

**EVERY SQUARE INCH—A MISSIONARY MEMOIR**

**THE LIFE AND MISSION OF**

**JAN & FRANCES BOER**

-----VOLUME 5-----

**Our Post-Nigeria Travels**

**by**

**Jan H. Boer & Frances A. Boer-Prins**

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BY DR. JAN H. BOER

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**Volume 5**

**Our Post-Nigeria Travels**

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***“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, ‘Mine!’”***

Quote from Kuyper's inaugural address at the Free University, October 20, 1880.

***DEDICATION***

**We dedicate this final volume to:**

**(1)**

**The Entire Nigerian Christian Community  
that has accorded us the privilege  
of serving among them for 30 years.**

**Especially:**

**The Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria  
TEKAN: The Fellowship of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria  
The Anglican Church of Nigeria  
The Christian Council of Nigeria  
The Christian Health Association of Nigeria  
The Church of Christ among the Tiv**

**(2)**

**The community that has enabled us to serve the above:**

**Especially:**

**Christian Reformed World Missions  
II Highland Christian Reformed Church  
First CRC Edmonton  
Covenant CRC Edmonton  
Westside CRC Edmonton  
Medicine Hat CRC  
Fleetwood CRC Surrey  
Alberni Valley CRC**

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## Chapter 41<

### *Grand Rapids Era Travels*

May 1996 – October 2001

Apart from getting ourselves sorted out as well as trying to make a living, probably the most striking feature of our Grand Rapids time as others observed it was our constant travel, both “local” and international. We seemed to be on the go much of the time. No doubt our relatives and friends must have wondered how this was all financed. Well, so did we, kind of, but we’ll get to that in due time. By the time we reached September, 2000, we were hardly settled in Grand Rapids any more; it was one trip after another. If we had been able to look at it all ahead of time, we would have shaken our heads in disbelief, if not outright denial. We would never be able to afford all that travel. Well, somehow we did. It is a story of God’s provisions that has amazed us throughout our post-Nigeria years.

Please understand that this volume assumes you have read Volume 4, for there will be some references to events recorded there. I am not about to repeat what’s there. This one is long enough as is!

These travel chapters are not just travelogues; they contain stories about interesting people, our reactions to situations met on these journeys and reflections evoked by them.

At the same time, if you don’t enjoy travel stories, then you could simply skip them. We personally have deeply enjoyed our various travels, both in North America as well as to the other continents. As much as we have traveled, we remain curious about and interested in so many places not yet experienced. In fact, during in 2013 we have been discussing China. China has always fascinated me. The question always is: what would be the purpose of such a journey? Can we afford it? And, if so, is it a responsible or stewardly expense? By early summer, we had decided with regret to drop China. With recent changes in our financial situation we don’t tell you about, we needed to sit more tight.

#### *Lutjegast—Down Memory Lane (1997)*

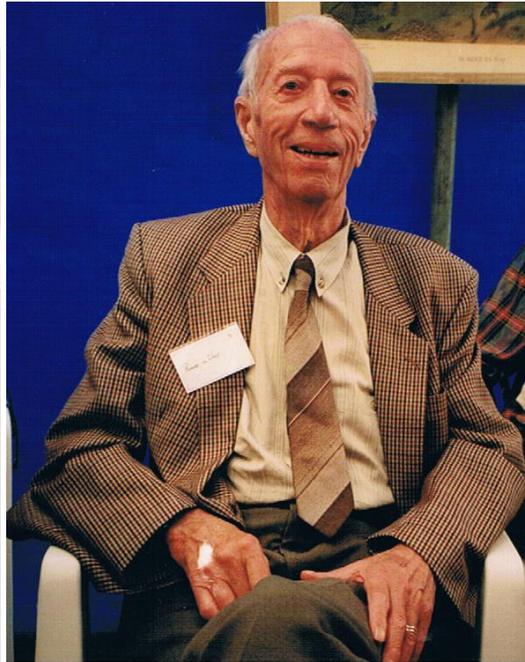
It was probably fitting that the first trip abroad in my new life was a May 1997 pilgrimage to Lutjegast for the centenary celebration of the Christian school which most of the Boer siblings had attended. It was a personal journey down memory lane. You’ve read all about my years there in Chapter 2. The four sisters had all agreed to go. I had no intentions, not with our unstable income. Suddenly, Fran came home one day with return tickets for me to also attend the event. I was totally taken by surprise and moved to the core at this gesture of sacrificial love for me in her situation. Of course, I gratefully accepted.

We decided to surprise my sisters by meeting them in Lutjegast. Somehow, they had gotten wind of something but were not sure. The surprise was dulled. But we had a wonderful time there, all of us. Of course, we all had our own old friends and history there and thus did not spend all that much time together. But we did take a walk through the village together, often sat together in the huge tent of meeting and spent a Sunday afternoon together in the garden behind Tante Dienie and Oom Berend's house. That was a lovely tea we had in their rose garden. I stayed with my childhood friend(s) Henk and Grietje Rozema.

It was a thrill to meet a couple of my teachers, *Juffrouw* Baukamp of Grade 1 and Mr. De Vries of Grade 6 and Principal. I did not recognize or even remember Baukamp, but after introducing myself to her, she remembered me and told me of the warning Opa gave her about my temper and knife throwing. Unfortunately, *Meester* De Vries was no longer "with it" and did not remember anyone, but it was a thrill to see my favourite teacher once again anyhow.



*Juffrouw* Baukamp\*



*Meester* De Vries\*

Of course, our album contains a number of photos of us siblings interacting with each other and with others. I recognized very few of the others, though, when introduced to them, I often remembered their names. We had a class picture taken of our grade that stayed together throughout our primary years. I am standing next to Luut Hoeksema, who lived on and operated the dairy farm he inherited on Abel Tasmanweg all his working life, and Jan Van Til, my constant friendly competitor. Though we had been together for six years, I recognized none, except their names. But it was great to re-connect with that childhood crowd. So many memories. And would you believe it? I posed for a picture with just the three of us, Luut, Jan

and myself, *with me wearing blue jeans!* If you know the John Boer of today, you would indeed be surprised, but there it is for the record, not to be denied, not even by myself!

One outstanding memory all of us siblings have of the event is sister Elly's spontaneous taking over the stage and leading a communal song fest of the old traditional folk songs so popular in Lutjegast during our childhood there. The people loved it and sang their hearts out. Completely unscheduled, not even in Elly's mind. It was just her natural self doing what she loved to do: lead people in singing. This was the only time I remember her leading in songs not overtly Christian. Her children would have been dumbfounded that she did not introduce the gospel into the mix—and possibly delighted.

From this time we have one of those pictures where Elly sits with her hands on a pillow pressed against her stomach. At that time, we had not yet come to recognize the significance of this posture. She was already having pains.



**Jan van Til\***  
**My Friendly Rival**  
**Throughout Primary School**



**Boer Siblings at the Reunion\***  
**Front: Martha, John, Ellie, Karen**  
**Standing: Bo, Dienie & Berend Douma**

After the event was over, Karen and I traveled by train to Zaandam, the hometown of her husband Jake, next door to Amsterdam, and stayed in the home of one of his brothers for a couple of days. From there we flew home separately.

### *Southern Africa (1997-1998)*

#### *Cape Town and Surroundings*

After leaving Botswana, Kevin lived in Cape Town, South Africa, and wanted us to come visit him. We did so for one month over Christmas-New Year 1997-1998.

So much to see and experience in this town and vicinity. Starting from day one, we took a lot of walks in Kevin's neighbourhood. "Houses," Fran wrote, "are built in some incredible places—into, under and between the rocks. Some houses required a cable car to access them way up high on the rocks!" Since Kevin owned a car, we drove up Signal Hill together to watch the amazing sunset. "A great place to enjoy wine, cheese and crackers and to overlook the city," wrote Fran. Kevin also introduced us to Nandos, a Portuguese-style chicken place that he especially loved. A few years later, along with Kevin we stumbled across one only a couple of kms from us in Vancouver and since then a new one has been opened only a couple of blocks from our apartment. Every time our kids visit us in Vancouver, it has a fixed place on their itinerary for at least two visits. On the way back to Kevin's house, we met some Jews for Jesus evangelists, one of whom had recently visited some CRC churches in Grand Rapids! I do remember meeting such evangelists trying to recruit CRC support for their ministry.

We toured all over the city and its vicinity, including the cable car ride up the famous Table Mountain just outside Cape Town. At the cable car area there was the Rhodes Memorial, a massive structure, but featuring only a small bust of Rhodes himself. The tour book described Rhodes as looking "somewhat bored and testy." Remember that I did research in the Rhodes Library at Oxford. Well, this was that Rhodes; the same also of the famous Rhodes Scholarship. We were wondering how long the new South African government would leave such reminders of colonialism and exploitation in place, but we saw such reminders in many places. Probably just a matter of time, we surmised, before this kind of history would be obliterated from the memory of the people by conscious government policy.

Already at 7 am there were long lineups for the cable car, with its capacity of 64 people. Fran wrote,

The ride is only a few minutes long and very expensive, but when your son is splurging on you, who keeps track of expenses? The view from the top is spectacular. We walked around for several hours. Watched two paragliders hovering over the country side. Saw a rock dassier, a rabbit-sized rodent-like creature, whose closest living relation is the elephant! Met lots of people who had spent two to three hours climbing to the top.

On our way to Cape Point, where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans meet, we stopped at Boulder Beach, famous for its hordes of penguins. We never realized that Africa was home to so many penguins. They were so domesticated that we could walk right up to them without raising an alarm among them. Cape Point itself is the famous Cape of Good Hope that Diaz and Vasco da Gama "discovered" in the late 1400s while looking for a marine route to India.

We parked the car as close to the Point as we could and then followed a narrow winding footpath along a high ridge next to a ravine to the Point itself. My latent phobias kicked in and I could go no further. I had to literally crawl back along the trail to the car. It's not the only time I have had such an experience, but certainly one of the worst. However, later we visited Cape L'Agulhas, the southernmost tip of Africa. Some claim that *this* is the real point where the two oceans meet.



**Southernmost Tip of Africa\***



**Dipping in the Indian Ocean\***

I was interested in meeting some members of the faculties of nearby universities, particularly those who were in Religious Studies and Missiology. Went to University of Cape Town and of Stellenbosch, but, due to the Christmas break, there were very few people around. We did run into a Nigerian acquaintance of Kevin at Stellenbosch, who was the Southern Africa rep of the Free Nigeria Movement. From Stellenbosch we drove through some lovely mountain passes to Franshoek (French Corner), where we visited the Huguenot Memorial and Museum. Huguenots came to South Africa in large numbers 300 years ago upon the invitation of The Netherlands that was begging people to settle in this country. They eventually merged with the Afrikaners and took their “side.”

Everywhere we ran into traces and reminders of colonialism and apartheid, all of them in historical settings remembering the past. I have already mentioned the Rhodes memorial. Touring District 6 Museum on New Year’s Eve during the daytime, Fran took a picture of me sitting on a bench at one time reserved only for Europeans—“*slegs blankes*”—according to the interpretive sign. For many generations people of different races had lived here together in this poor, overcrowded, coloured ghetto. “Coloured” here does not refer to the apartheid designation of a specific group classified as such; I use it here with its more general meaning. In 1966, the government classified this as a white area and literally bulldozed all the buildings and forcibly moved the residents to “bleak and soulless townships.” This was a sad testimony of what our cousins, the Afrikaner Boers, did to their compatriots.

That same day we had lunch at Kevin’s place with Dr. Weli Mazamisa. He had met Wiebe at Calvin College. We spent a sad and simultaneously delightful hour listening to this Black man’s view of apartheid—very forgiving spirit, gracious and optimistic about the future. Also found ourselves at the Cultural History Museum with its highly interesting and informative

displays. Fran wrote, “Lots of clashes between the original inhabitants, the Khoi and San, and the explorers, the Dutch and the English.” She was, of course, referring to the clashes between the Africans on the one hand and the Caucasians on the other. However, African history is also full of clashes between indigenous peoples and of clashes among the Dutch and the English—remember the Boer Wars—that it was all of these at one time or another. Probably the Museum wanted to tell us about the bad foreign wolves and forget about indigenous unpleasanties.

The day also included a tour of the Black township Khayelitsha with Lukas, a colleague of Kevin, who lived there. It included a couple of wonderful experiences. We stopped at a butcher shop, bought some lamb chops and had them *braaied* right there on the spot. Ended that part of the day in a tavern, sharing the *braaied* meat together with cold drinks. This was a real South African experience off the beaten tourist track. The day ended with an evening visit to the Waterfront, where there were an estimated 100,000 people celebrating the turn of the year. They were just milling around with lots of loud music and jam-packed the restaurants, cheering and clapping at the ad hoc fireworks that various people lit up.

Cape Town was a disappointing place when it came to Christmas. To us, it should be a busy time for the churches, but in fact, it was a dead time, a down time. Everything shuts down for a couple of weeks. Apart from their regular services, most churches, including the Reformed, were doing nothing special that was noticeable from the outside. Few signs of celebration. As a missionary, I was shocked that the churches did not even try to reach out to the many tourists in the town over Christmas. No outdoor signs of celebration, let alone music. Apart from service times, instead of open doors, we found them all closed.

We did attend St. George’s Anglican Church, where the children acted out an unusual Christmas play. Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt but were pursued by Roman soldiers. Tired and desperate, they hid in a cave. In order to protect them, a spider spun a web all around the cave. To make the cave even less visible, a fly, an archenemy of the spider, in true Christmas spirit used his wings to spread dirt all over the protective spider web. The spider and the fly then became friends and the family was kept safe. That was a bright spot in a largely somber Christmas.

There was one other bright spot, very bright. We drove to Kirstenbosch Gardens for a Carols by Candlelight service. Some 25,000 in attendance! People sat on the hillside, all holding and swaying with candles. A beautiful sight even if the outdoors does not provide the best acoustics for singing.

*An inset:* During the 2012 Christmas season in Vancouver, people were invited to join the Vancouver Outreach Community Sweet Soul Gospel Choir to a carol sing that “*could*”—note the careful language here—“break the world record for the most carolers in one place.” I always admire big thinking and we attended it, even sort of hoping they would break the record. However, this 1997 South African service had already gone way beyond the Vancouver ambition.

Once back in Grand Rapids, I felt led to write a letter to the Reformed Church closest to Kevin’s apartment. I identified myself as a professional missionary who had looked forward to

a season of festive churches opening their doors and embracing both the local people on the streets and the tourists. Instead, I found a situation that could best be described as morose. I gave the minister some advice as to actions he and his church could take to make the next Christmas more lively and more open. I did not really expect a closed church to respond to advice about an open and embracing church from a stranger, even if he sported the name “Boer”—I was not disappointed. I do concede that such a letter was a bit brazen, but, hey, I did what I felt needed doing.

We called on denominational offices of the Dutch Reformed Church, and were welcomed by the denominational Minister of Information, who was the only staff in the building, the others all taking advantage of the long South African Christmas break. He was very friendly, showed us around, explained some of their history, etc. and gave me a couple of books about their history, including their mission history in various African countries.

This was the church that had started NKST in Nigeria and handed over their work to the CRC when they were expatriated because of apartheid politics. In spite of their apartheid past, I had a real sense of connectedness with this establishment—Boers, of course, and the initiators of NKST, one of the churches with which our Mission in Nigeria had very close ties not only, but with whom I had personally done a lot of ICS and other ministry. He showed me a photo gallery of some of the denomination’s past leaders. It included Andrew Murray, a staunch Reformed theologian but whom I thought of as kind of a pietist. I could never get interested in his books; they just did not speak to me. Seeing him in that gallery confirmed my evaluation of their mission in Nigeria as of pietistic bend, something that was noticeable in NKST policy, especially among some of their older pastors. Pietism represents the very dualism I had been battling in Nigeria.

Kevin had written us for years about his hobby of paragliding,\* but we had never seen him in action. This was the time. He took us to a place popular for this sport and we saw him getting all rigged out and then jump off the cliff. For parents for the first time to see their son jump and float away, no matter his age, is a scary experience. A few miles across the valley was the ocean. From our vantage, it looked like Kevin had long passed over the valley and would land in the water. How would he get out? An optical illusion. When he finally landed, it was still safely inland, but way down into that valley. He had arranged for a friend to meet him by car and return him safely to his Mommy and Daddy on the mountain. We were glad he landed safely! But it was at the same time a beautiful sight to see him gliding in midair and slowly descend to the pre-determined landing spot. Fran wrote that it was quite a bit more scary than watching him ride his two-wheeled bicycle for the first time!



Kevin treated us to a performance of “Ipi Ntombi,” a high-energy musical that so captivated me that when it was finished, I was totally exhausted from the energy expended in listening and constant participation of feet, hands and head in the merciless rhythm of the performance. What an experience! Their brochure read, “From the pulsating sounds of African drums to the rhythm of the energetic cast, this kaleidoscope of colour and change promises you a night of African celebration you will not easily forget.” How true! We took a CD home and occasionally try to repeat the experience, but our home today is not Africa. It’s great to listen to it occasionally, but it cannot replicate the original experience. You can’t take Africa beyond its own borders, except in a secondary way.

The days did not always turn out as we had planned. One day, the plan had been to visit Robben Island, which is some eleven kms off the coast and clearly visible. It is the maximum security prison where Nelson Mandela spent many years. Unfortunately, it required advanced booking and there would be no room till Sunday, by which time we would be on the road. Well, we did buy a postcard of the place, a poor substitute for a real visit.

A day or so into the new year we were treated to an experience of the Coon Carnival, an event that featured a wonderful parade of a lot of Black musical bands with all sorts of instruments and the most colourful costumes and uniforms, at the same time festive and dignified in ways in which Africa so excels. The parade was followed up by a cricket game, a totally White affair.

And so we were introduced to cricket, a quintessential element of White South African culture. Fran and I were totally lost as to how this all worked and guessed our way through part of the game. Between us sat our guide, twelve-year old Dagon Nolan, son of another one of Kevin’s colleagues. The little guy knew the game in and out and was thoroughly puzzled at these adults who did not understand it. Does not everyone in the world know cricket? Apparently not. But it was very interesting to experience not only the game, but also the culture that has enveloped around it, not to speak of the serious pains our young guide took to interpret the goings on around us.

### *South Africa’s Interior*



We took a car trip northwards along the west coast and then east, across to Botswana. One of the most memorable moments of this part of the trip was our Sunday morning visit to Pella, a Black village near the Namibian border. In the centre of the town, stood an imposing 200-year old Catholic church.\* We wandered around the village for a while. All was quiet; the whole town was in church. When they came out, we talked to a few of them and were amazed to discover that their only language was Afrikaans —apparently no traditional African language, no English. I still wonder whether we fully understood their linguistic situation. It seemed very strange to us to have these “Pellans” speak a language so akin to our own Dutch and not have an indigenous language of their own.

We now found ourselves traveling eastward through the north of South Africa and through the southern part of the Kalahari Desert. Kevin had reserved a Bed & Breakfast place for us somewhere along the way. The place was one big surprise for us. The entrance was blocked by a gate that we were able to open and then we faced a long dirt road through the desert that did not seem to go anywhere. And then another gate and more of the same. We finally stumbled on a small white building that we took to be the B&B. No electricity; only kerosene lamps, the kind we were accustomed to in Nigeria. No breakfast either, except what we brought ourselves! We never met the proprietors. Anyhow, we had a comfortable place to sleep. What more would you want! Apparently “B&B” can be defined differently!

### *Africans, Boers, Anglos*

The next day, we stopped at Augrabies Falls National Park and then arrived in Kuruman, an oasis town in the Kalahari Desert that has a spring called “The Eye,” which daily supplies the place with 20 million liters of crystal clear water. It is a town of major intersection between African, Boer and Anglo histories. There was the Moffat Museum, named after Robert and Mary Moffat, Scottish missionaries who worked here from 1820-1870. They translated the Bible into Setswana, the language of Botswana. A historical marker reads:

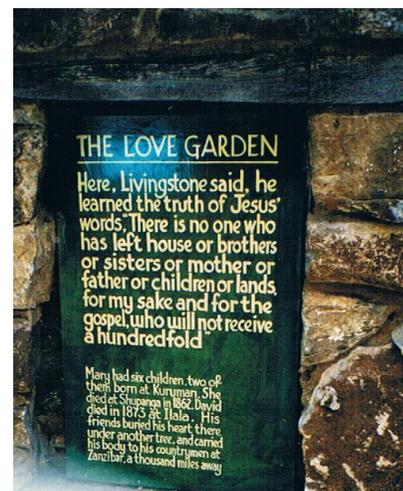
#### KURUMAN MOFFAT MISSION WELCOMES YOU

On this 14 hectares on the edge of the Kalahari

The first Batswana were baptized. Setswana was written down, the Bible translated and then printed. Here David Livingstone first made his name in Africa. The earliest schoolroom and houses north of the Orange River were built here. The Moffat Church has stood here for over 150 years. Robert and Mary Moffat laboured here for 50 years. Maphakela Lekalake was the first Motswana to be ordained here. Apartheid almost destroyed the work of the Gospel. In our generation, God’s Spirit is breathing new life into “This most holy place.”

As to the Moffat’s personal homestead, a sign on the gate to the house reads, “MOFFAT HOMESTEAD: The home of Robert & Mary Moffat between 1826-1870. Here he translated and printed the Setswana Bible.” The house itself consisted of solid brick with small windows, a thatch roof and a chimney protruding from the top.

David Livingstone served here as Anglican vicar for two years (1841-1843) and officiated at the wedding of Mary, Moffats’ daughter. There is a “Love Garden”\* in the churchyard with a sign that reads:



the



**Inside the Livingstone Church\*  
Two Imposter Preachers**

**Kevin's and my pose are identical, spontaneously so. Another apple case?**

And then, finally, we have a picture of Fran and me posing at a sign from where Livingstone started his trek further into the interior of East Africa. It reads, "The missionary road to the interior." We will "meet" Livingstone again towards the end of our journey in Edinburgh. Look for him below.

In this same town we came across another historical monument, dated 1938, honouring the *Voortrekkers*, the pioneer ancestors of the Boers. It reads,

*Met die genade en hulp van die Here belooft ons plectic trou aan die God, die godsdiens en die ideale van ons Voortrekker-Vaders.*

Just to show you how close Afrikaans and Dutch are to each other, here's my translation of the above into Dutch, followed by my English translation:

*Met de genade en hulp van de Here, beloven wij plechtige trouw aan de God, de godsdienst en de idealen van onze Voortrekker-Vaders.*

*With the grace and help of the Lord, we solemnly pledge our faithfulness to the God, the religion and the ideals of our pioneer Forefathers.*

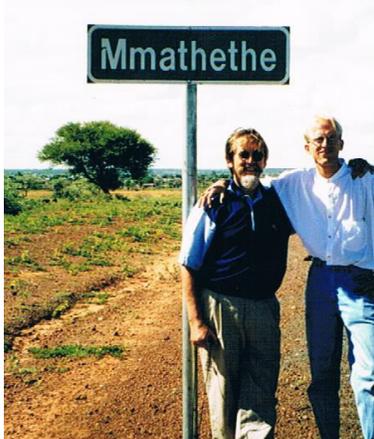
We paid a visit to the Mafikeng Museum. Mafikeng played an important role in the Anglo-Boer wars. The local people and the British besieged the Boers here for one and a half years until the latter succumbed. So you understand the intersection I mentioned above.

As we continued our journey, I found the long names of Afrikaner villages very interesting: they were often combinations of Dutch words, but you would never see such names in The Netherlands—e.g., Bruintjeshoogte (“Brown Heights) or Meulsteenbergr (“Meul”—a form of the Dutch “meulen” or “molen,” meaning “mill;” “steen”—stone or rock; “berg”—mountain), both fitting names for towns in the mountainous Namaque Desert. Ditto the names of bars and cafes: Pella Oase Drankwinkel”—“Pella Oasis Liquor Store.” Then there was “Kultuur Koffiekroeg” with a number of very traditional dome-like houses in the yard behind the sign —“Culture Coffee Bar.” In English these names seem kind of clumsy, but for Dutch speakers not used to Afrikaans, they are very humorous.

One particularly impressive sight in the southern Kalahari was a huge farm of sunflowers in full bloom, as far as the eye could take you. I am not enough of an artistic wordsmith to do full justice to this feast of yellow bloom. “Stunning” hardly conveys it. Because Cynthia carried a bouquet of sunflowers at her wedding not all that long ago, this amazing scene struck us with special force.

### *Botswana*

One of the major destinations of this long Boer trek was to visit Kevin’s Peace Corps home in Botswana. In fact, we have a picture of Kevin and me posing underneath the sign “Mmathethe,” the name of his village where he taught junior secondary school and from where his Peace Corps letters to us were sent to Nigeria—and they used to arrive, most of them at least. We also have a picture of Fran posing with Kevin in front of the house he lived in as well as next to a steel cage in which the school computer was housed, desk and all. Not sure whether students were actually locked in while using the computer. That would be something akin to the time I was locked up with the archives at the Rhodes Library at Oxford. Some of the classrooms had roofs but no walls. The students sat on semi-circular cement benches facing the blackboard that was part of the partial wall at the front of the room. So we saw his school, various village buildings, a chicken coop built by US Aid, but, above all else, his Mmathethe friends. It was obvious there was a real sense of bonding between them and Kevin.



Kevin and John at Mmathethe\*



Kevin and Fran at His Classroom\*

**On January 7, 1998—just to make sure we have our bearings right—we traveled in Jim’s 4x4 through the Mokolodi Nature Reserve. Jim and Valerie were fellow Peace Corpers and friends of Kevin. Now we finally did what all travelers to Africa are expected to have as their primary goal: to see the wilds of Africa, including wildlife. We never had a lot of interest in that kind of adventure and much preferred to see African culture and history, as you may have gathered by now. Actually Fran and I had both forgotten this part of the trip, until we went back to her daily journal in which it was briefly described: We “saw elephants, antelopes, hippos, ostriches and guinea fowl.” That’s the extent of her report; no pictures! Was there something wrong with our camera? Or with us?**

**Before entering Gabarone itself, we spent the rest of the day in Kanye, a village where Kevin lived for sixteen months after his Peace Corps days, while he was working for Logical Solutions, a computer company. Afterwards, he spent one year in Gabarone itself, working for Damelin, another computer outfit.**

**We came across Livingstone memorials also in Botswana. We paid a highly interesting historical visit to his Kolobeng Mission. The following speaks for itself:**

**The Kolobeng Mission to the Bakwena people was founded by David Livingstone of the London Missionary Society in 1847. The site was chosen because of its proximity to permanent water and Kgosi Sechele’s capital. This was the first mission station in what is now Botswana, and Sechele was the first Christian convert.**

**After years of struggling, the mission was finally abandoned in 1852. By this time, Sechele had moved his capital to a hill near Manyana as he feared attack by the Boers. The mission had also been gutted during one of Livingstone’s travels further north—it remains uncertain whether by Boers or Bakwena traditionalists, who both feared the impact of the missionaries on the Batswana, albeit for different reasons. Also, Livingstone had become interested in exploring and spreading the gospel further north by this time.**

**The foundations of the church and the cottage can still be seen. In the small graveyard lie the remains of Livingstone’s baby daughter, Elizabeth, and two adventurers, Alfred Dolman and John Coleman. There was no love or respect lost between the Boers and Livingstone, the personification of the Anglos. In the same area, we took notice of a new challenge to the people, a brand new mosque.**

**Botswana certainly represented the mixture of the old and the new. There was the modern**



**Gabarone with its automotive traffic, billboards and at least one modern mall, but there were also the people riding on donkeys or on carts with automotive tires pulled by donkeys.\* There were the thatch roofs next to the zinc and shingle roofs, round houses along with bungalows, a mixture typical of many African communities in Sub-Saharan countries.**

The last southern Africa picture we have of Kevin and myself is another food picture, on which, along with Valerie Joseph and Jim, Peace Corps friends, we were caught eating fried caterpillars in the market of Gabarone. Reminded me of the time Solomon, a Tiv student of ours at the Wukari CLAC, treated me to a centipede dinner. We stayed overnight with Valerie and Jim.

### *Potchefstroom*

We crossed the border back into South Africa. Having crossed that border twice now, we were impressed with how easy it was on both sides compared to Nigerian borders—no pressure or any shenanigans, quite relaxed procedures.

We headed for Potchefstroom. There was the University of Potchefstroom, a greenhouse of Boer Reformed Kuyperian scholarship, but also a bastion of apartheid. As the CRC worldview changed to absorb changes in social and economic status, so did the worldview of these Reformed folk. In both cases, distortions set in that created contradictions within the two communities.

By now, of course, we were officially in the post-apartheid era, even though in reality it still played an important role. However, within the University there was the Institute for Reformational Studies, a strongly anti-apartheid entity already before the Mandela era. This was the academic home of my friend, Benny Vander Walt, that Kuyperian professor of philosophy and prolific writer. He was anti-apartheid long before it became politically correct. He was a popular figure among Evangelicals throughout East Africa. He did more than anyone I know to spread the Kuyperian worldview in Southern and East Africa. It was one of his books that I used to teach Sociology at TCNN. It was due to having established a relationship with this Institute that I was given the privilege of publishing some of my articles in their magazine.



But I had never yet met him; our friendship had developed by means of correspondence and, as far as my side was concerned, by reading his books. In her journal, Fran described us as “soul brothers” and so we were. It was so good to meet him at his house. He and his wife hosted us with a delightful dinner at home and a great bed. I treasure the picture of the two of us posing in front of the Institute.

**Bennie van der Walt and John\***

Fran treasures the coat Bennie's wife, a high-class professional seamstress, made and sent along with Bennie to give as a present when he visited us in Grand Rapids. She had only seen Fran just once and was able to tailor a coat that was the perfect size. Till this day, she wears that coat in the so-called "shoulder" seasons and it continues to elicit much admiration.

Bennie is a great author of books and lecturer, but he is a poor letter writer. It has been very difficult to keep up our personal relationship due to this hesitation, even though it began on that very basis. One had to correspond with him via an email address that has only his wife's name. A professor without an email address? We did manage to meet again in Grand Rapids, as you have already read in Chapter 39. At this point in time (2013) we are out of touch again due to a change of address on their part.

While in Potchefstroom, we visited the Totius Home Museum. Totius was the first to write poetry in Afrikaans and also to translate the Bible from its original languages into Afrikaans. I noted a bust of Abraham Kuyper in Totius' study as well as many of Kuyper's books. I felt right at home, though I could not suppress the question about the degree of apartheid that had infused this place.

### *Pretoria and its Boers*

Pretoria was our next destination, because that's where that cousin Jan Boer lives who visited us in Vancouver (Chapter 40, Volume 4). He is the oldest son of Oom Harm, my father's oldest brother. I believe he is my oldest cousin. Along with a few other cousins, we are both named after the same grandfather Jan Boer; my middle name is Harm, after that same uncle. We loved their Afrikaans *braai* or barbecue. Besides cousin Jan himself, there are his offspring with names like son Harm and grandson Jan Harm Boer!

I always love that group of people with those names, scattered as we are across the world. It gives me a profound feeling of roots, belonging and family. So much more meaningful than the current individualistic random names picked out of a hat without any particular roots, meaning or connectedness. Our stay coincided with the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party of Sjaan, cousin Jan's wife at the time. We were invited to join them for a sumptuous restaurant meal. It was clear that this family was doing well—and so were our stomachs that evening!

Akin though Afrikaans is to Dutch—I can read it quite easily—understanding our cousins was another matter. They had to speak very slowly for us to understand them or speak in short sentences. Of course, we could all easily have conversed in English, but we wanted to try Dutch and Afrikaans. During the Sunday morning church service, they had alerted the pastor of these missionary visitors from Nigeria and North America. He took a few moments to announce our presence and to welcome us. I could understand just enough to realize he was welcoming us, but not enough to know just what he said. Though we understood the familiar liturgy, we had a hard time understanding the spontaneous part, let alone the sermon. Later, cousin Jan and his new wife—Sjaan had died—visited us in Vancouver. You will read of that visit as well as Jan's passing in Volume 4.

Members of the family took us around to a number of institutions. E.g, we visited the Paul Kruger Museum. Kruger was a hero from the Boer Wars and President of SA from 1882-1900—South Africa’s Winston Churchill, at least from the Boer perspective.

We toured the Voortrekker Monument, a truly impressive edifice that dominates most of Pretoria’s skyline. These *Voortrekker* ancestors had made a covenant on December 16, 1838, that if they won against the Zulus in an almost Gideon-like situation, they would build such a monument as a memorial. The building was dedicated in 1938, the centenary of that covenant. The main part of the building itself was a massive dome structure with huge historical murals on the inside walls celebrating the main contours of Boer history as a glorious divinely-driven story. It was impressive by any standard.

Then we were taken behind the building, where there was a display of Black South African historical architecture—compared to the Boer monument, tiny and primitive little structures that seemed designed to belittle Black achievements and culture. It basically consisted of a few dome-like temporary shelters designed to house a nomadic family. It was cleverly designed and structured, but in the shadow of the Voortrekker Monument it looked very primitive. We did not comment, but in our hearts we felt insulted and astounded at such blatant racism, even in the “post-apartheid” era. We wondered how the post-apartheid regime could allow such a public insult to stand there undisturbed. Of course, there was a lot of truth embedded in this situation, but in the context of apartheid and post-apartheid it was both boastful and belittling to the extreme.



Zulu Huts in the Shadow of...

the Voortrekkers Monument\*

So, we saw the modern South African cities of Cape Town and Pretoria, but we also witnessed more Black or Coloured townships—we could not always tell the difference—and they did not look glamorous like the cities. Small little houses; some of them just tin shacks, while others were composed of nicely maintained long blocks of two-story dwellings surrounded by fences. The three of us entered Bong’s Tavern in one of these communities and two of us enjoyed a local beer “born and brewed in Africa.” As in Nigeria and, as we discovered several years

later, Quebec, often these little places had huge church buildings, again, some of them very impressive. Somewhere along the journey, we were reminded of Nigeria by herds of cattle meandering and feeding along the highway, totally oblivious to the passing traffic.

Kevin took leave of us the morning after our arrival in Pretoria. He drove back to Cape Town and called us the following late afternoon to tell us he had arrived safely. Thanks, Kevin, you were a great host. The next time we met him was in California, where he eventually moved and started his own computer consulting business. Why California? That non-viable desert civilization? That outrageously expensive state? That economic disaster just waiting to happen? Well, there was a certain “native” young lady there.... The stories of some of our visits there are told in Volume 4 and some, later in this volume.

On January 11, we left SA via a flight from the Johannesburg airport designated as “JHB”!, and arrived in Grand Rapids on the 12<sup>th</sup>. It had been an exceptionally interesting journey. But before we move on to the next trip, I want to make a final comment on apartheid and the role of the Reformed churches in ending it, including and especially the CRC.

To our embarrassment, the architects of the apartheid system are the Boers. It was a politico-economic arrangement that was buttressed by a version of a Reformed world-view that was badly distorted to accommodate their position of power. It was that worldview that gave strength and religious “legitimacy” to it all. As that system increased in brutality, most of the world began to oppose and resist it, including the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC), a body that included some of the largest SA Reformed denominations and to which I once applied for the position of General Secretary. Unlike the political organizations that loudly trumpeted their opposition to the regime, the REC and its members worked quietly behind the scenes to persuade or even force their co-religionists to dismantle the worldview that undergirded it. Once they made some progress at that front, the foundation of apartheid began to wobble and crack until it could no longer resist the opposition. Especially Rev. Clarence Boomsma, long-time pastor of the Calvin CRC and chairman of the CRC’s inter-church relations committee, was a leader in this quiet campaign and should have received public acclaim for his crucial role in the dismantling of apartheid. Along with the REC and CRC, he was content with giving the glory to God for this victory, but in the world of politics even God was not given credit for His role. Instead, He was often berated for the oppressive regime His followers had created and received neither credit nor praise for its dismantling.

### *Japan (October 1999)*



Within a month of Asia’s birth, we flew to Japan to see our first grandchild. We spent around two weeks there, most of it at C & A’s house. It was a wonderful time of bonding with everyone, but especially with Asia\* as we helped with her bathing and nighttime feedings. We did wander around the immediate neighbourhood with her and noticed that everyone wanted to see the beautiful baby. We couldn’t understand them but their smiles said it all!

We quickly felt lost in these short walks, since we had no clue as to street names etc., for it was all in Japanese with no accommodation for foreign tourists. It was an experience that would repeat itself during our later trip to Mauritania.

Cynthia took us to a local Reformed church service. We did not understand a word, of course, but we could sense the stiff and formal nature of the service and were not impressed. Afterwards, a family invited us for lunch to their house, a most interesting experience. The father was a retired teacher of English in secondary schools. Though he had spent his entire career teaching English, he actually understood very little of it and could hardly produce a single sentence without using a dictionary he had close at hand. But if we were not impressed with their level of English, neither were their small grandchildren impressed with our clumsy way of eating Japanese food. It was delicious enough, but it sure was a struggle for us, as we were attempting to use chopsticks, to get it into our mouths without the children giggling behind their hands.

Before our return trip to Grand Rapids, we spent two days in Tokyo, staying at the home of Rich Sytsma, a second generation CRC missionary to Japan. We wandered around the city just with the two of us, finding our way through the amazing Tokyo subway system. We visited a couple of temples, but could not figure out whether they were Shinto or Buddhist temples. We simply had no criterion to go by. We were approached by a local Japanese in the train who asked us if we would mind holding a conversation with him in English, for he wanted to learn that language. We were happy to oblige and promptly started a conversation. We did visit other places as well, but we remember the frustrations of the subway more than the places and things we focused on. So, not too much detail, except for one crazy subway event.

In each station you would see rows and rows of Japanese moving in every direction without anyone making a sound. They seemed like columns of army ants to us. Well, I am a professional sneezer and can have it come on at any time and place without any obvious provocation. And being me, I generally let it go freely, frequently six or seven times a shot. It had to happen in the subway, of course. So, there it went in full force, several times. The ant columns stopped suddenly as if controlled by a remote control. Without making any sound, they looked around to locate this amazing and unprecedented rude rupture of the airways. All of it for a moment...and then the columns started moving again. Some, I believe, recognized this foreigner as the source of this barbaric gesture. I did not know whether to laugh or to hide in embarrassment. I was inclined to the former. There was no place to hide anyhow. This remains *the* sneeze story of my entire life so far, not because of the number of sneezes or the reverberation so much as the reaction of people: Never have so many hundreds of people reacted to a few sneezes. What is *your* best sneeze story? Or, a parody on a 2012 TV ad, what's in *your* nose?

### *K&T: California (1999)*

With K&T in California, we began to travel there a lot, even before they got married. Most of our trips there are not even mentioned in these memoirs. They became too many and too common. On our first trip there, in May 1999, we headed for Santa Barbara, where Kevin

lived at the time. I had always been curious about the place, but now I would finally set foot on it. We celebrated Kevin's birthday with Fran's famous "snow on the mountain" curry dish at his house. Theresa, his girlfriend, was there as well as their friend Joan, at whose house we stayed during the visit. She was a lovely lady in a lovely home on a lovely beach—where it was *always* too cold to swim!

Kevin took us for a ride to the south. We had pre-arranged a coffee shop date with Fran's niece Rachel, Ray and Gert's daughter, on the way and stayed overnight at one of Kevin's Peace Corps friends in San Diego. From there we moved on to the Mexican border. Kevin announced he needed a "third world fix" and expected to get it in Mexico. As soon as we crossed the border we recognized that so-called "third world" spirit and way of doing things, almost as if we were back in Nigeria, except that the people were of a different colour and language. We wandered around in the local market for a while and then drove on to Ensenada B.C.—that's Mexico's B.C.!—, where we put up in a hotel for several nights. This was our first foray into Latin America and, so far, the only one.

