looked at the various models available in our price range, taking several floor plans away with us.

Celeste agreed the plans were the best we had seen yet for the money. She visited the sub-division with us and became a like victim. Before we knew it, we had selected two lots,

side by side and placed contracts on two similar homes, known as Westons. The only difference was a reversal of floor plans from left to right, her garage being on the left and ours on the

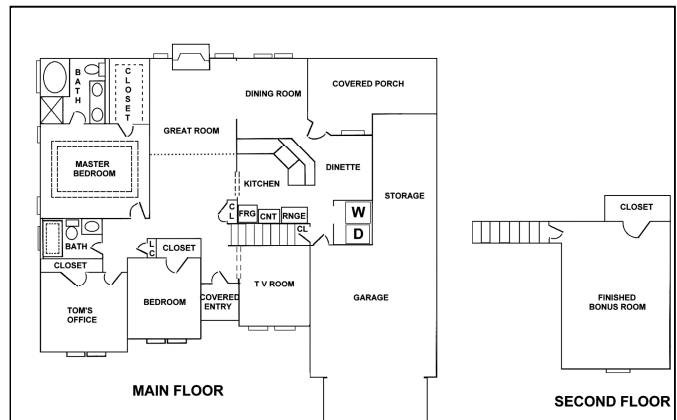


Figure 18-155 A basic floor plan for the Weston model home, a ranch style with a bonus room.

right. They were located on the inner most cul-de-sac about 0.8 miles from the entrance, which provided a nice sound barrier from highway noise. A map of the sub-division is provided in figure 18-154. Though we had some tense moments in the following months, both our houses sold and we were able to execute our contracts on schedule. Celeste moved into her house in December 2002 and we moved into ours in January 2003. Our year of frustration had finally come to an end and the houses we



Figure 18-156 Our humble abode as it appeared the second winter after we moved in.

ended up with turned out to be far more suitable than the earlier ones we had contracted for. They were also much easier on our aging joints and muscles, not including Celeste, than our first homes. Our living space was on one level and

the lawn was much smaller, thus achieving our goals. We felt fortunate, to say the least.

Since this is the last place in which I plan to live while on this side of the veil, I will familiarize you with it as much as possible and maybe more than you're interested. Consequently, I have included a floor plan of our house, as well as a few photos of it and the sub-division.

Let's begin with the plans as depicted in my drawing of figure 18-155. As with everything else in my life, it's only approximate, so don't be



Figure 18-157 Fall view from our front door looking along the road to the sub-division front.

looking for errors should you ever drop in for a visit. Likewise, I'll warn you in advance, any such visit will only be approximately as exciting as this autobiography, give or take a laugh or two. That is, any relative is always welcome but I want any who might make such an effort to



Figure 18-158 Fall foliage along the winding road coursing its way to the front of the subdivision.

approximately understand the approximate level of excitement existing within our proximity. The total floor space of the house including the bonus room is 2300 square feet. Kathleen has

claimed the bonus room as a bedroom and a place to simply do her crafts or to be alone. As you can see, I have claimed a bedroom for my computer activities while the third bedroom on the main floor is reserved for guests and Lethia's doll collection. Little did I realize the number of dolls involved when I proposed to my little doll. This aspect of her life was kept hidden from me until she moved into our first house in Flowery Branch. However, try as I may, I haven't been able to find any other idiosyncrasies she has camouflaged in her nature. No, the Lethia I met and learned to love is still the Lethia I enjoy as my daily companion. The TV room was billed as a living room, which might be more aptly described as a sitting room. However, it does work nicely for those wanting to watch the so-called idiot box. Others can enjoy the great room or family room for reading or listening to music. The dining room is adequate for the few people we have over but the kitchen and dinette get the most use for meals. Though there are a few things I would change if I had a chance, we find the house quite adequate for day to day living. Maintenance activities are minimal, which is certainly a plus for me.

Figure 18-156 provides a wintertime view of the house, taken the second winter we lived here or in 2004. One can see there are plenty of trees behind the house but the scenes shown in the figures of 18-157 and 18-158 provide a better idea of natural beauty of the sub-division. You can get some idea of the beauty we are treated to in the fall from the two of them, as well as a hint of the summertime foliage. Actually, the fall colors in Georgia seem to vary in quality or brilliance from year to year. Drought seems to ruin them as does too wet a summer and fall. Apparently the weather has to be just right with a few early frosts to bring the color out before the leaves dry out or die and fall to the ground. I suppose that's why New England with its early frosts is known for fall colors, while Georgia and points south take a back seat to that sort of public recognition. Even so, in a good year, northern Georgia as well as Tennessee and the Carolinas exhibit their share of fall beauty.

VALERIE RECEIVES HER PHD

This particular event took place in the spring of 2000 and is consequently a little out of place chronologically speaking. We still lived in our first house on Quail Pointe Drive and several of the afore-mentioned events described took place after this particular one. However, since

my overall story has little rhyme or reason to it, one more out of place story should be of little consequence.

Valerie, our first daughter, is a person of strong convictions and almost unlimited resolve. She has many of the characteristics of her grandmother, Violet. She had decided, right

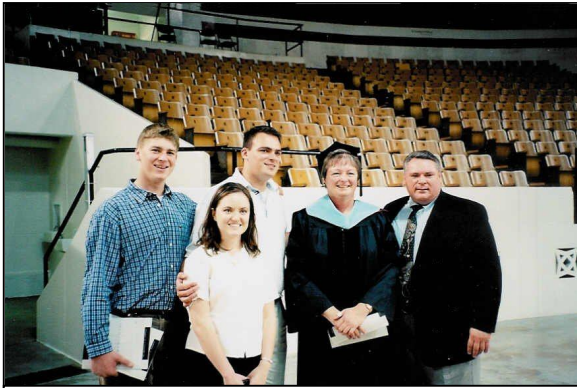


Figure 18-159 Valerie and family at her commencement exercises. L to R Johnnie, Dianne, Jared, Valerie & Jared Sr.

after she received her master's degree in 1992 to pursue her Doctorate in education, specializing in reading. She knew it would be difficult considering her roles of being mother of

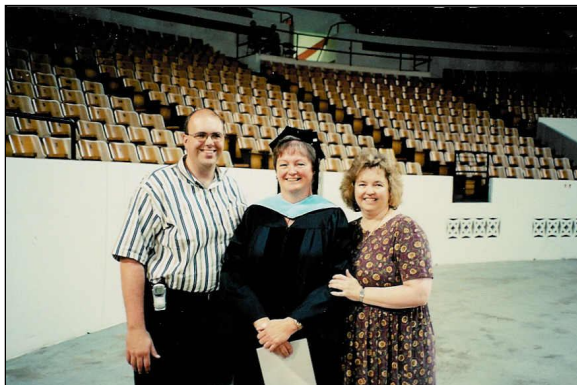


Figure 18-160 Valerie and her admiring siblings at her PHD commencement.

three boys and a full time schoolteacher but decided to press forward anyway. The extra money would be helpful in sending three boys on missions as well as beef up her future retirement. Her natural desire to learn and even excel played a major role as well in my opinion.