I loved CA, especially the colourful Spanish architecture with the red roofs. Simply beautiful. So different from the rather drab colours of the north. And then the abundance of flowers everywhere! But warm as it was, the ocean in Santa Barbara was still too cold to swim in. That was a disappointment.

Hispanic architecture has made a long journey. To the best of my knowledge, it originated in the Muslim heartland: the Arabian peninsula and surroundings. It followed Islam as it expanded westward, all the way to Andalusia, the name for Spain during its 700-year phase of Muslim religion and culture. It took root there and from there it was brought to the Americas by the Spanish. The main Muslim feature I recognized was the flat-roof buildings with protruding water pipes—so Californian and so Muslim, common even in Muslim Northern Nigeria.

Fran and I took the opportunity for a bit of touring on our own. We traveled to Pasadena to visit Fuller School of World Missions, probably the world's largest academic school for Missiology. I had met so many Nigerian graduates of the place and knew some of their faculty well. For example, Charles Kraft, whose wife Margaret was our Hausa language teacher at Michigan State University from way back in 1965, and Dean Gilliland, a former Provost at TCNN. One result of that visit was that I was invited to serve as the outside reader for some doctoral dissertations by Nigerians on Nigeria. Apparently, I was too strict in my evaluations of these dissertations, so that the school dropped me after I had done a few. Unfortunately, they never let me know about the problem they had with me until after they had dropped me.

We paid our first visit to downtown San Francisco (SF) and have enjoyed that city ever since, especially the Golden Gate Bridge, which we have crossed by foot twice now, a beautiful and uplifting experience. In addition, there are so many attractions, some of which we have visited on our own and some with K&T during subsequent visits. Fishermen's Wharf and Pier 39 with its hordes of sea lions are absolute musts.

And then the Haight Ashbury hippie neighbourhood devoted to the artsy crowd, the homeless, the ridiculous, etc.



Haight Ashbury Neighbourhood\*

What really surprised us during our first visit were the low temperatures and nasty winds. Most of us tourists were taken by surprise. Along with loads of other tourists, we trooped to the shops ready to fleece us when buying their fleeces that we still wear fifteen years later. We have since come to the realization that northern California in general can be quite chilly and does not always live up to its reputation. Well, SF is a city beyond description, certainly for purposes of these memoirs. Suffice it to say that we always enjoy visiting the place.

#### *Retirement Honeymoon (Sept-Oct. 2000)*

With Fran now being retired, we decided to go to BC for a “second honeymoon” for six weeks in a rental car. We took it easy by turning the journey into a sightseeing trip via Northern Michigan and then westward through Canada. We cooked some of our meals on a one-burner stove at rest stops; others were taken in restaurants. Many nights we slept in motels and hotels along the way.

We spent the first night at the home of Melanie Lieuwen. Melanie was engaged to Rick Boerman, a cement cutter by trade, a huge muscular future Tea Party guy with a heart of gold. He lived in nearby Petoskey, the north-western part of the Michigan glove, and joined us for the evening meal. The next day, together with Melanie, we visited Old Mission Lighthouse which was somewhere in her neighbourhood. It was built in 1870 on the 45<sup>th</sup> parallel, halfway between the equator and the North Pole.

Fran reported to Melanie, a nurse, that she had just started feeling a rather strong chest pain, especially when she coughed. After some questioning, Melanie thought it was probably a cold coming on, since there had definitely been a huge change in the weather during the last two

days. Alas, as we continued our journey, that chest pain became worse and would be with her for the next ten years—polymyalgia rheumatica, it turned out to be.

From northern Michigan it was a long drive across the continent, though nothing new for us. There would be no more relatives along the way till we reached Kelowna BC. After spending a week with Bo and Tom, we also visited many other Boers.

We have pages and pages of pictures of relatives big and small as well as old-time friends from and in Port Alberni. Apart from friends in Port Alberni, we saw a number of interesting items. In the cemetery on Beaver Creek Road there was the historical grave stone of William Henry Derby, the first beneficiary of the Canadian Old Age Security system. He died nine days after I was born. We met a couple of black bears on the road there, something that is not that unusual there. Then there was a rusty Chinese refugee boat in the harbour that had offloaded an entire shipload of Asian refugees onto Canada. Judging from the condition of the ship, that trip must have been hell for the passengers, who paid handsome sums for their passage. Almost a decade later, another such ship offloaded a large group of Tangalese from Sri Lanka. At the moment of writing, their cases are still worming their way through the slow court system. We also sat on a bench in Tofino sporting the sign “Pacific Terminus Trans-Canada Highway, Tofino BC.” It is similar to the claim made by Victoria, BC!



Chinese Refugee Boat\*



Western Terminal of the Trans Canada?\*

Where Does It Really End?

Brother Tinus treated us to a very special visit to the Free Mason Hall in his town Mission, some 50 kilometres east of Vancouver along the Lougheed Highway, route 7. At the time, he was their chief haunch and had the key to the building. So he gave us a tour through the facility with full explanation of the various items he showed us. Knowing that the CRC and some other denominations oppose membership in the Free Masons because of the alleged secrecy to which its members are sworn and its (semi)religious nature, he went out of his way to give it all a much more positive spin than the Free Masons usually get. If there was any secrecy, it was kept secret from us; it was well hidden, possibly even from him! I suspect that

the secrecy lies especially in the knowledge that is passed on from rank to rank as a member climbs the organization's ladder of power.



Tinus also insisted that the Canadian version is much more open than its American counterpart and that therefore the CRC position, hammered out years ago in response to the American situation, does not apply to Canada. Mmm, an interesting take on it that may be worthwhile checking out, but I have other things to do. A visit to a Missions Fest booth in 2013 led me to a man who was there with the specific mission to deny all of Tinus' take.

Tinus on the Free Masons' "Throne"\*

This has been a short story about a long journey of some six weeks; in a way one of the most relaxing trips we had in years, without any hurry or pressure anywhere-- except that nagging pain in Fran's chest. What was it and what to do about it? That was the big spoiler of what should have been the perfect journey.

We did stop at medical walk-in clinics three times. The first two said "Take aspirin, drink lots of water and you'll be fine." The third one said it could be arthritis and that she should have a thorough checkup once we returned to Grand Rapids. There it was diagnosed as "polymyalgia rheumatica" which is an arthritic condition that affects all the muscles. Prednisone, a steroid, was the drug prescribed and it turned out to be a miracle drug for her. She was on that medication for ten years before she no longer needed it, during which time I was doomed to impossible competition with my "steroid lady" as we walked the streets of Vancouver.

After all was said and done, that was quite a second "honeymoon." We soon started talking about a third one, but, with all the other travel since then, that has not yet happened.

### *A Grand Five-Month Journey (2001)*

#### *50<sup>th</sup> Immigration Anniversary (2001)*

A half year after our second honeymoon we were on the road again, this time for a five-month journey. Part of it was in North America and part of it abroad. It was all flying; no driving at all, except for local trips.

The first leg of the journey was back to BC, this time to celebrate the Boer family's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their coming to Canada back in 1951. Perhaps you've read all about that immigration story in Chapter 8. See also Appendix 1 in Chapter 40. The celebration itself was

dubbed as “Discover Your Roots.” The living siblings were all there as well as many down liners, including some of our own kids. We had a great barbeque organized by Margaret and Garry Vit; she is my niece and a professional caterer. We had an interesting assortment of odds and ends on the programme, with our own Kevin serving as MC. It turned out to be the last grand reunion of the clan. Next time we tried it, only a few showed up, but that is for later.



**Boer Siblings at the Reunion\***

### *Kevin's Yale Graduation*

From this celebration we did not return to Grand Rapids but we traveled straight to New Haven for Kevin's graduation from Yale and from there to Egypt and beyond. New Haven was thus the second stop on the longest journey we ever made. This was our third May trip to participate in Kevin's life in three successive years.



The graduation, a fun event and impressive, took a couple of days. Besides the two of us, C&A and Asia were there along with the Hannemans, Theresa's parents. On the family picture\* you can see Mark Hanneman, a retired Air Force officer, standing at attention; the only items missing were the uniform and the salute. All of us were, of course, proud of Kevin's accomplishment.

The University had scheduled two strong political opponents to speak, both Yale grads, one on each day—President Bush Jr. and Senator Hillary Clinton. Gigantic security measures were taken. The lectures were to be held in a large outdoor field on the campus that was totally

cordoned off with security people everywhere. To get a seat, we had to go through airport-like electronic scrutiny.

Yale MBA grads are popular with corporations. They have the world by the tail. Kevin joined forces with what must be the world's premier slave driver, McKinsey, a blue-blood consulting firm working with the elite corporations of the world as well as with governments to keep them viable by making them more efficient and lean, nasty job, some might say. Great salary and perks, but 24/7 without a break. It saw him spend weeks in hotels, commuting between San Francisco and the Big Apple, working in Germany with Theresa occasionally flown in prove that the firm was family-friendly. For McKinsey staff it was a choice between their job and wealth on the one hand and spouse and family on the other. Those who stayed, often divorced and became rich; others, like Kevin, quit. They discovered there is more to life than money, perks and limousines.



a  
to

The New Yale MBA  
Graduate\*

May 2001

*The Evenhouses in Egypt (May 2001)*

Our next port of call was Cairo, Egypt. Our main purpose for Egypt was to visit Bill and Nelle Evenhouse, our former Nigeria colleagues, who were now teaching in Cairo. Nelle especially could not stand living in her homeland, the USA, after they were released by CRWM. We had a great visit with them. We did a fair amount of sightseeing, partially on our own, partially under Bill's guidance. Cairo traffic reminded us of Lagos, only even more hectic and even harder to figure out for the foreigner. We moved around mostly by taxi and admired the way they miraculously negotiated their way through the city. We tried a couple of times to cross a major road by "walking" or, rather, skipping, hopping and jumping from one tiny little moving space between cars to another. Definitely not recommended! I consciously keep myself from describing the traffic situation as "chaotic," for I remember that Lagos incident of years ago.

When Westerners say "Egypt," we think "pyramid," "sphinx" and "Suez Canal." We spent time on our own at the first two of these world wonders, but found the constant interruptions by vendors and guides extremely irritating, so that we did not wander around as much as we would have liked. It was just too much. We did walk through a long tunnel into the interior of one pyramid, an interesting experience, but unfortunately did not discover any Pharonic

remains! For some reason, we never did see the Canal, something I regret till this day, though we did catch a glimpse of the Nile River.



Pyramid and Sphinx\*



Alexandria Catacombs\*

We enjoyed wandering around in the huge major market and tried to apply my Nigeria-honed skills at bargaining. Among others, that meant you initially offer a ridiculously low price in response to the merchant's first price. It did not work: the merchant got angry. Or was that part of *his* strategy? When I explained I was from Nigeria where we haggle that way, he told me to leave Nigeria in Nigeria. This was Egypt. Something akin to Canadian's demanding that we Dutch immigrants leave our wooden shoes at home. We ended up buying a woven tapestry wall hanging which still graces our bedroom wall. Bill also took us to that same market where, while Fran and I restricted ourselves to a tea experience, he smoked a hookah. We have since learned in Vancouver that smoking one hookah is equivalent to 100 packs of cigarettes! Sounds a bit extreme to me, but glad we did not succumb!

Egypt is known, of course, as a Muslim country, but there were Christian Coptics there long before Islam was even born. We went to check out a Coptic worship service in Cairo. We found a very large ancient church with open doors. However, the streets leading to the place were all guarded by uniformed security personnel and their vehicles. At the time of our visit there had been considerable violence against both Coptic Christians and foreign tourists. Whether those troops were there to protect the Copts during their time of worship or to intimidate them on behalf of Muslim interests, we had no idea. They allowed us through without any hassle and we entered.

Since it was all in what we imagined to be the Coptic language, we could only *guess* what was going on and so I have to be charitable in my interpretation. But what we *saw* was not impressive, as multi-cultural and tolerant as we are. It seemed very ritualistic with the congregation enveloped in a lot of "holy smoke," while many of them were milling about without displaying a worshipful mood or paying much attention. It almost seemed as if the

rituals were expected to have an automatic and objective effect on the congregation without their active participation. Some years later an Ethiopian from Coptic background confirmed to me that this is at least the popular attitude of adherents. Ritual seems more important to them than personal faith or involvement, the latter perhaps not even seen as necessary. I gladly and hopefully stand to be corrected.

Egypt is the home of the Al-Azhar University established around 975 AD and a great centre of Muslim learning even today. If you want to know more about this interesting place, check it out online, where you will find plenty of resources. You can also Google < Abraham Kuyper and Jan Boer > and you will find a document entitled “The Mystery of Islam,” containing an extensive description of the place as Kuyper found it during a personal visit early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Or find it in the following:

**[Plain text – Christian Classics Ethereal Library](#)**

[www.ccel.org/ccel/owan/islam.txt](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owan/islam.txt) The Mystery of Islam By *Abraham Kuyper* 1907. With a Preface by Translator-Editor *Dr. Jan H. Boer*

At any rate, I was eager to visit the place in the heart of Cairo. It was one of those times we tried to skip, hop and jump across a busy traffic artery at considerable danger to life and limb. We made it to the entrance and reported at the security kiosk. The head officer took one contemptuous look at us and unceremoniously told us in effect to get lost. I tried to explain I was a scholar doing research in Islam and all that, but he was not impressed. Not a chance that he would allow us in. Did we have a letter of reference? Of course not.

I suddenly felt stupid and embarrassed. Who did I think I was, dressed as a Western tourist in t-shirt and running shoes? After 30 years in Nigeria, had I so soon forgotten the importance of self-respect expressed in proper dress? I was reminded of our Wukari days years ago when Nigerian soldiers ridiculed me when I wanted to get through a roadblock but was dressed in messy clothes suitable for the maintenance work that engaged me at the time. I still had not absorbed that lesson, it seemed! Had I come properly dressed either in suit and tie or in a Nigerian robe, I most likely would have been greeted with respect and allowed in. We Westerners and our ways! When will we learn to show respect for other cultures? I left with my tail between my legs, thoroughly humiliated. I deserved that. I left Egypt without having seen a place I really wanted to visit.

One day, Bill took us on a guided tour of the city of Alexandria. We went there by train. What I remember the most of this train ride were the many incomplete houses in the towns. Bill explained that this was a tax loophole. If you had not completed your house, you did not have to pay property tax. So, a lot of people intentionally left their house incomplete, that is, without a roof, to avoid the tax!

The church was not the only place we encountered security people. We hired a taxi in Alexandria to take us around. We were soon stopped by a pickup full of security personnel. The taxi driver went out to talk with them. They wanted to know our exact itinerary for the day and then followed us at a respectable distance and never interfered or got uncomfortably close. I first thought they were suspecting us of spying, but it turned out they were protecting

us from attacks by militants. The past few weeks, tourists had been killed, something that would undermine the tourist industry, an important part of Egypt's economy. I jokingly suggested we should scramble our itinerary and see what they would do, but Fran and Bill quickly chided me for such foolish thoughts! I guess I enjoy challenging people, especially if it has a humorous touch, which I thought this one might. We returned home the way we came.

In summary, we enjoyed our visit to the Evenhouses and to Egypt. Such ancient societies feature so many delightful cultural institutions, buildings and practices that one never gets satiated with them. Magnificent churches and mosques. And then the catacombs with all their open empty graves. In distinction from northern Nigeria, Christians were allowed to enter mosques to view their artistic interiors. And though it is a country very different from Nigeria, nevertheless both share characteristics common to so-called Third World cultures and to Muslim communities. Striking similarities within the parameters of interesting differences that should make any observing visitor wary of rash conclusions.

*A Nigeria Home Coming Visit (2001)*

From Egypt it was on to Nigeria. We landed in Kano with its normal shenanigans on the part of airport officials and were met by Wiebe and James. James, you may know from previous volumes, was our former driver and current friend.

It was kind of a family reunion with Wiebe still in Jos doing his research and Kevin working as an IT specialist at the Unijos. Only C&A were missing. Wiebe lived in a Gomwalk house close to Hillcrest. K&T and we lived on the university campus, we in the home of Danny McCain and K&T within a short walking distance in the Helleman home, Canadian friends of ours teaching at the university. We had lots of help getting around. Wiebe donated his time as our driver for our first week. After that, we were allowed to drive Danny's car without conditions. Seeing the campus was some distance from the Hillcrest area, where we had most of our friends, we were so grateful for those provisions. Along with the presence of our kids, Danny's generosity made this visit a total success for us.

Wiebe had bought a property near Liberty Dam, a large water reservoir for the Jos water system. It was totally undeveloped, but was perfectly suited for building a house. Since foreigners, especially non-resident foreigners like Wiebe, were not allowed to own property, but only lease, Lydia served as his front woman by signing for him. Wiebe, the land owner,\* told us that he intended this place for us to retire one day!



Furthermore, he assured us he would always be by our side once we grew old and could no longer live independently. It was a great promise that touched me deeply and that I have never forgotten. However, that will not be in Nigeria. By this time, we still loved to visit Nigeria, but we no longer desired to live there permanently. Besides, we wanted to live in the heart of the city, not in some isolated compound. He repeated this promise during a restaurant dinner in Atlanta on New Year's Day, 2013, in the presence of Joanna. Wiebe and Joanna, you better get ready! We are now, at the time of writing, 76 and 72 respectively.

Apart from a lot of socializing with our kids, we also spent time with our Nigerian friends. There were James, Mary and Asabe, our former faithful staff. We still loved each other and ate each others' food. There were so many old friends that I could not begin to list them all. Prominent among them was Musa Gaya, whom you met at our home in Grand Rapids. We dropped in frequently at his house and enjoyed their tea and food. It was so pitiful to see their bright children doing their school homework in candle light because of lack of electricity, but they pushed on. An eminent professor living under such primitive conditions....

Another friend who suddenly showed up at our door was Musa Ndahi. We had been great friends for years during our Jos ministry and frequently dropped in on each other. His wife used to sell *kulikuli*, fried peanut "sticks" that were simply delicious. I bought them regularly from her. He was then in charge of the compound of the Church of the Brethren. He had been transferred back to his distant home area, but when he heard we were in town, he promptly up and traveled some 600 kms to see us. I was so moved by that gesture of friendship by a man of little financial means that I gave him the fare for the return journey. Musa—I love him till this day. Too bad it is so hard to keep in touch.

Fran and I spent a lot of time photocopying newspaper articles to be used for research for my series. I spent hours in the library section of a satellite campus of Unijos locating materials. The staff was kind enough to allow me to take the materials out for photocopying outside the campus, since the campus equipment was not working. We ended up with a huge pile of materials, some of it photocopied with *kerosene*, would you believe it, for lack of proper ink. Those were time sensitive in that they faded after a couple of years.

Let me tell you of an interesting preaching incident in one of the city's marketplaces. The Anglican Bishop of Jos, Ben Kwashi, and I had agreed to go to this market for a witnessing session. I was to preach in Hausa, not because I was better at it than the Bishop, but I would draw more of a crowd out of curiosity. In the course of my preaching, I told the story about

the potato ladies along the highway outside of Jos. You may remember it from Volume 2. At the end, I repeated the question of that lady four times, each time with increasing crescendo for effect, “*Ina ruwan Yesu da dankali?*” (“What does Jesus have to do with potatoes?”) and each time the audience would reply, also with increasing crescendo, “*I mana!*” “Yes, indeed (He does)!” By the fourth time they were almost in a frenzy and were not likely ever to forget the sermon or, at least, the question and answer. It was a speaking device I had learned from my friend and unofficial mentor Pastor Ezekiel Nyajo, later known as Alhaji Muhammadu. Afterwards, a lady selling veggies at *this* market came up to me with a basket of potatoes, “*Dominka ne*”—“For you.” And she handed them over to me. I was so touched that my sermon had been so effective not only, but even more so at her generosity, for these were literally the “widow’s mite.” I accepted them gratefully.

At this same event, the Christian Market Fellowship of Nigeria who had organized the above market event, presented me with a wall plaque. They explained that the Fellowship was an outgrowth of the ICS’s Market Evangelism programme of many years ago. They wished to honour me as their actual founder, since I started that initial market ministry. I was more than gratified to see the long-term effect of that earlier ministry. As so often happens, when you start something in Nigeria, you have no idea where it will go.



Jesus’ Potatoes\*



Christian Market Fellowship\*

Later, I gave them to Ibrahim Lafe, that Muslim policeman turned Christian evangelist, who had accompanied us to the market. His wife sold fried potatoes during recess at the Hillcrest food court.

We also took the time to visit Wukari and Nyankwala. In Wukari, Caleb, who was now pastor of the main CRCN church, had arranged for us to stay in the home of someone who was away. It was as comfortable a place as we could expect in Wukari. But it was hot and the AC was not working most of the time, since the electricity was frequently off—the old story you are familiar with from the Jos years. He also arranged for someone to cook for us and she came

faithfully with the great food the Jukuns were famous for—and delicious it was! We felt really spoiled.

We also felt a bit uneasy, for the guards around the premises were Muslims. That was quite common, even for Christian compounds. However, we had many Christian visitors whom we asked all kinds of questions about the Christian community, including their relationship with the Muslims. We felt uneasy that those guards might overhear discussions and report them to Muslim leaders. When we shared our concern with Caleb, he was surprised at the situation and promised to do something about it. He agreed it was not acceptable.

David Angye had prepared a reception of former students of ours and now evangelists. It was a heart-warming experience for us to hear how everyone was doing and how God had been leading them in their various lives and ministries. We enjoyed a visit with David's cousin, Bitrus Angyunwe and family. You've met him before during both our Wukari and Jos years. He had become an army chaplain and had risen to the rank of Captain. By this time he had retired and returned home. We enjoyed the time with his family.



**The Reception in Wukari\*  
Friends and Former Students**

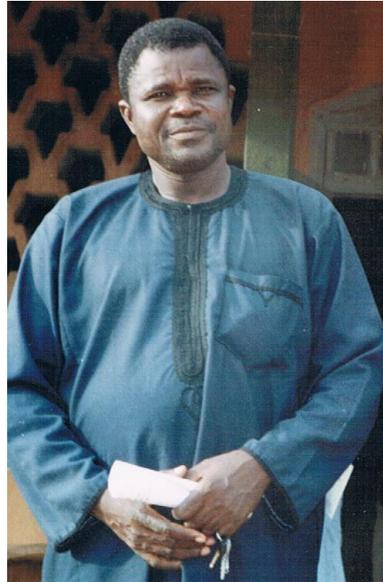
We also stopped to see Ifraimu Nyajo in Rafin Kada. He was, you may remember, our co-worker at many fronts in Wukari—our co-teacher and advisor at the CLTC, my sermon translator and fellow trekker. He was also Rafin Kada CRCN council chairman while I was the non-resident counselor, and so much more. Another man I had always loved for his readiness to stand by me with counsel and advice, never hesitating to tell me the plain truth, including some traditional Jukun truths that no other Jukun would ever have shared.

And then there were Ibrahim Sangari and his wife Saraya. Again, you've met them before. You may remember him as the sponsor of the Wukari Tennis Club and businessman. By this time, they had returned to Wukari and established End Time Ministries. I am afraid it was a

hodgepodge of notions he borrowed from various Pentecostal type churches that did him no credit and that put him “in Dutch” with the local CRCN. Somehow or another, he had come to regard Wukari as the new Jerusalem with some central role in the Kingdom. I regretted that a man of such skill, devotion and status brought himself down to this and then arrogate for himself the title of “bishop.” I have always loved and respected the man and still do his memory, but this was all pretty silly and an unhelpful way of spending his wealth. He passed away a couple of years before this write up.



**Ibrahim & Saraya Sangari\***  
in Wukari



**Businessman Nuhu\***  
Founder of Polygamous Church

We had written some time earlier to the Nyankwala congregation that we would like to visit them on that Sunday. Things did not work out well there. They seemed to know nothing about our visit. I entered the Council room before the service as visiting pastors customarily did, especially their own former pastors such as I was. They received me in a very cold manner, almost as if they did not know us. They did grudgingly allow me the chance to greet the congregation.

At the time, I could not figure out what was going on. The reason was later explained to me. The entire community, including the church, was divided over a chieftaincy tussle. Most of the town was united, but a small faction sided with Pastor Iliya and his wife Naomi, Lydia’s parents. The problem had been brewing for some time already. Iliya and Naomi were isolated from most of the villagers. And that after they both had been such exemplary leaders of the church as well as of the community as a whole for decades. I felt so sorry for them and angry at the church leaders who left them to fend for themselves. Iliya was already retired, while Naomi was scraping out a living for the two of them by teaching Bible in the local primary school. I was so happy that their children were doing reasonably well and in a position to support them, hopefully including grandson musician Jude, “Mr. Incredible.”

It was not our business to take sides in the issue, but we did have every reason to be unhappy with the way church leaders dealt with their former pastor and his wife. But it was not an unusual situation. In Nigeria, wherever chieftaincy is an issue, people take sides and wage bitter feuds with each other. In these situations, the Christian faith often seems to make little if any difference. Deep-seated traditional primal feelings trump everything else. The power instinct is a central aspect of the culture that still needs to be sanctified by the power of Christ's Spirit. I unconsciously switched to the present tense, for that situation has not changed much since.

But it was wonderful to spend some quality time with this pastoral couple who had given so much of themselves to this community. He was one of the most humble pastors I have ever worked with. Iliya passed away quite unexpectedly only a few weeks after our visit, but Naomi is still with us in 2014 and doing reasonably well. Lydia is her cookie-cutter offspring. I am happy to report that the rift in Nyankwala is largely over, at least at the surface, according to Lydia.

Apart from the Nyankwala chieftaincy debacle, this Nigeria trip was one huge pleasure for us. It just was not long enough; we had to skip too many people. But that's the way life and travel go. Our next stop was the UK.

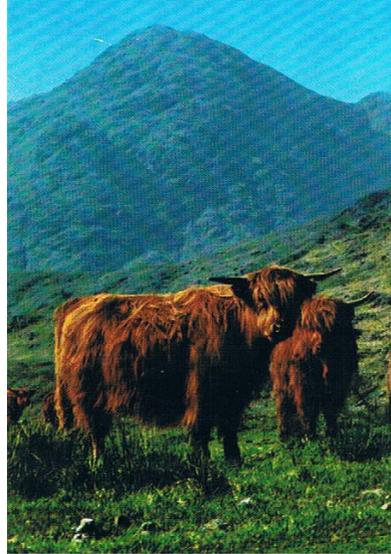
### *The British Isles (2001)*

Graham and Katy Weeks were once again our port of call in the UK. As usual, they hosted us with grace in their small, crowded apartment in a London suburb. London never ceases to attract us. Such an interesting place, especially the Buckingham Palace area. Among other things, we witnessed the alleged largest annual street festival of all of Western Europe here, just one sea of people without end. We had been in Oxford before, but for research purposes. This time we enjoyed a lot of sightseeing in this ancient university town. Really, everyone should have the opportunity to do a minimum of a month in this beautiful nation in both city and countryside. I guarantee you will not grow tired of it, at least if you can relax with driving on the left side of the road! Better, just take public transit and it'll get you wherever you want to go, at least in the densely populated parts of the country. We were also able to meet up with Rob & Esther Koops, close friends from Nigeria, and spent a few wonderful hours with them.

It so happened that the Weeks had arranged with another couple to rent a vacation home in Nairn, Scotland. Actually, it was more like a vacation castle that they had all to themselves, until they invited us to join them. We readily agreed to this extra bonus. We drove there in the Weeks' car, with Katy doing most of the driving. Now, we always thought of Katy as a quiet unassertive woman, except when she had to rein in her boisterous husband. But now we saw yet another place of assertion in her life—her driving! Wow, did she move us along expressways and, later, through the countryside of Scotland. Her heavy foot totally amazed us! But even more amazing was the Scottish country side with its roads winding from surprise through surprise. The purple hills, the Highland Cattle, the flocks of sheep blocking the road

like the Fulani cattle in Nigeria, centuries-old cemeteries, ancient buildings, ruins and towns everywhere. There simply was no end to it all.

In terms of just sightseeing, the UK, including Scotland, beats every place we have ever been. Of course, there is another level, namely that of untouched nature, culture and history, that we did not have to time to imbibe in. When you start comparing at that level, then other matters and levels of appreciation kick in, but for just sightseeing at the superficial level, we were simply overcome. Thank you, Graham and Katy.



#### Scotland\*

Our flight schedule required that we return to London on our own by train to Edinburgh with the intention of doing an overnight there. Alas, it happened to be the weekend of the largest Edinburgh festival with all tourist facilities booked for miles around. All we could do was to wander around for a few hours and continue the train ride to London. What a pity that we could not spend more time in this historic city. We did take pictures of the statues of David Livingstone, the famous African explorer, and Robert Burns, the famous Scottish poet. We'll surely have to revisit this place some other time.

Edinburgh\*

David Livingstone Memorial in

We meet again!



few

*The Netherlands (2001)*

Over the years we had paid many visits to our “Old Country” and always enjoyed visiting some of our friends and the relatives we still knew. The end of our long international journey was again The Netherlands, my second visit there since leaving Nigeria. This visit followed some of that same routine, but with a difference. We did a bit of Boer history. We went to Roden, Drente, and visited a cousin to Opa Wiebe by the name of Harm and Kornelia Boer. They took us to the area where Opa was born. In fact, we stopped at the very house at De Groeve 8 in Foxwolde, Gemeente (county) Roden. It was a little old place that clearly betrayed the poverty of its inhabitants. They also took us to Leeksterweg, a road from Roden to Leek, where Opa Wiebe’s grandparents had lived. In other words, my great grand parents. Harm was able to identify the place, but, unfortunately, the house itself was gone. I so enjoyed being shown these places so much part of the Boer history.

We visited so many people dear to us, both family and friends. Family included Fran’s cousins Renske Talma and Maaïke Wijnsma in Friesland. Also Tante Dienie, my mother’s sister, and husband Berend along with their daughter Winnie and husband Jan still living on Abel Tasmanweg in the old Notebomer house. Dienie and Berend were now living in a senior home. Even though one of his legs had been amputated due to cancer, he was still sporting that eternal smile of his. It was the last time we met him. Then there were Oom Job, the “Amsterdamized” brother of Oma Ellie, and Tante Suzie, whom we got to know during our VU years. From that same era were our friends Frans and Elly Linger, the musician and poetess, with whom we still enjoy somewhat regular contact, as well as Nannie Van Geest, the widow of our Amsterdam pastor. Of course, not to forget were our friends from Nigeria days, Ruud and Aly Dekker, who visited us later in Vancouver. Both the Lingers and Dekkers always open their doors for us whenever we visit The Netherlands. We have ongoing active relationships with both of them.



**Frans & Ellie Linger\***

**Ruud & Aly Dekker\***

As to the Lingers, they are gifted artists. Frans is a musician, while Elly publishes poetry and modern hymns that I find very attractive, expressed as they are in mostly very simple language. With the Dekkers, Ruud stays behind the scenes, but we hear about him from Aly, who plays digital scrabble with Fran and is my mentor in Dutch vocabulary and grammar. I used to play scrabble with her as well, but when she started beating me regularly, I became too embarrassed and used an excuse to quit!

Coming back to Lutjegast, there were always Henk Rozema and Griet in Grootegast, my childhood friend from long ago. It was the first time we stayed in a B&B in the Lutjegast area, more specifically, in Visvliet, three kms north of Lutjegast. The end of road from Lutjegast to Visvliet runs dead into that B&B's driveway right on the Groningen-Leeuwarder Straatweg (highway). We also enjoyed a coffee in the home of Piet Alserda, another childhood friend, who now lived in Grijpskerk, some fifteen kilometres from Lutjegast. Altogether a wonderful and meaningful visit at the end of a five-month international journey.

We so enjoyed that long trip, but we were also very happy to touch down on the old Prins homestead, now Grand Rapids' "Kent County International Airport," identified as "GRR." Don't let that that growl intimidate you; the place is actually quite friendly. We were welcomed by four of Fran's siblings and their spouses and, in spite of the GRR, they all managed wonderful smiles on the photo showing our arrival. All was well. We were home. September 5, 2001. Thanks be to God for His protecting mercies.

Home? Where was home? Our Godwin house was rented out, so we moved in with Rob Eygenraam for nine days. We were now ready for the move to Vancouver.

## Chapter 42<

### The Vancouver Traveling Life

#### A Potpourri of Travels

**Stories, Observations, Comments, Insights,  
Smart Aleck Remarks, Biases, Jokes,  
Political (In)correctness and  
Some Ordinary Stuff**

#### Travel Travel Travel....

Though we have not placed chapter outlines in these volumes, we make an exception for this final chapter just to give you a bird's eye view of the amazing amount of travels we engaged in at this stage of our life. Here it is:

**Trinidad and Tobago (May, 2002)**  
**The West Coast: Backyard RV-ing (2002)**  
     **Sunshine and Washington State Coasts**  
     **Vancouver Island**  
**Motor Home Tales**  
     **The "New" Motor Home (2003)**  
**Forays into Washington State (June 2003-2013)**  
**California**  
     **By Rental (2003)**  
     **By RV (June-July 2006)**  
**The Arctic World by RV (July-August 2004)**  
**Another Monster Journey (January-March 2005)**  
**Nigeria**  
**Mauritania**  
**Tunisia**  
**France**  
**The Netherlands**  
**Discovering the Kootenays (July 2005)**  
**The Alaska Cruise (June 2007)**  
**Exploring Route 99 (July 2007)**  
**RV Adventure to Quebec & Michigan (May-July 2008)**  
**A Four-Corners Trip (October-December 2009)**  
**Border Tales**  
**Closing Comments**

### *Introduction*

This chapter constitutes the final *written* chapter about God’s leading, guiding and shaping our lives during our last decade(s) on this side of the Great Divide. *We may not have overtly mentioned His role on every page, but that is the essence of our story.*

The focus of this chapter is on our travels during our Vancouver years. About the only role Vancouver plays in this chapter is as our base. The entire chapter plays itself out *outside* of Vancouver. So far (2014), it has been a wonderful time of travel and adventure in *God’s* world.

If you think we traveled a lot during our Grand Rapids years, just wait and see. We have traveled with a vengeance these years, so far, anyhow. As we travel and we witness the marvels God planted on this continent, the mountains, lakes, rivers, plains, oceans, forests, we are often filled with awe for His majesty and inspired. When we study the results of human artistry, technology and history, the grandeur and the squalid of our cities, we are often amazed not only at both human ingenuity and glory, but also at egocentrism, failure to think through long-term consequences, conflicts and just plain evil. And then the question of divine concurrence with all of that, the interplay of God and humans. Who does what? Travel provides so much food for deep thought. The Hausa-language proverb is right on: “*Tafiya madubin ilimi ne,*” –“Travel is the key to understanding.” All of these thoughts and musings arise especially when traveling abroad in foreign cultures, where the questions are even more, and understanding takes more time to develop and mature.

A little behind the scenes stuff. This very day, after a discussion at church about the use of time, I decided that I would skip most of this chapter with all of its human interest stuff but without much real ministry or service. I decided I should move on to other writing plans I have, more in keeping with Gospel outreach than just travelogue. However, though Fran agreed with this decision, she also said it was kind of a pity, for those many thoughts referred to in the above paragraph will be lost and stimulate no one else. Then, looking at the outline I had already prepared for this chapter and seeing the countries we traveled in, we relented and decided to proceed as planned earlier. The nice thing about it is that you don’t have to read all this. You can skip it altogether or just glance at places of interest to you. Your ticket allows you to get on and off the bus as often as you want and at any time or place.

### *W&J, Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), the Bachews (May 2002)*

Our first major trip from Vancouver was to T&T. As you know, the reason for this trip was W&J’s wedding, details of which are recorded in Chapter 40. Our travel plans left us a few days to explore Trinidad. So Fran and I rented a car to spend a day driving around the perimeter of the island that is only 4,828 square kilometers in size, just off the coast of Venezuela which is visible on a clear day. The island is luscious with old growth trees and underbrush surrounding picturesque towns and villages. We especially enjoyed walking around downtown Port of Spain and devoured a traditional meal in a large market shelter that

held many restaurants without walls and was known as “The Breakfast Shed.” Signs and posters of Maggi are everywhere, not just in this place or city but throughout the island. With our Dutch and Nigerian background, those Maggi signs helped us feel right at home. It almost seemed the island is kept together by these signs; they are that many. Let me propose a new name for the country: “Maggiland!”

There is also a strong reminder of Canada with the omnipresence of the Royal Bank (RBC). They too are everywhere. Of all the non-traditional eating places, the most common is America’s Kentucky Fried Chicken. Like Maggi signs and RBC, they were everywhere and clearly very popular. They are the McDonald of Trinidad, deeply embedded in the local psyche. With my goatee and handlebar, numerous times I was called “Colonel Sanders,” but it never yielded me one single free piece of chicken, though I tried once or twice by actually pretending to be him. Does this say something about the generosity or otherwise of the country or the company? Certainly not of the Bachews, whose generosity erred on the positive side.

The official name of the country is “Trinidad and Tobago,” Tobago being the second island that together with the larger one makes up the entire country. Tobago is a mere 300 square kilometers in size, surrounded by sandy beaches that, of course, are a major Caucasian attraction. We took a ferry to visit Tobago and spent a couple days there, staying in a small hotel. We arranged to meet K&T there and had a lovely couple of days together.

There are a few features of the country that surprised me. First of all, its history. For a long time it was treated as the private property of European princes and kings, who would pass it along to their peers as gifts! Re-gifting is a practice centuries old! It was a virtual European football that was kicked around at random with total disregard for its people. English is its official language with Hindi as second and then French and Spanish, reflecting the football picture. Religions according to a 2001 atlas: Christian 52%, Hindu 25%, Muslim 6%. It is the Hindu figure that surprised us. That was the result of the importation of bonded Indians to replace Black slaves. Ashoke came from that population segment. We would love an opportunity to show you the very interesting photographs we took of this beautiful island nation. As Ashoke said after he visited W&J in Nigeria in 2012, the traditional parts of the two countries look so much alike, especially the flora and fauna. When we finally left Trinidad, Stephanie saw us off at the airport. I left with a knitted multi-coloured cap bought from a market lady who had made it herself. Till this day I wear it in Vancouver and receive many appreciative comments. It goes well with my goatee and handlebars.

We have actually met the Bachews in different places a surprising number of times over the succeeding years. We met them in Grand Rapids during October 2005. But we met them most often in Atlanta, where W&J lived for a while and still own a house. In fact, we met them there only a few weeks after that Grand Rapids meeting at US Thanksgiving 2005.



**With the Bachews in Grand Rapids\***

That was the one time we did some sightseeing in downtown Atlanta. Wiebe showed us his McKinsey office towards the top of one of Atlanta's highest buildings and introduced us to some of his colleagues. We checked out CNN headquarters with their boast of housing the world's highest stand-alone escalator. Well, high it is! We also visited "The World of Coca Cola," where, among other interesting things, we watched their counter count the number of bottles as they were selling throughout the world. It went at great speed, too fast to keep up. On the 26<sup>st</sup> October 2006, at that particular moment, that number "stood" at 8,077,754,891,800. I leave the honour of pronouncing it to you! Whatever you think of their programmes or beverages, their headquarters were well worth the visit and absolutely worth the entertainment.



**Taken Within Seconds of Each Other\***

In addition, Fran stayed with the W&J family for a stifling week the summer of 2011 in New York for babysitting purposes, at a time when Joanna's mother and sister, Stephanie & Jenna, were also there. Joanna, Stephanie and Jenna stayed in our apartment in 2012, when they came to Vancouver to attend the wedding of a niece/cousin who lives here with her family. We always enjoy our times with them and are no longer strangers to each other. That's how we like it: Be good friends with our children's in-laws and our co-grandparents.