Having watched Valerie over the years, I have learned to admire her commitment and dedication to any project she might undertake. School teaching, in Georgia, is no easy task, due to having many extra things to do outside of

the classroom. To my knowledge, none of these things were short changed. They were not only accomplished on schedule but she went the extra mile in preparing her classroom each fall. Fortunately, she had a husband who not only helped her but demonstrated considerable talent of his own. I never ceased to be amazed by her classroom each fall after she and Jared finished it. She truly loved her job and the kids that she taught, as demonstrated by these efforts. Even after launching her doctorate studies, she never seemed to slack off in her regular classroom duties. She simply worked longer hours and managed, somehow, to put the various pieces of work frazzled life together. Many times, she

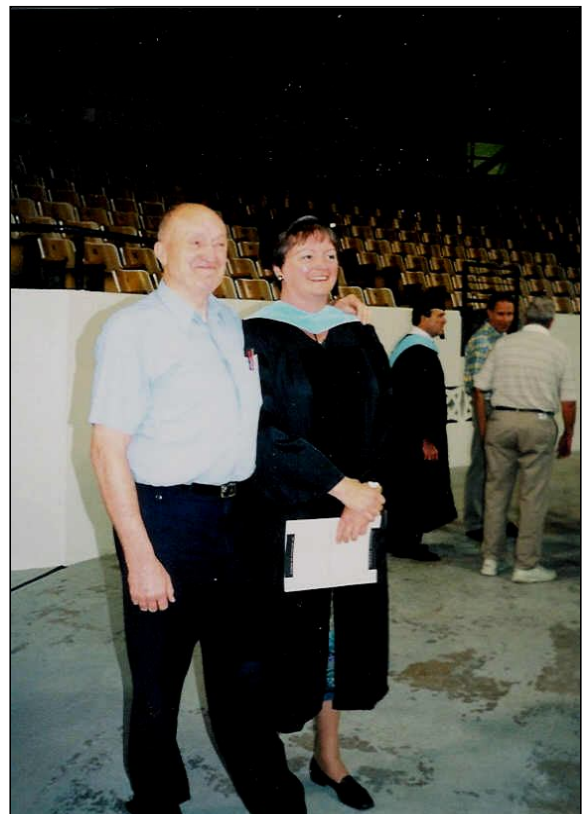


Figure 18-161 Valerie & one grateful papa. Who acts as though he is getting a PHD.

would comment about all the things she had to do, while exhibiting the associated stress.

After observing her for several years, I decided she worked better under pressure and would find extra things to do if they didn't materialize naturally through her job and studies. She is a workhorse, to say the least. I'm sure there are a good many people in this world with greater intelligence but there are few, if any, who will work harder to accomplish a worthwhile goal

than Valerie. Even though I find fault, at times, with the pressure she subjects herself to, to say I admire her work ethic would be an understatement. Of course, I admire her in many other ways as well but her drive and resolve to accomplish life's goals are unusual, in my opinion.

I'm not sure exactly what year Valerie began work on her PHD, probably 1993 or 1994 but



Figure 18-162 Valerie displaying the colors of her school in education at UGA.

she graduated in the spring of 2000 as mentioned earlier. She and her family had gone through a good deal of suffering in the years preceding her graduation because of her studies but she hung on to her goal like a Pit Bull in a struggle to its death. She probably completed her classes in 1999 and wrote her thesis and defended the same in 2000 but only she can tell you the exact timing of those events. Needless to say, her graduation was a big event for the family. Tom came down from Colorado Springs to witness her graduation and along with Celeste, Valerie, her family and me made a day of it in Athens, Georgia. Her beaming face along with those of her family that were living in

Georgia is shown in the photo of figure 18-159. Jared Jr. had recently been married to Dianne, who is shown as well, while Joseph is absent and was serving his mission in, of all places, Salt Lake City, Utah. Figure 18-160 is, of course, Celeste, Valerie and Tom, a photo I deemed appropriate for my story and finally Valerie and myself as shown in figure 18-161. After all, this segment is about her and the book about me, so what could be more appropriate than a photo together. Notice, I said appropriate, not more desirable or important. I save that comment for figure 18-162, which portrays Valerie all by herself with the colors of her "college of education" taking center stage. It was a great day for Valerie. I knew she was pleased with her accomplishment and I was overjoyed, to say the least. Not that I'm the least bit biased but no one I know has ever deserved such an honor more. Not only was her tenacity unrivaled but also her work was among the best as measured by GPA. For all her graduation work that particular measurement was 4.0 or straight "As". Since then, she has never mentioned that particular accomplishment, which I believe, is a reflection of her sweet



Figure 18-163 Valerie & Lethia at UGA commencement for advanced degrees.

humility. Valerie has accomplished much in life under difficult circumstances and deserves all the kudos she receives. Though I'm gratified by the success of all our children, each being different, I have to hand it to Valerie in the areas of goals and perseverance. She will take on all odds to accomplish a goal she deems worthy. It's too bad her mother wasn't present for the services. Even so, her capable replacement and present love of my life, Lethia, stood in for her and in her own way was equally proud. She likewise, thinks the world of Valerie and admires her determination and grit to succeed. They are shown together in figure 18-163.

MORE NOTES ON TEMPLE SERVICE

Our present house is located just six miles east of I-985, which then provides a direct route to the temple. It's roughly the same distance from the temple, as our first house in "Hunter's Landing" was. However, the general area around our present house has a more rural atmosphere about it, which I really enjoy. At the same time, we are only two miles from a shopping center with both the Georgia Mall and Gainesville being located about 12 to 13 miles away. It's kind of like having the best of two worlds. I suppose, however, in another ten years, we'll be right in the middle of things again.

Getting back to the temple, I now spend two or three days a week there, a round trip of about 90 to 100 miles depending on traffic and my selected route. I have now served there for some 14 years, working as little as 2 days a week and as much as 5. Right now, 2005, my schedule is every Wednesday and Thursday as well as the first two Saturdays of the month. Thus, I put about 1000 miles a month traveling back and forth. Needless to say, I find the service very satisfying and spiritually uplifting, which is a definite plus in today's world.

RECEIVING THE SEALING POWER

In the fall of 1996 I was called as a sealer in the Atlanta Temple and thus given power to seal couples and families as well for time and all

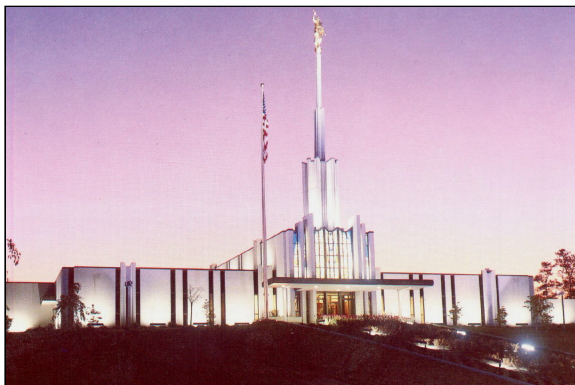


Figure 18-165 An view of the Atlanta Temple taken in the early evening.

eternity. The keys to this authority are held by the prophet, himself, who then delegates the authority to perform such sacred ordinances to specific Melchizedek Priesthood holders in a specific temple. At the time of my calling, one of the twelve apostles, under the direction of the prophet, had to confer the sealing power upon a designated person. Elder Robert D. Hales set

me apart along with two other brethren, a brother Davis and brother Watkins. The certificate for that particular ordination is

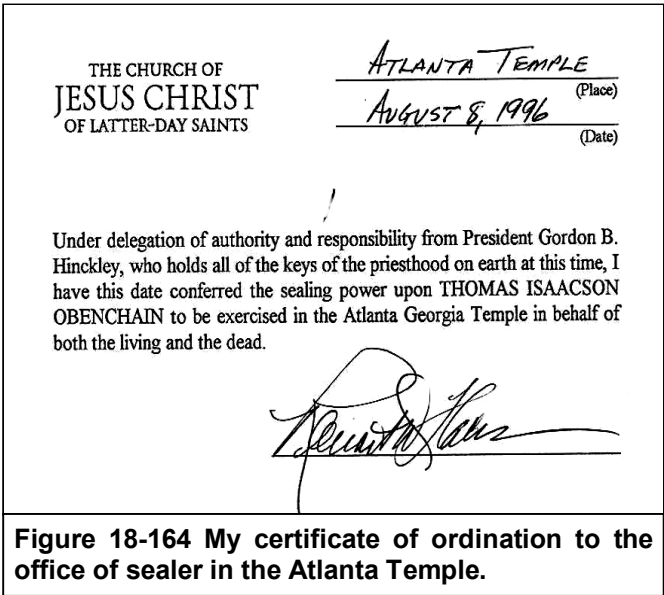


Figure 18-164 My certificate of ordination to the office of sealer in the Atlanta Temple.

included as figure 18-164. I had to search high and low before I found it amongst a good deal of other church memorabilia. Only I, Grandpa Tom, could be so careless with such a nonchalant filing system. I knew it would turn up somewhere in my clutter but I had to pay dearly in terms of time and patience to locate it.