### *The West Coast: Backyard RV-ing (2002)*

Throughout 2002, we still had the old pickup camper. We used it a great deal both in MI as well as enroute to and within BC and did a lot of local “RV-ing” with it for some years till we bought our present “Slumber Queen” motorhome. Though I’ve always detested that name, we both love that RV right up till now in spite of its age—a 1999 model.

#### *Sunshine and Washington State Coasts*

*Note: Throughout these memoirs, any reference to “Washington” is to Washington State unless clearly indicated otherwise.*

Our first summer in BC (2002) we did the Sunshine Coast as well as parts of Vancouver Island. The Sunshine Coast is BC’s coastland popular for its sunshine, something few people associate with BC’s coast. Apart from its gorgeous natural features of rain forests, rocks, mountains, cliffs tumbling straight down into the ocean, the tiny islands between the mainland and Vancouver Island, there are provincial and other parks all over for the enjoyment of travelers.



**Camping Scenes along Sunshine Coast\***

We went all the way to the end of the road, where there is a dilapidated old little town of Lund, founded originally by Scandinavians. It was just a few miles beyond Powell River, a town very similar in its history as Port Alberni. Both were booming lumber towns at one time and both lost much of that industry due to global conditions and demanding labour unions. The difference at the time of our visit was that Port Alberni was just wallowing in its loss and looked dilapidated, while Powell River had put on its boots and reworked the town’s economy and culture to focus on tourism. It even became an international centre for a huge annual choir concert. Who would ever have thought that of such an isolated place! Good for them. (I have more than once “threatened” my Port Alberni friends that I would run for Mayor and revamp their town if they didn’t do something themselves. The place was obviously lacking in leadership.)

Everywhere along this route there are historical markers provided by the Government about the history of the First Nations peoples. It is all very interesting material that goes out of its way to honour the history of the First Nations and their contributions to Canadian history. In mission studies, they would be described as “hagiography,” that is, writing only good and positive things about them, writing as if they were angels. There are critical portions as well, but they invariably refer to the barbarian Whites who allegedly brought only destruction and death. There is little about their inter-tribal wars and slavery or other negative features that exist in all communities. While the secular ethos of the country frowns on public discussion of religion, the traditional First Nation religion is extensively described, but camouflaged as culture, not as religion. This is, of course, blatant discrimination against other religions in BC that do not receive such respectful attention. It is all politically correct stuff and hardly balanced or objective history.

We often take the RV into WA state. There, you run across the same politically correct “Indian” history, as First Nations are called in the US. On one of these WA trips, on our way to C&A in Seattle, we went to Whidbey Island with its picturesque Deception Pass Bridge, a sight to behold. Apart from its beauty, a main reason we took that route was to visit Mrs. Rientjes, the widow of Rev. Gerrit Rientjes of Port Alberni days, who lived in a senior complex on the island in Oak Harbor. She was nearly a 100 years old, but still quite fit both physically and mentally. I had loved that couple so much during my teens and often thought of them during the intervening years. But here was our chance to meet her again. What a thrill it was for me to embrace her and, through her, her pastor-husband. I have never been so fond of a pastor couple as the Rientjes and never lost that affection. I regret we did not hear that she moved to Lynden WA and that she died there a couple of years later. I would surely have visited her there and, later, attend her funeral. That was one couple I can only describe as “angels” and “saints.”

### *Vancouver Island*

Another time, we drove up Vancouver Island’s east coast. We found ourselves in Cumberland, where we witnessed the take-off of a kayak event on a lake that included an amazing number of kayaks. The event was named “Mind over Mountain” for the itinerary included some very rough cataracts and rapids. In addition, the town had some very interesting historical events and characters. There was the Cumberland Museum. Its website reads:

Cumberland is a community steeped in history. Once Canada’s smallest and westernmost city, Cumberland was a bustling coal mining community from 1888 to 1966, with miners, entrepreneurs and their families streaming in from across Canada, the US, Europe, China and Japan.

We came upon so many now small insignificant and largely ignored villages that had quite amazing, though short-lived, histories. They were in their day major mining centres that supplied the world with important products and attracted people from all over the world that settled in the area.

In Cumberland, we stumbled upon a circular Japanese cemetery memorial commemorating the contributions of the Japanese to the town's history. We also visited the grave of Ginger Goodwin, a union organizer and former Vice-President of the BC Federation of Labour, who took part in a 1921-1924 mine workers' strike. A local coal mine had claimed the lives of 260 people, most of them immigrants from China, Japan and Europe. Hence the strike. Goodwin came to town to assist the strikers not only, but also to evade the draft. The Dominion Police came after him and killed him. The police claimed it was in self-defense, but, according to the historical marker, "the circumstances remain unclear to this day," a situation that, I suspect, will remain that way. Goodwin's funeral procession in 1918 stretched a mile from Cumberland to the cemetery. His grave stone describes him as "A worker's friend." Here, too, we discovered more of these politically correct markers about Aboriginal histories I mentioned earlier.

Those historical markers along the way, in spite of their frequent hagiographical nature, kept us spellbound. There was this sign about Seymour Narrows, part of the narrow channel between the northern part of the Island and the mainland. It reads:

Treachorous currents, swirling eddies, and turbulent tide-rips still harass vessels, despite the blasting away in 1958 of the twin peaks of Ripple Rock. Charted in 1792 by Captain George Vancouver, the Narrows has claimed numerous ships and lives and is considered by many seamen the worst hazard to marine navigation on the BC coast.

Somehow, when you drive into an old, small little town, you don't expect to run into such interesting history. When you do, it makes the trip all that much more precious. It happens all the time in this rather young province of BC. There is much more interesting history than one might expect. It only goes to prove the theory I stated some chapters ago that small villages like my own Lutjegast all have very interesting histories, provided you take the time to ferret it out. There is never anything dull about small communities, for human beings are intrinsically very interesting. Urban people, swollen with urban pride, only cheat themselves when they dismiss these little nooks and crannies of the world with contempt as boring and not worthwhile.

The journey northward continued. Along the way, we noticed what looked like a narrow pipeline suspended in the air, upheld by nothing that was apparent, stretching over an inland bay with boats and barges chugging their way through the restless waters below.

At Kelsey Bay we stopped to see the fishing fleet in the hope of getting in a chat with the locals. Sure enough, we met a very affable couple, James and Cindy. James was an "urchin picker." According to Wikipedia, sea urchins are small, spiny, globular animals. Their shell is round and spiny, typically from 3 to 10 cm (1.2 to 3.9 in) across. Their "roe" (actually the gonads) is a delicacy in many cuisines. And that's precisely the reason James fishes for them. But his is not fishing with tackle or from a boat. James dons his diving outfit and goes way down to the bottom, where he walks and swims around to harvest them. Asked whether he ever meets up with scary creatures, he laughed and did tell us a couple of stories I cannot recall in detail, but it did seem to us like a harrowing occupation I will not recommend for our progeny. They—the urchins, the *sea* urchins, that is, -- mostly end up in Japanese kitchens and stomachs.

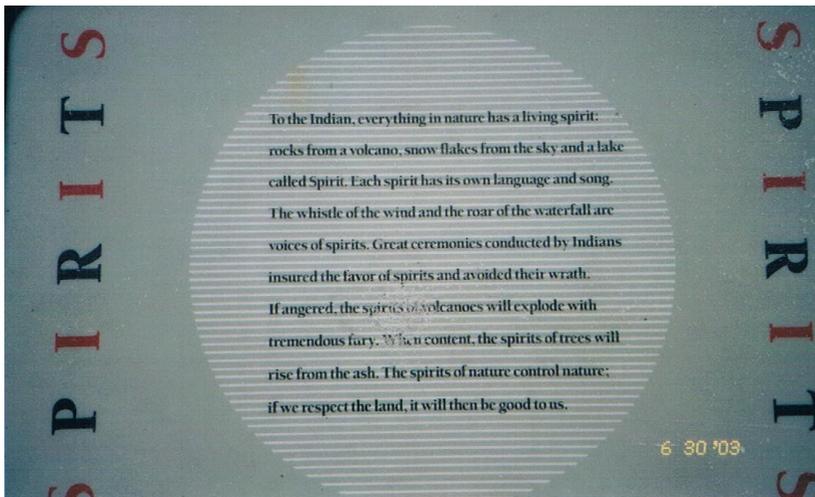
We were not yet finished with world wonders. We moved on to Sayward and ran into—well, not physically!—a café by the name of Cable House Café. The entire exterior, walls and roof, was all made of cables. It looked nice with its red roof, but why cables? We did not find out, but I do remember the place and wonder.

There are many smaller islands between Vancouver Island and the mainland. The word “archipelago” is used to describe the seascape. That tells you something. Many of them are tiny with few or no inhabitants. Quadra is one of the larger and has a sizeable community on it. It is home to a thriving art community, as well as a growing number of white-collar professionals who commute to Campbell River, on Vancouver Island.

In terms of Aboriginals, it is home to the Southern Kwakiutl, who migrated from Queen Charlotte Strait over two centuries ago, enslaving, displacing and absorbing the Comox and Pentlatch peoples who formerly lived there. Now *that's* not information you will easily get from the politically correct Parks Board signage. Enslaving their fellow Aboriginals? Taking over their homeland? That makes me wonder why they so object to the Caucasian invasion. Never heard of Caucasians *enslaving* Aboriginals in BC. And I thought Aboriginals objected to being absorbed or integrated into the invading society! And do these invaded, enslaved and absorbed people have the right to reclaim their lands and make development demands of their invaders? Did our Caucasian predecessors perhaps copy the methods of First Nations? Sometimes it is smart to de-and re-construct your history—until you are found out and then it smells worse than if you had been open about it to begin with. Of course, my source may not have it all correct either!

There is an Aboriginal lodge at Cape Mudge, a beautiful and modern structure meant to attract tourists. We saw very few guests there, while most of the staff seemed to be non-Aboriginal, a feature we've seen more often in Aboriginal establishments. This leads me to ask why Aboriginals complain so much about unemployment.

You see, there continue to be many questions; no answers. I know, politically incorrect, but



Aboriginals do owe us some explanations. I am not anti-Aboriginal. I am only too aware of the horrendous results of their interaction with Caucasians and am ashamed, deeply ashamed, of my race, culture and even of the religion that is at the centre of my life. However, that should not prevent us from raising long-suppressed issues. Do Aboriginals really have a right to the moral high road?

The “Apostles’ Creed” of Aboriginal Animism\*

After a good sleep in the RV with an excellent view of the town and the strait, in the morning, we took the ferry back to the main Island. We followed the road inland to Gold River on the Muchalat Inlet, a lumber town as well as transportation hub for further outlying places either by boat or water planes. It's a beautiful town, where we relaxed for some hours at a river side. We also drove to the entrance of Strathcona Provincial Park of 2458 square kilometres of lakes, rivers and mountains over two kilometres high. It contains Ella Falls, the highest in all of Canada, though by no means the widest or most voluminous. We took a short hike into the park to take a peek at Lady Falls. It turned out that, unbeknown to us, Glenda, the daughter of Nick and Rennie Hoekstra, lives in that town. We would have loved to visit her.

We drove back to the east coast of the Island and headed for Denman Island, another offshore place, and camped there overnight. One of the interesting places there is an even smaller little islet named Boyle Point Provincial Park with its Chrome Island Lighthouse, 100 metres off Denman. The only way to get to that Park is by walking during low tide from Denman Island.



Chrome Island off Denman Island off Vancouver Island\*

We did not reach our intended destination, Port Hardy at the top of the Island. I got cold feet when I began to realize how long and lonely that stretch of road was, how old our vehicle was and that it was totally out of cell phone range. We turned around to go back to more populated places to make sure we would not get stuck in the middle of nowhere. It was then that we started thinking about getting a newer and more reliable vehicle. So we left that far northern part of the Island for a later time, after we had purchased a newer motor home. We headed back to Vancouver. Seldom have we enjoyed a trip as much as this one, due to an environment that is absolutely exquisite and to the fact that we refused to be hurried. "Relax" was the mantra. And we did.

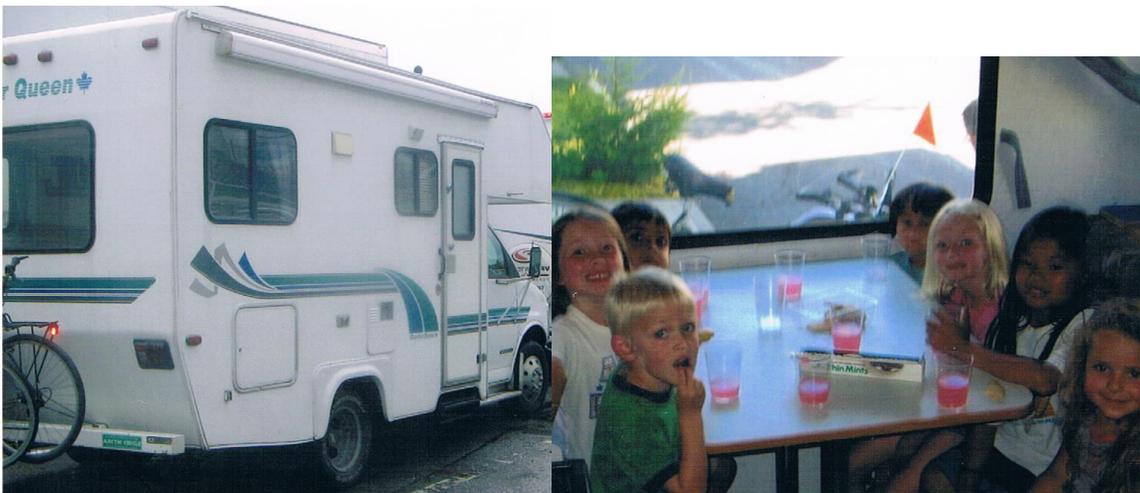
### *RV Tales*

The winter of 2001-2002, we parked the truck camper in our rented parking space on Bute Street. We kept an eye on it and it survived the winter. The next winter, we parked it in the Heikens yard in rural Maple Ridge. We knew little about RV storage in this extremely moist rain forest environment. We just parked the camper there, rested it on saw horses, locked it

and never checked up on it till spring. Wow, when we entered it in spring, it was like it had experienced a flood. The cushions on the seats and bed were absolutely dripping with the water they had absorbed over the winter and there was mildew everywhere. We had no choice but to replace it. We ended up giving the old camper to nephew John Steenbergen, son of sister Bo. He is a fixer upper and wanted to repair it for his son's hunting expeditions. However, when he started working on it, the entire camper collapsed! It had completely rotted. It had brand new fixtures such as toilet and fridge that he rescued and sold. Thanks, John, for taking it out of our hands! You're welcome to the free fixtures.

*The "New" Motor Home (2003)*

I have earlier referred to three major events in February 2003: Jehan's birth and my 65<sup>th</sup>. The third event was our purchase of another RV. It was not as significant as either the birth or the birthday, of course, but it has greatly affected our lives throughout the eleven years we've had it. It was a three-year old Class C motor home from Fraserway in Abbotsford. It had been used as a rental for three years and kept in almost perfect shape. We fell in love with it immediately and went for it. It changed the entire tenor of our lives, for it serves as an extra bedroom for Fran and me to sleep in when we have overnight guests. And it's useful for little "tea" parties for neighbour kids when we are in Kent. It is also used for storage, especially during the non-camping period. But that non-camping period hardly exists for us, for we often visit people out of the city or attend meetings in the evening in places like Surrey and Langley. Then, instead of going home at night, we often just find a place to park and sleep there, even in the winter. This became standard practice especially before I purchased a C-Pap machine to control my sleep apnea. I would be too sleepy to drive home after a visit or meeting. But even now, the week and day of my 75<sup>th</sup>, we left in the morning for some shopping and to spend time with sister Karen in Surrey. In the evening we took her and the Wolferts out for a dinner. It was a great but long and tiring day. Instead of going home, we spent the night in the RV in the parking lot of Elim, the senior housing complex where both Karen and the Wolferts live.



The "New" Motorhome\*

"Tea" time for Asia & Ezra & friends\*

Such arrangements also save us a lot of driving and bridge tolls. The following day, I had appointments related to Missions Fest with the Christian Labour Association of Canada in Langley and with the pastor of Maple Ridge CRC. So, we did not have to drive home that evening and then take that same route the following morning, for we were already in the neighbourhood. An RV is expensive to drive, but often we multi-task as we did this time and reduce driving by 50%. We invite people after church for a lunch and then, to their surprise, they find themselves eating in the RV right on the church parking lot. That is always appreciated with surprise and laughter. Or we take people out for an RV breakfast or picnic in Stanley Park. And grandkids? Oh, they love this “traveling house.” So, yes, the RV made our lives interesting, varied and adventurous. Till this day, more than a decade later, we love this vehicle for the freedom it gives us. We bought it at around 63,000 kms and now it clocks 180,000 kilometres, still good to go for some years. That means in these eleven years we have averaged only around 11,000+ kilometres per annum, in spite of some very lengthy trips that you will read about below. It still runs like a charm. During first week of July, 2013, we spent a couple of days camping at Derby Reach on the Fraser River near Langley with Kevin and Anneke. Kevin so enjoyed it that if we ever want to get rid of the vehicle, we should contact him first. Enough said.

*It does* gulp a bit and that should make our trips expensive. You’d be surprised. One trip took us all the way to eastern Quebec and back via Michigan. After a trip of seven weeks we ended up paying out a total of around \$80 per day *for the two of us!* We do our own cooking and we seldom use campgrounds. At night, we park at Walmarts or simply on main streets or residential roads in cities or towns or in rest stops; sometimes just a little nowhere place in a village or out in the open. After we counted every penny we spent for whatever reason, we ended up with a daily average of \$80. At the time, gasoline in eastern Canada cost \$1.50 per litre. That average did not include the rent we had to keep paying for our apartment or our various insurances!

But take care of this baby. Don’t get into a situation where you need work done on the walls of the RV, for this will cost you more than an arm and a leg. Be sure you have your seams checked out regularly for leakage, for once you have leakage, it seeps into your walls and spreads rapidly, much farther than you think. A bill of \$7,000 is nothing unusual. So, that Quebec trip may have been inexpensive as far as money directly out of pocket goes, but over the long run.... Neglect does not pay. And, of course, the moment you drive it out of the dealer’s lot, it has lost much of its monetary value. We don’t even consider devaluation, for it happens immediately and is done. Nevertheless, we consider the \$34,000 (including tax) we paid for the vehicle well spent; it has given us freedom and facility in ways we never foresaw but enjoyed tremendously. Right now, I cannot imagine life without RV! You will read more about some extensive RV trips we took over the next few years.

#### *More Forays into Washington (June 2003-2013)*

We have taken many short and long trips throughout much of Washington over the years. Some have already been described. Below follow some of our WA adventures.

Such Washington journeys for us usually include a Tanis visit in Seattle, before or after which we sometimes wander all over the place. The photo albums—note the plural— covering these trips with pictures of Mt. Rainier in WA, taken in June 2003—mid-summer flowers along with mountains of snow. Where did this name come from? It already had an Aboriginal name, but one day, Captain Vancouver, as he guided his vessels northward along the coast and saw that beautiful snow-capped mountain, decided to honour a friend of his by the name of Rainier, who had never been to this part of the world. The name stuck and replaced the original name. Some Aboriginals are still agitating for a return to the original. Of course, this distorted and meaningless naming history took place everywhere and thereby helped erase Aboriginal history from our memory as if it never existed.

One item that grew into a special interest to Fran was the Columbia River. This June 2003 trip took us to its shores at the WA/OR border in what is called “The Gorge,” the deep gully through which the river flows between those two states. That awoke Fran’s interest. We knew the river originates in BC, but where? A study of the map was not helpful, for it seemed to go in all kinds of directions, then get lost in artificial lakes. She decided to keep her eye on this river. The following website is the one to turn to for its route, history, uses, etc.:

<http://www.ccrh.org/river/history.htm>

It describes its course as “convoluted.” The printout of the river’s story is located at the beginning of “Photo Album no. 30—BC: July 2005.” The name itself is after one Robert Gray’s ship, the “Columbia,” and was first mapped by David Thompson. No doubt it has an ancient Aboriginal name, several probably, but like the name of mountains—see previous paragraphs.



Continuing the Columbia theme for a moment and interrupting the flow of this 2003 trip, in 2005 we found its origin in south-eastern BC, while in 2006, we visited the mouth

of the river and crossed the four-mile bridge taking us from WA into OR.\*

Going back to that June 2003 trip, it also took us to Mt. St. Helens. Remember its horrific volcanic explosion that destroyed such a wide swath as its lava covered the mountains and valleys in its shadows? The wholesale destruction it had caused was still obvious, but time was doing its work and already bringing in healing, what with green grasses and young sprouts everywhere trying to hide the ashes that had blackened it all.

In order to get the closest to it by car, we had to follow a very narrow road with deep ravines on *both* sides. My phobia kicked in with fear, anxiety and a degree of dizziness taking over my

psyche. I had had this before, but you never get used to it or learn techniques of coping with it. When there was no traffic, I would drive on the centre of the road, looking straight ahead of myself, forcing myself to look neither to the right nor to the left. If this sounds like a Reformed Christian theologian as people perceive such creatures, well, yes, I was just being myself! With oncoming traffic, I would just veer off to the right as little as I could get away with and just plain stop the car. I could not continue. It is a frightening experience I don't wish on any driver.

In 2006 we were on our way to CA but, as usual, stopped off for a few days in Seattle. This particular visit contained a couple of firsts for the family. They had just bought a huge tent with the family doing some backyard camping for their first time. The next night Asia slept with us in the RV, another first, with the same for Ezra the following night. Fran commented, "Gradually getting them used to the camping experience." In the afternoon, Asia & Ezra's friends came for a tea party visit in our RV, something that always seems like a real adventure to the crowd—and makes the neighbourhood Opa and Oma really popular. Yes, by this time we had become Opa and Oma to most of the neighbourhood kids.

That same day, Asia & Ezra performed in a program of their Japanese class. C&A, having had their Japanese experience, enrolled the children in a class so they could learn a bit of Japanese too. Couldn't understand them, but they surely looked cute and spoke clearly!

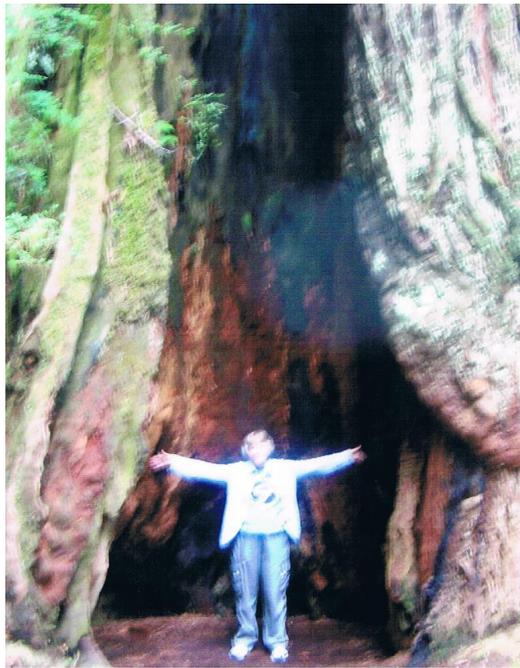
In October, 2012, we visited Cynthia and children in their new home in Kent, WA, and from there took a leisurely camping trip that ended in Kelowna, BC, where we stayed a few days with sister Bo and Tom. It was a very interesting and relaxing trip. We camped all over the place in mountainous and forested areas, mostly in various National Forests in north central WA, but nothing really so unusual that we had not seen before. So, not much to write about, except that we were allowed and able to have campfires everywhere, something that we both enjoy very much during the evenings and the early mornings.

However, there was one item on our map that really piqued our interest. The WA map shows a tiny state park along a local road, west off Route 21 leading to the Canadian border. A brochure describes the place as the smallest WA state park and it features what we read as "Ronald MacDonald's Grave." Huh? The national hamburger chief buried in an obscure little place way up there? We were curious indeed. We could hardly find the place. Obviously the WA parks people do not think the place worthy of proper development, including signage. We finally found it. Had to park the RV along the narrow country road in a precarious way. Then climbed our way along an unmaintained rocky trail to the top of a hill, where we saw a small fenced-in area the size of two residential lots. It all looked to be unmaintained, except for what we recognized as a standup gravestone with a separate historical marker next to it. But it is not the grave of the famous Ronald so much as of *Ranald* MacDonald! Apart from acknowledging that he played an unofficial but crucial role in opening up insular Japan to the world, I ask you to check out his history on the internet, including the reason he was buried in this rather isolated corner of the state. It is an interesting story and, for those who have the time and interest, well worth a visit.

*California Journeys and Back*

*By Rental (2003)*

We visited K&T many times in CA but we'll only write about a few of the trips. In November of 2003 we did something unusual; we used a rental car. We drove the super scenic Highway 1 along the Oregon and California coast. At least partly due to a much larger population, there are many more points of history, entertainment and reflection along this route than there are along BC's Sunshine Coast. Every time we take this route, we are astounded by all the beauty, so much, in fact, that I occasionally decide to just ignore it and drive on, for I get satiated with beauty; I could take no more. Of course, we could not skip the Chandelier Tree in Drive-Thru Tree Park in Legget CA. We had seen so many pictures of it that we had to take one of me in the car standing in the hollow of the tree. The trip also included California's Redwood Forest with its road winding through the giant redwoods. It kind of puts Cathedral Grove on the road to Port Alberni to shame. (I can't believe I said that!)



Now *that's* a Tree!\*

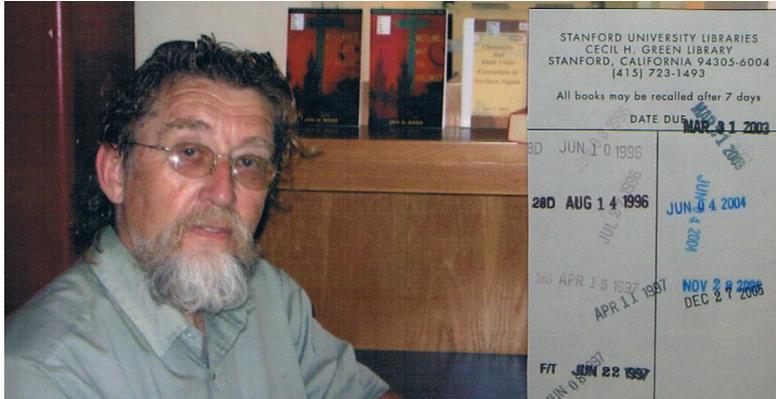


Fran and Another Sister Mermaid\*  
Crescent City CA

The Elk viewing area near Orick was full of well-fed elks as were the Crescent City harbour and pier of well-fed sea lions. Some of them were playfully pushing each other into the water while the others lazily lounged around on the floats and still others encouraged them with their veritable concert of honks, squabbles and squeals (of delight?). This city is also a major crab fishing centre with huge columns of crab pods lined up along the harbour. It had a Lighthouse Park accessible only at low tide just like Chrome Island Lighthouse off Denman Island in BC.

We visited Stanford University, very near K&T's home. What an impressive place! In fact, we visited that campus several times over the years. Its architecture always leaves us in a state of awe. We attended their worship services a few times, but that often leaves me with a sense of annoyance, for it is infused with a liberal theology that often denies the very inscriptions on their bulletins and written liturgies. Beautiful music, impressive formal liturgy, but the sermon content often vague with little to take home. It has gone the way of all great American universities: paying little more than lip service to the faith that spawned them.

One time, after we had already published several volumes of our series, we decided to donate



them to the Stanford Library, in the assumption that they would not have them. So we did, but then we checked the Library's catalogue and, sure enough, there they were already! We looked them up and found them in their proper place on the shelf. We were impressed with the far reach of the Essence distribution machine.

#### John's Books in the Stanford Library\*

During this same trip, we paid a visit with K&T to Angel Island in the Bay, which is described as follows on one website:

Explored by the Spanish in 1775, it came under U.S. control in 1851. The U.S. army used the island as a base from 1863 to 1946. From 1910 to 1940 the island was used to process mainly Asian immigrants to the U.S., earning it the nickname "Ellis Island of the West." During World War II, enemy prisoners of war were confined on Angel Island. The island is now a state park.

Another place we visited was the infamous rock in the Bay known as Alcatraz. One website tells us the following:

Alcatraz and history go hand in hand. Once home to some of America's most notorious criminals, the federal penitentiary that operated here from 1934 to 1963 brought a dark mystique to the Rock. The presence of infamous inmates like Al "Scarface" Capone, and the "Birdman" Robert Stroud helped to establish the island's notoriety. To this day, Alcatraz is best known as one of the world's most legendary prisons.

Many people, though, are unaware of the wealth of other stories to be learned on the island. Alcatraz is now home to rare flowers and plants, marine wildlife, and thousands of roosting and nesting sea birds. Civil War-era buildings dotting the island give insight into the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the island served as both a harbor defense fort and a military prison. You can

also see visible reminders of the American Indian Occupation that started in 1969 after the prison closed, highlighting an important milestone in the American Indian rights movement.

So we wandered around in the bowels of this former hell that looks so pretty from the air with the Golden Gate in the background over the Bay. Inside, the place looks like an oversized vacated chicken battery. In 1854, the first lighthouse on the US west coast was built on the island with its light beam visible from eighteen miles away. For that Indian Occupation, I refer you to the internet that tells its interesting and significant story. Please don't miss it.

*By RV (June-July 2006)*

As Fran kept a travel journal during this trip, much of the information in this section comes from that journal. Our first major stop was Portland OR, but with several minor stops in between. Once again we crossed the Columbia River which constituted the WA/OR border at the mouth of the river at Astoria. From there we headed south along US 101, but took a side trip to visit the Kieselhorsts, friends from our Nigeria days. We parked the RV on the road in front of their house, probably the most hilly space we've ever parked it.

It was a very very hot weekend. We found out the hard way that when using bottled gas to run the fridge, you need a level parking space! Everything defrosted over the weekend. We thought the fridge needed repair, but a neighbour told us it was due to the uneven place! Sure enough. After we left, everything started working again.

Went to a Foursquare Church with the Kieselhorsts and had our first "McCommunion" experience, as they called it. The wine or juice was served in the kind of paper thimbles used for coffee cream in restaurants. The Kieselhorst twins, Matt & Gabe, were celebrating their 30<sup>th</sup> birthdays, so we met many of their friends as well. Also met Xavier, a South African pastor from the Foursquare Church. From Portland, we went back to the 101 and followed the coast all the way down.

That entire coast, from the top of WA through CA, is one stretch of an experience that is difficult to describe if you haven't traveled it. So much interesting fairly old history of fishing villages and beach towns that just never end. And then all these broken rocky islets strewn all along the coast. I don't know how much time you would need to explore it all. Simply too much to describe. After a while you get so satiated; you even quit taking pictures.

We saw many interesting things both en route to and in California on this trip. A first stop was at Fort Stevens State Park at the Oregon side of the mouth of the Columbia River, out on a little lip or peninsula reaching into the river. That fort has the distinction of being the only place where Japan shelled the *continent* during WW II. No shots were returned from the fort. After that the Japanese moved on to the Aleutian Islands where there were major battles with the US, as we learned on our Alaska trip.

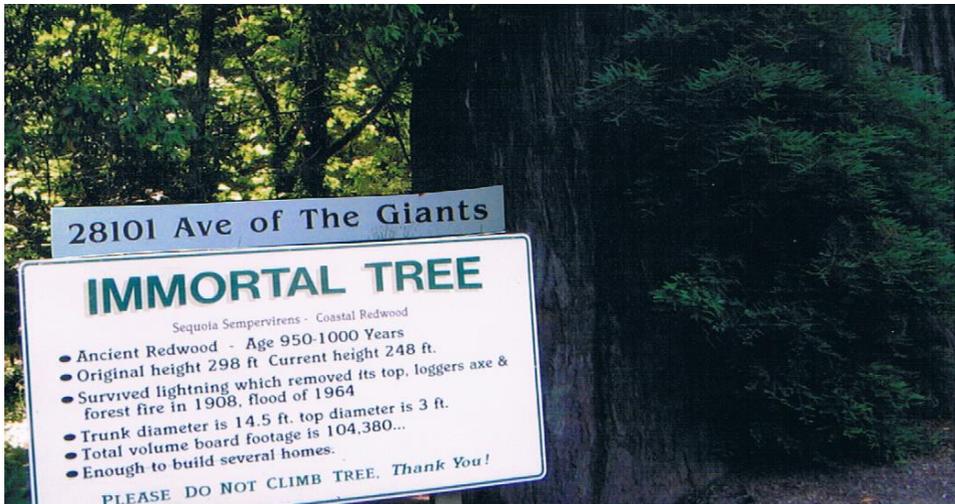
Tilamook OR boasts the largest wooden building in the world. The town's greater claim to fame is the Tilamook Cheese Factory. You can buy all sorts of cheeses as well as related dairy

products and watch how cheese is produced and other demonstrations about dairy farming. The place is a local farmers' cooperative. Probably the greatest attraction is the bar where you can pick up free cheese samples and go through as often as you want. It is a highly popular stop during the tourist season.

A nearby cemetery had a statue in memory of aborted children. The caption reads, "In Memory of the Innocent Victims Killed by Abortion. Let Us Respect Life."

Port Orford OR was the scene of a deadly conflict between Aborigines and the White settlers in June 1851 that the latter lost. They escaped under cover of darkness and returned with a larger force and then established the settlement.

Where the 101 deviated away from the coast, we took Hw. 1. Again many places of interest which included the Redlands State Park in CA. I was used to BC giant trees, but in this park I saw trees with the hugest above ground roots you can possibly imagine. They look like the feet of giant elephants. They exuded a kind of peace. Since we came upon them in the morning, we stopped here for our morning prayers. It was so conducive for spirituality. One fallen-down tree trunk was so large that I could sit in its hollow centre.



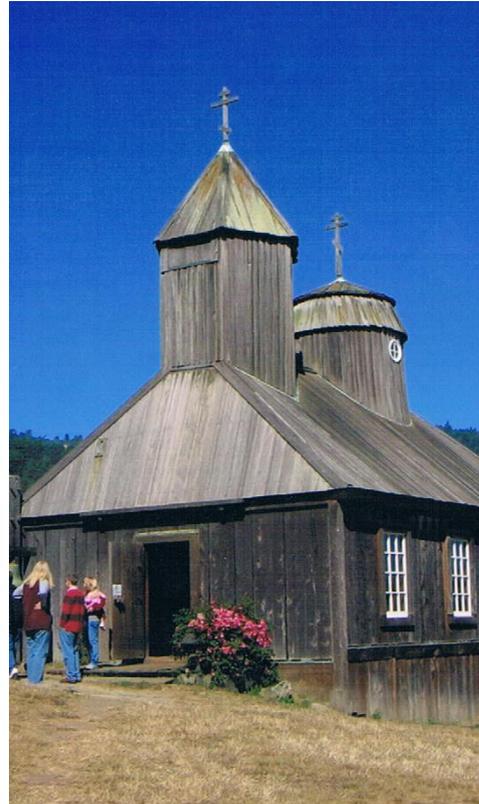
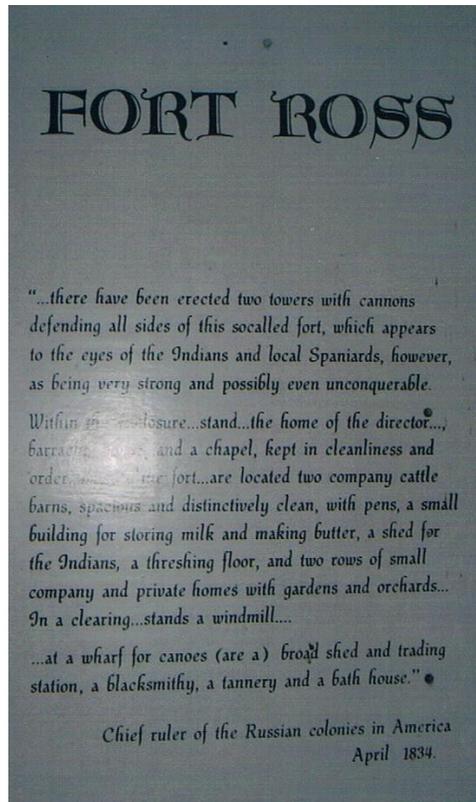
Then we took a side road named *Avenue of the Giants*, a 50 km drive through the Redwoods. I again had to admit it was more beautiful than Cathedral Grove. One tree was called "Immortal Tree." Read its stats in the picture.

### Immortal Giant\*

Once back on Route 1 and drinking tea at a rest stop, we noticed a fellow with a bike who seemed exhausted. He turned out to be a long-distance bicyclist doing the Seattle-San Diego run. He gratefully accepted our invitation to join us for a tea and chatted for a long time. His specialty seemed to be 9/11 conspiracy theories on which he grew highly eloquent without showing any signs of coming to the end of his stories. We finally had to ask him to leave so we could continue our journey.

We learned that Fort Ross CA was the southernmost outpost of Russia's attempt to colonize the west coast all the way down from Alaska. The Alaska Panhandle was part of that southern reach. The fort was founded by the Russians in 1812. It was enclosed by a redwood wall and

contained a chapel and several houses. The entire community comprised 59 buildings. Population stats in 1836 were as follows: 260 people—154 male and 106 female; 120 Russians, 51 Creoles, 50 Kodiak Aleuts and 39 baptized Indians.



Early Russian Occupation of California\*

Fort Ross Chapel\*

This whole project was a serious effort to establish a safe and permanent base in the area. A sign reads, “They established themselves in such strength that the meager Spanish forces... realized they were unable to evict the Russians.” The fort was abandoned for a variety of reasons in 1842. Eventually the State of CA purchased it and classified it as a historic landmark.

Close to a town named Jenner, we gassed up at a station that featured a number of signs encouraging people to talk to each other. E. g.: “Why not be friendly? In the event the person on the other side of the pump says, ‘Hello,’ feel free to say, ‘Hi,’ back. Or maybe even say, ‘Sweet ride you got there.’ Better yet, why not initiate a conversation? After all, this is a gas station. Not a public library.” Ironically, the lone attendant at the station was one of the most unfriendly people we’ve ever seen. He was on a private call on his cell phone and basically refused to help us with filling the bottled gas tank. When I pointed to his interesting signs and asked what they meant, he scoffed as if to say, “Mind your own business.” After we returned home I wrote a letter complaining to the company’s “board of governors,” but never heard back from them.

Drove through lots of lovely vineyards to Suisun Valley to the Hanneman ranch. Theresa's parents weren't home, but Kevin & Theresa were staying there for the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday. Had a great swim in their pool. This was the place where they got married. We have a picture of Fran sitting on the swing chair hanging on a limb of and in the shadow of the mighty oak tree under which Kevin proposed to Theresa.

We also spent time again on the campus of Stanford University, just a few minutes from their house. We had an interesting experience there with respect to Jukun history. There is a "terra cotta head" called "Jukun." That, you may recall, is the name of the ethnic group in Wukari, where we served our first two terms in Nigeria. That head is said to date from around 1400 AD. It is accompanied by the following description that I copy here simply because it tells you of the history of a people we worked with as missionaries. Our old Wukari friends, Pastors Habila Ada, David Angyu, Ezekiel Nyajo, Bitrus Angyunwe as well as Evangelist Ifraimu Nyajo and Ibrahim Sangari all are/were Jukun.