One of the great privileges of my calling as a sealer is to be able to perform that ordinance for



Figure 18-166 With Jared and Dianne in a wedding photo at the Atlanta Temple.

members of my posterity who might request my presence as the officiator. To date I have had the distinct pleasure of officiating for two grandsons and their brides, i.e. Jared and Dianne and Joseph and Rebecca. I also had the pleasure of sealing Katie Arrowood, Lethia's niece and her husband, Brian Sipes. I have also

been asked to perform that ordinance for several members of our ward in Gainesville. The ordinance, which was given by revelation to Joseph Smith, is both inspiring and beautiful. A couple so sealed, are married for time and all eternity and not until death do us part, as is the custom in other churches. Children born to that union are thus sealed to the couple for time and eternity, as well, by virtue of the covenant they made in marriage. Children not born under the covenant can receive those blessings as a separate ordinance. Consequently, the temple wedding is, indeed, a spiritual experience and is particularly meaningful to one such as me, where posterity is involved. It becomes a testimony for all participants that Jesus is the Christ, the only begotten of the Father in the flesh and due to of the plan of salvation we can return to His presence to live with Jesus Christ and our Heavenly Father throughout eternity.

DIANNE AND JARED’S WEDDING

I decided to include a photo of the Atlanta Temple at this point, not having done so in the



Figure 18-167 The San Diego Temple glistening in the California sunshine.

account of Lethia and my wedding, because Jared and Dianne were sealed in that temple as well in September of 2000. See figure 18-165. Though I had been performing such weddings for about 4 years by that time, I must admit this event was an emotional high for me and I was somewhat nervous. I can’t remember any specifics regarding the ordinance and couldn’t print them here even if I did but I do remember the flood of gratefulness that came over me as well as the general spirituality that attended the event. Jared and Dianne asked me to pose with them in one wedding picture, which I have

displayed as figure 18-166. They, of course, had several more photos taken without my countenance to detract from them.

I remember Dianne’s mother giving me counsel just prior to the wedding. She said something like, “Brother Obenchain, you be sure to seal them real good. I want this marriage to last forever”. I don’t remember my exact reply but it was something like, “All Eternity is, indeed, forever. I can’t seal them much better than that”.

Dianne’s parents were from the Salt Lake City area; I think near Ogden and they were serving a mission in Atlanta. I had worked with them a little in the temple. Dianne came here to visit them and met Jared at a single adult function, I believe. It must have been love at first sight



Figure 18-168 Joseph, Becky and “yours truly”, sandwiched dwarf between.

because we heard about the engagement almost before we knew they were dating. They had their wedding brunch at the Lanier Islands, as I remember. It is a nice facility with a beautiful view of the lake. The reception was held in the Sugar Hill Stake center and was a beautiful event. As of this writing, they are well on their way to forever with two beautiful girls, Jackie and Brooke and apparently a wonderful relationship. I can now add that a cute little boy named Dallin has also been added.

REBECCA AND JOSEPH’S WEDDING

Joseph and Rebecca were sealed in the San Diego Temple in the spring of 2001. Rebecca was from the LA area and chose that temple, one she had dreamed of being sealed in for some time, it seems to me. They, likewise, asked me to perform their wedding, which I gladly accepted. However, it posed a special problem. You see, a sealer is called and given authority to perform weddings only in a specific temple. However, with special permission from the First Presidency, authority can be given to perform weddings in other temples for the sealer’s direct line of progeny. Thus, I sought and obtained that authority some time before the wedding. When the wedding date rolled around a couple of months later, we were all set including airline tickets, motel reservations, an evening with Ted and his family and the necessary authority to perform the sealing.

Figure 18-167 is a photo of the San Diego Temple. It is really a beautiful facility and is



Figure 18-170 The sign identifying the Mormon Battalion memorial site.

somewhat larger than the Atlanta Temple. It is located just north of San Diego proper along the freeway, I-5 I believe. Our motel, the Hampton Inn, was very nice and lay a little south of the Temple along California highway 54, if my memory isn’t playing tricks on me. Beth, Lethia’s daughter, had obtained the reservations along with special rates because she worked for the company in the Knoxville area of Tennessee. We flew in and out of the LA International Airport because the fares were much better than those to San Diego. Notice how I go after the special fares and rates. We rented a car in LA and drove to the motel some 120 miles south in northern San Diego. We would use it for our local transportation needs, as well and, once again, got a special weekly

rate. Oh, how I love to save money. The reception was to be held at Rebecca’s parent’s home in Redlands and a luncheon at Marie Callender’s Restaurant in Temecula, about half



Figure 18-169 The beginning of our tour through the San Diego Historical Park.

way between Redlands and San Diego. All together we would spend five or six nights in our motel so we could tour the area a little and visit one evening with Ted and family.

The wedding went well. Procedures were a little different than in Atlanta, which wasn’t too



Figure 18-171 The tuna fleet at rest in the San Diego harbor waiting for the next trip.

surprising but they had been notified of my authority to perform the ceremony by Salt Lake and no problems occurred. In Atlanta, the sealer is the last one to enter the sealing room and is introduced prior to making any introductory remarks. In San Diego, I was told to go in and introduce myself, which I did. I expected the bride and groom to be in place and almost began my introductory remarks before they were brought in. I caught myself and said something like; “I suppose we should wait for the

bride and groom, since it's their wedding. That drew a little laugh and fortunately, Joseph and Becky were brought in right after that, leaving no need for me to improvise any more remarks.

The ordinance also went well, though I'm not sure Becky or Joseph heard anything I said. They seemed lost in each other's eyes as they gazed back and forth oblivious to the world around them. However, they did respond with



Figure 18-172 Just the three of us enjoying sights in San Diego's harbor area.

the appropriate words at the appropriate time, which I suppose, indicates some attention was being given to the sealing ordinance. As I observed them, their obvious love for each other brought back fond memories of my own for the weddings to both of my beloved wives.

After the wedding, photos were taken by an assigned photographer as well as Celeste and others. Naturally, I got to have my picture taken with Joseph and Becky, which appears in figure 18-168. I have shrunk a couple of inches from my 6' 3" height I carried in the air force but even if I had been pre-shrunk at that youthful age, I would still feel like a midget alongside Joseph. He stands at 6' 9 1/2 ", I believe. Becky is no

shorty either, as you can see. I'm not sure of her height but had I maintained my youthful stature, I would be lucky to be as tall as she.

She put her height to good use in college playing volleyball. They now have two boys, Joseph Braden and Landan Isaac, whom I will have to describe as handsome rather than beautiful like the girls of Jared and Dianne. With those genes in place, I have already obtained the rights to any basketball contracts the boys may be offered, as well as those of any and all future posterity, so don't get any ideas. I plan to use my cut to embellish my heavenly retirement but I still have to work out the details on how to take it with me. Maybe there is some sort of wireless service available.

SEEING SAN DIEGO SIGHTS

Celeste stayed in the same motel as we did, while Valerie, Jared and family stayed nearer Los Angeles so they could associate with the Baumgartens, Rebecca's parents that is. Thus, we saw each other at the various functions only, i.e. the wedding, the luncheon and the reception. We also went with them to the home of Jared's good friend, whom he met while in Germany and spent a few hours. That took place on the way back from the luncheon. We then left them to have dinner and visit with Ted and family.

The morning after our arrival, we went down to a city historical park as evidenced in the photo of figure 18-169. We also visited some "Mormon Battalion" sites. One site contained old pioneer relics like covered wagons, etc. while the other was a museum and visitor's center. The Mormon Battalion was recruited at Winter Quarters in Iowa; I believe and terminated in San Diego. As you can see from the sign of figure 18-170, their march was the longest infantry march in American history. Some women with children accompanied them to cook, etc. Many died from the hardships involved including a serious sickness that plagued them around Santa Fe, New Mexico. It seems the disease was cholera or something similar. Some of them had to be left at a fort in Colorado, probably Pueblo.

As you can see, my memory of what I learned isn't very clear but neither is my eyesight. It could be a memory lapse or a recording error. Anyhow, they marched down to the Mexican border where they saw little or no action before going on to San Diego. After disbanding, they had to make their own way to the Mormon

settlement in Salt Lake. Some stayed for a while in San Diego and others moved up to the gold rush area near Sacramento. Some were involved in the gold discovery at Sutter's Mill, as I remember. They apparently accomplished their purpose in the march to the Mexican border, though the need had apparently disappeared by the time of their arrival there.