**Heading: Jukun, Sokoto Region, Nigeria.**

On the Adamawa Plateau of Northern Nigeria, an aggressive empire called Kororofa held power from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Its king (whom you may remember as the Aku Uka—addition by myself) ruled by divine right and enjoyed absolute power, but only for seven years. Then a new king was chosen. It is not clear whether the Jukun people who live there today are descended from the warriors of Kororofa, but this terra cotta head is called "Jukun," because it was found in that area. This region was also the birthplace of the Bantu language, which spread throughout Africa during the past 2,000 years.

Some of this story we know to be true, but they are mixing up two regions, Sokoto and Adamawa, that are nearly a thousand kilometres apart. As to the Bantu language being born there, I doubt that very much and just now (March 20, 2013) sent an email to our linguist friend, Dr. Rob Koops, asking for his reaction. He responded:

As for "this region" being the birthplace of Bantu, that is quite likely. What I recall from grad school is that yes indeed the whole Bantu family started out somewhere in the general area of the confluence of Benue & Niger rivers, and then spread South and East, probably going down tributaries of the Congo to its mouth, and then back up other tributaries to the east and south. There's some kind of link to the development of iron-smelting industry, but I've forgotten the details on that. I suppose a quick look at Bantu on Google or Wikipedia would provide more up to date details.

As we were parked on the Stanford campus with the RV side door open, someone knocked. The person was an Indonesian who was in the US for a conference. He was curious about this strange kind of vehicle and asked if he might take a look inside. Of course, we were happy to oblige and ended up chatting quite a while at our table. His name was Elsar Hayer. He was a Christian, who was happy to meet a missionary couple. We gave him a set of my books for the library at the University of Jakarta. We did exchange addresses, but somehow we lost his and that was it. One of these random meetings that we always enjoy so much.

After a delightful week at K&T's, we headed east in the direction of Yosemite Park. We went as far as Oakdale CA and camped at a reservoir where a full hook up cost us only \$10! Had a swim in the rather hot water together with lots of ducks and ducklings. Finally took our bikes down again and had a nice ride. We observed an old historic church in the centre of the town, probably a century or so old, and expected it to belong to one of the mainstream denominations. We were very surprised to see it was CRC, a highly unusual combination of style and denomination. We decided to check it out the next morning. We drove into the parking lot and asked some questions to a couple of people outside on the premise. The long and short of it was that one of the people we talked to was a second cousin to Andy, Cynthia's husband! His father, a cousin to Keith, Andy's Dad, had pastored this church for seventeen years! When we asked Andy about this, he seemed to know little if anything about this, but Keith did.

One of the towns we went through was named "Chinese Camp," a good-sized village on Route 120 with its own post office even. We decided to use this facility to mail a package of books to Nigeria. A sign read, "During the Gold Rush, Chinese Camp was a bustling gold town boasting a population of 5,000 Chinese and 2,000 other residents." No matter where you go, whether the Yukon, Vancouver Island, BC's interior or the US west coast, you simply cannot escape the history of the Gold Rush. Of course, it all began in CA.

The next stop was Groveland, a town that has an interesting jail history. It was built around 1900, though no one is sure about the exact year. The town was booming at the time and had trouble with drunks. The jail was basically a holding tank for drunks before they would see the judge. When a drunk was found and the jailer called to lock him in could not be found, the door would not be locked. The next morning the occupant might have left, which was no problem if he had sobered up by then. At one time, when the door was locked, a prisoner tried to escape by building a fire inside up against the door. The jailer lived across the road and was home. The escape failed. The jailhouse still stands.

Drove on to Yosemite National Park. With the lifetime U.S. National Parks pass which Fran purchased for \$10 at Denali National Park in Alaska two years earlier, we were able to enter for free. Seeing it was already quite late, we camped at the first spot available in the park

Drove through the lovely Yosemite Valley in the National Park. Spectacular water falls and granite cliffs. They encourage you to park your car and take the free public Shuttle Bus all around the valley. We also had some good bike rides down well-marked trails. For the following night, we got a choice spot with a terrific view of Half Dome mountain cliff. At sunset the straight cliff shines like gold!

I had been having trouble with a skin infection for a few days so decided to go to the park's walk-in clinic. Once again we found out how much more expensive medical care is in the U.S. compared to Canada! But they gave me good advice and medicine so that the problem was soon cleared up. However, there was no doctor available; the one who helped us was a physician assistant. We thought nothing of it. When we sent in our claim to our BC provincial insurance, however, they rejected it because I had not been attended to by a medical doctor! Had I insisted on seeing a doctor, the bill that they would have paid would have been much

higher. Go figure. Who invented civil servants and administrators? Fortunately, our extra travel insurance covered the expense.

In the Visitors' Centre we saw a film titled "Spirit of Yosemite." These days it seems to be politically correct to mention all kinds of spirits as long as you don't talk about the Holy Spirit!

We reluctantly left the main park and drove for about an hour and a half to the area named Tuolamne Meadows. That's at an elevation of 8000 feet. In the evening there was a huge campfire with an enthusiastic park ranger doing an excellent job speaking on the topic of *ravens*. Had no idea they were such fascinating and unusual birds.

The next morning we strolled around awhile in the Tuolamne Meadows. Saw small dirty looking hot springs called Soda Springs. Took the Shuttle Bus for its entire circular tour around much of the park. Seeing we were the only passengers for much of the trip, the driver had the time and inclination to share lots of information with us.

Then drove through the Tioga Pass (9,975 ft) and out of Yosemite Park. Our first stop was at Lee Vining (population 395) Information Centre. The lady gave us tons of reasons to stop and have a look around the area. She emphasized Mono Lake, where there are huge calcium deposits called *tufa* that look like sand castles. A brief history of Mono Lake will be helpful. The lake was slowly being emptied out in order to supply *Los Angeles* with water! The area's ecosystem was thus gradually being destroyed. A college student studied the bad effects of this process and raised the alarm. Conservationists and protestors took up the cause, turned the situation around and now it is an ecological success story. There is now a cooperative effort to preserve the lake without withholding water from distant Los Angeles.

Mono Lake *Park* lies within the city limits of Lee Vining. The sign at the park entrance reads:

**MONO LAKE PARK**  
 Maintained by  
**Mono County Parks and Recreation**  
 =====  
 Site Leased from the  
 City of Los Angeles

With LA being many hundreds of kilometers from Mono Lake, I find that a very interesting but strange arrangement. A public park within the confines of a county that maintains it, but owned by a city hundreds of kilometers away and then leased by that distant city to that county!

Swam ("floated" would be a more accurate word!) at Navy Beach on Mono Lake. This beach has three times the salt content of the Pacific Ocean. During the Cold War, the military used this area for so-called "seismic research." Stayed at an RV park in Lee Vining and paid a whopping \$30 – three times the price of Yosemite National Park! Hot showers were great though. Splurged that evening as we shared a full rack of ribs for our dinner at a local

restaurant. We were not aware of the cheap meal deals that were awaiting us just up the road in Nevada!

Went 15 miles off the main highway on a poorly maintained dirt road to visit Bodie State Historical Park. Bodie was another one of those gold mining towns of the 1850s with a population of 10,000, at the time the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest city in CA!—and now you can't even find it on the map! A historical marker reads: "Gold was discovered here in 1859 by W. S. Bodie, after whom the town is named. Bodie's mines produced gold valued at more than \$100 million." We did see some old buildings from those early days: ramshackle wooden "houses," an outhouse photographed through a window portal in a stone wall, and a church.

Drove into Nevada and the first building we saw was—you guessed it!—a casino. Stopped at the Nugget in Carson City, the state capital. The security man in the parking lot said, "You've come to gamble & eat? Oh, parking here is fine!" Watched 100s of people doing some serious gambling on the slot machines. A feature to draw people in is the excellent and inexpensive food served at these casinos. We enjoyed a full prime rib dinner for \$5 each!

We came upon a historical marker dedicated to the main pioneer of Carson City, who was described as "A man with a vision" who had done so much for the development of both city and state that he was given the title "Father of Carson City." I include this story because of the Dutch connection embedded in his name: Abraham Van Santvoord Curry. Ah, we Dutch, we're truly somethin'! As to his heroic achievements, please check them out in cyberland.

Picked up some groceries at Safeway and noticed they have a slot machine room right at the entrance! Can't say we've seen that in any other Safeway—and we've shopped in many Safeways in many states as well as BC. Attended the service at First Presbyterian Church, a church that has been at its present location since 1861. Met a group of young people there who had gone with a YWAM team to Vancouver the previous summer.

Backtracked into CA to drive the 70 miles around Lake Tahoe. All the way, simply scandalously beautiful, overwhelming. Refreshing swim. Lovely sunset over the lake and a great campground.

Drove back to Carson City. Did a tour of the Nevada Capitol buildings. Very early in the state's history, fences were built around these buildings in order to keep out the roaming animals and thus protect the ladies' dress hems from poop! Nevada became a state in the early 1860s. Had basically been one territory with Utah, but Abraham Lincoln was eager for two more non-slave states in order to vote against slavery. So both states had an unusually quick but separate entry into the union. Another lovely meal at the Nugget casino: this time a very generous buffet for \$7 per person. A nice warm swim in the jacuzzi pool at the RV park. Very therapeutic for tired bones!

Unfortunately, Fran was developing knee problems. It turned out to be a flare-up of her polymyalgia rheumatica. If only she had taken Prednizone right away, she would have been spared a lot of pain! A Walmart pharmacist suggested Ibuprofen and the IcyHot knee sleeve,

the kind you see advertised for sports on TV. It helped a bit but she knew something was definitely not quite right as walking was becoming more difficult and painful.

On our way to Reno, we stopped in Virginia City. It has an elevation of around 1900 metres, an elevation that did us in. So far I have not talked much about the weather, but for days on end we had miserably hot summer weather that diminished our travel enjoyment considerably. It was just too humid and too uncomfortable, not only for us, but even for the RV. One early afternoon we were climbing the steep slopes up the mountains to Virginia City when the engine began to heat up and eventually boiled. I should have caught this earlier. It was a lonely stretch of road without houses or settlements and little or no traffic. We just had to park the vehicle for it to cool off and then go again for a while. Stop and go; stop and go. Eventually, we did arrive in Virginia City.

It



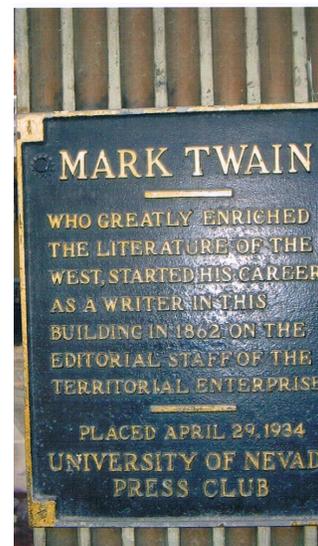
Virginia City--A Friendly Town?\*

was a wealthy mining town in the 1860s with a population of 30,000. Their wealth helped to finance the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln still seems to be a hero there. Old wooden boardwalks all through the downtown area give it the Wild West feeling. This feeling is further enhanced by the dominant type of signage advertising the businesses.

The “preserved” town has thriving shops and restaurants. One shop we found particularly interesting was a leather shop, where they had all kinds of leather and other items for sale at very reasonable prices. This is where we found a zippered loose-leaf type of leather bag I had been looking for a couple of years for rather low price: \$20. Fran bought a purse, something she is not inclined towards.

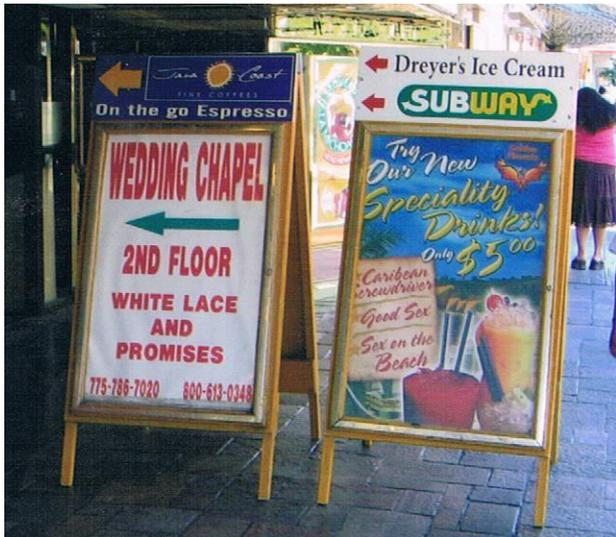
Mark Twain started his writing career here. Yes, the Mark Twain whose books were the first English ones I read back in 1951 in Pitt Meadows. There is a Mark Twain Museum along this wooden boardwalk. On the day of our visit, there were some 20 motorcycles parked in front of it, with still more on the street looking for a parking place.

### Remembering Mark Twain\*



We wandered around an old historical cemetery which was high on the hillside. Nothing particular to report about it, but it is the kind of place we tend to spend a lot of time discussing the history (-ies) gleaned from the grave stones. To us, fascinating.

Then we drove on to Reno, which welcomes you with “RENO: The Biggest Little City in the World.” It prides itself on being the place for quick marriages and easy divorces and, of course, gambling. A historical marker states that the city’s reputation as a divorce centre began in 1908 and gambling was legalized in 1931. Wedding chapels all over the place. One advertised its services loud and clear on a sidewalk sandwich board: Wedding Chapel.



There, I’ve made it easy for you. All you need to do is place a call! You can probably hire a bride or groom if you don’t have one yet. Next to that was a Subway sandwich board advertising their specialty drinks+! Yes, that sedate Subway corporation just down the street from you. When you’re in the gambling state, you’re allowed a little “fun!”

#### Wedding Chapel and Subway Sex\*

As to the casinos, they were even more and all of them vying with each other for customers by means of their entrances decorated with cheap lugubrious colours and images. As the heat was getting worse, we managed a walk along the Truckee River, but after that we sought the comfort of air-conditioned casinos with all their slot machines, arcades, county fair type games and even saw a circus trapeze show, not to forget their meal deals.

Somewhere in the city we came upon a plaque telling the origin of Levi’s jeans. In summary, it reads:

#### JACOB DAVIS’S TAILOR SHOP

This place marks the location... where, in 1871, the riveted work pants we now call blue jeans, were invented. On May 20, 1873...the American fashion icon Levi’s Jeans was born.

That’s the when and where of a fashion that may be iconic for most people, but that I despise as tasteless, a feeling not shared by Fran. I do not major in fashion statements, but allow me this one!

Leaving Reno behind, we headed north along NV Route 445 to Pyramid Lake with its Indian Reservation at the top. We were interested in seeing the exhibits in the Visitors Cultural Center. The building itself is of imaginative teepee-like rock construction that is obviously funded by Government, but, unfortunately, the whole establishment was closed, even though, according to the signs, it should have been open! Come on, Aborigines, get with it. If you don't plan to be open, cover your sign. We run into these situations too often; there's no excuse for it. If you want us to respect your culture, give us a reason! Why should we waste tax money on such underused facilities? We drove a long distance to see your stuff!

Pyramid Lake is the “residual body remaining from the prehistoric Great Lake Lahontan water body.” We drove for miles on what clearly used to be the bottom of a huge lake. Then 240 kms of very isolated roads. Came upon a small cluster of buildings with the road sign “Welcome to Nowhere.” Further down the road, there was one tiny town named Empire; it was a company town with a gypsum mine along Route 447.



Welcome to Nowhere, Nevada\*

From there we headed north-east back into CA and camped at the side of the road in Eagleville, CA (population 35), which is close to Lower Alkali Lake and, a little further, Upper Alkali Lake, both also dried up. The following morning we took a slow walk through the village and chatted amiably with a few residents. But even early in the morning the heat became oppressive, while Fran's knee problems “weren't improving,” as she put it. I think she meant, “getting worse.” It was actually a picturesque village with huge shade trees lining the road and some pretty houses with well-attended flower gardens. They suffered from the usual problems of small isolated villages: slowly losing their facilities. There was a picnic facility we could use free of charge, but next to it there was the sign: “Help save our water tower.” So, welcome to our facility, but do leave something behind apart from your garbage. But the village had not given up. On a large sign they called themselves “The Last Frontier” and were inviting people to an August jamboree under the epithet, “Where the West still Lives.” Good for them!

Drove on along Route 395 through very mountainous areas to Lakeview, OR, where we saw Old Perpetual, a geyser in a small area of rather grubby looking hot springs. In the 1920s, some people intended to use the therapeutic waters of the hot springs for patients at a sanatorium. They also had big plans for a golf course in order to attract wealthy tourists. Not much to show for it now but there are plans to revive a small hotel and restaurant. By the time we arrived, it was really getting too hot to do anything. So we spent several hours at a park enjoying a bit of shade under a tree.

By now we were tired of that heat and so just drove on and on and on in our air-conditioned vehicle. We drive very seldom with our AC on and prefer open windows, but it was just too much. On and on through more desert and small forest areas, again quite isolated, till we arrived in John Day. We were now halfway into OR. Walked around a bit in downtown of John Day, but when we saw the large overhead thermometer reading of 106 degrees, we decided to look for some air-conditioned relief! Found a very luxurious campground at the John Day River, electricity and all, which meant AC for us.

The next day—the 21<sup>st</sup> of July—we continued north along Route 375 through a lot of mountainous National Forests and stopped briefly at Battle Mountain, the scene of the Bannock War on July 8, 1873, between Indians and settlers. It was in protest against White encroachment, the last major uprising in the Pacific Northwest. But the US Army brought up mighty troops and weaponry that led to the defeat of the Indians. Their leader, Egan, was subsequently betrayed and his scalp delivered to the US camp.

It was just too hot to linger. So, on we traveled to Pendleton, where Route 375 intersects with I-84. Spent some time in the cool comfort of the local tourist office. The people there were very helpful and energetic in promoting the must-see things in their town. But it was just plain too hot so we drove on north along Route 11 and crossed the border into WA state.

Drove through some large grain fields to Walla Walla, WA. A large thermometer showed 110 degrees; so we just drove on. We simply were not enjoying the trip anymore and badly wanted to get out of this heat. Didn't realize how we were abusing our motor home by just driving on and on in the heat. We were climbing and still using the AC when the warning light went on. Turned out we were low on oil. We weren't close to any gas station, but a helpful motorcyclist gave us some.

We passed up a camping spot at a nice WA State Park, because they had no hook ups. In this heat it was impossible to sleep without the AC. So we ended up in a not-so-nice RV park in Pomeroy, but at least it had electricity! I do not remember the thinking that made us head for Pomeroy, for it was out of our way and it took minor roads to get there. That was, of course, our normal style, but we were in a hurry to get out of this heat belt and passed by many very interesting towns and natural sights just to get out. So how and why did we end up in Pomeroy?

The next day, the same oppressive heat all day. Drove through more desert and also through well-irrigated farm areas. Stopped early in the day at Bridgeport State Park which is at the Chief Joseph Dam on Coulee Lake. A very cold lake but, ah, what a refreshing swim!

Crossed the Columbia River once again and drove through quite a few small towns. Entered the forest area and the coolness (only 85 degrees) was absolutely delightful. Stopped at the Diablo Dam in the North Cascades National Park. Great displays of various rocks in the park. Diablo Lake is an unusually bright green colour because of the rocks rubbing each other into silt and then from the reflection of the sun. Camped in the Colonial Park campground in the National Park. Now the price was down to \$6 for lifetime pass holders!

We were tempted to try a swim but changed our mind when we found out that the lake is *glacier* water, only several hours old glacier water, to be exact! We spent a relaxing day in the cool (82 degrees) shade. Enjoyed a few good campfires again. Went to a short ranger slideshow program in the evening. If you ever stay in national parks in the US, be sure to avail yourself of ranger programmes; they are usually highly interesting and helpful in understanding your environment.

Celebrated the better weather with a morning campfire. Then drove onto Gorge Dam and the Newhalen Park Visitor Center. Saw a good film on the Wilderness. Walked down several short trails. Now we are at the Skagit River which flows to Puget Sound. Seattle has been getting most of its electric power from here since 1916. Camped at Raser State Park.

On July 26, we crossed the border and were now back in BC. We were very fortunate to find a camping spot at Cultus Lake Provincial Park near Chilliwack. Had a lovely swim in the lake even though the lake bottom was a bit more rocky than we had remembered. Spent part of the day wandering around the old downtown area in Chilliwack. Visited Cheryl, Jeff, and baby Jack Gates, old-time friends. Cheryl suffers from some neurological disease and is basically bed ridden, but she is amazingly positive in her Christian attitude towards life. Enjoyed an evening campfire and again in the morning around breakfast as well as prayer time. A wonderful way to start the day. Spent some time at the library and park in downtown Chilliwack. Enjoyed a Chinese buffet. Parked in the Walmart parking lot in Sardis overnight.

The next day, spent time at Fraserway RV in Abbotsford, where we bought our RV, in order to look at their new motor homes. Still very happy with our own! No need for an upgrade. Visited Fran's cousin Auke & Teresa Prins in Abbotsford. Then went to Matsqui Provincial Park, under the Abbotsford-Mission Bridge, one of our favourite picnic and campgrounds, where Sarah, Tinus & Joanna's daughter, and hubby Eddie & Tinarah came to visit us. Weddings are conducted under that bridge for its romantic environment. "Camped" on the street in front of Tinus & Joanna's house in Mission overnight.

The next day being Sunday, we went to a small United Church in Mission, where Tinus used to preach. Spent the afternoon and evening with the Wolferts in Surrey. Slept on the street in front of Elim Village, a Christian senior housing complex where the Wolferts live, after getting evicted from the Walmart parking lot in Surrey!

Left very early on Monday morning and stopped at the Russian Bakery in Burnaby for my low-carb diet. Successful in beating the traffic rush and got to Bute & Davie before 8 A.M. We didn't want to make our tenants-for-the-month, the Van Werkhovens, feel rushed about leaving; so we thought we'd wait til 9 A.M. before ringing the doorbell. While our eyes were

closed for before-breakfast prayers, they must have left the parking lot and driven right past us! So we never saw them this year, but, once again, they left the apartment spotless for us.

We had an absolutely wonderful trip in which we again admired God's handiwork in both nature and culture, the latter through human activity. But it taught us a lesson: Never go far from the West Coast during July and August. The heat is just too much in the rest of the continent. There is enough on the West Coast for camping, travel and visiting purposes.

### *The Arctic World (July-August 2004)*

Our first really major trip in the motor home saw us on the road to Canada's far north, the Yukon and Northwest Territories. I will only tell you about or merely list some of the more outstanding points of interest. As with previous trips, Fran kept a journal. Much of the following information comes from that journal.

We entered Prince George during such a heavy rain that we actually hydroplaned on the bridge into town, but were restrained from sliding into dangerous territory by a ridge built into the roadway. Stayed overnight with Jim & Wilma in their retirement home in the middle of the bush, quite a distance from the city, where they counted bears among their neighbours.

In the small town of Mackenzie saw the world's largest tree crusher. It weighs 175 tons and was used to clear land for the W. A. C. Bennett Dam. Stopped at the Peace Canyon Dam with the largest turbines in all of North America. Yes, apart from its size, Canada has a few things bigger than the US. Sorry to disappoint all my American readers!

Stayed in a campground at Fort St. John and had a group of donkeys tethered right next to us. They do bray! Fort St. John itself is the oldest non-native settlement on the BC mainland. It was the site of the first trading post established by Alexander Mackenzie.

We met up with and joined the Alaska Highway. This road is so full of well documented history that, if you are really interested, check it out on the Internet or read some of the many books on the subject. An interesting feature is that, while Fort St. John claims to be the largest city on the Highway, Whitehorse and Fairbanks are larger! There is also controversy as to where the road actually terminates, something like the western end of the Trans Canada.

The population of Fort Nelson doubles in the wintertime, when construction vehicles have access to remote sites by driving over frozen tundra. They cannot get there through the summer mud.

As we proceeded, we stumbled upon Liard Holt Springs with its three levels of heating: hot, hotter and hottest. During construction of the Alaska Highway, the place was reserved once a week for women to swim in. Rumour has it that men used cable cars to cross the canyon to get a better look. Seems like we men never change!

Entered the Yukon at km 2, 263 from Vancouver. The territory is larger than California but has a population of on about 30,000—1/1000<sup>th</sup> of CA's 30 million!

Visited the Signpost Forest at Watson City with its more than 50,000 signs! It seems such a random location in the middle of “nowhere,” but there is a historical reason for it. The first sign was put up by Carl Lindley of Danville IL, a homesick US Army engineer working on the Alaska Highway. He erected a sign with the name of his hometown and the distance from it. Others followed his lead and the rest is history.... There is a place with the equipment to make your own sign, which we did and hammered it safely under an overhang to protect it from the weather. It features(d) our names, birthplaces and website. Ten years later in 2014, I wonder if it is still there and, if so, still legible.



Signpost Forest\*

John Hanging Our Sign\*

Watson Lake, Yukon

As we drove on, we entered smoke country, heavy smoke. It was a fire summer with smoke covering the entire place, it seemed. Much of the countryside and the mountains were covered by it and thus deprived us of the colourful scenery tourist literature promised us.

Whitehorse is a fascinating place. At the Visitors' Centre we heard Robert Service poetry read and have been interested in reading it ever since, especially his famous “The Cremation of Sam Magee.” We also learnt there that Flora Shaw had been part of the gold rush as a reporter and wrote quite a few articles on the subject. She became the wife of Lord Lugard, the first colonial governor of Northern Nigeria in 1900. She is the one who coined the name “Nigeria.” What a random connection!

We drove on to Carmacks along the Klondike Highway going north. Stopped at Three Sisters' Café (similar name to our neighbour in the old Alberni) and were treated to many fascinating stories of life in the community by the waitress. She said winters have warmed up. It no longer gets below 40C! As we entered the land of the “Midnight Sun,” we noticed that the sun is truly still a bright ball at 10 pm. Quite an experience.

Stayed overnight in Pelly Crossing at an Aboriginal campground under construction and, so far, free of charge. Spent the evening wandering by foot through the village on the reserve. As seen in so many Aboriginal communities, there are some very large public buildings paid for by Government. As the journey progressed, we began to realize the fortunes governments spend on these communities, while we saw very little signs of Aboriginal enterprise apart from fishing. Most of these communities tend to be unkempt, with messy yards strewn with old vehicles, boats, discarded junk and toys. Very discouraging, to say the least.

Klondike Highway had a lot of gravel and got our windshield nicked. Not being aware that by catching this early, we would not have to replace the shield, we let it go for months until it did have to be replaced. Thanks for BCAA and its insurance.

As we were nearing Dawson City, we were led by a pilot car through thick smoke, with miles of huge piles of tailings left over from gold mining. Met a person in the Anglican church there who used to work with Tom Wyatt in Kelowna, sister Bo's husband.

Spent a couple of days in Dawson City to take advantage of the many excellent historical tours organized by Parks Canada. Especially enjoyed the visit to and readings at the Robert Service house. All the signboards present everywhere gave us a lot of insight into the Gold Rush and its psychology. Check the Internet for its amazingly colourful history.

Toured Dredge no. 4, which is the largest wooden hull dredge (industrial hydraulic gold mining boat) in the world! Yea, we love the big stuff!

Drove up the Midnight Dome at 2911 feet. Saw only smoke as thick as harmatan, thicker than in Alaska, thus thicker than America's! Ah, we Canadians, we're finally getting somewhere!

With the BC-Alaska border long remaining vague, the RCMP helped establish Canadian authority in the past. Throughout the trip, the history of Canadian-US border disputes frequently cropped up as significant threats to Canadian authority in the past.

Rented the only van available in Dawson City to go up the Dempster Highway together with five young people from Australia, Ontario and Vancouver. Because of the condition of the road, we didn't want to take our RV. Everywhere, smoke made for poor visibility. In terms of flowers and colour, we saw only the interminably long rows of fireweed along the highway, but they were great and beautiful in that they provided much needed colour in the smoke-filled landscape.

Had lunch at point 350 km, about halfway up the highway and met John & Irene Vander Steen, former Nigeria colleagues now living in Ontario, in the only restaurant along the 700-kilometre road!



We write about many “crossings.” Well, we crossed the Arctic Circle with the sign “Welcome to the northern half of Canada.” After crossing the border into North West Territories, crossed the Mackenzie River and the Arctic Red River by ferry. In the summer, ferries; in the winter, ice bridges that will carry any weight and are maintained by government.

At the Arctic Circle\*

Finally arrived at the end of the road at Inuvik (population 3451) at midnight. Children still playing outside. At this time of the year “the sunset and the sunrise share the sky.” We slept in the rental; the young people, in their tents. Never saw so many and such large mosquitoes.

It is a fascinating town. Homes built on stilts to protect the permafrost from the house heat radiating downwards. Water and gas flow through above-ground “utilidors,” a network of covered pipes that crisscross the town. We talked to quite a few Inuit people, all of whom had interesting stories, histories and observations about oil pipes, government policies, high cost of living and houses. All were unfailingly friendly, much like Nigerians.

On the way back to Dawson City, met a couple at the Arctic Circle playing chess. A year ago, they had played on the equator. And we thought that we traveled a lot! Continuing our journey, we crossed the Yukon River by ferry and took the *Top of the World Highway* into Alaska. Nothing but smoke along the road and even an occasional fire. Crossed into Alaska at Poker (population 2—just border guards). As we drove deeper into the state, the smoke began to diminish and we could see more of our environment.

At Visitors’ Centre in Anchorage, we learned much about Alaskan history, including WW II history between Japanese and US in Aleutian Islands. Japanese had taken 800 Aleutians to Japan. Since a Dutch vessel was the first European ship to enter the harbour of a smallish island in the Aleutian lineup, it was named Dutch Harbor. Current population of 5,000 is 80% of the entire Aleutian people. It is now the largest fisheries port in the U.S. by volume caught. Everywhere there are signs of Russian history and its Orthodox Church.

We were told that Russia sold Alaska to US, because they preferred US as neighbour to the British. Russia sold this land, because it could not get enough Russians interested to make it a viable colony. The now American Alaskans were not interested in statehood, but the military did and they were the majority voters. We were told that many Alaskan residents resented the

move into statehood and felt they were dragged into it by the military who did not have the same personal interest in the state.

Met Ellen Schripsema-Sharpe (Calvin '63) at Anchorage CRC. We remembered her from Mission Club. In Cooper Landing, a small town in the middle of nowhere, we met Marjorie Van Kooten, a Calvin grad ('58) from Lynden WA. At Hope, we met Diane Olthuis, a relative of the Edmonton Olthuis family, but she was from New Jersey and had lived in Hope for 20 years. She writes and publishes local interest materials. Dutch Bingo continues!

We watched "dipnet" fishing in Kenai. This kind of fishing is where "anglers stand on the bank or in the river and hold large nets in hopes that salmon will swim into them. It's a privilege enjoyed by Alaskan residents only and just for a brief few summer weeks."

At Seward, saw *MV Statendam*, a Holland-America cruise ship we often see in Vancouver.

At Denali National Park, Fran purchased a National Golden Passport for seniors. That's the one you've read about already and that gives her as a senior American citizen free entry into US Federal parks, forests, etc. I had obtained one a few years earlier while I was still a US resident. All passengers in a car with one card holder can enter any US national park free of charge. The card never expires. What a deal! We have often made use of it.

Drove to a town by name of North Pole and sent cards to our grandchildren.

At Delta Junction met up with the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. A maintenance centre.

Kathleen Lake. We were now back in the Yukon. Due to a glacier dam that broke some years ago, there are now fresh water salmon called Kokanee in the lake.

We stopped in Klukshyu, an Aboriginal fishing village. Bought bannock or fry bread from an old lady who told stories about life long ago. She was forced to send her children to residential schools in Whitehorse. Such a shameful history. The government has officially apologized for it. Hopefully we can soon move on and together build a better Canada.

Haines, a US town in the panhandle. At the end of the Gold Rush, a border dispute with Canada/UK prompted the US to build a fort to showcase the Army's strength in case Canada/UK had any ideas. There are still canons there aimed at Canada.

We took a ferry to Skagway, where we kept meeting up with Robert Service events. On the ferry itself, I participated in an impromptu reading, while we also attended another reading in the town. Also joined a tour led by a man who used to live in Jos, Nigeria! Cruise ships dock here, up to five at a time. The town's population then swells from 400 to 10,000! We ourselves docked there a few years later. We had to take special pictures of the Skagway airport, for Kevin had a special navigational interest in the place. The runway stops abruptly at a sharp drop into the ocean. During our cruise stop there some years later, Kevin saw it with his own eyes.

Atlin BC—Interesting little place with lots of Gold Rush history. In 1910, cruise ships docked there with international tourists aboard. One of them—cruise ship, that is—is dry docked there to testify to this history. Met a 90-year old lady who had lived in Atlin for 67 years. She took a two-year break in Surrey, Metro Vancouver, but found it such a horrible place, she returned to Atlin. She never left the place again.

Back to Makluk Annie's, where we had also camped on our way to Dawson City. This time splurged on a delicious salmon bake dinner. The owner takes guests out on the lake for a ride and then gives a Christian testimony. A captive audience, if ever there was one.

We left the Alaska Highway and turned on to Highway 37, the BC Cassiar-Steward Highway. Turned off to visit Steward, another Gold Rush town that, like so many of them, used to have a population of 10,000 at one time, but now has only 400. Across the border into Alaska is Hyder, a town of 89. There was no US Customs—or, at least, not at that time—but there was a Canadian post that opened only after a store in Hyder started selling guns. Canada did not want them imported. We did cross into Hyder to walk their boardwalk in the vain hope of seeing some bears. We met a Dutch female tourist there, who was insulted that we detected her Dutch accent.

We found ourselves in the First Nation village of Gitanyow. There were many historical markers with extensive historical accounts. There had been lots of warfare between various First Nation tribes, belying the myth that early Indian life was so peaceful.

On Highway 16, near Terrace BC, we saw a little Orthodox-style roadside church that had been ruined by floods from the Skeena River. The Terrace CRC had rebuilt this church to mark BC's centennial.

We went as foot passengers on a cable ferry crossing the rapidly flowing Skeena River and walked around in the little village of Usk. Met a woman, Solveig Thornton, and her children at Shekinah farm. She was surprised we didn't immediately know that "Shekinah" is a Biblical Hebrew word meaning "dwelling or settling." She was an ex-hippie who had seven children before she married. Several of her children had been taken from her by Social Services. She became a Christian when her husband was healed of arthritis. She'd had some contact with good CRC folk, both at church and school. She claimed to be homeschooling the kids who were now with her (we met 5, ages 5-17) but she seemed to be a very strange disciplinarian. She said she was sort of Pentecostal Amish, but realized there's no such thing. They were all dressed in what she called "thrift store Russian style." Her husband, Richard, works as a carpenter "when the phone rings." The family proudly showed us their farm which is in worse shape than "Old McDonald's farm": chickens, ducks, rabbits, goats & pigs. Apart from the pigs, sounds like our Jos animal farm. But take note of the tremendous government expense in keeping this ferry service going for just a few hippies who thus are able to live such privileged lives. It was all free of charge and at any time any day. Unfortunately we have no pictures to prove this story. Our film ran out and the extra rolls were in the RV across the river! Yes, pre-digital camera days.

Phoned Joe & Joyce Vander Kwaak and went to their house for coffee. Joe was in Fran's class at Calvin and a fellow teacher. It turned out he knew the Thornton family well and, in his capacity as a government educational officer, had had some frustrating differences of opinion with Solveig in how to educate children. Spent the evening around a campfire in a campground, with several people dropping by for chats, including a musician who was happy to find an appreciative and welcoming audience. Needing some more mileage on her pedometer, Fran spent the late evening gathering stray grocery carts on the Wal-Mart parking lot where we spent the night. It was her way of thanking Wal-Mart for their hospitality to campers all over the continent.

Before we started our trip, nephew John Steenbergen warned us to replace our tires, but they looked fine to me. He is an R&M man who knows too much, I thought. If a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, a lot of it is an expensive thing: you're always spending money on preventing things that may not happen for a long time. So I ignored his warning, though I did not forget it and quite often thought about it along lonely roads like *Top of the World Highway*. We were barely on our way out of Terrace to Prince Rupert on BC's north coast, when we got a flat in the rear tire. Drove back to town on the remaining three rear tires and replaced all the rear ones. We were so grateful for God's protection against my foolishness! Just think: all these miles on poor tires along bad and lonely roads and nothing happened. We were close to a city and there it happened. Now we had only to worry about the front tires—or so we thought. Just read on.

On to Prince Rupert, especially Cow Bay area. The town does not amount to much, but we found the harbour and its lore interesting.

To celebrate Cynthia and Joanna's birthdays on August 12, 2004 we sailed on MV *Queen of Prince Rupert* to the Queen Charlotte Islands. On the boat we met a Haida Indian woman who was re-learning her language. Docked at Skidegate Landing and took a taxi to Queen Charlotte City. There are 150 islands in the Queen Charlottes, but driveable roads on only the two main ones, Graham and Moresby. The total population of all the Queen Charlottes is 5,000 of which half are Haida Gwaii First Nations and half are a mixture of many different people. A Japanese tourist couple drove us to the very nice looking Indian village of Skidegate and then took us back to the ferry terminal for the overnight trip back to Prince Rupert.

Back to Terrace and from there we took the Nisga'a Highway to the Nisga'a Memorial Lava Beds Provincial Park. These lava beds are the result of a volcanic eruption in the mid 1700s, which actually pushed the Nass River from one side of the valley to the other. It is estimated that 2,000 Nisga'a died. Driving and walking through the lava beds seems similar to what I imagine the moonscape looks like.

It was animal time for us. A small bear ran across the road right in front of our RV. Two seconds later would have meant a collision. Saw a small scrawny coyote right at our RV door the next morning.

Drove on to New Aiyansh, in Nisga'a Provincial Park, B.C. (turnout at the Vetter Falls), headquarters of Nisga'a First Nation. At the time, they were the only B.C. Aboriginal group

that had signed a treaty with the BC government. There are a total of 195 First Nations groups in B.C., so there are still lots of treaties to be signed. We talked to two white construction workers and a white woman working for the Nisga'a government. They all spoke highly of the treaty and how things were going. The Nisga'a nation now owns only 10% of their original holdings. About 900 of their people live in New Aiyansh, some 2500 in the whole Nass River valley. There are about 5000 Nisga'a people worldwide. The language was written down by missionaries in the 1970s. The town's pride is a very pretty and expensive town centre--another tax payer project. We also checked on the only local grocery store. It had just about all junk foods. It gave us a bad taste—with pun intended-- as to the kind of culture of these people. They seem to have adopted the worst of white dietary ways.

We drove on to Gitwinksihlkw, another Nisga'a village, where we saw an elementary school, a community center, a post office, and some small shops. Everything was closed and nowhere was there a sign about opening times. Saw a fishing wheel in operation on the river and a native swinging bridge that was in disrepair and closed off. Stopped at the Visitors' Centre in the middle of the Provincial Park. This was the first Visitors' Centre on our trip to charge an admission fee (\$2) and it was run in third world style, par excellence! Run by a woman who knew nothing and who had a kid who climbed all over the few exhibits. Shameful. Couldn't believe we were in Canada. Where is that native pride we are always told about? We read a poster of Nisga'a Chief Joseph Gosnell's Address to the B.C. Legislature on December 2, 1998. That was indeed a *very* powerful and eloquent address.

Then we drove on to Kitimat and Kitimat Village. This was where cousin Jan Harm did surveyor work when the town was first being planned in the early 1950s. It claims to be the youngest city in all of North America. We met two local Indian fellows who told us they didn't think signing treaties was a good idea. "You never know where the money goes," they said, an oblique reference to deep-running corruption among First Nations in Canada. They gave us a big pink salmon. We were suspicious of how they had caught it so quickly because we saw lots of dead spawned fish floating in the water, so we ended up throwing it away after they left. Attended a Sunday morning service in a Presbyterian Church, where we found copies of the CRC's *Today*, a monthly meditational booklet translated into many languages and published in numerous countries. Also went to see the largest living Sitka Spruce tree in BC—42.2 metres (139.26 ft) tall; 11.4 metres (37.62 ft) in circumference, big enough to provide for nine average houses. Ran into the Vander Kwaaks again and spent the whole afternoon chatting with them in a park with tea from the RV.

The next day, back to Terrace and then east to Hazelton. Even though we were told dipnet fishing was only an Alaskan thing, we saw some fantastic dipnet fishing from a rocky island in the middle of a river canyon at Moricetown. This is a joint project between the Federal Ministry of Fisheries and the local Indian communities. They tag the fish and record their numbers. Sounds as if there is lots of corruption in every aspect of the fishing industry. Met a lady staff member who also emphasized the corruption scene.

Stopped at Smithers Visitors' Centre, but we both decided we were "*uitgekeken*" (we'd seen enough) and it was time to head home. Drove through Smithers, Telkwa and Houston (Francis Lieuwen's hometown) and checked out their CRCs and Christian schools.

Drove on to Prince George. We had come full circle. Walked around the campus of UNBC (University of Northern B.C.) and were surprised to see so many people there. It turned out to be a special 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. Heard a bit of a speech and listened to a choral rendition of “God Save the Queen.” Hadn’t realized before how militaristic this song is. Met the CRC chaplains at UNBC – Neil & Virginia Miller (daughter of the late Charles Miller, Calvin history prof) Lettinga. They seem to be a good couple for this position.

Had supper at Jim & Wilma’s house. Jack, Mary, and Laura Beekma, friends from Nigeria now living in Prince George, came over for dessert. Had a nice “*gezellige*” evening in an actual house instead of an RV or campsite! The next day, we went with Jim to his Thrift Store and then went on our way with another jar of Jim’s delicious smoked fish.

Car trouble at McLease Lake, about 40 km north of Williams Lake. Remember the hint I gave earlier on this trip? The car stopped with no warning; same problem we had in March on the Interstate 5 on our way to Seattle. Called BCAA and they sent a truck which towed us to Canadian Tire in Williams Lake. They couldn’t really find anything wrong, but decided it could be the crank sensor. They emphasized that it was an educated guess, since the computer showed nothing. However, that part, they said, is a weakness in this kind of vehicle. They sent for the part to Vancouver, so we had to wait till the next day for it to arrive. It was installed and off we were at 11 A.M. Cost us some \$400+ without any type of guarantee since they had warned us of the guess.

After three hours on the road, the same thing happened again near Lytton in the Fraser Canyon while Fran was driving! She hardly ever drives and doesn’t like driving, so why did this have to happen again at just that time? A very frightening experience for her. No public phones around and cell phones don’t work in this mountainous area. It took two and a half hours before the tow truck showed up. He towed us all the way to a GM garage in Hope, about 130 km. The good thing was that, for once, I got to see the majestic Fraser Canyon better than usually, since I wasn’t driving and thus enjoyed the luxury of looking around.

The mechanic couldn’t figure out what was wrong. He said definitely it couldn’t have been the crank sensor that caused the problem, and that possibly it was fuel pump related, another common feature of our type of vehicle. After four hours of idling and observing, the mechanic advised us just to go our way and hope for the best. So that’s what we did and, of course, we said a few extra prayers along the way!

To help pass the time while our car was fast idling in the garage, we went to the Visitors’ Centre and heard a lecture on the Kettle Valley Railroad. It was built between 1910-1916 and operated in interior B.C. for 50 years. Some of its wooden trestles have been preserved and used for bike trails now.

We arrived home safely around 8 pm on August 21, 2004, after seven weeks on the road. Phew, what an adventure! We were more than ready to settle down for a while.

Wherever we had wandered we saw signs of missionary activity in the past and clear evidence of Christian influence in the many cemeteries we checked out. In spite of the horrible news about residential schools, there has been a lot of genuine missionary heroism in the North to which we pay homage by means of this poem written by H.A. Cody in *Northern Lights*, published in the interests of the Diocese of Yukon, Canada in Nov-Feb, 1934.

### An Apostle of the North

We saw him come—there was no loud acclaim;  
 He stood among the crowd, so frail and spare;  
 His humble garb marked his still humbler mien,  
 Whilst gently waved his scanty, silvery hair.  
 He stood alone, as stands some ancient pine  
 Amidst a stirring land and busy mart,  
 And strove to grasp the new and unknown ways,  
 Which were so strange to his intrepid heart.  
 But as I gazed upon that trembling form,  
 And marked the lisping words which slowly fell,  
 A vision rose before me, grand and clear,  
 Which thrilled my soul like some sweet vesper bell.  
 I saw a lonely region, cold and drear,  
 I saw the sad wild natives of the North  
 Pass slowly before me, Christless, base, forlorn.  
 And as I thus beheld there passed straightforth  
 A lonely man—ay, more than common man—  
 ‘Twas one of God’s great heroes, brave and strong,  
 Who gave up home and friends and comforts all,  
 And for Christ’s sake passed forth to conquer wrong;  
 In lonely wilds, in wigwams foul and drear,  
 Midst sickness, famine, plague, and sore distress,  
 He pressed straight on, true soldier of the Cross,  
 His only aim to comfort and to bless.  
 And so he stands as stood his Master, Christ;  
 Brave leader, he, no matter what the cost’  
 True teacher he, whose every word was love;  
 Good Shepherd of God’s children strayed and lost.  
 And this we know, when broken lies the bowl,  
 The afterglow of his devoted life  
 Will lead men on to do and dare for Christ,  
 And win for Him through darkness, pain, and strife.

(Written when Mr. Cody first saw bishop Bompas arrive at Whitehorse in June, 1904, two years before the Bishop’s death.)

Hagiography? Yes, that's part of it, but that does not tell the full story of genuine missionary passion. Too negative about Aboriginal culture? Definitely out of tune with today's politically correct tendency to recognize only its positive aspects with a coat of syncretism.

Just a few interesting facts about our journey:

- We drove 11,336 km in our RV and 1,500 in that rental van.
- Ferries used: North West Territories Ferries, Alaska Marine Highway Ferries, and B.C. Ferries.
- We were towed about 200 km.
- We walked 258 km; 5 km per day.
- We biked 63 km.
- John lost 1 lb and Fran gained ½ lb.
- Camped free 36 nights.
- Had 12 campfires.
- Expenses:
  - Paid for camping 15 nights (average cost Cdn \$14.00)
  - Spent about \$1 a day for propane gas for stove & fridge.
  - Our grocery bill was only a bit higher than normal.
  - Restaurant prices were about the same as at home.
  - Gasoline costs averaged Cdn \$1 a litre (U.S. \$2.75 for gallon) and with our motor home going about 5 km to the litre (12.5 miles to the gallon)--well, you do the math!

### *Another Monster Journey (January-March 2005)*

This section contains the stories of a journey to five countries that took from January 20 - March 22, 2005, a full two months, a "monster" in terms of time and distance, but definitely not in quality! Again, many of the details come from Fran's travel journals.

#### *Nigeria*

We flew from Vancouver straight to London Heathrow and spent pre-arranged time with Ruthie Koops-Campbell who was living there. Remember, she was a close family friend during our Nigeria years.

From there it was on to Nigeria. It was the first time we landed at the new Abuja airport. Everything worked so well and efficiently that we were taken by pleasant surprise and had no grounds for even a single complaint. That was not the way we remembered Nigerian airports.

We were met at the airport by Rev. Joseph Ajaver, who was now the CRCN lead pastor in the Abuja area. He was unusual among CRCN pastors in that he was the only Tiv man amongst them, but he seemed always to have been well accepted. He was sympathetic to Pentecostalism and desired a revival in the CRCN. You may remember that I had discussions with him on

that subject long ago. Today, he is the pastor of the Jalingo church, Jalingo being the capital of Taraba State, the main CRCN base.

After a few hours of sleep, we indulged in a proper Nigerian meal that had us salivating all the way. Though I was following the Atkins low-carb diet, I decided to forget it during this visit. There would be no way. Had supper at Bernhard & Annemarie (Verhage) Vander Vlis, who were operating something like a CRC-type institute of church and society in the city. Annemarie was a former student of Fran at Hillcrest in the mid-80s. Bernhard is Kevin's age, but we were good friends, both of us having a streak of rebellion in our veins.

That Sunday morning we attended Ajaver's church and remember his description of the way Muslims take over traditional villages and establish a Muslim presence. I related that story somewhere in my series.

We observed many tables with umbrellas along the sidewalks and suspected they might be for drinking tea, but, no, they were cell phone stations! For 20 cents you could call anywhere in Nigeria. Nigeria has basically skipped the ineffective landline telephone system and is now headlong into cell phones, even in remote villages. We once had a phone call in Vancouver from Lydia's mother, Na'omi, in Nyankwala! We have a picture of Fran sitting under such an umbrella, chatting over a cell phone outside the gate of WATS in Lagos. You'll soon hear more about that gate. Hitched a ride to Jos, where we were booked for the Mountain View Guesthouse (MV), that was still under the management of Mary, James' wife whom Fran had trained for that position. Ah, how good to be with our old Jos friends again. We would, of course, see many more.

Throughout our stay, Lydia would pop in regularly on her way from work and we would have long chats about life, the family, her parents, work, etc. She lent us her cell phone and was thoroughly amused when she had to teach us how to use it: Africa teaching Westerners their own technology. Well, it may be Western, but it is hardly ours! Thanks, Lydia, for teaching us.

Wiebe's 5000 meter track-and-field record of 1991 at Hillcrest was still on the board. No one had yet succeeded to dethrone him with his 16:54.5.

We asked Asabe to cook one of her great meals and shared it in the MV Guesthouse common room with Asabe and family, James & Mary and family and Ibrahim & Ladi along with theirs. Had an absolutely wonderful evening with these friends. James, in fact, insisted we use his car for the duration of our visit! How helpful that was! Prof. and Mrs. Ishaya Audu came all the way from Zaria to greet us. We had dinner with Dr. and Mrs. Miner Selcan, a businessman supporter of Muslim evangelism. There were my former Nigerian colleagues, Istifanus Habila from the ICS and Dr. Bot of the WHC unit of CHAN.

One afternoon, Asabe sent her son Iliya to guide us to her house for a meal that really was a sampler of all the food items she used to cook for us. It was indeed an unforgettable treat.

Actually, there was no end to our socializing. The Orkars always excel in hosting with their huge dinners. Caleb Ahima, now General Secretary of TEKAN, was no slouch either. Both the Orkars and Ahimas hosted us together with Peter and Jan Lanser from First CRC in Grand Rapids, who frequent Nigeria for development projects. We were so happy to see Matthew Arins Adams, our former translator. John Samci was still fairly healthy. I always loved chatting with him. He died in 2012. We spent time with “Timothy O.,” the Nigeria publisher of our series. One day we walked into his office and who did we find there but Bill Kieselhorst? He was a former Nigeria missionary now living in Portland OR. Of course, some of our former missionary colleagues invited us as well, especially Kathy and the Palmers, and so did the Seinens and Persenaires, our former MV neighbours.

Then there was the Unijos crowd. Musa Gaiya whom you met at our house on Godwin Street, had us over. Unfortunately, his wife, Nanlap, later succumbed to kidney disease. He has since married an Irish lady. There were the Hellemans and the McCains of IICS, as well as Phil and Vicki Ostien. Phil, an American lawyer born to missionary parents in Jos, concentrated on sharia developments and has shared a lot of his research with me over the years, for which I am very thankful. I quote him liberally in my series. For some reason, he never reciprocated along that line. Probably this is due to secular scholarship restraints; mine is too missionary oriented.

A very special visit was to Machunga, my original ICS Board Chairman, a saint of a man whom both of us love(d). His dear wife had passed away some years ago and he was now completely bed ridden but in the good hands of his children and grandchildren in Jos. That was the last time we met. Dandaura was in the same class with us as Machunga, very special and dearly loved. I have described both saints for you in Volume 2 and 3. He, too, was now bed ridden and we never met again.

I really just have to quit listing all the friends we met or who hosted us. No end to them. We were busy to the extreme. But, sorry, here’s a couple more that I *must* mention. First of all, we had dinner at Shehu Galadima’s house. He was a convert from Islam and a typical Hausa by culture in all his behaviour, including a degree of arrogance. I was fascinated by this aggressive now-Christian preacher who restlessly traversed the North looking for new converts. He received a small stipend from COCIN, but made most of his money selling literature and CDs. He lived in the centre of Tudun Wada, a poor area of Jos, in a house he built himself and to which we donated the galvanized tin roof. Good thing his driver came to pick us up, for we would never have found it. He served us “*gwote*,” a traditional Plateau stew that comes close to Fran’s meatball soup in texture.

The second were Ivan and Jennifer Rasch, Lutheran missionaries. Ivan was the son of Wally and Betty Rasch. Wally had died. Remember him traveling home in a hospital bed through the streets? Into her 70s, Betty was the sole caregiver to their son Michael, now in his 40s and almost totally disabled by muscular dystrophy. Last we heard, they were living in St. Louis MS.

Dr. Dennis Ityavyar, my former WHC Chairperson, invited me to deliver a speech at a seminar he had organized between Christians and Muslims on February 9, 2005. This was one

of the few opportunities for me ever to speak directly to Muslim leaders. I introduced my series and then sold some books and CDs. I donated copies to some Muslim leaders. Before the end of that particular session, someone had already copied the CD and was offering it for sale! Afterwards, Ityavyar invited us to a post-seminar dinner party that included one Muslim male staff who was very friendly throughout the event. However, Fran was taken aback when, at the end, people took leave of each other, mostly by shaking hands. When Fran reached out for his hand, he withdrew, saying that he did not shake hands with women. Fran was aware of that tradition but had never encountered it personally in such a blunt way.



John Delivering the Lecture\*

As to the lecture itself, it was entitled “Introducing a Christian Alternative to Secularism.” After introducing and summarizing the series, I spoke about Secularism, its origin and its definitions, after which I described a few relevant Kuyperian insights such as the comprehensive nature of religion, religion as the foundation of all of life, the religious nature of mankind, the myth of neutrality, the human status and function as vice-gerent or *khalifat*, pluralism. I reminded my audience of Jesus’ statement about us first taking the beam out of our own eyes and then the splinter from a neighbour’s eye. I ended with a final warning:

If you don’t want Secularism to overtake the country and have your religion restricted to a small space, you had better take this bull by the horns. Neither Muslims nor Christians want to see a repeat of history, where Secularism forces itself upon the foolish adherents of our two major religions, first as a corrective, then as a replacement and finally as an oppressor. That, if you don’t watch it, lays before you. It happened in the West; it can happen here.

I also had an opportunity to address the TCNN student body once again. You may recall that during our previous visit, they were very hostile to our Christian-Muslim project, while the Jos bookshops were fearful of stocking the first volume. Things had turned around, for they had now read the next two volumes as well and had become more accepting. I explained once

again that my battle was against that old demon of dualism with the resultant reduction of the Gospel to a minor slice of life. I emphasized that this perspective was an unfortunate part of the missionary heritage they had received from missionaries who had imbibed it as members of Western culture. In addition, this dualism makes it difficult for Christians to understand the Muslim push for sharia and makes it difficult for Muslims to understand the Christian religion. Then I summarized some Kuyprian perspectives similar to my Ityavyar lecture of February 9 in which I advocated necessary building blocks for new parameters from which to construct a healthier approach to the Muslim challenge.

I was also given an opportunity to address the Reformed denominational class at TCNN, a class that was held on a weekly basis for students of each denomination to help them keep in touch with their own tradition. The Reformed group was by far the largest, for there were several Reformed and Presbyterian denominations represented by the students. On a more intimate basis I reviewed the previous lecture and engaged in energetic dialogue with the group. I ended up by suggestion that we need to be realistic and not expect ever to live in perfect and relaxed peace with Muslims. We should work towards an “uneasy peace” and a “tension management regime,” which should be better than a “graveyard peace,” a term I overheard during the February 9 seminar.

Obed Minchakpu, a Christian journalist who features frequently in US Christian publications, including *Christianity Today*, interviewed me for two hours. I have no idea whether anything of it was ever published. I have quoted him liberally as well in my series. However, on this very day that I am reviewing this chapter, eight years after that visit, Minchakpu sent me a review of the first three volumes of my series that he had published in the online newspaper the *Daily Post* of August 7, 2013. I was happy to read that he ended up with a positive recommendation for Nigerians to consider my offering of a new set of parameters within which they might consider possible solutions to Nigeria’s intractable religious problems. Through such ways, the series continues to receive attention from Nigerians.

But our *main* task during this Jos visit was to destroy, due to their confidential and personal nature, my four cabinets of paper files of research materials that I had been building up ever since coming to Nigeria. I had used them gratefully during my ICS years especially, but now it was time to destroy them. I first thought to sort through them, but then decided that it would take more time than we had available. We hired a fellow who burned the whole lot in a place designed for such fires on the CRC compound. We just saved a few select files. We gave some of the filing cabinets away to James and, if I’m not mistaken, some to the CRCN Secretariat.

After all the lecturing, socializing and burning, we took a “luxury bus” to Lagos. Quite an experience. All the front seats were reserved for gun-toting policemen who had to protect us from armed robbers along the way. The bus was full. The trip started with a typical Nigerian flamboyant Christian prayer. Along the way food was served on trays as in airplanes. Sometimes passengers would break out into Christian songs. It was a great trip. One of the passengers, Rosemary, knew about WATS and accompanied us to the place.

Our destination was the West Africa Theological Seminary (WATS) in Lagos, a non-denominational school founded by Gary Maxey, the founder of that national movement

against corruption some years earlier and a one-time visitor in our Grand Rapids Godwin house. It was interesting to see many of our Mafa collection on the walls of the institution. Among others, we met our Jos friend Dr. Herbert Eze, who had originally challenged me about that External Debt Conference years earlier. He had done a doctorate at Fuller in Pasadena CA and I was his external reader. Ruth Veltkamp was also lecturing there and, in her “spare” time, still partnering with the Imani group. We had a couple of meals with her. Our main meals were eaten outside the campus gate, where a few market women were cooking up a storm of traditional Yoruba foods that we enjoyed so much. Our friend Herbert felt he could not join us there, for it would denigrate his standing in the community. That kind of dining was for the *hoi poloi*, not for professors. I understood, for I likewise used to guard my status in the community by avoiding certain types of behaviour or places. About one dollar a plate, after which we would go to a nearby hotel for a coffee which cost us two dollars each!

One afternoon, I invited the campus to an introduction to my series. Some fifteen people attended and raised good questions. They were not as uptight as were the Jos people, but, of course, they were further from the frontlines. One of the attendees was a Mr. Okey, an Ibo man whom I had met at FBC in Vancouver. He drove all the way across Lagos for the event, something you can appreciate only if you’ve been in a city like Lagos. He enjoyed the discussion and commented that it was obvious I felt at home in this crowd of Nigerians, something he appreciated. Unfortunately, he disappeared and we never heard from him again.

With our Lagos visit done, we now headed for Mauritania, but it took a couple of hops to get there. First, we landed in Accra, Ghana, where years earlier we once got stuck overnight, you may recall. Then we re-boarded for a flight to Dakar, Senegal. Wiebe had arranged for a World Vision (WV) colleague to meet us and take us for some sightseeing. It was just an overnighter there, but long enough for a dinner with some other WV staff and to allow us some time in the city the following morning. We posed with a guard in ceremonial garb in front to the national palace. We were also made to feel at home once again with the omnipresence of Maggi signs, just like Trinidad.

We found the people to be more aggressive and obnoxious than we had ever experienced anywhere else. Some traders followed us very closely and generally harassed us. I did, however, get an excellent shoe polish job done right in Independence Square. Then several very aggressive men talked to us and said that, according to their custom, they were looking for a stranger to whom they should give a gift of joy because of the birth of a child in the family. We were those lucky strangers and they gave us some cheap jewelry and coins. We were tired of the harassing and said a loud “NO!”; we didn’t want any gift. They objected and said we shouldn’t “vex their culture.” So we accepted the gifts and started walking away. Then they followed us and said they would like a contribution from us for the naming ceremony. When we finally gave them 1000 CFA (\$2) just to get rid of them, they were definitely not happy!

It was time to move on to Nouakchott, Mauritania. We were met by Sau, a WV staff, who took care of all the entry formalities for us, while we moved through to W&J and little Jehan, who were all waiting outside.

### *Mauritania*

This part of the trip was actually the centre piece of the entire journey. Jehan recognized us immediately, for he had been listening to us reading him stories. We were his “Uha & Uhma.”

That evening they took us to a Lebanese restaurant and told us that they were leaving Mauritania. Would we care to guess where to? I quipped, “Mongolia.” I have had some interest in that place and would have been happy if that’s where they would end up. Wiebe said that actually WV had offered him a position there! However, they were instead planning to move to Atlanta in May 2005 and so would be a lot closer to us. Fran exclaimed, “That is good news! All of us actually living on the same continent!”

They lived in the capital Nouakchott, best described as an unorganized collection of buildings just kind of plunked in the Sahara sand. Even the streets were simply desert sand, wandering in every direction and without any signs that were helpful to us. A bit like Japan in that it left us with a feeling of being lost. Arabic and French are the dominant languages. Wiebe strongly urged us not to wander far away from the house, for we probably would not find our way back. We listened!

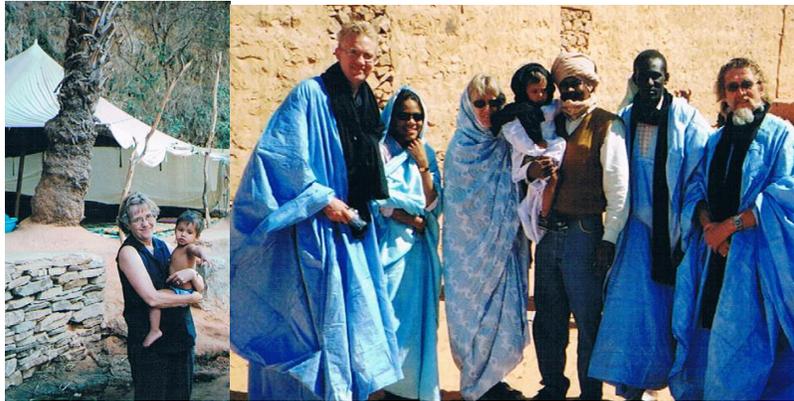
It is a totally Muslim country, where it is illegal for citizens to be anything but Muslim. Even WV staff, local and expat, were not allowed to talk religion, if it were not Islam. Though the office had scheduled prayer meetings, locals were not allowed to attend.

Mauritania is known for its residual slavery. Once pointed out by Wiebe, we could easily identify the little lean-to’s that were slave “houses” outside the walls of the masters’ fancy manors. In my series, Muslims argue that of course Muslims do not practice slavery, for it is *haram* (forbidden) to Islam. Well, *haram* or not, there they were. When it comes to Christians, Muslims accuse us of slavery. I do not understand why they use such different logic for the two religions. For us, too, it is *haram*. Using the same logic, they should also claim that Christians have never practiced slavery or anything else not approved by the religion. I wish!

We bonded a great deal with the entire family, but especially with little Jehan, who celebrated his second birthday while we were with them. We have pages of pictures with us happily bonding with this very cute child. We also bonded well with Pam, Shegali and Sau, three local WV staff, who would drive us around or otherwise accompany us. Very charming Muslims whom we respected and enjoyed associating with. They, too, readily carried Jehan.

Wiebe introduced us to a variety of people: his WV colleagues and other friends. The latter included a Dutch couple who invited us for dinner. They wanted to check out if Wiebe was really Dutch; he has a real Dutch first and last name but can’t speak Dutch, so they were curious. We passed the test of being Dutch, so they gave us a copy of the book of Dutch immigration stories, *Het Wrede Paradijs*. Though not a Christian himself, he was working for the Lutheran World Federation on an Aids Awareness Program.

On Jehan's and my birthday, W&J had arranged an overnight stay in a desert oasis, tent and all. It was a lovely and romantic place with a small stream flowing through its midst and luscious green trees and undergrowth. I did not realize deserts can be so magical and beautiful. To get there, we drove for three hours on good roads into the desert. Then a side road to a lovely oasis at Tirit. Large palm groves, caves and rocks. Several large tents for tourists and visitors. We were served many small glasses of Mauritanian spiced sweet tea as well as a delicious meal of rice, chicken and vegetables. Then ate some birthday cake which Joanna had made in honour of Jehan's second and my 67<sup>th</sup> birthdays. It was fun watching Jehan open his birthday gifts.



Fran & Jehan at Tirit Oasis\*

In the Desert at Chinguetti\*

Then drove another hour to Atar. Checked in at Hotel Seguillil where Fran and I stayed in a very comfortable round hut. Very nice hotel with actual working air conditioners. Air France has regular flights to Atar and many tourists come to do the Trans Sahara truck tours. Went to the downtown and saw the new WV office. Had a delicious supper of kebabs, fries and chicken outside at a Moroccan restaurant, while we watched the traffic, a mixture of pedestrians, bicycles, push carts, donkey carts with goods and passengers, motorcycles and cars. All in all, a fascinating mixture that held us spellbound.

The next day we drove for an hour on mostly gravel road thru rocky mountainous area and then a complete sand road to Chinguetti. The mosque here is the seventh most holy site for Sunni Islam. Up till 1800, Chinguetti was a large centre for the Trans Sahara camel trains of as many as 30,000 travelers. For centuries it had large libraries and universities and it has been called the Timbuktu of Mauritania.

We were all given clothes to completely cover ourselves before we were allowed to walk around the area. Mauritanian clothes are mostly blue robes that we were given to wear, even Jehan, but, unlike Nigeria, no *hula* or hat. Being almost monocoloured, at least the men, they looked a far cry from the flamboyance of a dressed Nigerian man. But they still had a royal kind of bearing that demanded a respectful attitude. It is amazing what a combination of dress and pride can accomplish. Without the hat, their outfits did look incomplete to me.

A guide first gave us a lecture on camel train artifacts. Then he took us into an old underground cellar in the sand that houses an amazing library of scholarly and ancient

Muslim books. He showed us some books that were severely termite-eaten and also some whose pages had recently been computer scanned. Wiebe felt it was a genuine place, but I had a hard time believing that the authorities, whether political, academic or religious, would leave such an important collection in such a remote place and housed in such inadequate facilities. I felt I should have tested the situation by picking out one random box myself to see whether there really were ancient manuscripts or books in them. Had we been had? I tried to access their website at [www.fondaam.net](http://www.fondaam.net), but it did not work. Why don't you try it?



The Librarian\*



In the Sahara Desert\*

While Wiebe had business to attend to in the community and Joanna worked on her online course from a London university, Jehan was placed in our care. We spent part of the day checking out the town, but saw little of real interest to us. It was not a place to live, we concluded. The entire town was built of brown sand stones, very creative, ingenious and probably efficient in that climate, but hardly beautiful. There wasn't much for sale and it didn't look like a great place to live. For dinner we went to a campsite restaurant for cross-Sahara travelers. This campground is run by another Dutchman who had been appointed chief of this district. Did I just write, "little of real interest to us?" I can't believe it. I should have deleted that!

The next day, we drove three hours through sandy dunes, rocky hills and ridges. We were amazed with Pam's driving. In this terrain one has to carve out his own road as the sand is constantly blowing and changing everything. There simply is no road to follow, at least not as far as we could see. So how did they know where to go? Where were the invisible signs they were following? When you look at our pictures of this Saharan environment, there is nothing but sand and sand dunes interspersed by an occasional palm tree with minimum foliage at the top and a few sparse low brush plants, haunting scenes of mystery.

We drove through Aoujeft on the way to Madaane. In Madaane there is a community of 1500 people who have built a dam and done irrigation work resulting in quite impressive gardens. WV is helping with dam repairs and planning to build a Women's Centre there. Most people here speak Hassaniya, a local form of Arabic, and not French.

**Of all things, this community – truly in the middle of nowhere – *has an internet connection!* They showed us lots of pictures on their computer and were even able to log on to my website. Unfortunately we couldn't get on either Gmail or Hotmail at the time in order to send e-mails.**

**Joanna and Fran were treated by a group of local women to sessions of henna application to their feet and toenails. That was a time consuming and rather strange experience with the women cutting, taping, putting “gobs of goo” and forcing their feet into uncomfortable positions. Later on we found out that we were in the middle of a village struggle about Wiebe's project between government officials, politicians and the religious leader. So the henna party was mostly a means of stalling for time so that we wouldn't leave too early. The free mixture of local women with a small group of foreigners including a man without the presence of a Muslim male should have alerted us that something unusual was going on!**

**Drove back to Nouakchott the next day. Lunch had been ordered for us in a town about halfway home, but when we arrived they hadn't even *started* any preparations yet, except that the goat had already been killed and its carcass was hanging in plain sight for us to see. The owner objected to our leaving, since we had ordered the meal. How could he absorb this loss? Driver Pam advised him next time to stick to agreed-upon terms with his customers. So instead of waiting for two hours for the meal, we went straight home. When we got home their worker had a lovely Senegalese meal ready for us.**

**Afterwards, we went to three places:**

- **To an internet café where we had our first experience with a French keyboard. Ended up doing a lot of hunt-and-peck but got our messages out.**
- **To Wiebe's Syrian barber so that I could get a haircut. We had no common language between us, so conversation was by means of signs and gestures. I ended up with a very good haircut.**
- **To a Tunisian butcher for camel meat. Wiebe prepared red stew from it with the Nigerian spices we had brought along.**

**We spent the next couple of days driving to some of Wiebe's development projects. Drove for 4 hours southeast to Boghe where WV has water, agricultural and small loans projects. Saw:**

- **The Senegal River which is the official border between Senegal and Mauritania, but local people cross the river freely.**
- **A potato farm, fish farm and the local market. Nothing looked very productive, as locusts had devastated this area a few months before.**
- **A small library. Not much interest in reading or literacy. All the titles were in French; saw translated works of several Nigerian writers.**
- **The WV farm project. It consisted of an irrigated farm with water from the river which the women carried on their heads in large pans. The farm was divided into community gardens, each one of which surpassed the next one in green lusciousness. Highly labour intensive. Our pictures show the work all being done by women, but the management team is all men but one! When we left, the women sang a song of thanks to WV that spoke for itself.**



### World Vision Irrigation Project at the Senegal River\*

- Some camel trains moving across the desert and a camel market, where you can buy your own pet camel. These trains move straight through the desert and ignore any modern structures or obstacles like highways with speeding vehicles. They just cross wherever they happen to be. Sorry, drivers, this is not your territory!

Moved on to do the following:

- Had dinner in a tent outside the WV office with the staff. Menu: boiled goat and a large salad made mostly from tinned vegetables & fruits.
- Had lunch the next day of sheep & rice eaten from a communal tray, a very common menu and practice in Mauritania.
- Wiebe bought a little goat as a gift for Jehan. It was named “*Akwiya*” which is Hausa for “goat.”



World Vision Sponsored School\*



Eating from Communal Tray\*

- **Stopped in Dar El Barka (Town of Blessing) to see more WV projects. Visited a kindergarten & elementary school that are paid for by WV sponsors. Couldn't understand what was being taught, but it all looked impressive, disciplined and seemed that the sponsorship funds were being well spent. An impressive detail here is that this WV project aims at the entire community and its children, not to a few individual fortunate select. It carries the entire community forward**

**Friday morning we attended a service at the Nouakchott Evangelical Church together with 150 other expatriates. Met people from U.S., Canada, England, Denmark, Nigeria, Ghana, Chad & Senegal. No Mauritians are allowed to enter a church or be anything but Muslim. It is, after all, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. Since Muslims have their main weekly prayer on Friday, Christians also worship on Friday.**

**Wiebe drove us one and a half hour east into the desert for an overnight visit to Ahmed, one of his co-workers. There are many Mauritanian Muslims working for WV, but only at a certain level. The top management jobs are reserved for Christians, who come from many different countries.**

**After many rounds of Mauritanian tea and some camel milk, we were served supper at 10 P.M. Menu: salad, rice, chicken & fruit. Needless to say, at that late hour, Jehan was getting a bit tired and hungry. But he surely is a great trooper and adapts well to every situation.**

**We spent the night in a huge tent. After all, these are Bedouins who traditionally keep moving. Because the pillows were very tightly stuffed and high, our sleep wasn't the most comfortable. Joanna wisely decided to sleep in the car. However, that huge tent looked pretty. It was tastefully furnished in Mauritanian style and spotlessly clean.**

**We found the desert an interesting place, but to live in it? Ahmed, however, tells us that he simply loves the desert! Well, to each his own. Canadian and American readers, what would you prefer: icebergs or sand dunes, miles and miles of it without any sign of beach or water? Fortunately, our choices are not that sparse.**

**Joanna & Fran went to a women's meeting at the American Ambassador's house in the U.S. embassy compound. Even though Mauritania has a small population, the U.S. has a large presence there. According to Fran, it's the only Muslim country that is very friendly to the U.S. and the only one to have an Israeli embassy. And if you know anything about American foreign policy, you knew that this trailer had to come: There is also a developing oil industry with US involvement! What else is new? It was amazing the amount of security Joanna, Fran and their car had to go through before being admitted inside the compound. It was a very interesting evening with about 30 in attendance. The programme: Five women married to Mauritians shared their stories. Fran commented, "The whole Moor culture is certainly a complicated one." Yes, "Moor" culture. "Moor" is, I believe, the English version of "Mauri...."**

Food, a big subject. We ate Mauri food with abandon, but we did not enjoy most of it. I am talking not about restaurant or roadside food, but that served in groups and eaten from a tray. Like Nigeria, a group would gather around a container and in turn take a mouthful by hand, but in Mauritania it would be around a large tray with a larger crowd around it. It would usually be rice almost floating in oil with goat meat or mutton on the side. It was, to be honest, tasteless, not to say repugnant. Apparently no spicing at all; just bland cooking, that's all, while it was dripping oil out of your hand back into the rice. Plain disgusting. But as good Nigerians, we ate our share. For me, at least, meat has to *really* be bad before I pass it up! I admit that we were probably too unconcerned about the hygiene of it all, what with unwashed hands and fingers groping around in the rice and then squeezing the oil to drip back in. Ughhh! We literally *asked* for upset stomachs.

The part of Mauri cuisine we *did* enjoy was the tea ceremony. Tea was served in glass thimbles, poured from a teapot high above the cup(s) so that it cooled off on its descent. As soon as you had swallowed your two sips worth, it would be replenished indefinitely until we'd show signs of being satiated. It tasted good and quenched our thirst effectively. But even here, I wondered about the hygiene of it: was it properly boiled? Probably not, but we drank it with abandon and prayed for our health.

Though we did not eat that much bread, bread was available everywhere. Apart from stores and bakeries, vendors were omnipresent with their wheelbarrows full of uncovered French bread, but it was not the fine quality you pick up at Safeway or the French bakery across the street from us. It was of the lowest common denomination, *looking* like French bread but lacking the taste; it represented the letter, not the spirit of it.

It was evidence of the success of Western economic penetration. The West exports cheap wheat to such countries, where it penetrates the traditional cuisine and soon is considered a mandatory ingredient, thereby replacing more traditional foods and diminishing the market for the crops used in those traditional foods. In other words, causing serious distortions and disruptions in the traditional food chain, replacing the local with imports. Even WV participated in that scheme. Its programmes in Mauritania were financed by the sale of wheat the US donated to WV for that very purpose. Whether that was the reason Wiebe resigned after a couple of years, I do not know. At any rate, that seems to me to be "development" paid for by the proceeds of *conscious* "underdevelopment" and undermining the local. Can hardly recommend such a scheme.

We both had been feeling very well throughout our whole trip, but towards the end of our visit, I came down with stomach flu, probably the result of the camel milk of two days earlier. However, accustomed to eating almost anything in Nigeria, we may have been too careless with Mauri food in general. We ate whatever people put before us. Unfortunately, it was more than just the inconvenience of an upset stomach. A fuller description calls for that dirty "D" word that started dogging us during our onward journey. The next day, it hit Fran as well. It was the state in which we left Mauritania.

But what of our prayer for health? Was it heard? You could argue either way. It was *not* heard, for we did descend deep down into "D" territory. It *was* heard in that our discomfort,

though seriously uncomfortable, was of temporary nature and not *really* serious. It could be interpreted as a gentle call to responsible consumption and not to push known limits of hygiene. The Christian faith is, among other things, a strong call for responsibility and accountability. You *know* what can happen if you push the known limits. And it did, but only to the level of inconvenience. That was grace. It could have been much worse. If the answer to the original question is ambiguous, well, welcome to the reality show.

### *Tunisia*

On March 1, 2005, our next destination was the city of Tunis in Tunisia on the Mediterranean shores. In order to get there, Air Mauritania first took us back to Dakar, completely the opposite direction. We had a layover there for several hours during which we were greatly inconvenienced due to our health condition. At the time, it seemed more like distress than inconvenience, but later reflection led us to downgrade the seriousness of the situation. All we had to do was sit on the floor, waiting it out from outburst to outburst till our plane arrived.

Eventually, we flew out as scheduled and in due time arrived at Tunis Airport. We have a Tunis Air map that made us wonder whether Tunis was in Africa or in Europe. Due to their history, many Tunisians prefer considering themselves Europeans rather than Africans. Certainly their traffic patterns justify such a claim as over against chaotic places like Lagos and Cairo. Even geography provides some justification for that, for Tunis is located on the most northern tip of Africa that stretches a considerable distance north of the south of Spain and reaches out to neighbouring Italy.

In Fran's exact words:

We were welcomed by Dr. Obed and Margaret Mailafiya, Nigerian friends and our hosts. Obed first met John in 1976 at a conference in Zaria, Nigeria. He feels that from that point on, John had a great influence on his life. As a way of saying thanks to John and all missionaries, they booked us a suite at a five-star hotel overlooking the Mediterranean. They felt their house was not suitable for guests like us. The fanciest place we ever stayed with prices far beyond our reach. But Obed had done well and wanted the best for us. He instructed the desk that everything we ordered or ate was his responsibility. They should not bother us with any bills. What a way to show appreciation! We felt overwhelmed. This was classic Nigerian generosity that deeply moved us.

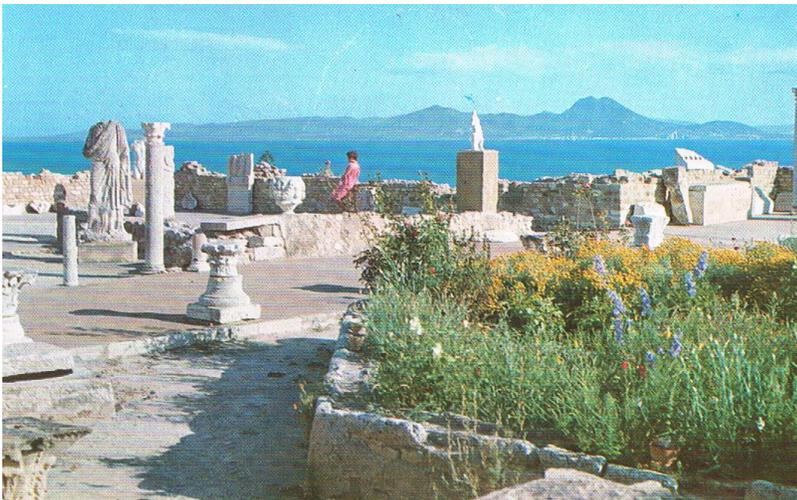
Unfortunately neither one of us was in five-star shape. Our condition continued to persist so that we were not free to move around and explore for the first couple of days. We perused the menus and were eager to tap in, but alas, we needed restraint more than anything else. We slept much of the first day but did spend a bit of time exploring the hotel and its surroundings. We went to the Mailafias and had dinner around 10 P.M. Unfortunately, due to the state of our stomachs, we could not enjoy their delicious Nigerian offering either.