We then went down to the harbor area, ate lunch and walked around. Celeste took a picture of the tuna fleet anchored in the harbor, which is presented in figure 18-171. While there we noticed a sign offering tours of the harbor



Figure 18-173 The ship we traveled in as we toured the San Diego harbor.

area via boat and decided to take advantage of one. It would be easier than walking and hopefully more interesting as well. We had a little wait until the next trip left and walked around the docks looking at the various boats that were moored. Celeste was taking her usual pictures and a nice tourist asked if we would all like to have a picture together. Of course, we accepted, which resulted in the photo displayed in figure 18-172. It was surprisingly cool along the harbor as you can see from our attire. Notice that I don't look as much like a pygmy as I did with Joseph and Becky. Although you can see the edge of the ship we traveled on in our threesome picture, I decided a better photo was in order and have presented another that Celeste managed to take in figure 18-173. After

spending an hour or so waiting for the tour, we began our trip around the harbor. Certain islands were pointed out to us as were some landmarks on shore. I remember going by an abandoned naval depot used in WWII where several landmarks were identified. I think the tour lasted about an hour and we soon found ourselves pulling back up to the pier for docking.

That evening we had dinner at a nice seafood restaurant on the waterfront. It was a big place and it seemed like we walked a mile to get back to the area where we were seated. As it turned out, our table overlooked the harbor and we could watch the nighttime activity, which was taking place in the bay the whole time we were eating. I remember the food being as excellent as the view. We all splurged a little and ordered according to our appetites' demands. It seems kind of weird but I can't remember any of the dishes ordered, including my own. I do,



Figure 18-174 Celeste's photos again picturing our gala dinner with Ted & family.

however, remember having plenty to eat as well as enjoying everything. After dinner we went back to the motel and relaxed before retiring for the evening. It had been a full day. Though the motel was nice enough, I don't believe any of us worried about the comfort of the bed that night.

THE LUNCHEON

As mentioned earlier, the luncheon had been arranged at Marie Callender's restaurant south of LA in a little town of Temecula, I believe. We had a leisurely breakfast before heading north on I-15. We passed by Escondido, Ted's residence, but didn't stop in. We would see him that evening. We had no trouble finding the restaurant and arrived on schedule, in fact, a little ahead of schedule. They weren't quite set up yet. We found a pleasant place to relax until things were ready. Valerie had made excellent

arrangements, particularly so, considering the long-range communication. We met Becky's parents, the Baumgarten's, as well as siblings and friends. We also met Jared's friend, John Howells and his wife. The lunch was excellent and the bride and groom were at their very best. After lunch, we decided to go with Valerie and Jared to visit for a while at the Howells house, which was south of Temecula a few miles and a little west of I-15. They had a beautiful home in a lovely area but I much preferred the low density housing of Georgia. Late that afternoon, we left Valerie and Jared and headed back to the motel to relax a little before dinner with Ted and family.

Kristen came by the motel that evening and guided us to the chosen restaurant. It seems its specialty was Italian food, which was all very good. We spent several hours over dinner in good conversation, talking about the impending wedding and things going on with Kristen and family as well as with Monica and young Ted. Celeste photographed virtually every scene she was aware of. Thank goodness for a daughter with a photographic bug. As I have said many times before, without her, I would have little to show in the way of pictures. She managed to take several of Kristen's children and probably more than one of our party. I selected one showing everyone there but Celeste behind the camera and have provided it in figure 18-174. As you can see, everyone looks pretty well fed and quite content to just sit there and smile. Celeste didn't even have to coax us. We finally broke up about ten or so, as I remember and went our separate ways. It had been another long day and we were all pretty well bushed. Tomorrow would be yet another full day with both the wedding and the reception in Redlands.

THE RECEPTION

The wedding was scheduled for the next morning and the reception in Redlands that evening. This would be another full day. As I indicated earlier, the wedding went well with numerous pictures being taken. After the excitement was over, we went back to the motel and had a light lunch. We then relaxed for a while knowing that we had a 200 to 250 mile round trip to the reception.

Becky had given us precise directions to her parent's home where the reception was to be held. We had freeway most of the way to Redlands and then just a few short blocks to her house. However, with the traffic involved and

my inexperience in the LA area I asked Celeste and Lethia to watch for the various landmarks involved. The first hundred miles or so were on I-15 and I-215 before we intersected I-10 and hung a right to Redlands. It was pretty easy to that point but then the girls really had to keep their eyes open to find the proper exit in time for me to get into the proper lane for exiting. With their help, I made it to the house without any major mishap.

They lived in a nice Spanish style home as I remember with a nice back yard where the reception was to be held. They had set up lights throughout the yard as well as portable heaters on poles. I was surprised by how cool it was and we were all grateful for the warmth of the heaters. We met numerous people, none of whom I can remember. They were all nice and we had a good time. The Baumgartens were gracious hosts and the reception went off without a hitch as far as I know. Valerie and Jared were staying in LA and would have a short trip to the airport in the morning. We, on the other hand, had not only a hundred plus mile trip in the morning but also one of equal length back to the motel. Consequently, we excused ourselves early and headed back.

Although I don't remember any major traffic fiascos during our return, I'm sure a few of the Californians must have shaken their heads as they encountered our vehicle along the freeway. Being as unfamiliar as we were with the area, I drove slowly looking for proper exits and such. As I remember, there was some construction going on along either I-10 or I-215, which caused us a little concern but we were soon out of L A proper, actually the many suburbs of L A, and headed south. We arrived at the motel rather late and left an early wake up call, since our flight out of L A was around noon. We wanted to get an early start, not knowing just what traffic situations we would encounter. Our return trip to the airport as well as to Atlanta went off without a hitch. Before long we were home once again enjoying our Georgia spring.

At this point in time, November 2005, I continue to serve in the Atlanta Temple every Wednesday and Thursday as well as the first two Saturdays of the month. Officiating in the various ordinances of the temple keeps one mentally alert and my association with other ordinance workers is a blessing that I look forward to each week. I really feel profusely blessed, spiritually speaking, as well as in health and driving

confidence. The Atlanta traffic approaches that of California and as I mentioned previously, I still negotiate it without fear or problem. How long my eyesight and confidence will hold up remains to be seen but for now, I'm doing well. I intend to continue my service as long as my health and confidence hold up. Lethia plans to return as an ordinance worker the first two Saturdays of the month in 2006. She may have to take over the driving before I lose my ability to perform ordinances. I hope that time is still a ways away. Inactivity can be a curse for the older generation, in my opinion but then, who asked my opinion. It makes no difference here, however, because I get to write what I want.

MINING MONTANA'S MIRACLES

Lethia came down with a bad case of Psoriasis in 2002, as I remember. She had that treated by a skin specialist for sometime before she noticed pain and swelling in the joints of her hands and later her feet. Sometime after that she was diagnosed as having psoriatic arthritis. She contacted a specialist and began treatment. After reacting negatively to a couple of drugs the doctor placed her on a chemotherapy drug called Methotrexate. Though it was probably helping some, it wasn't satisfactory in the eyes of the doctor or Lethia even after raising the dosage some 33% to the maximum allowable. About November or December of 2003, he recommended she begin treatment with Embriel, which was to be taken by injection. The only problem was that it cost \$1200 per month. We contacted our insurance company, who said they would probably cover it after her deductible was reached each year or \$5000. Financially, we were in no position to handle that amount. I had raised the deductible to that level to maintain affordable insurance for catastrophic situations and not for an annual occurrence. At first, it didn't appear that we had a choice, which would cause us to put it off as long as it was feasible while watching her arthritic progression.

In the January 2004 National Geographic I came across an article titled "Mining for Miracles in Montana". It spoke of apparent miracles taking place in the radon mines of Montana and included one of a lady named Tanya Beck from Duluth, Georgia who brought her little 4-year old girl, Allison, to the mines. Allison had been diagnosed with progressive arthritis and given no hope for a cure. Predictions were that she would spend her life in a wheelchair. Out of desperation she took Allison to the Merry Widow

Health Mine in Basin, Montana. Since her trip there, she is now running and playing with friends and is definitely getting better.

Those comments struck a glimmer of hope in me that such exposure might help Lethia and prevent the need for the \$1200 drug. We talked about it for some time and finally decided to give



Figure 18-175 The mountain and mine from I-15. A sharp eye can pick out the Merry Widow sign hanging on the hillside clearing

it a try. There seemed little to lose because that area of Montana is beautiful and if nothing else, we could spend a week relaxing. I wasn't worried about the radon exposure side effects published by OSHA. Frankly, the possibility of getting lung cancer seemed more remote than

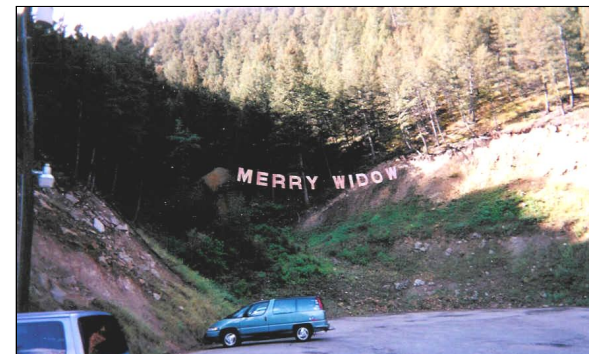


Figure 18-176 Parking area and sign at the Merry Widow office and mine entrance.

having negative side effects from the several drugs used for treatment of arthritis. I contacted the Merry Widow Mine and made reservations for 11 nights and 10 days at the end of July 2004. We made the trip and spent 32 hours each in the mine in one-hour increments. At first, we saw no noticeable effects. By the time we left, the swelling in Lethia's hands had gone down to almost normal and the pain had essentially subsided. She continued to be treated with Methotrexate and still does today

but the dire need for Embriel, predicted by the doctor, has yet to arise.

About January of 2005 Lethia began to experience pain in her right hip, which she attributed to the arthritis. The exact cause of that pain was never defined. She had difficulty walking and often had to take a pain pill at night to sleep, though she did her best to stay away from them. By the summer of 2005 we decided to return for another ten days, which occurred between our visits to the kids in Dallas and Colorado Springs and the reunions. She had been experiencing pain every night as well as during the day with some periods worse than others. After two days in the mine she



Figure 18-177 The entrance to the Merry Widow Health Mine in Basin, Montana.

exclaimed, "Tom, my hip doesn't hurt any more". At first we thought she was experiencing a temporary lull but that pain has yet to return as of November 18, 2005.

I likewise had been experiencing some pain in the joints of both hips when I took my mile walks. If I walked every night or at least didn't skip more than a night, the discomfort was tolerable but when I skipped two or three nights it became very uncomfortable for a couple of nights. I continued to experience that discomfort while at the mine even though I was walking virtually every night. I quit walking during the reunions and the trip home. Much to my surprise, the pain had disappeared when I began walking again in Georgia. It likewise has failed to return as of this date listed above.

Though I don't necessarily expect the apparent relief of either of us to be permanent, we know we have had relief and will continue to make an annual trip to the mine as long as such benefit continues. For any benefit or curiosity my readers, both of them, might draw from this section, I will include the National Geographic article as well as earlier comments of my own in

the following. I will also add a few of our photos and a drawing in lieu of those provided in the article to provide a personal touch. I have not added to the article proper, only adding comments in the photo captions.

MINING FOR MIRACLES IN MONTANA

People come to Basin looking for miracle cures for rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, depression or cataracts. From the highway,



Figure 18-178 The mine tunnel as one makes his way 450' into the mountain.

though, the tiny Montana town doesn't seem to offer much. There's just one exit and a single long look reveals all there is to the place: a collection of weathered houses and old miners' cabins huddling close to the interstate, caught between the high peaks of the Elkhorn range. Basin looks like a place left behind on a whim. Were it not for the radon "health mines," Basin, population 250, would probably vanish into the mountains as quickly as it came, left only in the memories of the boomers, or prospectors, who first called this place home.

Miners founded Basin in 1880, when it was nothing more than a collection of brothels, tents and saloons in a Montana that hadn't even graduated to statehood. Law and order

depended less on rules than on the strength of a man's fist. "They were a tough bunch of people, and they all liked to fight" says 68 year old "Hap" Bullock. "There were cowboys on one side and miners on the other".

Hap claims Basin roots that go back three generations. He settles himself in his chair in the Silver Saddle Bar and examines me with the patient stare of a man who's seen more than his share of newcomers.

"Did you like to fight?" I asked him. He gives me a slow grin and winks. "A little" he says. "We were looking to make a fortune. What you did is, you hollowed out a mountain and walked



Figure 18-179 Lethia on her go-cart, returning from a treatment in the mine.

through it. I shipped 35,000 tons of gold, silver and other metals from my mines."

You can still see evidence of Basin's late 19th century heyday. Hike up in the mountains and you practically stumble on tunnels abandoned during the gold fever search for bigger and better. Graves of Chinese laborers lie in unmarked mounds along Basin Creek. Ghost towns stare down on Basin from the high hills. Why did the town survive? Local legend explains it this way: Someone once put up a

sign along the highway that said, "Basin – Heaven." If you saw the sign, you would end up in Basin for life. "Every time someone crazy comes to live here," one resident says, "we say, 'Oh, they must have seen the sign.'"

I look for the sign along the highway but only see ones advertising the Merry Widow and Earth Angel Health Mines, two of the world's handful of radon mines. Believers claim that ten days in the mines, breathing in radioactive gas and drinking radioactive water, will cure a whole host of ailments.

The owner of Earth angel, "Wild Bill" Remior, a disabled WWII veteran, goes into the mine every day with his dog, Mr. Stup. "Now I seen a dog

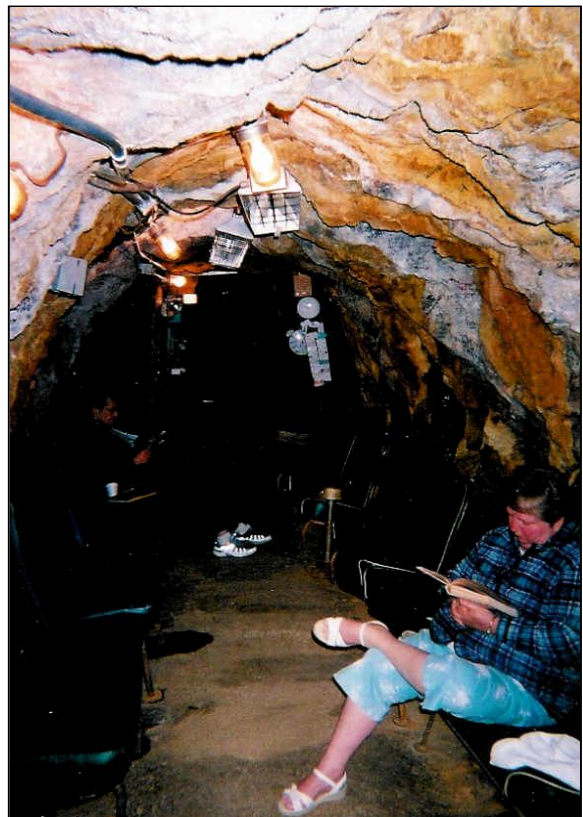


Figure 18-180 Lethia soaking up radon deep in the bowels of the mountain.

go in that mine that could hardly walk," he says, "and by about the second day he was chasing rabbits. That was my rabbits that he was chasing."

He is referring to his more than 120 pet rabbits that live on the mountainside around the mine. When he leaves his trailer, they flock around him like he is a latter-day St. Francis.

“Lady, I seen miracles go through this mine here,” he says, pointing to the 600 hundred foot long tunnel that cuts through the granite bowels of the mountain.. “But what does it? I don’t know. Now, I cannot see the radon in there, and I cannot smell it, and neither can I see the good Lord nor smell him neither, but there’s something in there that does ya good.”

Even scientists who advise the therapeutic use of radon haven’t studied how it works in



Figure 18-181 The furnished cottage we stayed in during our 10 days each year.