The next day, still no improvement in the stomach department. So we made arrangements for the hotel doctor to come to our room. He spoke acceptable English and made his diagnosis, told us not to drink camel milk again, and wrote out the prescriptions. His charge was 60 dinars (about 60 Cdn. dollars) each. The pharmacist knew no English so she had to use writing, signs, and motions to explain what to take at what time. Then we had a bit of a shock when she said the total price was 49,575 dinars. Fortunately the comma is used where we would use the decimal point! So the total for the meds was only \$50. That was doable. Slowly things took an upswing, but we still did not dare to wander too far from safety.

We began to take walks. At first, only on the Mediterranean beach near the hotel. Even drew a compliment from a camel owner about the henna on Fran's feet. Then we became more daring and took a taxi to the Africa Development Bank where Obed worked and then went to his house for dinner. We were still careful about what we ate.

By the fourth of March we took a walk around downtown Tunis. Saw a large, historic, and beautiful Catholic Cathedral. It serves as a constant reminder to the local population of the great Christian culture in North Africa that existed prior to the arrival of Islam. It was also clear that the local variety of Christianity was shot through with folk religion and a degree of animistic superstition, something similar to what we witnessed in a large Catholic church in downtown Port of Spain, Trinidad. I have long had the impression that wherever the Catholic church has historic roots, a lot of messy folk religion enters into the picture and these situations confirm that to me. Also wandered around in the huge main market or "bazaar" where there seemed to be many more sellers than buyers. Very much like some Cairo markets.

By evening, the medicine seemed to be doing its job effectively and we decided to have a light evening meal at the hotel, which we truly enjoyed after the tether of "inconvenience." It was a great relief to be free to move around again, especially in this unique environment.



The next day Obed and Margaret took us to the ruins of the great ancient city of Carthage\* to see a museum and the magnificent historic St. Louis Cathedral. Three of the early popes came from Carthage and thus were associated with this cathedral, which is now being used as a theatre. Much of the city now consists of ruins that constitute a long sacred memory of past glory. It was a historical but also sad visit. There were said to be

only 400 Tunisian Christians in all of Tunisia at the time of our visit. What a shocking contrast to its historic pre-Islamic greatness. What happened to the promise that "the gates of hell will not prevail" against Jesus' people? This is worthy of a serious discussion, a question that some Nigerian Christians are asking these days.

From there we went to the seaside town of Sidi Bou Said and visited a tourist market. We bought a very beautiful large bluish oval ceramic serving platter that has decorated our living room table ever since.

On March 6 we were scheduled to move on to Paris, France. The Mailafias gave us as parting gift, a beautiful framed multi-dimensional facsimile of a small potted olive tree that till this day hangs on the wall at the end of our hallway and serves as a frequent reminder of the Mailafias and their wonderfully generous hospitality. When he came to pick us up at the hotel and pay our bill, he expressed surprise at the small amount he owed. Well, yes. Most of the time we were not in shape to avail ourselves of its delicious meals or drinks. Of course, there was also the expected drama of a pretended disappointment. That was par for the course; it was an integral part of the scene. Thank you, Obed and Margaret. We hope to meet again in Nigeria—or in Canada? You are invited.

Around the time we left for France, Obed received a call from Nigeria's President Obasanjo inviting him for an interview for the post of Assistant Director or some such position in the Central Bank of Nigeria. He did soon return to Nigeria, but we somehow lost touch again what with moving around and changing email addresses. Recently, we got in touch again, when Obed informed me that the Nigerian press had identified the powerful citizens who were backing *Boko Haram* in Nigeria. I responded by challenging him to initiate action against those citizens. After all, he himself was a powerful citizen. Then he retreated behind the statement that those allegations had yet to be proven. Obed?! I know: It's easy for me to goad him when I am safely tucked away out of danger in distant Vancouver, far from *that* frontline.

### *Paris, France*

The purpose of our visit to Paris was to visit our old friend Vassil Valkov, who met us at the airport and took us to his place. We met the Valkov family in Jos in the early 80's when Emil was a classmate of Wiebe's. Vassil is a Bulgarian engineer; his wife, a Vietnamese medical doctor. We've been in contact ever since first meeting each other. Vassil visited us in Vancouver in 2002. He is kind of embarrassed that his two kids live in capitalist California.

As Fran explained our relationship:

John & Vassil have carried on an extensive correspondence through the years, John a Christian missionary and Vassil an avowed communist Atheist. As far as I can tell, neither one has yet budged an inch in their convictions! Vassil's big problem is that he only knows a version of the Orthodox church in his country that he considers corrupt and on the side of the rich and powerful. He judges all Christianity by that standard and cannot conceive that any church anywhere can be different. He considers John an exception with his social conscience, even though John has assured him a thousand times that he represents majority Christianity in that respect.

Good thing that both of us were finally feeling well again, because Vassil really gave us a workout on our first day in Paris! He showed us how to use the metro system from his home

in Noisy le Grand and all around downtown Paris. We saw the Seine River, *Arc de Triomphe*, *Champs de Elysses*, Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame Cathedral, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Pigalli (Red Light) District. Also took in the Parisian Statue of Liberty. It apparently is the prototype to that in NY. It's quite close to the Eiffel Tower.



The next day we took an early morning walk to the city centre of Noisy le Grand and then hopped on the metro and headed for Paris again, this time without Vassil. Walked more on *Champs de Elysses* and all around the *Arc de Triomphe*. Instead of taking the metro, we walked through some residential areas to the Eiffel Tower. We took the lift to the top and had an excellent view of all of Paris. Initially the tower was only going to be a temporary structure in Paris because many people felt that it defaced the city. That day we set a record: walked 16.93 km!

*The Arc de Triomphe\**

The following day was spent at the Louvre and most of it just looking at the section with the Dutch painters. We had a hard time at first finding our way because of everything being in French and the confusing signage. Later we rented audio phones so we could hear explanations in English. However they only covered very few of the exhibits. And then, of course, we headed along with all the crowds to the *Mona Lisa*. We were amazed that we were allowed to take pictures everywhere in the museum. Another section that interested us was that of Muslim art. I was surprised to see paintings and other forms of artistic expression that included representations of human beings. On the whole, that is *haram* in Islam. Due to our lack of French, we could get no one to explain this anomaly to us.

March 11--Fran's 63<sup>rd</sup> birthday. What better way for a Prins to celebrate a birthday but in the palace of the kings and in the city of Napoleon, who was cause for the choice of the name "Prins?" It was about an hour by metro to get to Versailles.

A Prins at the Versailles Palace on her 63rd birthday\*



the

Took a tour of the part of the Versailles palace where Kings Louis XIV, XV, and XVI lived. Royalty were often forced to eat, sleep and even die in public view. The tour guide compared it to the intrusive media of today! Many things were stolen from the palace during the Revolution and are just now being bought back by the museum. Three small sculptures were made here shortly after the American War for Independence. One is now again at Versailles, one is in the White House, but the location of the third one is unknown. We even took a picture of the royal toilet! French royalty was apparently of lower rank than that of Wukari Jukuns, where we spent our first Nigeria years. There the myth has/had it that the Aku Uka, the King, was not afflicted with such base human functions. Apparently Ben Franklin, the scientist, was a frequent visitor at the palace—the Versailles one, that is.

On our way to the palace, we first went to see the place from which we order the Mafa pictures. We saw a few of the new pictures they are working on. The actual painter is a French lady who goes to Northern Cameroun to sketch and take photographs. Then she does the painting in her home in Senegal. When she is finished, she sends the proofs to Versailles from where they then copy and distribute the cards and posters all over the world. They are so beautiful and so realistic that we deeply enjoy them and are proud to be associated with them. For those interested in a Black interpretation of the Gospel stories, you can't do better than these. Contact us, if you're interested—and we're still around! Or try <[www.jesusmafa.com](http://www.jesusmafa.com)>.

The Paris part of our entire trip was not entirely pleasant, in spite of Vassil's great hospitality. For one thing, it was unseasonably cold, something on which we had not counted when we made our decision as to what clothing to bring along. Because of the cold, the streets were largely empty and hardly *gezellig* as we tend to like them. Secondly, on the whole we found the French unfriendly and snobby. Of course, they have that reputation; it was solidly confirmed for us on this trip. Their coffee was not only expensive but undrinkable for us civilized human beings. So, coffee time would find us—I hate to admit it—at McDonalds!

Not sure I ever wish to return to France. Snobbishness and undrinkable coffee are enough to keep me away. However, just visiting Vassil once again would be worth the sacrifice. He was a great host, even with his wife absent. Thank you, Vassil.

### *The Netherlands*

Our next stop was Schiphol Airport, where we were met by Fran's second cousin Ali van der Wel. After having coffee with her, we picked up our Hertz rental and headed north, aiming to get to Lutjegast in time for the church service the following morning. We made it as far as Sneek in Friesland, where we put up at Hotel Hanenburg.

We went for an early morning stroll through Sneek's picturesque, narrow streets. And then, heresy of heresies, we decided that the town of Sneek was actually nicer than world-famous Paris. We stopped at the Port of Sneek and noticed the building there was the exact one that Fran had stitched on her *schellekoord* in 1973.

Back in the hotel, we listened to morning news on TV. Interesting to hear news in Flemish, Dutch and Frisian. This was the first time Fran heard her own language coming from a TV! After breakfast we headed out toward Lutjegast. This was now a blended congregation of Gereformeerd and Hervormd, the two denominations that reunited. We were happy to see many young families with children in a full church. The children sang a lovely Bible song based on I Corinthians 12. It was about “*Iedereen is nodig*” (everyone is needed) i.e. we need hands, feet, eyes etc. to function as a body, both individually and communally. It was much more of a light-hearted and joyful service than we had expected. It spoke well of and for the church of my childhood.

After the service we met many people in the coffee room. Quite a number remembered the Boer family and some of the Boer kids, even though we had left way back in 1951, 54 years ago. Spent time wandering around the village, especially De Wieren, my home street. Then we went to Tante Dienie, widow of Oom Berend, the town’s former musician, poet and undertaker, for a visit and a late lunch. We were amazed at what good shape she was in, since she had been very ill several times last winter. Her son Poppe and wife were also there.

The rest of this Sunday we visited Piet Alserda, a childhood school-and-play-mate and Ettie vander Velde, a friend to sister Martha. Martha had asked us to visit her. Then we checked in at Augberge Hotel in Visvliet, four kilometres north of Lutjegast on the Groningen-Leeuwarden highway, the only hotel in the area. It is such a delightful place that we have subsequently recommended this place to relatives and friends visiting the area.

On Monday we spent time with my childhood friend, Henk Rozema and Grietje. He continues to be the inventor. He has submitted plans for a unique retirement centre to be built in Grootegast. He received a patent on “*digizerk*,” his idea for a digital recording to be installed and played at a gravesite. It may contain a message from the person buried there. It is operated by solar energy. It created quite a ruckus in some Dutch newspapers. Some people, including Martha’s friends, whispered that you can hear the voice of the dead! They do not approve! Since then, Henk has profitably sold his invention and has moved on to others.

Also visited an elementary classmate of mine, Luut Hoeksema. He still lived on the farm he was born on and operated all his working life. He was now a widower. We enjoyed the visit and promised each other to stay in touch.



Luut and John doing dishes in his kitchen\*

It turns out that his cousin is married to Fran's cousin, Jantje Tjepkema. And Jantje's husband, Willem Dijkstra, is a nephew of Simon Floris, the man who sponsored the Boer family for immigration to Canada. What a small world! Dutch bingo works its charms everywhere. It was so delightful, especially for Fran, to visit with Jantje in Zuidlaren and speak Frisian. Those family connections are really special. Jantje told us that Fran used to come overnight to their house fairly often. Fran's mother complained that Mooike Sina (Prins) Tjepkema spoiled her and paid too much attention to her. Jantje gave us some pictures and announcements which our family had sent to Mooike Foekje Prins through the years. When Mooike Foekje died, they were all given to Jantje and she thought this was a good opportunity to pass them on to Fran.

Checked in at 'T Raedhus Hotel in Dokkum. It was a bit cold and rainy but we still enjoyed wandering through the streets. In contrast to Sneek a few days ago, there seemed to be no night life. But then, it was raining and mid-week. Like so many old Dutch cities, its streets run next to canals, with a street on each side, without any kind of fencing or other safety precautions. Through the years many members of the Prins clan have lived, worked, schooled, or shopped in Dokkum.

Spent much of a day in Damwoude with Maaïke & Martin Wijnsma. Maaïke is the daughter of Trijntje & Wiebren, with Trijntje being Fran's first cousin, the daughter of Jan & Sippie Boersma. Trijntje & Wiebren were there for the morning as well. Maaïke has been in the U.S. several times and even had some photos in her album of us with Kevin, Cynthia and Wiebe in Grand Rapids taken in 1977.

Drove through many northern Frisian villages, one of our favourite activities in those parts, what with so many lovely ancient places. Stopped at a bookmobile in Wierum. We checked whether Meindert de Jong's book *The Wheel on the School* was in their stock. That was written in 1954 about his home village, Wierum. It wasn't in the bookmobile but it was in their computer system. Had a great conversation with the librarians in the bookmobile about immigrants and immigration.

Stopped in a coffee shop at Lauwersoog and I had some authentic solid Dutch pancakes which reminded me of my childhood. I am grateful to report that I now make them myself, tasting every bit as good.

Drove back to Damwoude so that Maaïke could go with us to Hantumhuizen to visit Fran's old farm. Fran wasn't sure we'd ever find the place on our own! Doeke (son of Reinder, son of Doeke, son of Reinder) Prins and his wife Griet are running a large farming operation and thoroughly enjoying it. Fran said she'd probably feel lonesome and isolated living on that dead end road and close only to a small village. She sympathized a bit with her mother's complaints.

A sign at the farm read:

**PAS OP!!  
LOSLOPENDE BOER**

**WATCH OUT!!  
WILD BOER ON THE LOOSE**

Als de Boer komt:  
 Plat op de grond gaan liggen  
 En op hulp wachten.  
 Als er geen hulp komt:  
 Sterkte....

When the farmer comes:  
 Lay flat on the ground  
 And wait for help.  
 If no help comes:  
 Good luck....

As you probably understand, a humorous version of “Watch out for the dog!” Our last name being what it is, we enjoyed the humour greatly.

Drove on to Leeuwarden, the capital of Friesland, and stayed at the Euro Hotel. After a fry-your-own breakfast at the hotel on Wednesday, we phoned cousin Renske Talma. She came to the hotel to meet us and then took us to her home. Her sister Janna also met us there. They are both so interested in the extended family and are in regular touch with some of Fran’s siblings. They asked her to try to contact a niece of theirs (daughter of their brother Harry and Evelyn Talma) who lives in the Vancouver area. They hadn’t heard from any of that family since both Harry & Evelyn died four years ago. Fran fulfilled her promise by getting in touch with Florence Talma. Florence promised us that she would write and phone her relatives in The Netherlands. And that’s the last we heard from her.

Back on the road. This time to the polder area of Dronten, Flevoland, where my cousin, Willie Boer-Hoogenkamp lives. Had a wonderfully *gezellige* evening with Willie. We looked at the photo albums of her trip to Canada summer of 2003 during which she also spent some days with us in Vancouver. Willie provided us with good and very secure accommodations! We weren’t able to take our normal morning walk, because we were locked in, didn’t see a key anywhere and didn’t want to wake her up so early.

After breakfast on Thursday, we drove to Lelystad, not far from Dronten, to visit Fran’s cousin Anneke Talma and husband Marten Willemsen. Anneke and Marten visited us in Wukari, Nigeria in 1974, right after Wiebe was born. They still have lots of souvenirs of that trip on display in their house. Anneke is a volunteer at a museum where they have a life-sized model of the ship named *Batavia* along with all the original trimmings. The ship also has life-sized sculptures of some of the crew, including that of Captain Michiel de Ruyter, a famous historical icon in Dutch history. People were considerably shorter in those days. The Captain reached up to my ears. Anneke took us for an interesting tour of that ship and told us some of the history.

Then we drove to Rijswijk to the home of Fran’s second cousin Ali (Prins) & Jan van der Wel with whom we had coffee upon our arrival at Schiphol Airport. According to her self-description, Ali is a genealogy fanatic who has collected tons of information on the Prins family. She showed us information about Pier Doekes who was born around 1750 and died in 1818. He was Fran’s great great great great grandfather who took the family name Prins. Also saw a photo (taken in Janum around 1860) of her great great grandfather Pier Doekes Prins who was born in 1808. Sister Jane was always very interested in genealogy. How she would have enjoyed a visit with Ali! But Jane died before any of us got in touch with Ali.

The van der Wels also invited Riek Attema & Auke Kingma. Riek's full name is Henderika Fransina, exactly the same name as Fran's sister Henrietta, so obviously named after Fran's grandmother Prins. She is a daughter of Trijntje Prins and Ids Attema. Cousin Riek has early childhood memories of visiting our grandparents Reinder & Henderika Fransina in Dokkum. Pake Reinder would read, rather poorly, from the theological books of Abraham Kuyper and expected the children to sit quietly and listen! She said there were pictures of both Kuyper and Bavinck prominently displayed in the Prins parlor. Fran wrote,

It's interesting that the Prins family were among the early supporters of Abraham Kuyper. John considers him his "hero" and has incorporated many Kuyperian ideas throughout his ministry, writing and teaching. That is precisely the reason Nigerians have been so attracted to John's ideas.

The two couples treated us to a delicious dinner at a fancy restaurant, the Prinsen (appropriate name!) Kelder in Delft. After the meal we walked around the city centre a bit. They pointed out the burial place of members of the royal family, the House of Orange. The Delft mayor, trying to impress tourists with his command of English, is reported to have said, "Here's where we bury our oranges!"

We spent the night at the van der Wels and, in addition to good food at breakfast time the next morning, Jan treated us to a wonderful repertoire of jokes and stories. Sample: Insurance companies were bragging to each other about what they all covered in their policies. 1) We cover you from the cradle to the grave. 2) We cover you from birth to earth. 3) We cover you from womb to tomb. 4) We cover you from germ to worm. 5) We cover you from (Fran thought he said) election to resurrection. It turns out he said "erection" not "election." Wonderful hosts though they were to us, they could not comprehend that we were still Christians and had not thrown Christianity overboard. Well, they were typical of many languished Dutch Christians in this regard, a pitiful degeneration that has put a spiritual damper on the country.

Visited the VU (Free University) in Amsterdam and spent time at their bookstore. Took a picture of the hospital at the VU where Cynthia was born in 1973. After a time-consuming search, we finally found a hotel and parking space in downtown Amsterdam. We had a lot of fun walking and walking and walking. We saw the grachten (canals), the Kalver Straat, the Dam Square, and Centraal Station. Also checked out a museum or two. What a fascinating city! Of course we had seen those areas also during our VU time in the early 70s, but this city never loses its attraction.

This was the first hotel that didn't include a breakfast buffet in the (high) price. So we went out to find our own. I tried pancakes (not as good as the ones in Lauwersoog) and Fran tried an "*uitsmijter*" which turned out to be rather runny eggs served on plain bread--not as interesting as it sounded! We don't understand how this particular item has become so popular among Dutch traditional dishes; it is no more than just a fried egg with little or no accoutrements. One of the problems was that, though the place was officially already open, they were not yet ready for customers so early in the morning.

Drove to Purmerend to spend the weekend with Frans & Elly Linger. We lived in the same apartment building as they did during our stay in Amsterdam from 1972-1974, and have stayed in touch ever since. They are a wonderful Christian couple who are both very active in the church. They told us some very distressful news about the state of the Dutch church. Some church elders question whether there is a God and don't see why that is even important. It sounds as if a revival led by Abraham Kuiper would be helpful again. There seems to be the same "*vrijzinnige*" (Dutch liberalism) attitude as in the 1850s.

Spent time singing some Dutch choruses with Elly at the piano. Many of these were translated from English and were the choruses we had taught in the Bible Study in our apartment in Amsterdam North in 1973.

We attended a service of the PKN (Protestant Church of the Netherlands), the result of the merger mentioned earlier, in a Lutheran church building. Even though it was Palm Sunday, there were not many people in attendance. The pastor did a good job telling the Passion Week story from Peter's perspective. Fran found church Dutch quite easy to understand, easier than some of the conversations in people's homes. But she was pleased with her level of fluency in both Dutch and Friesian and happy with the compliments she got for her efforts! To which I would add: Rightly so!

Took the long way back home with the Lingers, walking through the town of Purmerend, the market area and the shopping centre. After lunch we went together by train to Hoorn, a beautiful ancient town on the shores of the IJssel Meer, the former salt water bay turned into a fresh-water lake. The Lingers know a lot about different types of gables and pointed out interesting details on many buildings from the 1500s. They took us out to a superb restaurant located in a high tower right on the IJssel Meer.

We left Purmerend and drove to The Hague. Those of you who know the Dutch map will tell us we were going back and forth without following a plan. But we had our reasons!

We walked around the central area of The Hague and spent time at the parliament buildings. We decided to try another Dutch treat, "poffertjes," but found out they were just expensive, small and very sweet pancakes. I decided that Febo has the best treats of all: sausages, meatballs and "*croquetten*." I am going to suggest to the Dutch Consul in Vancouver that they advise Febo to open a branch in our West End! I am sure they will do well there.

Arrived at the Dekkers house in Voorburg in mid afternoon. We've been friends with Ruud & Aly since their time in Nigeria in the mid 80's. They invited the Verhages, Annemarie's parents, over for the evening as well. So we were able to personally bring Annemarie's greetings to her parents!

Had a relaxing final morning with Ruud; Aly had to work. Alas, not everyone is retired yet! Then drove to Schiphol, dropped off the rental car and checked in for our flight. Flew with British Airways and arrived in Vancouver at 6:05 P.M. Not bad for a journey of several thousand miles, eh? Do remember there's an 8 hour time difference between GMT and PST—Pacific Standard Time! Took a taxi home from the airport. Found piles of mail in our apartment. Also a "*Welcome Home, Mom & Dad*" sign from Cynthia. Cynthia and two

Hillcrest friends, who needed to renew their visas for the U.S., stayed in our apartment early in March while we were in Tunisia.

We had a wonderful journey and feel really blessed that we were able to do it, but there's still a lot of truth in the old saying, "*Oost, West; Thuis Best*" (East, West; Home is still best) or "Home, Sweet, Home!" Nevertheless, we felt tremendously grateful for God's protection all along this long way as well as the rich experiences we had. These included "exotic" cultures as well as a re-connect with relatives and friends we had not seen for years. We are blessed with our very large families; all these make us feel rich and connected, even though they are far from us. *Alhamdu lillahi*—Praise be to God who made it all possible.

A few interesting facts:

We flew with 6 different airlines on 10 flights.

We slept in 19 different beds.

We spent 16 nights in hotels.

We paid excess baggage charges once: (20 cents) on the Abuja-Lagos bus.

We walked a total of 358 kilometers; 67 km during the week in Paris.

I gained 7 lbs. Fran stayed the same.

### *Discovering the Kootenays (July 2005)*

Just a few months later, we were ready to travel again! This was a more local trip which took us into BC's interior. We tended to think of that region as rich with respect to nature but culturally and historically barren, but it is surprisingly full of both of these. Many of the towns have gold rush history or other mining stuff. All of that is gone, but most of them have reconfigured themselves with flowers and parks and various forms of recreation and entertainment that make them fun to visit. Fran started this journal as follows:

#### A KOOTENAY RV TRIP – July, 2005

#### IN SEARCH OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER

and

#### WHY IS BC NAMED BRITISH *COLUMBIA*?

First point of interest was Princeton on Hw. 3, aka as Crowsnest Highway. It boasts an old wooden bridge, covered in former times, that has been turned into a pedestrian zone and is now often used in movies. Also boasts a large structure of huge wooden blocks that were moved from Vancouver's Burrard Street, two blocks from our apartment. Original name was Prince Town, in honour of some royal visitor to *eastern* Canada a century or more ago!

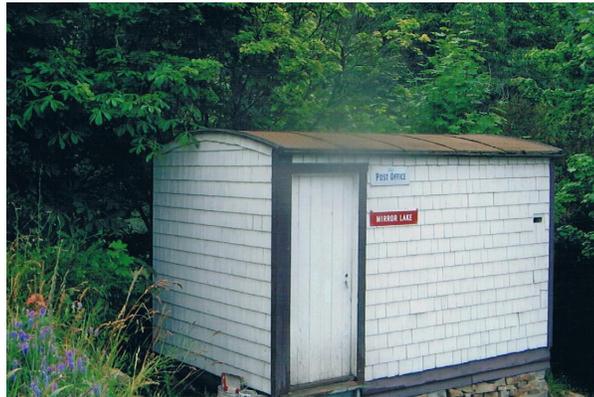
The next place worth a stop was Osoyoos at the junction of Hw 3 and 97. When I was there with a group of fellows from the Alberni CRC during the 1950s, it was a sleepy orchard community. But now it's a bustling centre with lots of seniors. It boasts the warmest lake in

Canada. It is the northern tip of the Sonoro Desert, which originates in Mexico, and is he only desert area in Canada.

Continuing east along Highway 3, we reached Bridesville, too small to be on the map we were using. Its main distinction is its cute Post Office that we thought of as possibly the smallest in all of Canada, even smaller than the one that used to stand opposite our house in Pitt Meadows in 1951. Just a well maintained tiny self-standing hut. There surely could not be a smaller. But on a 2013 boat ride on the *Lady Rose* in the Alberni Inlet, we saw a floating post office at Kildonan that seemed smaller still, but upon comparing the pictures, that of Bridesville trumps all so far. On the post office it said “Mirror Lake.” Is that possibly a suburb of Bridesville?



Kildonan Floating Post Office\*



Smallest Canadian Post Office?\*

Next port of call was Greenwood after we had just passed Midway, the location of a tiny border-crossing facility through which we entered Canada out of Washington State years later. Greenwood was the site of large Japanese internment camps during WW II. Their movements were restricted and they were prevented from owning properties or businesses until 1957. There are still many living there. The people of BC tend to be ashamed of this history of racism, but it happened during the pre-multicultural era and pre-Canada’s “philosopher king” with his distorted Humanist anthropology. With immigrants often tending to sympathize with the politics of their countries of origin, I do not blame the Government for this preventive move. After all, WW II showed us clearly the outrageous cruelties the Japanese were capable of. This brings up the question why Germans and Italians were not treated similarly! It could be a matter of numbers, but also of racism; possibly both. However, BC being on the west coast, the threat of German or Italian invasion was much less than a Japanese one. Not sure Canada or BC had the wherewithal for internment of such large numbers. Hold off on your conclusion here and wait till you get to Revelstoke in this journal!

Phoenix was another of the ex-mining towns from 1880-1910. Had a population of 4,000 then, but now reduced to a historical marker. Located along a very lonely road high up in the mountains. After the marker, it was a dirt road with many side roads going every which way. We lost our way, but were rescued by a worker in a pickup who redirected us. Had we kept going, we might have unwittingly crossed into the US over unmarked borders.

Grand Forks on Highway 3 has even now a large Doukhobor community, a Russian Christian sect that emphasizes obeying the “inner light” and rejects church and civil authority. They had immigrated to Saskatchewan, but felt betrayed by the provincial government in connection with land policies. So in 1910, they moved to BC, some 6,000 of them, some of them to Grand Forks. More info about them to come.

Came upon Christina Lake where we took a swim. It is allegedly “the warmest *tree-lined* lake in Canada,” in distinction from that of Osoyoos. It certainly did not feel as warm as Sproat Lake during my Alberni days! Hey, everyone loves to add an “est” to his town—the last, the biggest, the smallest, etc. So, let’s give it to them. It does not make Sproat Lake colder. There’s room for more than one “warmest,” or “biggest,” right? After all, teenagers have scads of “*best* friends!”

Next town was Rossland. It has the same gold mining history as so many towns in the West, except that they allege they had more gold than either California and the Yukon. Took a tour deep into the bowels of an old mine, with high school students as our guides.

The town of Trail is the home of Cominco, the largest zinc and lead smelter in Canada, but with only 75 employees now. Their ore comes from places as far away as Alaska’s Red Cat mines. On our tour of the place, we were challenged to lift a one-ton block of lead, but for some reason did not succeed. Many Cominco employees live in Warfield, an area on the hills with very interesting houses known there as “Mickey Mouse” houses. They were hastily constructed after WW II. The streets are named after poets and authors. A most charming residential community. It calls itself “the jewel of the Kootenays.”

Saw the Columbia River for the first time in Trail. The Columbia River has many dams on it and runs through many lakes. Many different names appear on the map, which makes its course hard to follow, at least on the map. Queen Victoria named the province after this river. Hence the name “*British* Columbia.” The name constituted a challenge to American expansionism: This is as far as you can go!

Camped at the side of the road that night, near a large Columbia River dam in Waneta which is on the BC/WA border. Had a wonderful campfire with old stained railway ties, smoke and all! Not exactly green-friendly. Since we were less than a block from the border post, we were wondering whether we would get harassed, but slept through the night without noticing anything or anyone.

Continued on to Castlegar, the major Doukhobor town in the interior. Enjoyed a typical Doukhobor meal of borsch and beet pirokshki. Spent much time in the Doukhobor museum with a graduate student in history who knew his stuff and was proud of their history. He told us all about their two major sects, the nude parades and the arson tradition. The one sect accused the other of terrorist activities that deviated from their traditional pacifism. Nothing new under the sun! Also visited the Doukhobor cemetery that was attended by a female interpreter who similarly was proud of their history. Our campground was also managed by a Doukhobor.

We drove through a Doukhobor suburb of Castlegar and gained the sad impression that they had become a bland middle class community with the usual lawns and big houses with double garages; instead of persecuted, now absorbed into mid-stream secular culture or so it seemed. Not sure who should learn a lesson from whom: Aboriginals from Doukhobors or vice versa. What's the best model: absorption or resistance? They seem to have chosen opposite routes.

The town of Nelson is next. A bit of a bigger town, very attractive. Proud of its heritage buildings. Explored it a bit on bicycle. The city is having problems with Canada geese in its parks and warns the public of occasional hoots, "loud noise devices to scare geese" away. Seemed to work, for there were no geese in the park we were in. An example of how our own laws can become our prison instead of freeing us. The geese were endangered and thus became protected. The protection was so successful that now the geese dominate many of our parks, including Sunset Beach Park just blocks from our house. Filthy! Feces all over the place. You can hardly sit on the grass without a blanket, let alone lie down. But don't touch those holy geese! No matter how dangerous to public health. It's the law, you know. Well, you changed that law once; change it again, Dude. Otherwise, you make the law an ass. Unprotect and clean up. Trap and enjoy a good soup! The law needs to free, not imprison. Problem is that the same attitude prevails with respect to criminals; they get more protection than their victims. Thanks for listening to my rant.

On to Balfour, where we finally left Crowsnest Hw onto Hw. 31, but only temporarily, for after a brief visit to Mirror Lake and an overnight at Kaslo, we returned to Balfour. As to Mirror Lake itself, it is difficult to know what to make of it. Seems to be part of a very long, narrow lake that stretches on for kilometres. We wondered if it could be part of that mysterious Columbia River route.

If you check our route on the map so far, you may well question why such a convoluted road with nary one straight kilometer along the way. Doesn't Canada have engineers who know how to lay a straight road? Why pave a cow path? We probably should have asked the Americans to do it for us! The reason: fantastic mountains. This whole trip is beyond my words, absolutely. The beauty and majesty—ach! Every step of the way; around every curve and corner. Do yourself a huge favour and take the time to explore that road with all of its beauty. You'll even begin to love curves!—if you don't already.

Crossed Kooteney Lake at Balfour on a B.C. ferry which advertises itself as the world's longest (45 minutes) *free* ferry ride. Why that community should be singled out for free ferries when the people on Vancouver Island pay through the nose, is beyond me. Perhaps some former provincial premier hailed from there? The inequality of it stinks to high heaven. This year, 2013, this free ride has become a hot issue because of ferry rate increases on the coast. So, Vaughn Palmer of the *Vancouver Sun* published an article on the history and politics of the fourteen free inland ferries, and suggested that the power of the vote lies behind it all. Next time we do the Kootenays, we can rest assured that the free ferry will be waiting for us. But it *was* a beautiful boat ride and, in spite of its ambiguity, being free made it even more so!

Just across the lake is Crawford Bay which is known for all its artisans. We observed the barefoot hand weavers and the broom makers at work. Theirs is all manual labour. With all

the interest in brooms inspired by the Harry Potter books, the North Woven Broom Co. was doing great business, with orders from all over the world. They also provided the broom for the ad for the film *Bewitched*.

Now straight southward along Hw. 3A and along narrow Kooteney Lake to Creston, near the US border once again. With all the write-ups in the media about the polygamous community in Bountiful near Creston, our first question at the Tourist Info Office was, “Where is it?” We asked three people and got three different answers: “It doesn’t exist.” “They live amongst us but you’d never recognize them.” “It’s a definite place ‘out there’ and they dress very differently, so you’ll notice them immediately.” We recognized some members of the community in town by their mode of dress. We went in search of Bountiful along the road to the border, but couldn’t find it. We might have succeeded if we had taken some gravel side roads, but didn’t because of the RV. I intend to be more insistent next time we visit that area.

Once again northward to Cranbrook, where Susan Pel and her children live. Susan is the daughter of Elsie Bosma and Fred Pel. Emily van Brederode, daughter of Margareth Bosma & Pete Van Brederode was visiting her and serving as a summer babysitter. Both Susan and Emily are granddaughters of my sister Elly. We invited them to our campsite and spent a very pleasant evening with them around the campfire.

Here we also met a gentleman who was roller blading his way across Canada. His wife accompanied him with their RV. All of this on behalf of Diabetes Prevention.



Roller Blading vs Diabetes\*

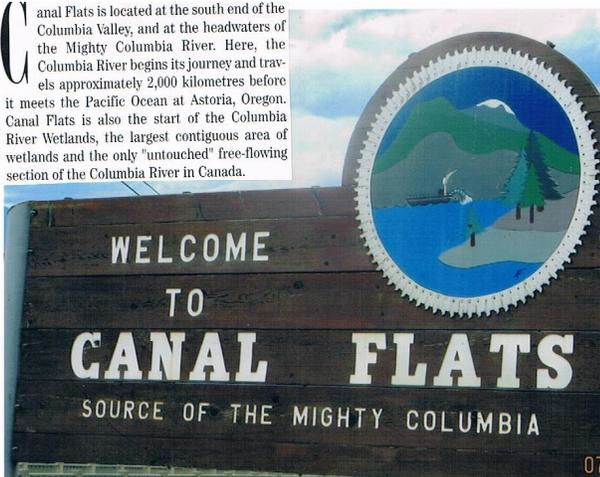
The town boasts a Baker RV Park that has a story of political intrigue behind it. The story started in our next town, Fort Steele. This town boomed in 1897, but in 1898 the railroad that was promised them went to Cranbrook instead and that was the end of the town. A Mr. Baker, an MLA, owned land in Cranbrook and his political power was the undoing of Fort Steele. Guess where the Baker RV Park in Cranbrook got its name? We camped at the Fort Steele Campground in sympathy!

They've done an excellent job in restoring the town to its former glory. A real Living History Program with live drama in many spots in the town. The centre of it all was the Fort Steele Heritage Town, but, really, the entire town was one big and very interesting museum of their own history. Enjoyed a pioneer cooking demonstration. Walked through stores, hotels, churches and saw the school. All of it historical, including people in period costumes. Really well done, so well that we have twelve pictures in our album and I'm feeling a pull to revisit! Most other communities got no more than a couple pictures; some, none.

We've now left the Crowsnest Highway for good and are on Highway 95 on our way to Kimberley, BC's Bavarian city. Were treated to a free performance in a downtown square of "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown," as well as two vaudeville shows. Took an old railway car up to Alpine Resort and from there "climbed" to the top of the mountain in a ski lift. Some of our fellow passengers went up with mountain bikes, which they would ride down the mountain and come up again with the lift for a rerun. At the top we spoiled ourselves in a lovely restaurant patio overlooking the entire world. Must have been similar to the views Moses had in the OT and Jesus in the New!

We missed by just one miserable day what for me might have been the musical event of my lifetime. They had just finished a whole week of an accordion jamboree, where players met from all over the world. The accordion is probably my favourite instrument that I still dream of learning to play again. I hope one of these summers to attend this event. Ah, I can just imagine...! I trust I am not being disloyal to Gilbert & Sullivan! Day of writing—April 8, 2014—just learned that the 37-year old tradition has been discontinued due to economic factors. What a bummer. I had hoped to attend the event this year!

Canal Flats is located at the south end of the Columbia Valley, and at the headwaters of the Mighty Columbia River. Here, the Columbia River begins its journey and travels approximately 2,000 kilometres before it meets the Pacific Ocean at Astoria, Oregon. Canal Flats is also the start of the Columbia River Wetlands, the largest contiguous area of wetlands and the only "untouched" free-flowing section of the Columbia River in Canada.



Drove further north to Canal Flats. Here is the source of the Columbia River\* that Fran has been so curious about and that travels 2000 kms to the Pacific Ocean, mostly through the US. It runs out of Columbia Lake, which flows north. A mere 2 kms from its shores is the Kootenay River, which flows south! In 1889, a canal was built to connect these two bodies. Only two steamboats passed through it before the project was abandoned. Fran was happy to finally find the source, even though it was not immediately recognizable as such. There comes a time you just have to believe the experts.

We've all heard about people who either build or destroy churches, *stealing* a church, well that's something else. It happened in Windermere, the next port of call. There's this St. Peter's Anglican Church aka "The Stolen Church."\* The story has it that one Rufus Kimpton moved his family from a little village called Donald to Windermere in 1899 and, "because his wife pined for little church she had left behind, he took it upon himself to 'steal' the house of worship and move it to his family's new home." It must have taken some expertise to steal an entire church without being noticed!



but

the

On the way to nearby Radium Hot Springs, we continued along Highway 95 through spectacular gorges cut in the mountains for purposes of the road. Cars look like little bugs as they scramble their way between the mountain walls towering straight up above them. Enjoyed a swim in water at 40C\*. Did it ever make us feel sleepy!

Drove on to Golden and camped at the Kicking Horse River in their municipal park. Golden is located at the confluence of the Columbia and the Kicking Horse Rivers. Biked around Golden. Walked our bikes across the Kicking Horse River Pedestrian Bridge. Much of the work on the bridge was done by volunteers and it claims to be the longest (150 feet) free-span timber frame pedestrian bridge in Canada. Heh, another "–est!"

Observed a strange accident in the campground. An older (older than us!) couple was trying to back their tent trailer into the spot across from us. The driver got out of the car to check out the situation but forgot to put the vehicle in park, so the car and trailer went wildly forward between us and the lot next to us, riding straight across our camp chairs. The wheels ran over the driver and the passenger fell on the gravel. They asked us to phone 911 (yes, we now know how to use our cell phone!) and help arrived quite quickly. After being discharged by the medics, they decided to drive home and didn't camp after all.

We saw lots of big horn sheep on the mountain across the river from our campsite. Also saw a large dog chasing a branch in the very-rapidly flowing river, going way down stream till we could no longer see it. No obvious owner near by.