Montana mines. Never-the-less, medical studies conducted in Europe, where radon spas have been popular destinations for more than a century, have shown beneficial effects of radon treatments for various inflammatory joint diseases, including rheumatism and arthritis. Still, the mainstream medical community and many lay people in the U.S. find such claims

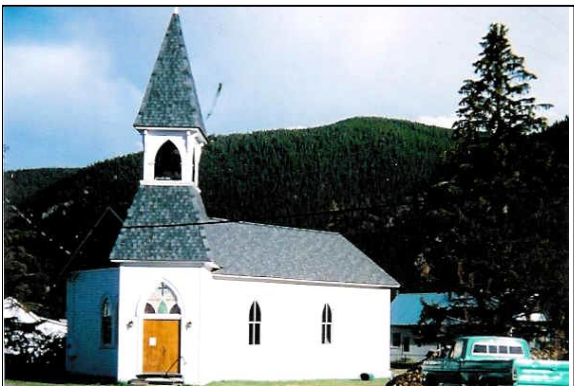


Figure 18-183 An old non-denominational church located on the main street of Basin.

unsettling if not downright dangerous, given the well-documented ill effects of high-dose radiation on the body. Yet ever since the Merry Widow became a health mine in 1952, hundreds of thousands of people have come from as far away as Germany, Korea, and Japan to walk 450 feet into the mine for one-hour “treatments,”

three times a day. Up to 32 such treatments a year are recommended.

Their signatures and messages cover the rock walls. Old bus seats line the sides of the mine to provide resting places for the daily crowds of 50 or more people during the summer months, with one passageway leading to the doggie Den: a cubbyhole with built in shower, where you can bathe yourself and your arthritic dog. At the end of the main tunnel, I find people soaking their hands in basins of the frigid 44° F radioactive water, which they believe to be more beneficial than just breathing in the radon gas. A rack of magazines and board games helps visitors pass the time, their conversations creating a pleasant rumble down the mineshaft.

Being in these mines is like entering an odd sort of club in which everyone greets you by nods of their heads and knowing. Because they will tell you, miracles really have occurred here – and not just to the faithful or the lucky, but to nonbelievers as well.

“I was a nonbeliever,” says Sue Schuster-Johnson, who first visited the mine eight years



Figure 18-182 An old school directly across the street from the cottage and still in use.

ago from Nampa, Idaho. “I just came along with my Uncle Clyde for a vacation.” (Clyde, 94, has been visiting the mine nearly every year since 1962, when he says it cured his rheumatism.) “But when I got back from the trip, my migraines were gone for good – and I’d had migraines for most of my life.”

Sue collects clay from the walls of the mine, swearing that it heals skin infections. Most visitors end up taking some of the mine away with them: lichen or mold, water, mineral secretions – even little pillows filled with radioactive gravel. One man is said to have loaded up his truck with a hundred gallons of water for his racehorse.

Stories like Sue's brought Tanya Beck from Duluth, Georgia. Her four-year old daughter, Allison, suffers from progressive rheumatoid arthritis: her doctors, having run out solutions, predict she will spend her life in a wheelchair.

"This seemed like our last hope," Tanya says. "When we got here to the mine and saw what it was, it was kind of like a Twilight Zone thing. I thought, there's no way. But Allison is running and playing now. She hasn't been hurting. She is definitely getting better, and this mine has something to do with it."

The other mine goes and I have been listening to Tanya. We all hope it's true, that Allison is getting better. For the first time, I join in and drink some of the radioactive water along with everyone else. I figure it couldn't hurt.

ATTACHMENT

I am making this attachment to include some information I gained while reading various scientific studies provided in the Merry Widow Mine. Because I am writing this from memory, some details may be missing and some not totally accurate but they should be close. They represent my understanding gained from reading the same. I suppose you might draw somewhat different conclusions but they should be similar to mine.

The mine owner makes no medical claims and is, in fact, forbidden to do such. They only provide the low-level radiation environment for those wishing to subject themselves to it. In addition to the environment, they provide various reading materials among which are some scientific papers written by various recognized researchers. Unfortunately, I can't remember the titles of the papers or the names of the researchers but simply a few facts or conclusions contained therein. I do remember one researcher was from the University of Pittsburgh and another from the University of Missouri.

According to one researcher, the primary benefit drawn from a low level radioactive environment comes through breathing the air into ones lungs

where it enters the bloodstream and circulates through the body. However, many suffering joint problems in hands, feet, elbows, etc. feel immersing those areas in the mine water, which contains a measure of radon gas, adds benefit to the particular joint involved. Thus, there is a place where people can immerse their elbow,

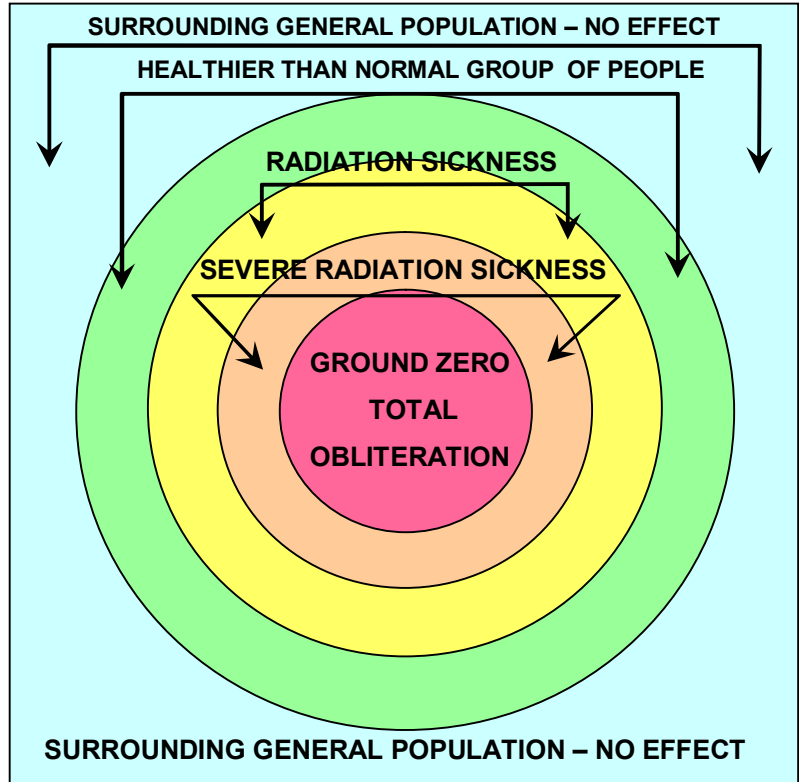


Figure 184 A chart, which qualitatively illustrates the cumulative effects of radiation on the health of people living in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki areas of Japan after WWII.

their feet and their hands. Some people even lie down in the water, which is designed primarily for foot soaking. Ten minutes per trip into the mine is recommended for such soaking. Each visit in the mine is supposed to be one hour in duration but people come and go as they please. There is no regulation as such. One can also drink the mine water, which has been approved by the state of Montana. I suppose such activity is thought to help various internal organs. One can also buy a little eyecup, which allows you to wash out your eyes with the water. This has been said to eliminate or reduce so-called floaters or spots that come and go before one's eyes from time to time. I personally subjected myself to all these opportunities except a complete body soak. I couldn't find the courage for that and would have to be hurting all over to do such. I suppose that is the case for

those that do participate. It is recommended that people who enter the mine should do so in three one-hour visits per day for a total of 32 visits per year. However, some do more and some less. Each person is free to come and go as they please. We made 32 trips the first year and 35 the second year. I'm confident we will return once again in 2006 unless some unforeseen situation occurs.

IMMUNE SYSTEM:

The general consensus of all researchers seems to be that the radon stimulates the immune

to the elimination or reduction of pain associated with rheumatoid arthritis and rheumatism but others claim help with diabetes, osteoarthritis, psoriasis, eczema, lupus, gout and even muscular dystrophy. The list goes on with many I can't remember. No one that I met claims it helps every disease or condition or in all cases but most people had experienced relief with the predominate benefits going to rheumatism and arthritis suffers. Maybe some help is more psychological than physical but, once again, if a person feels better regardless of the reason, the benefit and effort is probably worthwhile.