We went to a nearby Buffalo Ranch run by an artist-rancher couple from California. They seemed very enthused about the possibilities of raising pollution-free meat, but the government is making it almost impossible for them to sell the meat due to interfering laws that make no sense. They could not sell meat, only animals on the hoof. Their solution was to sell the animal and then the customer might ask them to butcher it for them.

Spent a second night at Golden Municipal Park. Woke up to a flood in our RV bathroom! The toilet mechanism had gotten stuck in a slightly open position and so water dripped out to fill the toilet and then overflowed.

After cleaning up the mess, we joined the Trans Canada to head south-west to Revelstoke. Note the drastic change in direction: Looks like we're now on our way back home, but not quite. There are still some detours waiting for us. We took a very enjoyable tour of the huge Revelstoke Dam on the Columbia River. Also took a quick look at a display of an Interior Forestry project. Did some biking in downtown Revelstoke and listened to an evening concert at the bandstand.

Drove as far as the road goes up Mt. Revelstoke, a most lovely ride along a road framed by a



stunning display of flaming red fireweed flowers. I just love the gorgeous picture we have of it in our album. At the end of the road, the park provides free shuttle service to the summit with its elevation of 6360 feet. Spectacular panoramic views from up there.

Road to the top in Mount Revelstoke National Park\*

Mt. Revelstoke had an interment camp during WW I consisting of “Ukrainians and other Europeans.” The Parks commission tried to get the internees to complete the new road to the summit of the mountain, but “weather conditions and labour disputes resulted in the men spending most of their time clearing snow and cutting firewood rather than working on road construction.” Internment of Europeans in BC? Never heard of it. Might be interesting to explore this further on the Internet.

Would you believe it? Later, the very day I wrote the above paragraph (March 16, 2013), I ran into a man of Italian descent in Vancouver who had worked for the *Vancouver Sun* all his life and had written a book about Italian internment in BC during WW II! As a result, I did a quick perusal of the issue on the Internet and found that Canada has interned Canadians of German, Italian, Jewish, Ukrainian (including Austro-Hungarians) descent in addition to Japanese, though not on such a wholesale scale. My friend Ernest Poser was one of the Jewish internees, but he was neither a Canadian citizen nor resident at the time. It seems most Canadians have forgotten about this part of our history. The point here is that the Japanese Canadians were not the only ones interned and, the others being Caucasians, the charge of racism may not be valid.

After Revelstoke, we turned south on Hw. 23 and at the next stop found ourselves in a little place called Nakusp. Here we enjoyed a lunch from a patio overlooking Arrow Lake at the Leland Hotel, which claims the distinction of being the oldest continuously open hotel in BC! In such an isolated place! Amazing, this history of the BC interior.

From there to Burton on Hw. 6, where we camped. The following morning we noticed our front license plate was missing. Had to find an RCMP station to report the missing plate and receive an official letter exonerating us to avoid being caught along the way. Continued on through various little communities, crossed a few ferries to get us back and forth across one of these long narrow unknown lakes so typical of BC's interior. Swam in different places both warm and even glacial. On through Cherryville, where there were still remnant tailings of Chinese gold miners during the 1860s. Did a little biking around in Lumby village and then took in Vernon, a bigger town.

Here we enjoyed a breakfast buffet at the O'Keefe Ranch and visited the Planet Bee Honey Farm, where we watched most interesting displays of bees busy producing honey. Vernon is known for its humungous murals. There is an entire gallery of larger-than-life faces on one building that we took some time enjoying and musing, wondering whose faces they were and what their owners had done to deserve being "immortalized." We watched a crew working on other huge murals with the use of construction scaffolding a couple of stories high.

From Vernon on to Kelowna, where sister Bo and husband Tom live. We're now on Hw. 97A and heading straight south. This highway takes you through Oyama, where there is a surprising roadside display of Black manikins (derived from the quaint Dutch term "*manneke*") dressed in African fashion. This is surprising in view of the almost total lack of anything Black in the BC interior.

Spent a few days with Bo and Tom in Kelowna. Apart from the visit itself, the most interesting thing there was watching pleasure boats navigating through a series of locks between the big Lake Okanagan and an artificial residential lake.

On through various towns and villages, including Penticton, where we camped on the Wal-Mart parking lot. That night we were disturbed by a noisy group of hooligans wandering around, yelling obscenities and in general bothering the campers. We called the cops, but before they arrived, the group disappeared. Penticton is the proud home of two historic ships that played important and, to our generation and yours, surprising shipping roles all around Lake Okanagan. They are S. S. Naramata and S. S. Sicamous. Check them out on the Internet for their interesting histories and their current appearance. They are typical of similar vessels that used to ply BC's interior lakes and rivers. They lead one to ask where they came from and how they penetrated the interior so deeply. Well, you do the research and you'll find it interesting.

One thing I have noticed on this journey are the traces of the gold rush that jump started many communities, made them grow up like mushrooms, only to wither away just as quickly. The same story as along BC's coast and in the Arctic north. A historical marker with the title "Fairview Gold" says it all for so much of BC, the Yukon and Alaska:

The 1890s held high hopes for the lode gold of mines.... By 1902, when the Fairview Hotel or “Big Teepee” burned, the golden years were over. Fairview’s population dwindled as miners left for more promising prospects. But some settlers, lured by the natural attractions of the Okanagan Valley, remained to profit from the lasting wealth of its abundant resources.

Many of these settlers were Americans. The same holds true for Victoria, the capital of BC on the Island: many American gold rushers remained and settled there. It may have the reputation of being the most English city, but many of its residents are descendants of Americans rather than British. In fact, this holds true for BC wherever there have been “rushes” of whatever kind. The name may be decisively chosen by Queen Victoria as British, but much of the DNA is American—and that in a province that kind of hypocritically prides itself for its non-American character, if not anti-American. Well, that’s one thing at least I share somewhat with my fellow BC Canadians.

After several days more, a number of villages and towns and swims, we ended up back in Princeton. There we met a man who knew Lutjegast and the Boer family. His sister was a refugee from Amsterdam who spent time in Lutjegast during WW II. He moved to Abbotsford and met Opa when Opa was the custodian at First Abbotsford CRC in the mid 1970s during the first years of his retirement. According to his story, one day Opa was busy vacuuming in an area of the church during a choir practice time. One of the young but fairly heavy choir members didn’t like the noise and thus unplugged the vacuum. Opa went up to him, sort of dragged him to the outlet and forced him to re-plug the vacuum! Yep, that was my Dad!

The next couple of days were spent visiting some friends and siblings on the way home, the same siblings we visited on the way out. On August 1, 2005, we drove into our Bute parking lot. Happy to be home but elated about weeks of highly surprising cultural and historical experiences. Had not expected anything like it! Yep, that’s our BC!

### *The Alaska Anniversary Cruise (June 2007)*

A big celebration in 2007 was our 45<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. During 2006 our investments did unusually well. We decided to use that extra bonus in 2007 for a family cruise from Seattle to Alaska and back. Had it not been for our 2006 “luck,” we could not possibly have done that. It lasted just long enough to pay for that trip. Then it went back to doldrums “normal;” from there it fell off the cliff in the 2008 economic tsunami and never recovered. All twelve of us participated in this cruise, that is, the three kids and their families. Sarah Palin, then a colourful Governor of Alaska, threw us an unexpected curve by imposing a special \$50 per person surcharge on all cruise passengers that set foot on Alaska. That meant an extra \$600 for us! After she resigned, it was withdrawn, but in the meantime we were among its unhappy victims without recourse.

Except for W&J, who arrived separately by air, we all started the journey at C&A's house. We expected to go to the cruise terminal by taxi, but Cynthia complained that the taxi was late. So she ordered another vehicle; it turned out to be a stretch limousine that could accommodate all of us. We were even treated to a bottle of champagne. It did not occur to me until later that this was all planned to mark the beginning of an amazing journey. Thank you, Cynthia. That was a great way to start. First time we'd ever been in a limousine.



Vision of the Seas\*

The name of our cruise ship was "Vision of the Seas." Along the way, we met the ships of the Holland-America Line sporting the names of former Dutch immigrant ships such as Volendam in which our family crossed the Atlantic and the Statendam.

The cruise was an amazing experience for Fran and me. The four couples did a lot of things on their own, but sometimes some of us would also relax together either on deck or in one of the many lounges. We ate many of our meals together. Breakfast was an unending buffet of all foods associated with that meal, but prepared in ways difficult to equal in your own kitchen. We often ate lunch on/in our own times and places, sometimes in a restaurant, sometimes in a lounge or on deck. Dinner was more formal with suit and quite formal dress. Every party was assigned their special table and waiter for the entire cruise. The thing was that the cruise economy assumes everyone will drink a lot. We told our kids that for drinks they were on their own, for that would add too much to our bill. Sometimes they would buy a bottle to share. The company did not do well with us in this regard. Same with gambling. We simply didn't. To make sure our special waiter did not suffer loss, we gave him a special tip at the end of the cruise; the main tip being paid for from our surcharge levied for that specific purpose. He was a lovely family man from the Philippines.

The food available at any time was astounding and, though tongue-friendly, it was hardly corpus friendly. I zeroed in on the smoked salmon, available at any time as much as I cared. I must have eaten half a ton of it. Besides the foods available at set times, there were continually changing displays of fancy snacks in various places. The only way I could do justice to describing those would be to insert photos. It was from such places that I, almost continuously, went to snatch more salmon. Well, a healthy snack, right? And that's me, who is not fond of fish except in the form of fish and chips, raw pickled herring or Fran's fried fish.

We watched the Dutch chef in action during an exhibition he put on of pastries and chocolates, much of it looking like flowers and other plants. We were simply overawed by his skill.

The grandkids were entertained every and all day by a special crew in a special facility, an arrangement they loved so much, they never asked for anything else. That meant we adults were free to do our own thing. One of the things we watched Asia and Ezra do was rock climbing. Yes, you heard that properly, simulated, of course, but real as an experience. They were in a harness attached to a pulley above them, which was operated by an attendant on the deck below. Theresa and Asia made good use of the swimming pools onboard, while almost everyone spent some time there just lounging at the side of the pool. Asia was in first grade at the time and had a bit of “homework” to do, mostly just journaling her experiences. One evening at 10 as we were still enjoying the last bits of our dinner, she exclaimed, “This is the life!” That remark came after the waiter brought her a second dish of ice cream.

We also had family pictures taken aboard. On the night of June 5, the actual anniversary date, the kids treated us to a special private reception in a smaller room reserved for such occasions.

The journey northward was taken through open international waters. Somewhere along the line, a passenger became so seriously ill that (s)he had to be taken to a hospital. The ship turned around to meet a helicopter ambulance that came to pick up the patient. They came low and let down a basket for the patient. This took several hours, all the while taking us into the southern, that is, wrong, direction.

Our first port of call was Juneau (population 32,000+), the isolated state capital in the Alaskan panhandle that can be reached only by air or sea. Since it is on the mainland, I wonder why no road access has been provided from BC. Perhaps the place is either too small or not enough of an economic centre to make that viable? It certainly is a distance from any existing BC highways. It must be the smallest state capital in the US as well as the most isolated, but it is also a pretty place. It is nestled in a small space between the sea and the mountains.

*An aside:* The sophisticated and vibrant city of Juneau is the only state capital in the nation not accessible by road. It is exceptionally picturesque, hard against the Gastineau Channel, with steep, narrow roads clawing up into the rain-forested hills behind. Gold features heavily in its history. In 1880, Joe Juneau made Alaska's first gold strike along the banks of the Gastineau Channel. Until the last mine was shut down in 1944, this was the world's largest producer of low-grade ore – all the flat land in Juneau, stretching from downtown to the airport, is landfill from mine tailings. Today, the state government provides much of the employment, and tourism plays its part with the drive-to Mendenhall Glacier and the watery charms of Tracy Arm fjord as temptation. (From an online travel guide)

There were at least three cruise ships in the harbour at the time of our visit, so that the town was alive and busy with thousands of cruise passengers, each of whom had paid that \$50 surcharge! Business was good! The houses have unusual colour schemes with a lot of pastels. The town was built up the mountainside so that many parts of the town could not be reached by car. Instead, you had to climb stairs to get to the higher levels—by foot, not by car! I took a

picture of Fran and Kevin patronizing a lemonade stand advertising “Cold Fresh Lemonade for Sale.” I wonder if it reminded Kevin of the Zaria Road lemonade stand from years earlier, except that this one was quite a bit more sophisticated and operated by teenagers, not just young children. It was even covered by an extra wide umbrella-type shade and had the appearance of permanence. It being Alaska, the town also boasted a round Russian Orthodox Church dedicated to St. Nicholas. It was good to get off the ship for a few hours and we all enjoyed strolling the streets of the place.



Then on to Skagway. We had been there before with our RV in 2004. Nothing had changed. This town was of special interest to Kevin, as I explained during our previous trip there, because of its runway stopping abruptly over the water. I took a picture of Fran, Wiebe and Joanna relaxing on chairs in front of the Skagway US Post Office, with Joanna protectively holding Stephan in a heavy blanket. After all, it was wintry Alaska, not tropical Trinidad! Again, it was fun strolling with the kids.

#### Resting at the Skagway Post Office\*

*An aside:* Skagway is a first-class borough in Alaska, on the Alaska Panhandle. It was formerly a city, first incorporated in 1900 that was re-incorporated as a borough on June 25, 2007. As of the 2010 census, the population of the city was 920. However, the population doubles in the summer tourist season in order to deal with more than 900,000 visitors. It is a popular stop for cruise ships, and the tourist trade is a big part of the business of Skagway. Skagway (originally spelled *Skaguay*) is from the Tlingit name for the area, "Skagua" or "Shgagwei" meaning "a windy place with white caps on the water." (From Wikipedia)

The ship was supposed to take us far into the Tracy Arm Fjord in Alaska, full of ice flows, to bring us to the foot of a glacier, but the ice flows were so numerous, huge and thick that the captain decided it was too dangerous. We turned around halfway into the inlet with mission unaccomplished.

*An aside:* Tracy Arm is a fjord in Alaska near Juneau. It is named after a Civil War general named Benjamin Franklin Tracy. It is located about 45 miles (72 km) south of Juneau. Tracy Arm is over 30 miles (48 km) long and one-fifth of its area is covered in ice. During the summer, the fjord has considerable floating ice ranging from hand-sized to pieces as large as a three-story building. (From Wikipedia)

We saw lots of hand-size pieces and much larger, but nothing like a three-story building! I did wonder whether this being “too dangerous” was not an excuse routinely used on every trip. It would be interesting to find out.

Our next stop was at Prince Rupert BC. We’d been there also on our northern RV journey. The difference was that this time it rained rainforest style: hard, driving, relentless, all day. This city is not all that much to look at, but the cruise stopped here for legal reasons. Its license was for international travel and Prince Rupert was a handy place to fulfill that requirement. We stopped for the minimal time required and then moved on again. Hopefully, Prince Rupert received its due from patronizing cruisers, but with all that rain...!



From here on it was the “inside passage,” the route between the mainland and Vancouver Island. It’s a picturesque area to sail through. We have several times watched cruise ships move through the narrow passageway from the Island and it’s always a pretty sight.

A cruise ship in the “Inside Passage”\*

Then nightfall and darkness. When we woke up we were near Seattle, where we started out. Here everyone scattered. We took a taxi to the Greyhound station and rode back to Vancouver. This expedition was a very good way to celebrate an anniversary, but it was marked by too much tension between our children that made us sad. We will have to think twice before doing anything like this again with the whole family.

### *Exploring Route 99 and Beyond (July 2007)*

So, we had been in many places in BC, including Route 99, but we had only driven that route without ever stopping to “smell the roses.” So, in July 2007, we drove up the Sea to Sky Highway past Whistler, that famous ski centre, and moseyed up to Pemberton, along the way stopping for various tourist and natural attractions. It’s a pretty town, Pemberton is, but not much to do if you’re not an outdoors fan. We took the one road leading west from the town and it ran dead at the Van Loon Farm. This was a beautiful dairy farm that the Van Loon family, Dutch immigrants, had developed from scratch, cutting down the forest and creating a huge area of grazing meadow that was “framed” by snow-capped mountains. The picture of that meadow with the mountains behind it is “breathtaking,” as Fran described it. There are several houses on the property in which the Van Loon families live. As we slowly drove past the place, we came across an older gentleman working the field. He was the patriarch and original pioneer. We stopped and chatted for quite a while, with the man very interested in our story as Dutch immigrants as we were in his. We could tell from the town that the family were good citizens and contributed their weight to the community. We spent the night camping in an abandoned railway yard in the middle of the town.

The following morning we continued along Route 99. Just outside of the town the road has an almost unbelievable and endless steep climb up the mountain so that the RV had to be geared down to make it to the top. Having a couple of trailers ahead of us did not help! Now we were down to low gear and just crawling upwards till I took a chance and passed it in a curve, something that is not recommended, as I knew. But sometimes you just have to do what you have to do. This was a situation where normal rules just don't apply. We have since taken that hill several times with our international guests.

At the village of Mt. Currie, we left Route 99 in favour of an unnumbered side road to an even smaller village at the end of the road and the edge of Anderson Lake, called D'arcy. How such a frontier village earned such a distinguished-sounding name, I do not know. It was a ramshackle kind of settlement with much of the place kind of swampish. While in most of BC pedestrians have the right of way, here the cows did! They were wandering all over the place. Many of the villagers were Aboriginals, but it was not a reserve. You could tell that from the fact that there was no luxurious government-funded community centre.

The kids rode to school in a bus, not such a startling discovery in Canada. There was a bit of a store at the bus stop, the owner of which must have had it with the kids. On his outside wall:

#### NOTICE

From now on kids that get off the high school bus  
 Are only allowed in the store  
 One at a time without your school bags.  
 If you need to use the washroom,  
 Please go over to the hall or go home.  
 Your bragging about what you do has been told to me.  
 I'll be talking to your parents.  
 Sorry!!!!

Two other outside signs read, "Stay alive. Don't drink and drive!" And, "We are not buying back stolen land. Lot 100 belongs to N'Katkawwa." With those three signs, one does not have to read between the lines to understand that there is a lot of "excitement" going on here as well as resentment, quite apart from the cattle on the street.

The lifeblood of D'Arcy at one time was the multitude of salmon that spawned in the Gates River near the village. However, in 1913 a rock slide at Hell's Gate on the Fraser River blocked the salmon and reduced them to a negligible number. The government introduced fishways to restore the flow. The salmon did begin to increase again, but then logging activities and flood controls negatively influenced the best part of the spawning ground. Since then, the Gates River Spawning Channel was built in an attempt to restore the numbers once again.

We had to retrace our steps to Mt. Currie and then continue on along Route 99 to Lillooet, one of the hottest places in all of Canada along with Lytton, still further up the road. It's a long haul through very lonely and wild ranching country with mountains and high hills together with rivers, lakes and patches of forests providing lots of worthwhile semi-desert scenery. Our foreign guests are always impressed by this part of the drive.

While D'Arcy is struggling with its heritage of salmon, Lillooet, with white sturgeon. I am tempted to reproduce government info about this wonderful fish, but I suggest you check it out on the internet, except to say that "it is the largest freshwater fish in North America, attaining lengths in excess of six metres and weights of over 600 kilogrammes. They can live up to 150 years!" Again, due to human mismanagement, the stock plummeted to near extinction, which the government has since begun to reverse by, among other things, a moratorium on fishing for them. Local Aboriginals have voluntarily adhered to this moratorium.

Lillooet also brags that it is "bat friendly!" This is apparently due to its location in the transition zone between the coast and the interior. Bats turn out to be very interesting animals, quite different from the popular mythology about them. For example, most of them have excellent vision and are far from blind. They can consume mountains of mosquitoes and are thereby the best eco-friendly "pesticide." Again, if interested, check them out on the internet.

Other interesting features of the community are the Chinese rock pilings, leftovers from the gold rush. Again, there you have that history. And then there is that legendary figure Sir Mathew Baillie Begbie (1819-1894). He was British and one of the first officials in the Crown Colony of BC. A historical marker describes him as follows:

He was an artist who drew sketches of the witnesses in his "courtroom." He was an opera singer and a linguist who heard cases in the Shuswap and Chilcotin languages without needing an interpreter. Most of all, Begbie was a great judge who won the miners' respect, often took the side of the underdog and kept the peace with good judgements, some of which are still quoted in courtrooms today.

Have you ever heard of the "Hanging Judge?" That's what they called him.... He looked the part too—an imposing man at 6'5", with white hair and black moustache. But only 27 of the 52 cases he heard...ended in hangings.... Hanging was the punishment required by law for the crime of murder at the time, so if the verdict was "guilty," the judge did not have a choice.

In 1857 Begbie was knighted by Queen Victoria—Sir Mathew Baillie Begbie.

Popularly, he is known for bringing justice to the lawless Gold Rush days and for hanging some people for crimes ranging from petty theft to murder. Way up on a hill, the town preserved what was called the "Hangman's Tree." For safety reasons, it was cut down in 2003, with remnants remaining on the site. "It was used as a gallows...more than 100 years ago...." A Begbie effigy is standing next to the stump, in proper black suit, hat and moustache.

We met a very friendly biker gang in the town that was touring the area. One of the members sported a sign on his bike: "Riding for the Christian Motorcyclists Association." We had an interesting chat with him.

From there we drove to Kamloops (population +/- 87,000) along Route 99 and then the TransCanada. We had a bit of a history here. In 1965 Fran and I, on our way by train from Vancouver back to Grand Rapids, stopped there to visit brother Wim/Bill and Tina. It was New Year's Eve. Though we had not met for some years, they promptly left us with their baby

Tammy and I went off to a drinking party! At another time, I preached there on one of our deputation tours.

However, we had never before stopped to savour this city. It turned out to be a very attractive place. Amongst other things, it was the hometown of one of BC's more colourful Social Credit politicians, Philip Gaglardi, at one time the provincial Minister of Highways who had his license withdrawn due to speeding! He is still remembered for and by his nickname, "Flying Phil." However, we met a group of senior men sitting in a park in the centre of the city and in the shadow of a building named after Gaglardi, who remembered him with admiration for all the things he had done for their city during his tenure as a go-getting pastor.

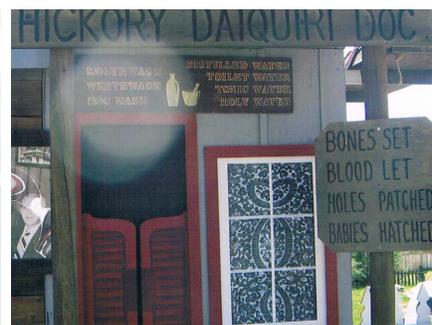
We camped in a private campground that was absolutely crowded with only a foot or so between RVs, the kind of place that you see in cartoons poking fun of RVing. All of our neighbours were Jehovah Witnesses from all over the province attending a conference. We had quite a chat with one of them who insisted we attend their Sunday service the next day. It would be an amazing event, he assured us, organized with this conference in mind. We decided to go for it. It sounded like it would be an interesting "spiritual" adventure. However, by morning we changed our mind and went to the CRC where I had preached years earlier.

Our next destination was north along Route 5 into Wells Gray Provincial Park that is bragged up for its "alpine meadows, towering mountains, cavernous gorges and spectacular waterfalls." None of that is unusual in BC, but it thrills you every time you experience such places. We remember it especially for its mosquitoes that were more than we could handle and the "world famous" Helmcken Falls, about three times the height of Niagara Falls, though hardly its width. They could use some of Lillooet's bats!

This Park is the end of the road and so we backtracked along Highway 24, another lonely and mountainous stretch till we reached Route 1, the Trans Canada, and headed south towards Clinton (population 670+). According to Wikipedia, originally known as "47-Mile House" or "47 Mile," Clinton was named in 1863 for Henry Fiennes Pelham Clinton, the 5th Duke of Newcastle, who was Colonial Secretary in 1854 and again from 1859-1864. Every May, Clinton is home to the May Ball which features a rodeo and dance. This is one of British Columbia's oldest continual events, having first been held in 1867, and was a highlight of the social calendar in the British Columbia Interior for many decades. Besides that Ball, there is not much to see or do for travelers in this village unless you're a back-country person. But they do have a good sense of humour with some pretend old-style wooden buildings.



**Bucking Ham Palace\***



**Medical Supermarket\***

Since we were not in the market for any of these services at the time, we moved on to Ashcroft, further south along Route 1. Our interest in Ashcroft (population 1628) was more in its history than in any contemporary stuff. It was founded in the 1860s, during the Cariboo Gold Rush, by two English brothers, who emigrated to Canada from Ashcroft, in the UK. The brothers had originally come in search of gold; however, on hearing stories from failed gold searchers, they decided to establish the town to give future gold searchers a place to saddle their horses. They sold flour to packers and miners, thus helping to establish the community.

The town has a couple of interesting examples of old-time architecture. There is an old loghouse with door and windows and a rather flat roof that appears to be made of some kind of thatch. It looks well preserved.



More interesting is the “pit house,” of traditional local Aboriginal design, partially a dugout with a mound on top and an entryway halfway into the pit and half way in the mound. The mound was covered with grass. The inside was amazingly spacious and looked very comfortable for keeping cool in the summer and warm in the winter; it had provision for heating up the place.

The Pit House\*

Though relatively close to the very wet rainforests of the coast, the climate of Ashcroft is surprisingly the driest place in Canada outside of the high arctic, with very hot, dry summers and moderately cold and usually brief winters. In fact, it has one of the hottest summers in Canada, with a July average daily maximum temperature near 30°C (86°F). Fran and I have been in these parts quite a number of times, but we never seem to learn our lesson. In the summer it is often simply too hot to enjoy the place, so that we seldom spend a lot of time there.

We learned from signboards that due to its arid climate, Ashcroft and the surrounding area have occasionally been used as a stand-in for film productions set in the Middle East and American West, including the miniseries *The Andromeda Strain*. Other movies filmed in the Ashcroft area include *Cadence*, *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, *An Unfinished Life* and *The A-Team*.

We are now in the centre of a lot of drama between Aboriginals and White interlopers. The history of this drama is well summarized on a historical marker with the heading “Nomadic Times.” Let me quote the latter part of the history:

Go back a 150 years. Gold is discovered to the north. The large influx of gold seekers and packers into the area deeply affects the Indians’ traditional life patterns. A

shortage of white women amongst the miners means that a lot of Indian women are taken as wives or housekeepers by the newcomers. As ranching establishes itself in the area, many Indian males become cowboys or handlers of horses. Some show great skills at horse riding and become famous rodeo riders. This sort of interaction with the white man effectively puts an end to their nomadic life and changes their life style forever.

This is the relatively peaceful part of the interaction. There is another historical marker in the same style that betrays more volatile situations that, more than a century later, seem surprisingly contemporary, indicating that little progress has been made in Aboriginal-Caucasian relations since then. It is a declaration by Indian chiefs:

#### **TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

We, the underwritten chiefs of the Indian Bands in the southern interior of BC, hereby make known our position in regard to the question of Indian rights and the policy of the Indian Rights Association of BC as follows:

Then follow seven statements in a document from which I quote the first four:

- (1) We stand for treaty rights with the Dominion of Canada....
- (2) We stand for compensation to us...for all lands appropriated....
- (3) We stand for the enlargement of our reservations....
- (4) We stand for obtaining title...to our reservations....

“Signed at Spences Bridge, BC, on this sixteenth day of July, 1910.”

On to Lytton (population 230). It was on the route of the Gold Rush in 1858 and was named for Edward Bulwer-Lytton, a British Colonial Secretary and a novelist. Lytton, along with Lillooet, boasts the second-highest temperature ever recorded in Canada. It is located at the confluence of the Fraser and Thompson Rivers. It was here that Simon Fraser, the explorer after which the river is named, landed and was greeted by the Aboriginals. He wrote, “Neat mats were laid out for our reception, and plenty of salmon, in wooden dishes, was placed before us.”

It was here also where Fraser named the Thompson River after his friend David Thompson, whom he thought was exploring that same river. It turned out Thompson was on the Columbia River! Located at the confluence of those two mighty rivers, it is no surprise that Lytton proclaims itself the "River Rafting Capital of Canada."

In this as well as the other communities in the area, you often see quite a number of young people, mostly Aboriginals, just hanging around on the streets with apparently nothing useful to do. That is not a healthy situation. We saw no signs of anyone doing anything serious about making some important changes.



Just outside the town there is the Lytton Ferry that is operated, I believe, by the BC Ferry system. It is called a “reaction ferry,”\* that is, it is tied to a set of cables across the river that prevent it from running out of control down the river. The crossing is a free service. Fran and I did cross with the ferry just for the experience, but we left the RV parked on the highway side.

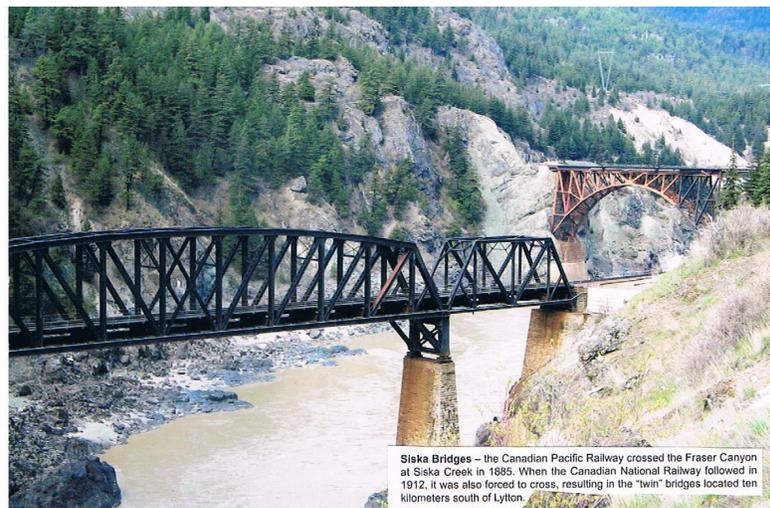
At another time as we drove past the place, the Trans Canada traffic was halted by striking ferry operators. They would bottle up the traffic for some time and then open the road again, cycle after cycle. The RCMP, who could be expected to control the situation, was nowhere to be seen. It would, of course, have been totally politically incorrect should they have tried to keep the traffic flowing. The strikers being mostly Aboriginals, the cry of racism would have rent the air.

As to older Aboriginal history, Lytton has the Spintlum Memorial, a cairn erected in 1927 in honour of Chief David Spintlum. A tourist brochure tells of the early gold rush, when there

was enormous antagonism between the adventurers and the natives, often leading to bloody encounters. To head off this trouble, Chief Spintlum of the Thompson Tribe went to a meeting with Sir James Douglas, Governor of the Region. Agreement was reached and, as symbols of the peace to come, Chief Spintlum was presented with a knife, a flag and a Bible. He died in 1887 at the age of 75 and was buried here.

We were now in the heart of the Fraser Canyon. One marker describes it this way:

This awesome gorge has always been an obstacle transportation. Indians used ladders and road builders hung “shelves” skirt its cliffs. Canoes rarely dared its whirlpools; only one sternwheeler fought it successfully. Railroads and highways challenged with tunnels and bridges, today man and nature still battle here for supremacy.



Siska Bridges – the Canadian Pacific Railway crossed the Fraser Canyon at Siska Creek in 1885. When the Canadian National Railway followed in 1912, it was also forced to cross, resulting in the “twin” bridges located ten kilometers south of Lytton.

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to

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but

### Railway Bridges, Lytton\*

Hell's Gate was the natural next stop. Simon Fraser wrote in 1808, "We had to travel where no human being should venture, for surely we have encountered the gates of hell." Things have not changed during these 200 years. The hellish wild waters are still there, but we can now access them and admire their untamed wildness. Right off the Trans Canada, you go down the gorge in a cable car taking a steep plunge downward. Once below, you cannot but marvel at the power of the swirling waters, but you can do so safely from various viewing points and even walk around or have a meal. The environment and access has been completely tamed, but the waters are untouched.

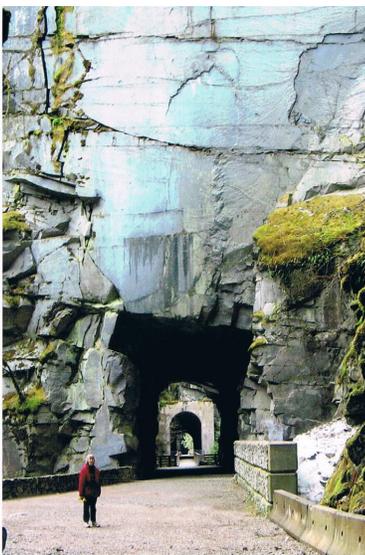
A marker in the general area stated that the pre-gold rush fur trade actively involved the Aborigines and even suggested that their lives were enhanced by it. However,

All that changed with the discovery of gold. The Fraser River Gold Rush of 1858 brought 30,000 American miners into Tait and Nkaka'pamux territory. Villages were overrun, native people were assaulted, and food, tools and canoes were stolen by desperate miners who showed little respect for the rights of First Nations people.

The situation moved from the relatively peaceful and mutually satisfying fur trade to violence. Another marker describes The Fraser Canyon War:

In the summer of 1858, during the height of the Gold Rush, amid the rocks of the Fraser Canyon, natives and whites engaged in vicious battles. One of those battles took place in this very location. The natives felt their land and homes were being violated by the dramatic increase in gold seekers making their way up the Fraser Canyon. In June, the bodies of 29 headless men were taken from what is now "deadman's Eddy" in Fort Yale and another 32 downstream in Fort Hope. These men are believed to have been ambushed at night by the waiting tribesmen. It wasn't until a "Mission of Conciliation and Peace" led by Henry M. Snyder along with the demise of Captain Graham, leader of the Whatcom Guards, led to an end of the organized fighting.

British soldiers put a stop to the war and enforced the peace. The amazing thing is that at this time some members of the Tait tribe began to attend church! With all these barbaric and wild "Christians" around, what could possibly have moved Tait people to consider their religion? There must have been some priest who sided with the First Nations in all this turmoil.



This trip was one of several we made along all these roads and through all these communities, sometimes by ourselves, at other times with our visitors. We often would stop at the Othello Tunnels near Hope. In 1910 Civil Engineer Andrew McCulloch, working for the CPR in the construction of the Kettle Valley Railroad, met the Coquihalla Gorge. There was no way to go around the Gorge, so he decided to go through it! The

engineering feat resulted in the series of tunnels. Today they are a tourist attraction, but a century ago they were part of the railroad that crossed Canada.

### **Fran at the Othello Tunnels\***

From here it was a straight home run. The end of another journey of delightful discovery.

### ***RV Adventure to Quebec & Michigan (May-July 2008)***

Both of us have long been curious about the Province of Quebec. It was always portrayed as a place different from the rest of Canada with French as its language, Catholicism as its core religion and not all that hospitable to English-speaking Canadians. Well, if you know Canadian history, their hesitation towards the rest of us should not surprise you. So we decided to take a trip there and explore the place. We took off on May 2, 2008.

First, a few stops in BC. Stopped in Abbotsford to visit Al & Marianne Bohr, missionary friends from Nigeria days. You have met them in Chapter 40 of Volume 4. They took us in their vehicle across the border to Sumas, WA. It's a minor border crossing with short lines. There we mailed several boxes of our series to the U.S., Nigeria and The Netherlands. Book mailing expenses in the US are a fraction of what they are in Canada. We used Bohr's vehicle, for when we cross for this purpose with the RV, as we do occasionally, they will often ask why we drive an RV when a car will obviously suffice. Then we have to explain our car situation. Using Bohr's vehicle avoided such extra questioning.

Then we spent a few days with siblings and friends. Specifically, Bo & Tom in Kelowna, Jim & Wilma in Salmon Arm and Hemke & Grietje Vander Zwaag in Vernon. On May 6, we took off east and spent our first night on a Walmart parking lot in Strathmore AB, some kilometres east of Calgary on the Trans Canada. We woke up to a temperature of 5C\* in the RV. Next day we drove 860 kms to Grenfell, SK, well past Regina, where we slept on the side of a road and woke up to 2C\*. Another 800 kms took us to Dryden in northern ON, where we put up in a campground, for we needed showers and laundry. We woke up to 0C\* that morning. We had driven almost all of this route several times before and so did not stop for any sightseeing. We were headed for Quebec and wanted to get there as soon as possible.

We did only 400 km on May 9, for we planned to stop at the home of Harold & Joanne de Jong, Nigeria friends you've met before. They retired to live in Thunder Bay on Lake Superior. Spent an interesting day with them. Stayed on their driveway that night and woke up to a warm 3C\*! Drove a boring 750 km through ugly and monotonous country along bad roads with hardly any towns or traffic to speak of. Slept at a truck stop in Cochrane ON.

The next day, May 11, was Pentecost Sunday and Mother's Day. It was also Kevin's birthday. Finally we entered the province of Quebec after 4,150 km on the road. Actually saw a moose walking along the side of the road. Wiebe phoned from NY & Kevin from SF to wish Fran a happy Mother's Day. Drove through several small towns and the first thing we noticed as we

entered every town was their large church in the village square. We are now in hard-core Catholic country. Slept in the Walmart parking lot in Val-d'or (population +/- 32,000), on Route 117. Cynthia phoned the next day from NL, where she and Andy were spending time with Ruud & Aly Dekker, our Nigeria friends.

Drove almost 200 km through a "Reserve Faunique" (wildlife reserve) but saw no animals at all. There was very little traffic. We drove through the Laurentian mountain range which is a real ski resort area and stopped in Ste-Agathe for repair on our fridge. It was at a random and small RV place along the highway. The repair was done very efficiently by a young man who spoke very good English. He discovered the problem very quickly and was able to take care of it. He had learned English by consciously watching English TV programmes. He said he was very impressed with the way the fridge had been installed originally and did not expect further trouble for us. So far, at least up to 2014, he has been right. Slept in a store parking lot in St-Jerome (population about 60,000).

Drove through many small idyllic towns, all with their large churches. Seemed like a great farming area judging by the farm smells! It may sound like all we did was drive, but actually we stopped in quite a few towns and villages, checking out the cathedrals and the downtowns. We took a serious stop at a National Historic Site of Canada in St-Lin-Laurentides (population not indicated), north of Montreal. That's the birthplace of Sir Wilfrid Laurier (1841-1919), the first French Canadian prime minister (1896-1911), who predicted in 1904 that "the 20<sup>th</sup> century will be the century of Canada." What do you think? Was he correct? Found a local barber shop for me to get a much-needed haircut.

By now we were getting used to having all the streets named after Catholic saints. The weekend I am writing this, Easter 2013, we had a group of friends over for Easter dinner, including Mike McManus, a man well grounded in the Catholic tradition. He explained that the effect of these names, intended or unintended, was that the more pious Catholics would be praying to all these saints as they proceeded along the streets, one after another. He also told us that before the secular revolution took place in Quebec, the Church emphasized spiritual and professional occupations as over against business. If you went into business, you were sliding into dangerous territory—exactly the same as in many African countries that hosted Protestant missions. This, you may recall from Volume 2, was precisely the understanding Nigerians had gained from their missionaries and was the focus of my ministry.

Did our e-mail in Joliette (population 18,000+), near Three Rivers or Trois-Rivieres, in a huge church which had been turned into the town library. We made the mistake of asking for the library. Library in French is a bookstore. So now we were reminded that "bibliotheque" is the word for library. We should have known, since the Dutch word is "*bibliotheek!*" Slept at a Walmart in Trois Rivieres (population +/- 130,000).