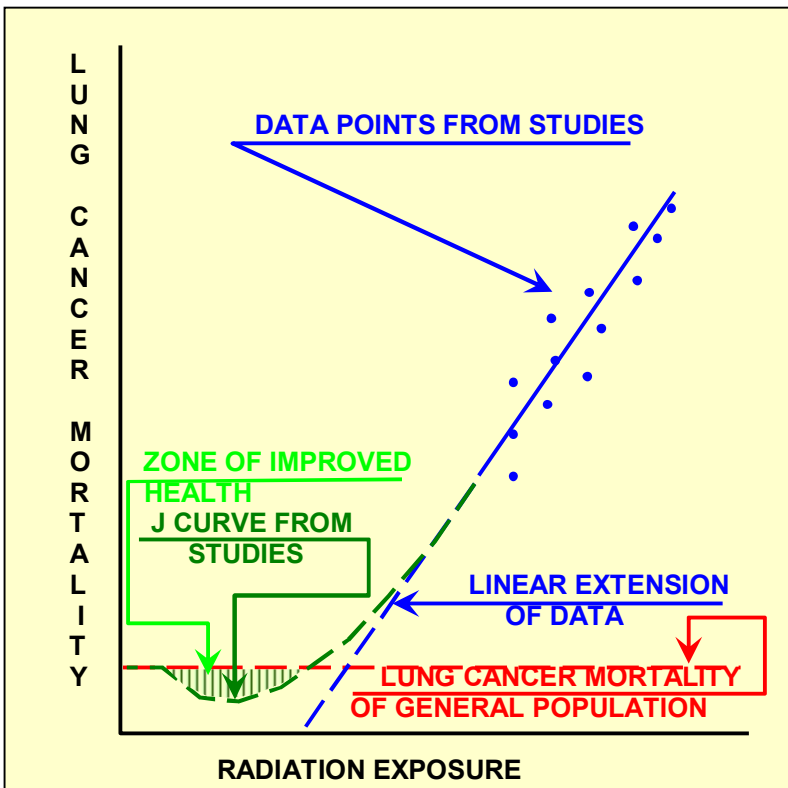


Figure 185 An illustration of two types of studies and conclusions drawn for lung cancer deaths vs. radon exposure. Green hash marked area implies better health.

system and thus helps people fight various types of ailments. Supposedly, it stimulates the adrenal gland and maybe others giving an overall boost to the body's ability to function effectively. I didn't understand all the remarks made in this regard and simply mention it as the probable basis for providing relief to those suffering from a host of other ailments.

In addition to the book containing scientific papers, there is another containing various testimonials from people who have apparently received help. The bulk of the testimonials refer

Low-level radiation is widely accepted in Europe and Russia as well as Japan. Russia seems to be most heavily involved according to the material I read but Germany and Japan aren't far behind. There are many health spas in those countries, which provide both natural and artificial radiation. Apparently natural health benefits have been widely recognized in all of those areas for the last hundred years. In fact, some natural hot springs involving such radiation were used as early as the 1500s. They obviously didn't know why bathing in such pools helped but they found there were benefits by trial and error.

HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI

There was an interesting comment by a Japanese researcher regarding the after effects of the first atomic bombs used in the Pacific in WWII. It can best be summarized with the aid of a little diagram I've shown in drawing of figure 184. Studies after the war of the peoples living in the areas of Hiroshima and Nagasaki indicated various effects, which

depended on the distance they lived from ground zero of the bombs. I have labeled them in the drawing and will not repeat them here. The study's point is the existence of people around the cities with better health than the general population.

OSHA STANDARDS FOR RADON SAFETY

The standards issued by the Department of Labor regarding safety from low-level radiation are based on several studies of miners, most of who smoked and worked in mines with high

levels of radon or radiation in general. These studies resulted in a graph of mortality from lung cancer versus the level of radon exposure. I have provided a qualitative graph depicting study results and conclusions drawn in graph of figure 180. There is no claim of accuracy regarding the graph but it illustrates the results of the studies, as I understand them. There were no low-level measurements available and the assumption was made that the apparent linear relationship between mortality and exposure could be extended linearly to zero and resulted in the so-called linear-no threshold relationship. This is the area where other researchers find themselves at odds with the U.S. Government. These researchers claim there is no justification for this extension and that low-level radiation studies indicate a so-called J effect in the relationship. I have tried to illustrate this effect along with the extension of the studies used by the Department of Labor. Note that the J portion of the curve indicates a mortality rate less than that of the general population when individuals are subjected to low-level radiation.

Whether one believes the Department of Labor or the independent studies of other researchers, I think it's fair to say the effect of low-level radiation on our health is undetermined at this time. We, the uninformed, simply have to use our best judgment depending upon the situation at hand to determine whether we want to experiment with such treatment. However, I have learned over the years not to place my complete faith in federal studies.

HORMESIS

According to one researcher who is involved with the effects of very small concentrations of poisonous substances on humans, there are indications that some such substances may improve our general health and can even be necessary for good health. He cites vitamin A and Vitamin B+ as examples of substances that are necessary for good health but poisonous if one takes too much. Apparently there is some dispute over the validity of such conclusions but we do know the vitamins sighted react in the manner stated.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Lethia and I became interested in the so-called health mines involving radiation when we ran across the article above taken from the January 2003 issue. She had been diagnosed first as

having a bad case of psoriasis and later as having psoriatic arthritis as previously stated. We had not heard of the latter before but found out a good deal about it on the Internet. She



Figure 18-186 A view of the cottage kitchen with included appliances.

began treatments for the latter under a local doctor with several negative reactions or side effects and ended up on a drug called Methotrexate. It also had side effects but they seemed tolerable as compared to the others. He then recommended a new drug, Embriel, which was to be injected. He felt it was not only safer but would be more effective. It would cost \$1200 per month and it didn't appear our insurance would cover it until the deductible was satisfied. We talked about our options. I had a \$5000 deductible on Lethia and it would thus cost us at least that amount before they would kick in. About the time we were trying to make a decision about her treatment, the article came out in the National Geographic and we decided



Figure 18-187 A view of the living room as seen from the kitchen doorway.

to give it a try. The potential side effect from radon exposure seemed far less than those we heard about from all the new arthritis drugs. She continued to take the Methotrexate,

receiving some relief but still had considerable pain. We thought, with luck, she would get some relief from the health mine and, if not, we could then make the decision about Embriel.

We first visited the Merry Widow Health Mine in late July of 2004, spending ten days and making the 32 visits into the mine. She didn't seem to get too much relief at first. Many people using the mine said the maximum effect usually came about three months after a visit and a second visit would be needed the next year. As we headed back to Georgia, we noticed the swelling in her hands had gone down and the pain had significantly decreased. In the next three to six months, it became apparent that she had received some help and/or the Methotrexate was doing more good. To make a long story short, we felt good enough about her improvement to return in 2005.

In 2005 we took 5 weeks to visit kids in Texas and Colorado as well as spend 10 days at the mine and then attend two reunions. It was a rather exhausting trip but not only fun but very worthwhile. As of this writing, we have been back 10 days and have both noticed beneficial results. Lethia hurt her shoulder just after the first visit and has been bothered by pain of various levels ever since. She also developed pain in her right hip, which limited her mobility. After a day of significant walking, such as helping her mother do her shopping at Walmart, the pain would become so bad she had to take a pain pill containing Codeine to sleep. After the second day in the mine on this trip, the hip quit hurting her and hasn't bothered her since. By the time we arrived home her shoulder had quit hurting as well. It is obvious she feels much better because she is much more active around the house and acts more like the lady I married 13 years ago. Needless to say, we are both pleased.

I likewise have seen some improvement. All last winter I had some pain in both hips when I walked. Actually, they were okay if I kept walking on a regular basis but if I quit for more than a couple of days, the first walk would be very uncomfortable and maybe the second as well. Then the pain subsided on the following nights. I was experiencing pain while walking in Basin, Montana and a little when I walked at Grand Jean about 5 nights later. Then I didn't walk for six nights because of travel and weather. Now, I am pleased to say I have had no more pain even though I stopped that week

and have only walked sporadically since. I don't know exactly what was causing the pain (I surmise it is osteoarthritis) but it is gone at least for now. Similarly, I have been able to reduce my insulin by several units since I got home.

Both Lethia and I are holding our breath, wondering if the relief is permanent. Needless to say, we hope so. We, like many other people, can only express the results we feel and can't really explain how the radon health mine has helped us. As long as we see such positive results, we will continue to return regardless of the opinions of doctors and others. By the way, no doctor will admit that such visits help at all. They explain it as a figment of one's imagination but who cares if we feel better. Even the possible theoretical side effect, i.e. lung cancer, is of less concern than those real ones so common with many powerful drugs today. As the old adage says, "The proof is in the pudding". So far the pudding tastes mighty good and will continue to be a diet staple for us in the foreseeable future or until it turns sour and/or upsets our digestive tract.

LIVING FACILITIES

The Merry Widow Mine has various living facilities available at nominal rates. Lethia and I rented the cottage shown in figure 18-181 both years we were there. We paid \$30 per night in 2004 and \$35 in 2005. It was roomy and well furnished with necessary furniture and appliances as well as towels, linens and cooking utensils. Thus we only had to bring the food and our clothing. To give the reader an idea of the cottage interior, I have included figures 18-186 and 18-187 illustrating the kitchen and living room respectively. Our cottage also had a washer and dryer in the rather large bathroom along with a tub, shower, two sinks and a john. A few of the units have air conditioning but ours didn't. However, it never got so hot that we were uncomfortable, day or night. We found the facilities very comfortable as well as affordable. There are units with two, three and even four bedrooms and a few have satellite TV. We had a TV but only two rather poor stations were available. Thus we confined ourselves primarily to reading. Ten miles north on I-15 is another little town called Boulder, which has a decent grocery store and other facilities. There is a little branch of the church there, which we have attended regularly. The folks are very friendly, adding to our satisfaction. Butte lies about 27 miles south of Basin and Helena 35 miles north.

A SIGHT SEEING TRIP TO THE NORTHWEST

If one wants to take the time, there is a good deal of beautiful country to the north and west of that general area. Lethia and I took one day to drive to the Ross Creek giant cedar scenic area just south of Libby, Montana. That's in extreme northwest Montana, a couple of hundred miles



Figure 18-188 A couple walking the trail just ahead of us in Ross Creek Park.

from Basin. Those cedars at Ross Creek were not only large but beautiful as well. Some were 500 years old and had survived several fires. I tried to photograph a few scenes to use in this book but failed rather miserably. The whole length of the trail was in the dark recesses of the cedars and only a couple of shots were even close to being acceptable. Figure 188 is a photo taken soon after we embarked on the trail behind another couple. Lethia surprised me because she made the complete circuit, about a mile long, without really tiring. We sat down occasionally and other times simply stood, listening to the stillness. It seemed as though there was kind of an aura of mystery pervading the silence that reigned throughout the grove. We heard no chattering squirrels or twittering birds claiming ownership of its quiet reaches. It's no wonder the Indians considered this area

sacred ground. The cedars seemed to taper quickly as they reached skyward and appeared relatively short for their diameters even though their height must have been over 100 feet. I wanted a photo of the full length of one or more



Figure 18-189 A 400-year old Cedar reaches out of an abyss of enveloping darkness into the beckoning light above.

trees but couldn't find a site where that was possible to accomplish in one picture. Finally I hit on the idea of piecing two or three photos

together to accomplish the job. Figure 18-189 is the result of such manipulation. Though I failed to catch the very top, the composite gives one an idea of the scene when we looked skyward.

One could easily spend two or three days touring the whole area. There were several

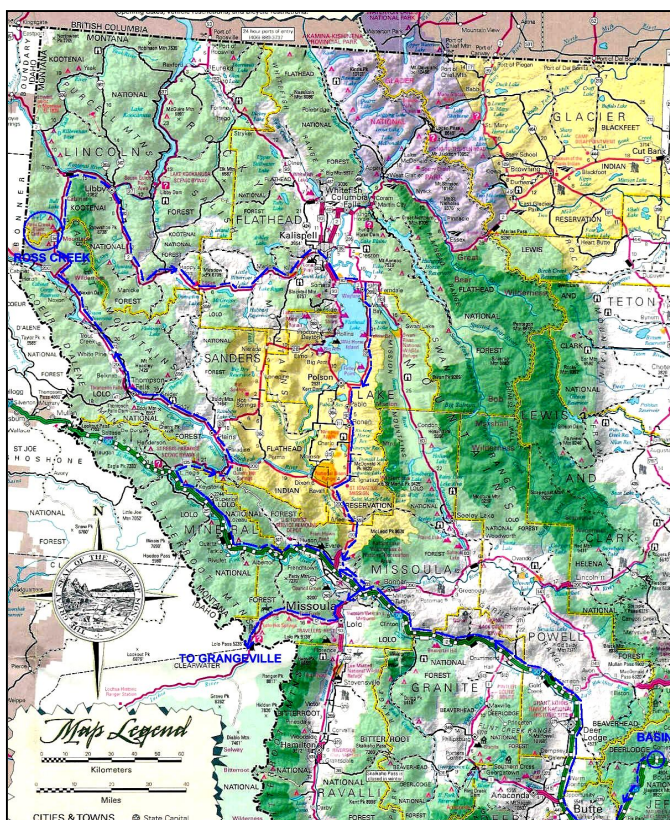


Figure 18-190 Map of northwest Montana showing our route of travel in blue and major stops.

beautiful lakes along the way, all of which appeared natural. Had we been outfitted for camping and had more time, we might have spent a night or two along the way. However, we had to head for the reunion the next day, (Friday) and I wanted to position myself so I could arrive in McCall about noon. Consequently, we didn't linger anywhere along the way other than in Ross Creek Park itself. It was late afternoon when we exited the Ross Creek Park and drove north to Libby. We stopped in Libby for dinner at a rather nice café. It was dusk by the time we left town and drove east to Kalispell where we would stay the night. Kalispell sits on the north edge of Flathead Lake, which you may remember from an earlier story, is cherry country. We intended to indulge in a few pounds of those juicy fruits, which I knew as Bing and Royal Anne cherries before

heading south to Idaho. From Kalispell, we could position ourselves the next day Thursday, to arrive in McCall by Friday noon. I had never approached McCall from the north, i.e. New Meadows, before and was looking for some interesting scenery in the northern part of Idaho. My previous trip took place during Esther's and my trip through Canada as described earlier.

It was getting dusk when we left Libby. We passed a few lakes along the south side of the highway before it got too dark to appreciate the scenery. Kalispell lay some 80 miles to the east along highway U.S. 2. Though the road was good, being dark and a two-lane road with plenty of curves, it took the better part of two hours for us to get to our motel. It must have been 8 or 9 o'clock by the time we settled in for the night. Lethia and I were bushed from the hectic day.

We were up bright and early Thursday morning and grabbed a couple of sausage biscuits at McDonalds, an old standby on our trip. Just south of Kalispell, we grabbed Montana 82 around the east side of the lake where most of the cherries are. By noon we were in Missoula, some 120 miles to the south. Even though we had crammed quite a few cherries down, we stopped for a burger and filled the gas tank before heading for Idaho. Figure 18-190 is a map of the whole excursion west to Ross Creek Park and swinging back east to Kalispell, then south to Missoula. It shows our route in blue and may make the earlier story easier to follow.

Just south of Missoula, we took a right and headed west or southwest over Lolo Pass and down the Lochsa River on U.S. 12 to Kooskie then south to Grangeville. I was really taken with the ride from Lolo Pass down the Lochsa. What a beautiful drive it is with rugged scenery all the way. We stopped at a federal rest area at the top of Lolo Pass where there was an interesting gift shop. There was a bunch of stuff on Louis and Clark as well as the Nez Perce Indians and Chief Joseph. I might have bought a few things but decided they would never be read, even though interesting.

We arrived in Grangeville where we spent the night. Morning came and we headed for McCall, arriving there before noon. We checked in at the camp and got a nice cabin, named Romans, which just fit our needs. Kristin did a magnificent job of handling the festivities. We thoroughly enjoyed our time there as well as another trip to Grand Jean. From the latter we headed south once again for Georgia.