May 14— Early in the morning we walked to the Tourist Office and asked about the town's name. Apparently people first thought there were three separate rivers, but actually the town is at the junction of the St Lawrence and three channels of St Maurice River. It was founded in 1634 and is the second oldest French city in the province after Quebec City. An English marker read: "A wooden fort built on this spot in 1634, became the cradle of Three Rivers and

a centre for fur trade with the Indians. It was besieged on several occasions by the Iroquois and demolished after the Treaty of Peace with them in 1663.”

We saw a reminder of the American Revolutionary War, a memorial for “graves of American soldiers fallen in the battle for the conquest of Canada on June 8, 1776.” Don’t know enough about this history to tell on whose side these soldiers were fighting. Who was trying to conquer whom?

Visited the Museum of Ursuline sisters. This order was founded in Trois Rivieres in 1697, its purpose being to educate the colonists and Indians. Later they added “caring for the sick” because of the urgent need for medical help. In 1886 the Sisters of Providence (same group that runs St Paul’s Hospital in downtown Vancouver?) took charge of the sick. The Sisters of Ursuline are still educating there today. The school now has 900 girls aged 5-16, many of them living on campus. 315 years of educating the city’s youths and the Quebec people are ungrateful to the Catholic Church?! It is my guess that you can find more examples of that in this province. Of course, if you’ve become a mindless secular, how could you appreciate what a church does? Ach....! And that’s considered “enlightened?!”

We found the people on the street and museum guides to be very helpful and they tried to speak understandable English. In fact, they often asked us for the exact word they were looking for, and then would write it down to add to their notes. *Lonely Planet* guidebook says: “Once they know you are from elsewhere (i.e. not an Anglophone Quebecer), they will bend over backward to speak in English and help you out in any way they can.” Indeed, they’ve come a long way since their Parisian ancestors, the champions of snobbery! Some of the French signs were hard to figure out, but others were easy: “Fantasie du dollar,” and “NAPA Pieces d’Autos”

We decided it was time for an actual campground again. Found one named Camping Panamorique. The place was huge and well kept with lots of permanent summer homes for Quebec City folks. Enjoyed our first campfire of the trip! This was in Portneuf, QC (population 1500), on the St. Lawrence River.

We’d been following the Le Chemin du Roy (Royal Road), Highway 138, for the second day. It’s an old road very near the expressway. It was the first carriage road linking Quebec to Montreal and originally had 29 relay stations along the way. At one time it was the longest road north of the Rio Grande. It is really the land-based counterpart of the St Lawrence, i.e. it follows right along the river.

Had the 5,000 km service done on the truck at a GM Goodwrench in St-Marc des Croix, QC. Had a bit of a hard time explaining what we wanted, but with some pointing at signs and gesturing, we managed! The first three places we stopped at couldn’t handle an RV, so we were happy to have it taken care of. We had such a good feeling about the place, that next time we need service and see a branch of theirs, we will patronize them.

We found downtown Quebec City quite easily by following the CAA city map. But the campground we were looking for was not where we thought it was – same street name but a totally different section of the City! Finally we found it, but it was not open, even though the

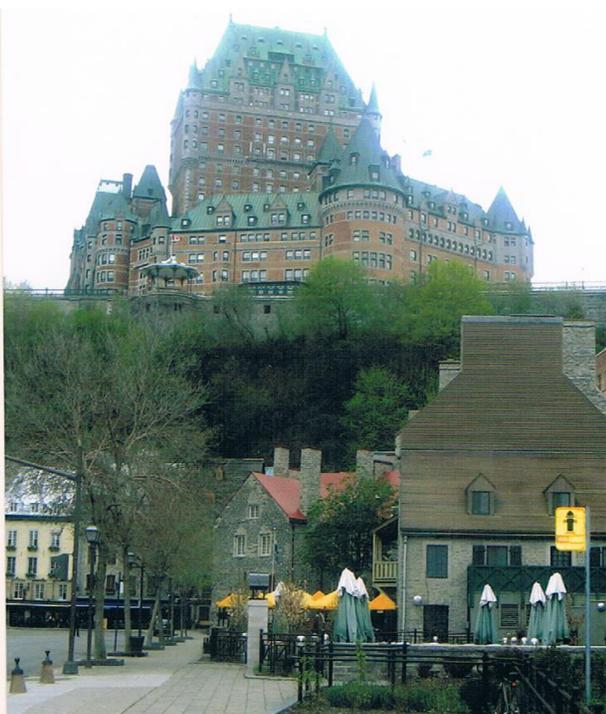
CAA campground book said it would open on May 1. We asked in the bar next door and they told us it was an 86 year old man who ran it and he'd probably open "tomorrow!" So we started looking for a Walmart again. Slept at a Walmart in Charny, QC, just over the bridge from Quebec City.

The following morning we found a parking space on a main street with a 5-hour maximum limit. Even though Quebec City has all the big-city trappings, the core downtown population is just 167,000. Walked around in Old Upper Town on very narrow and steep streets. Definitely European architecture. City was founded in 1608 by Samuel de Champlain. He named it "Kebec" from the Algonquian word meaning "the river narrows here."

Stopped at the Canadian Bible Society and bought a few postcards. The clerk told us the population in that area was 2% Anglo and 98% French. She was the first one to tell us about the fifteen feet of snow they'd had this past winter! Found the main Tourist Info office and they advised us to try finding a parking space right on the Plains of Abraham in Battlefields Park. The Plains are named after Abraham Martin, a Frenchman who was one of the first to settle in the area. We bought a 24-hour parking pass and found a great spot.

Now we were truly surrounded by history. This is "the site of the confrontation between the French and British Empires to secure their hegemony. Battlefield Park was the scene of conflicts that changed the fate of North America, including the 1759 Battle of the Plains of Abraham." Both the French leader, General Montcalm, and the English leader, General Wolfe, died in or right after this battle, but the result of this battle is that most of us today in North America speak English and not French. Slept on the Plains of Abraham right in the center of Quebec City, QC.

Somewhere along the line, we read, "The Plains of Abraham are to Quebec City what Central Park is to New York, or Hyde Park to London: a majestic city park central to the lives of its citizens." Fran rightly added, "And as Stanley Park is to Vancouver!"



On Saturday morning, the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, we took a lovely morning walk in the coffee shop/internet café area on the Grand Allée. Then spent time at a wonderful exhibition named Canada Odyssey. You actually "move from theater to theater where the history of the Plains of Abraham is depicted through clever multi-media presentations and generous dollops of good humour." Also took a long afternoon walk through the hilly old city; lots of other tourists, especially on Rue-du-Petit-Champlain in the Old Lower Town. This is said to be the narrowest and one of the oldest streets in North America. We took the cable

car (funicular) to get down and later walked back up the very steep hills. To get to the Frontenac Hotel took some serious effort.

#### **Fairmount Le Chateau Frontenac Hotel\***

Due to the constant walking that we did, my feet were developing pain, severe pain, something I had never had. Walking was becoming an unpleasant, not to say “painful,” experience for me and, without telling Fran about it, I began to resist her suggestions to walk even farther. This was not wise on my part, for she had no way of knowing why I was so eager to just sit down. Eventually, of course, I did tell her and she was both sympathetic, but also annoyed for not sharing with her. I was very happy when we called it quits for the day, but also regretful, for there was so much more to see and so many more places to go in this historic city.

After a second night in the RV on the Plains of Abraham, QC, we had an interesting Sunday. Worshipped at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church. It is the oldest English-speaking congregation of Scottish origin, in Canada. It was established in 1759. The current church building was “erected and dedicated in 1810.” Initially the congregation was “almost wholly military in character, made up for the most part of the famous 78<sup>th</sup> Fraser Highlanders in Wolfe’s army.” We met another visitor there who has weekly choir practice in De Ark, the church that we attended in 1973 when we were in Amsterdam!

A plaque in the church wall expressed great admiration for one of its early pastors.

#### **THE REVERED ALEXANDER SPARK, D.D.**

Late Pastor of St. Andrew’s Church in this City  
 Born at Marykirk in Scotland Jan 16<sup>th</sup> 1762  
 Educated at the University of Aberdeen  
 Died March 7<sup>th</sup> 1819  
 In him were united  
 Superior attainments in learning.  
 With a prompt and decisive judgment  
 Unaffected and ardent piety.  
 With a genuine urbanity of Manners  
 And unvaried fidelity  
 In the discharge of his pastoral duties.  
 With a humanity and integrity in private life  
 Which gave the utmost weight  
 To his public instructions.  
 By his modest and unassuming  
 But substantial and manly virtues  
 He secured the universal esteem  
 Of the inhabitants of Quebec

And its vicinity.  
 His disconsolate widow  
 By erecting this monument  
 Has endeavoured  
 To perpetuate the remembrance  
 Of those virtues  
 Which the present generation  
 Never can forget.

In the afternoon we walked around the La Citadelle and on the old city walls. The Citadelle was built by the British who feared two enemies: “An American invasion of the colony and a possible revolt by the local French-speaking population.” That’s the reason the canons point not only at the river, but also at Quebec City itself. A historical marker reads as follows:

#### THE URGENT NEED TO CONSTRUCT A CITADEL

In 1759, following the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, New France was ceded to England. Though British military authorities continued to worry that France would reconquer the territory, they soon discovered that the real danger lay in the U.S. In 1775 and again in 1812, the Americans attacked Canada, each time without success.

... With a citadel looming over it, Quebec became, for a time, practically impregnable. Indeed, in his *American Notes* of 1842, Charles Dickens dubbed the city and its cliff “the Gibraltar of America.”

Big hockey championship playoffs were going on in the City for the whole weekend. In the end, Russia beat Canada 5-4. Huge victory celebrations, especially at the Aux Vieux Canons sidewalk café on the Grand Allee. Many tables full of celebrating Russians in various costumes. One regular shout: “Canada great; Russia super!” We were greatly amused by their celebration antics! This café is known for its beer glasses. A brochure describes them as “so tall, so narrow, so precariously filled, that they’re served with a wooden brace to support them.” I ordered one and Fran helped drink it. We have the pictures to prove it.



### **Macho Beer Drinkers\***

The Russians were not the only ones to provide the humour that evening. As we continued our walk along the Grand Allee, we noticed the big McDonalds Golden Arch sign up ahead. It turned out to be a look-alike: the big M alright, but with “Marijuana” in the centre of it and the caption of “Over 1 Billion Stoned.” When its advocates are off guard they can be honest, it seems, and admit that it stones them. I thought I heard its proponents argue that it is harmless?!

In the late evening we wandered through the Joan of Arc Gardens. And a third night on the Plains of Abraham, QC. At \$14 per 24 hours in such historic surroundings, we could not complain!

We stumbled across a sculpture of Samuel de Champlain, the founder of Quebec, perched on a high decorative base. The marker tells us that he was born in France at “about 1567.” He “founded Quebec in 1608. Discovered the region of the Great Lakes. Led several expeditions against the Iroquois from 1609 to 1615. Was successively Lieutenant Governor and Governor of New France. Died at Quebec 25<sup>th</sup> December, 1635.”

There is a beautiful water fountain, called La Fontaine de Tourney, on the grounds of the Quebec Parliament Building. The display includes the following poem composed by Marie Laberge in 2008:

Waters from the birth of time  
 Waters from the deepest depth of earth  
 From the crests of age-old glaciers.  
 The waters of our rivers, great and small,  
 Have carved out our country.  
 We are of this place; we are Huron-Wendat  
 Innu—(next word escaped the photograph)  
 We are from France, from Scotland, Ireland, England  
                   For 400 years.  
 Water has flowed into our open hands,  
 Hands that will carry Quebec  
 From now to tomorrow.

Here, past meets future,  
 Here, the present surges mightily,  
 Here, Quebec asserts itself,  
 Loyal and proud,  
 Strengthened by our past,  
 Forever courageous  
 And determined never to die.

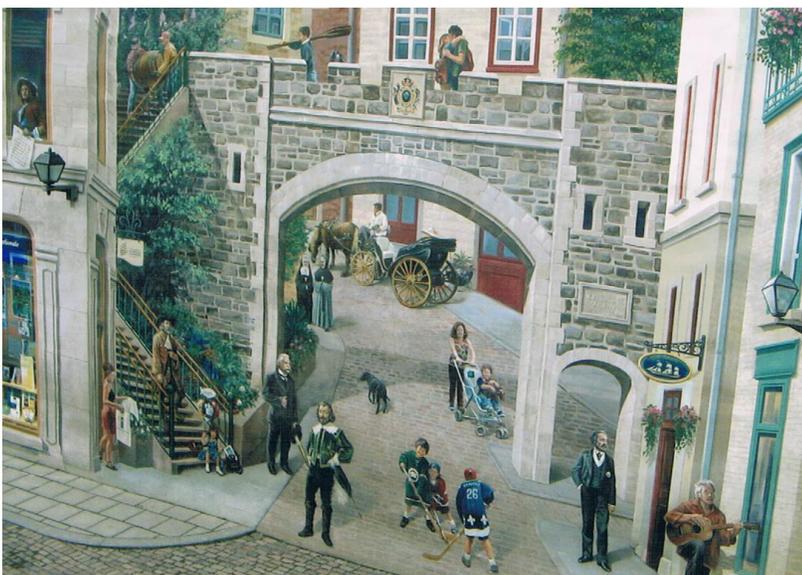
Judging from the name, the poet is French; the language, the conqueror’s; the sentiment, embrative; the spirit, a proud nationalism.

On the 19<sup>th</sup>—just to help you keep up—we checked out the Fairmont Le Chateau Frontenac, that famous ancient hotel, from all angles. Note well; a small preposition can make all the difference. “We checked out,” not: “We checked out *of!*” We knew the price would be a “bit” more than the \$14 per night we were paying for our parking lot camping spot! It’s a “splendid, dominating, copper-topped, castle-style” building with lots of “turrets and multiple imposing wings” and “perched atop a cliff that swoops down” into the St Lawrence River. It was designed by Bruce Price, father of Emily Post, and named after the Count of Frontenac, who governed New France in the late 1600s. We thought the hotel lobby was not all that impressive. Saw the Russian hockey team checking out. A Canwest news item declares the hotel “the uncontested symbol for Quebec City around the world.”

The hotel has been the scene of many historical conferences over the years. During WW II, the Quebec Conferences involving Churchill, Roosevelt, and Mackenzie King, were held at the Frontenac in 1943 and 1944. In 1945, the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization was born here. A plaque reads:

In this building, 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1945, representatives of 44 nations met and established the Food and Agricultural Organization, first of the new UN agencies. Thus, for the first time nations organized to raise levels of nutrition and to improve production and distribution of food and agricultural products.

You just don’t get enough of this ancient city and so we walked all through the old city again. Explored the Notre Dame Church and Square. This church has two distinctions: it is the oldest church in Quebec City and it was erected on the site of the first Quebec establishment built by Samuel de Champlain in 1608. Also strolled along Rue du Petit-Champlain again and stopped at a small café for coffee and nougat bars. While there, we chatted with an African-American couple who had worked for the National Television Authority (NTA) in Lagos. The NTA branch in Jos was our next door neighbour and confiscated part of our Mountain View property, though at a reasonable price.



As to the Square itself, I believe this was the place where we saw some unbelievably huge and life-like murals of old Quebec City, up to seven floors high, looking so real, you were tempted to walk through the gate into the old city! Most of the people in the murals wear period dress, but there are also a few contemporary folk, so that it gives you the illusion of a mixture of old and new. Never seen such a huge artistic exhibit. Note that I wrote in the plural: “murals;” there were several.

### One of the Murals\*

Spent a little time walking around the port area and then in the St- Roch area. St-Roch was for some time an “abandoned urban wasteland” but is now being rehabilitated. Also stopped at J.A. Moisan *epicerie* (grocery), a store founded in 1871 which looks like a very old-fashioned general store. Also stopped at the Laval University campus, the first French-speaking university in North America, and found Volume 3 of our Christian-Muslim series in their library listing.

We were not done with or tired of Quebec City, but we couldn’t stay forever. Besides, all the walking up and down the hills became still more painful for me, so that I was ready to move on with our explorations by sitting in the RV. And so, with regret, we left the city behind us. So much more to see! You ought to see the pictures we took! What a marvelous city! Prime Minister John Diefenbaker had it right when he declared that “a visit to Quebec City was like a pilgrimage to the cradle of our nation.”

Jumping ahead of myself, once back in Vancouver, a nurse at our healthcare provider’s office explained that the pain in my one foot was most likely due to *plantar fasciitis*, a condition that can easily be controlled and remedied by inserting a special insole in shoes. They are available over the counter at any pharmacy. It quickly disappeared and I never felt it again. Too bad I did not seek a remedy in Quebec, for I would have enjoyed the rest of our trip so much more. If only we could all learn to share our pains and foibles with our spouses and friends as soon as they start; unnecessary “manly” suffering is plain stupid. It’s unusual for me not to share with Fran any aches and other discomforts in their early stage and don’t understand my own silence on this one during such a wonderful trip.

Only five km down river from Quebec City, north-eastward along a secondary route parallel to the St. Lawrence, we observed a bridge leading to an island in the river called Ile de Orleans (population 7,000). This island used to be totally isolated except for a few winter weeks, when people were able to walk over the ice. In 1935, a bridge was built with the result that there are now quite a number of villages, prosperous farms and vacation homes for wealthy Quebecers. It has such a fascinating history that I suggest you check it out on the internet. For our American readers, let me whet your appetite by telling you that at least 300 historic American families are said to trace their origin to this place.

That night we camped at Camping Orleans on the southern tip of the island, on the shore of the river, which is so wide you can hardly see the other side. Windy and cold, but a beautiful place to spend an evening around a warm campfire, while you watch this amazing river and its marine traffic. The next morning, we stayed on till mandatory vacating time and enjoyed a long relaxing morning campfire, while watching the passing freighter traffic. Drove 35 kilometers along the other side of the island and saw many small villages, huge churches and large farms. Had a beautiful view of Old City (Vieux) Quebec and Montmorency waterfalls from the island road and the bridge.

Continued a short distance north-east along Route 138, called the “Royal Road,” to Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupre (population +/- 3,000). The road to the church was a steep hill, so steep that the RV had a hard time with it and we felt uncomfortable pushing it so hard. After we reached

the top, we saw a sign warning of a 19% decline! We promised ourselves that we would never again subject the RV to such steep inclines and, till now, we have pretty well stuck to that, though, as you will soon discover, not completely.

St. Anne is said to be Mary's mother, and, according to the guidebook, the patron saint of Quebec. In another place in the same book, it says that John the Baptist is the patron saint of all French Canadians. Camped for free in a huge pilgrims' campground right across from the Basilica. Though a small town, its basilica is huge, befitting a large city, but in Quebec that's the normal.

The next day—the 21<sup>st</sup> of May-- we spent much time touring the awe-inspiring chapel and main sanctuary/shrine at the Basilica. Noticed row upon row of confession booths. Some history: churches were built at this location since the mid-1600s but were frequently destroyed by fire. A crippled stonemason was “suddenly cured” while he was laying stones. Now “legions of believers swear they have been cured after their pilgrimages here.” Over 1.5 million people do the trip each year. So, there was need for many such booths.

There is much to describe in this Basilica, so many wonderful sculptures of Jesus in various poses and of other Biblical characters. There is one where someone in Catholic clerical garb on tiptoe reaches out to Jesus, whose right hand is somehow released from the cross and then bends down to embrace the other. This sculpture is all white. Another in full deep colours portrays Pontius Pilate with one hand on Jesus' shoulder and the other pointing at Him. The subscription is in both French and English “*Voici l'Homme (John 19.5)*” and “Behold the Man,” both translations of the better-known original Latin phrase, “*Ecce Homo.*” Find websites named “St. Anne de Beaupre” and you will find many pictures depicting its full beauty. When entering the church you can see two pillars filled with racks of crutches, canes, braces, and other signs of disabilities left there by people who claim to have been healed due to the healing power of St. Anne.

Allow me now to focus on the attention paid to the “Venerable Alfred Pampalon, Redemptorist 1867-1896.” The place features a prayer *for* him and *to* him.

The prayer *for* him:

**Prayer for the Glorification of  
FATHER ALFRED PAMPALON  
(For Private Use)**

**O Jesus, in Your power and goodness, You have raised Father Alfred Pampalon to such admirable virtue, grant that, through his intercession, we may imitate him in his love for You and for Your Immaculate Mother, Mary.**

**Bestow upon us, O Jesus, the favours we seek through his intervention, so that You may be glorified in Your servant and that Your Church may soon raise him to the ranks of Her Blessed and of Her Saints. Amen.**

*Please report obtained favours to:*

*Cause of father Alfred Pampalon  
Secretariat of the Shrine  
Saint Anne de Beaupre (Quebec)  
Canada G0A 3C0*

*Cum permissu Superiorum*      Printed in Canada

**You will note from the smaller print at the bottom that a painting of the Venerable along with this notice for his “glorification” constitutes a shrine that even has a secretariat associated with it, all of it in the confines of this basilica. It is no ordinary place. This is a drive to be taken seriously—and is, by thousands of pilgrims annually.**

**The prayer *to* him:**

**PRAYER  
TO THE VENERABLE  
FATHER ALFRED PAMPALON**

**Father Alfred, your young life was given as a gift of love to Jesus, Mary, Saint Anne and her pilgrims.**

**For the last century your presence at the Basilica has brought comfort to those trying to free themselves from drug dependency and alcohol. Many are those who thankfully witness the favors received through your intercession.**

**I come to you with hopeful confidence. I pray for my family and those dear to me. I pray for the Church and my brothers and sisters left without help and going through difficult situations.**

**Lead us to Jesus whose warm welcome invites us:  
“Have no fear, you are precious in my eyes and I love you.”**

**I love the piety expressed in these prayers, but I decry its mixture with prayer *to* people. The Bible tells us that Jesus is our Advocate with the Father and that the Holy Spirit will interpret our groanings when life is too much for us. So, why do we need to *pray to* ordinary mortals, no matter how pious, to intercede for us as well? Are the Son and the Holy Spirit not enough? It is one thing to request others to pray *for* you, but another to pray *to* them. It is part of a deep divide between the Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions.**

**Still on the same property but even at higher elevation are full-sized replicas of the destroyed buildings. In one of them there is a high wooden flight of stairs with this instruction: “Pilgrims ascend on their knees in a spirit of penitent; they love these holy stairs, recalling those of Pilate’s Pretorium.”**

**As you continue still further up the hill, you come to depictions of the *Via Dolorosa*, “THE WAY OF THE CROSS,” a series of fifteen stations, each containing on average five bronzed cast-iron statues that were prepared in the workshops of Vaucouleurs in France. This Way of**

the Cross was built over a period of 32 years, from 1913 to 1945, depicting the various stages of the way of the cross Jesus followed to Golgotha through His crucifixion to His death, except for the fifteenth; it has signage but no sculpture. If you give yourself time, you will find it a very moving experience to follow these stations one by one, follow the instructions given at the beginning of the tour and pray the prayers given in the brochure.

### Preparatory Prayer

Lord Jesus, look upon your children gathered near the cross. We come to offer a gesture of love and reconciliation.

This gesture of love is similar to what you, our Redeemer, made during the days of your passion. You gave yourself up to the Father's will out of love for us, and freely and courageously you followed the path which led you to Calvary. Following your example, we would like to walk this same path of love by meditating on the different episodes of your passion. We want to respond to your love by offering you this same affection.

*Good Saint Anne, accompany us on this Way of the Cross. Open our hearts to the infinite love which our Saviour poured out for the salvation of the world by his passion, death, and resurrection. Amen.*

(A beautiful meditation—if you can forget the prayer to St. Anne!)

Between each station: “Our Father...”

Before each station you may say:

We adore You, O Christ,  
And we praise You.  
Because by Your holy cross  
You have redeemed the world.

A brochure accompanies you along the way and suggests an appropriate prayer at each station. In spite of the space this requires, I herewith reproduce all these prayers, including the one to the Virgin Mary; you already know my objection to that one. Though we did not follow all the instructions, doing the entire series of stations was a spiritual highlight for us that we want to share with you. You can use them for any Easter weekend or even at any time for your edification. This exhibit represents Christian spirituality at its best. It is the gift of the Church of Christ to you.

**1<sup>st</sup> Station: *Jesus is condemned to death***

Lord Jesus, I desire to receive your Holy Spirit. May it transform my heart into the image of yours. Fill it with your love so as to disperse the violence and hatred that surround me.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Station: *Jesus accepts his cross***

Lord Jesus, place in my heart your love for each of my brothers and sisters. Help me to be of service to them, even when they are at odds with me. You told us “Come to me, all you who find life burdensome, and I shall give your rest.” I come to you with confidence; come to my aid.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Station: *Jesus falls the first time***

Lord Jesus, I am sorry for having fallen so often. I ask forgiveness for my offenses: for being selfish, for preferring my own interests over those of others. Help me never to be discouraged, but to continue on my way with confidence, and to love as you love us.

**4<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus meets his mother***

Blessed Virgin Mary, you are my mother. You are my Perpetual Help. I implore you to help me at all times, in every place, after my falls, in times of temptation, and at the hour of death. Take me by the hand and lead me to Jesus.

**5<sup>th</sup> Station: *Simon Of Cyrene helps Jesus***

Lord Jesus, I thank you for appreciating each of my good actions as a gesture of love for you. May you be praised. I want to see your face in each one of my brothers and sisters. I want to love them as you do.

**6<sup>th</sup> Station: *Veronica wipes the face of Jesus***

Lord Jesus, lend me your eyes so full of love, so I may see people as you see them, see beyond their external appearances, and see only the good in each person. Clothe me in your goodness.

**7<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus falls the second time***

Lord Jesus, send me your Spirit. May it bring me your wisdom, so that I may make the best decisions; your strength, to pick myself up from my falls; and your serene joy, to accept your will at all times.

**8<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem***

Lord Jesus, I beg pardon for my faults, for the times when I have failed to love, and for my sin. I bitterly regret my lack. I am sure of your forgiveness. On the occasion of my pilgrimage, accept my repentance. You are my Redeemer. Grant me a heart that burns with an ardent desire and thirst for love and justice. Grant me a new heart, O Lord.

**9<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus falls for the last time***

Lord Jesus, I want to love you with all my strength, with all my being, but I know that I am weak. I want to love my brothers and sisters as you love them. Give me a new heart; recreate in me your own Spirit.

**10<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus is stripped of his clothing***

Lord Jesus, I desire to do your will at all times. I want to strip myself of all false affections, so that I may love as you love. Come into my life and give me courage, generosity and self control.

**11<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus is nailed to the cross***

Lord Jesus, give me your merciful heart; I want to forgive all who have done me wrong. And, I offer you the Our Father for the person whom I find the most difficult to pardon.

**12<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus dies on the cross***

Lord Jesus, our Redeemer, blessed are you for having delivered us from sin, for reconciling us with the Father, and for bringing salvation to the entire world. We praise you, splendour of the Father, Jesus, Son of God.

**13<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus is taken down from the cross***

Lord Jesus, we thank you for having conquered death and allowing us to share in your own life.

**14<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus is laid in the tomb***

Lord Jesus, we want to accept your invitation with joy and shine with your love. Jesus is living; we are his witnesses.

**15<sup>th</sup> Station: *Jesus is living***

Alleluia! The Lord is risen. Alleluia! He is risen among the dead. The creator of life has conquered death. The darkness of death has changed into light. He, who so often said “Arise and walk,” has opened our hearts to the way of hope. The final word is life. The Lord sends us out on a mission: “Peace be with you! You are my witnesses... I am with you always, even to the end of time.

The question is why is there no sculpture depicting the resurrected Christ, only a prayer? Is this a sop to modern theologians who reject the notion of resurrection? It is kind of a disappointing ending to an otherwise wonderful spiritual exercise. You do not know how much we struggled about whether or not to include photos of the entire series. They are just so beautiful, life-like and moving. Alas, it would have taken up about five pages.

Time to move on. So we continued north-east on Route 138 to Baie-St-Paul (population +/- 7500) with very narrow streets in the town centre. The majority of the buildings were art galleries and studios. Camped at a marina on the St. Lawrence. The following morning we woke up to rain and the prediction of an all-day rain, the first time on this trip.

So decided to visit a Fromagerie (cheese-making dairy) in town. We were given a guided tour of the premises and an opportunity for cheese tasting. Found out that there are “cheese snobs” just as there are “wine snobs.” They highly praised their own “Boerenkaas” as “having a complexity of flavour; on the back of my tongue, I pick up the sweetness and fruitiness which, when I exhale through my nose, brings out the perfume of the milk, the grass and the soil.” That’s exactly the language we heard from wine enthusiasts when we accompanied them to a wine-tasting ceremony—after they were properly instructed as to the appropriate terminology! As to the red-waxed export Gouda, “I chomp and swallow, and that’s the end of it, with nothing to savour.” Again, according to their pamphlet, “Boerenkaas is completely

unlike ordinary young export Gouda. When you see red plastic or red paraffin around Goudas and Edams, it tells you the milk has been pasteurized, and they've been made for export by some huge factory in The Netherlands.”

And all of that bad-mouthing us Dutch in spite of the fact that Frisian Holsteins are providing the milk for their cheese! In fact, a certificate on the wall indicates they are members of The Holstein-Frisian Association. They need to be reported and excommunicated! We need to ensure that people continue using the politically correct cheese language that *we* bequeath them!

Drove on to Les Eboulements and stopped at La Chocolaterie du Village. All kinds of chocolates are made on the premises by a Quebec couple trained in Belgium. They use cocoa from all over the world, including Ghana & Tanzania. The shopkeeper was, unfortunately, more interested in making a sale than in giving us any info about the process. We bought some of the specialty heart-shaped dark chocolate but still really prefer Toblerone, the Swiss milk chocolate.

By this time the “all day” rain had already stopped. So we took “a spectacular downhill drive”—another 19-degree incline we had pledged to avoid—to St-Joseph-de-la-Rive, a small village nestled between the mountains and the St Lawrence. From there we took the free 15-minute ferry ride to Isle-aux-Coudres. History says that Jacques Cartier anchored here on September 6, 1535. Apparently he was impressed with the number of hazelnut (*coudres*) trees he saw, so he gave it that name. The 26-km road circling the small island is meant to be shared with bikes, a fact clearly indicated on the road signs.

On the island we saw a procession of some 20 people followed by a large support vehicle. They were advertising the upcoming International Eucharistic Congress to be held in Quebec City from June 15-22, the closing mass to be celebrated on the Plains of Abraham. Their brochure said:

The Quebec City area inherited a rich patrimony passed down by Catholic, Anglican and Protestant Christian communities. This patrimony reflects the cultural identity of Quebecers where history and religion intertwine. During the festivities celebrating the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of Quebec City, we are proud to commemorate this religious heritage.

In keeping with its piety, the island even has a roadside chapel, a proper stone building, with its doors wide open as an invitation. As if it does not have enough churches—a huge cathedral in nearly every village. If the quality of religion or of life itself can be measured by the number and size of churches, this island, like the rest of Quebec, actually has every reason to boast.

Left the island and continued north-eastward along the St Lawrence on to La Malbaie. History says that Samuel de Champlain spent a night here in 1608, “unaware that the bay ran completely dry at low tide.” Next morning he was forced to wait for the tide to come back in before he could set sail. Supposedly he said, “*La mal baie*” (the bad bay) and the name stuck. Here we heard about the previous bad winter and the snow that was eighteen feet high! It

seems it has not yet outlived its reputation. Slept in the tourist office parking lot at La Malbaie, again along the St. Lawrence. We enjoyed a lovely early morning walk along the seawall.

Then we continued our north-easterly direction along the St Lawrence on to Port-au-Persil. Stopped at a pottery workshop and school which features the work of 50 Quebec ceramists. From there we moved on to St Simeon where we joined the short lineup for the ferry which crosses the St Lawrence. Right in front of us was another Fraserway RV with a BC license. Turned out to be a Dutch couple who were driving from Vancouver to Halifax in a three-week rental deal. They were born in Amsterdam but now living in Friesland. She was busy reading *Het Wrede Paradijs*, the book about emigration from the Netherlands after WW II; we got our copy of that book in Mauritania when we visited Wiebe, Joanna and Jehan in 2005. The ferry itself was very old but it was a smooth ride. Saw some beluga whales. Listened with great delight to a very enthusiastic guitar-playing folk-singing group in the bar. That earned the Dutch epithet of “gezellig.”

Now we were south of the St. Lawrence. Explored Riviere-du-Loup (population +/- 18,000). Right in the downtown is a 30-metre waterfall in a park named Parc des Chutes. This is part of the Quebec hydro system. Slept in Riviere-du-Loup in a large gravel parking lot on the River. The next morning, we did the self-guided walking tour of the old town. A large section is called Project Fraserville, named after Malcolm Fraser, who was “Lord of the Manor.” We learned that most of this area along the St Lawrence has been used for summer homes for the wealthy ever since the 1800s. Had morning coffee and pastries at Boulangerie Artisanale Au Pain Gamin. Turns out the owner, Cesar Lopez, is from Dominican Republic and entertained aspirations to become its prime minister. His Quebec wife, Christiane Carrier, seems to be making the “unique” products as well as serving her husband. Drove on to Cacouna and had a delicious banana split at Les Glaces Ali-Baba.



Then on to L’Isle-Verte to Marche des 3 Fumoirs to check out their smoked fish. It was easy to recognize this fish market because of its three smokehouses very visible from the road. The owner was busy smoking the herring. The smell reminded Fran a bit of “*kusa da baki*” at the Ibi fish market in Nigeria. I strongly disagreed with her; the taste of it confirmed it to Fran that I was right! Ah, finally! For once!

Smoked Fish for Sale\*  
Quebec or Nigeria?

Decided it was time for a real campground again, so chose Rimouski’s (population 42,000) Motel & Camping. Great choice: It even had wireless internet access from inside the RV, a

first for us. Unfortunately, no fire pits, something we always look for in campgrounds. We were parked next to a couple who live permanently in their 34-foot RV. They have no other home and have been doing this for over a year.

The town's name comes from the Amerindians and "maybe" means "moose." We thought it might be Polish or Russian, but when we asked if that was a possibility, the person sounded almost offended. Being a larger city, Rimouski had quite a bit to offer us. We walked along the seawall in Rimouski and strolled through the town. Even did some shopping and found a great deal on long-sleeved shirts for me. The store was closing down and was selling five good men's dress shirts for \$15. I am using them gratefully and regularly. We were a bit tired so spent some time just sitting in the RV and enjoying the view of the St Lawrence. Had delicious tea-time pastries at Les Baguettes en l'air. That night we slept on the parking lot of the tourist office in town.

We took another lovely walk along the Rimouski seawall the next morning. Wanted to try some biking, but unfortunately it was too windy. Visited the Maison Lamontagne in Rimouski East. A brochure describes it as "a stone-filled frame house built around the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. A unique testimony of New France in Canada." It wasn't yet officially open for tourists, but the guides told us to go inside, but at our own risk. There was a six-meter deep well inside the house which gave access to fresh water throughout the year directly from the house. What a luxury that must have been in those days!

Next, we went to the Pointe-au-Pere district of Rimouski. Saw an impressive lighthouse; couldn't go inside because it also wasn't yet officially open for the season. Read the interpretive signs outside of the exhibition building about the *Empress of Ireland*. This was a cruise ship that sank on May 29, 1914, Canada's worst maritime disaster.

We drove on to Ste-Luce, a charming seaside resort town. A very prominent Eglise de Ste-Luce in the centre of the town. A very large cemetery right on the shore of the St Lawrence. Stopped at the tourist office in Ste-Flavie (population +/- 1500), the gateway to Quebec's Gaspé Peninsula. The Peninsula covers 30,340 sq km (size of Belgium) but has only 136,600 inhabitants.

By now, many of the towns and villages were beginning to all look the same and we didn't really want to drive another 885 kilometers around the Peninsula, so we opted to turn away from the St. Lawrence River and go inland along Route 132 in the eastern direction of Sayabec (population +/- 2,000). This meant that we were now sort of on our homeward way, though with several major cities still ahead of us. At least, we had gone away from home as far as we would on this trip. From now on, every km would bring us closer to home. Well, somewhat.... We were almost a continent east of the place!

**“Sayabec” is derived from an Aboriginal name meaning “river blocked by beaver dams.” An interpretive sign informed us that this is the home of David Pelletier; he, with his partner, Jamie Sale, won Olympic Gold for couple’s figure skating at Salt Lake City in 2002. First they were awarded Silver, but then it was discovered that the Russian judges had been bribed, so their decision was overturned, and Gold was given to the rightful owners!**

**Drove on to Amqui, an Aboriginal name meaning “where we have fun.” From here on we were headed in a south-eastern direction. We saw some interesting covered bridges there, but not much of anything else that would tempt us to stay overnight. So we continued on to Matapedia (“where the rivers meet”). VIA Rail train makes two stops per day here even though it’s a very small town. It borders on New Brunswick. Slept on the parking lot of the tourist office in town. Signboard said it was open till 9 P.M. but we saw no activity of any kind.**

**On May 27, 2008, we left Quebec and entered New Brunswick (NB). We drove through the northwest tip of NB along NB Route 17 and saw only a few small towns. Our direction was now south-west; we were headed back to Quebec. Road signs were in both French and English but most people are French speakers.**

**A small section of New Brunswick south juts into Maine, U.S. and into Quebec. There have been many years of dispute over the exact boundary lines. Some very interesting history: The Amerindians knew the area as Madawaska (“land of the porcupines”). For years the territory was visited by traders just passing through, only a few setting up temporary trading posts. The Acadians sought refuge in this area along the banks of the St John River after they were forced out of Fredericton NB by loyalists fleeing the American War for Independence. Shortly after that, French-Canadian colonists from Quebec came and settled to farm the lowlands. The people living on either side of the St John River felt no need for boundaries. But the governments of NB, QC and Maine felt otherwise. In 1842 the governments finally reached an agreement known as the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, so that now the south bank of the St John River would mark the American frontier. And so “with just one stroke of the pen, thousands of Acadians and French-Canadians became American citizens.” In 1851 an Imperial Act of Parliament officially defined the boundary between QC and NB.**

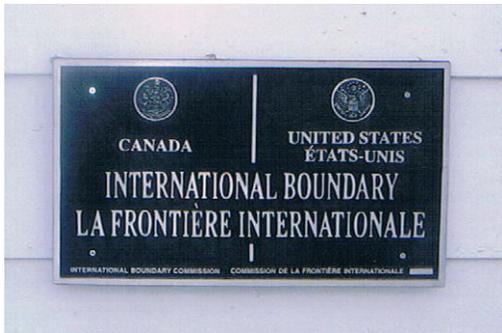
**Back in Quebec, the first place we stopped at was Riviere-Bleue. A very unusual sight: A French Evangelical Baptist Church in this predominantly Catholic province. The signboard said it all:**

**The small Gospel Baptist Chapel of Riviere-Bleue bears witness to a troubled period in the religious history of Quebec. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, French Canadians in Quebec were under the grip of the Catholic clergy, who imposed a strict ultramontaine doctrine, based on tight control over all aspects of society, largely dictated by church authorities in Rome. Under these conditions, Quebec became closed to any influence foreign to Catholicism.**

**The clergy shrewdly kept their parishioners in ignorance of broader spiritual thought, allowing them to mold their conscience as they saw fit. They even prohibited teaching**

the Gospel and the possession of a Bible to keep parishioners from learning the truth about the religious teachings of the time.

The Protestant community of Riviere-Bleue grew from the desire to read the Gospel. Around 1907 ... settled in the area to convert Catholics to Protestantism. His work was cut out for him; the Catholic clergy were hostile and didn't hesitate to show it. Despite their objections, the pastor converted new Protestants by teaching the Gospel. Today (2005) the few Protestants in the area still attend the Gospel Baptist Chapel of Riviere-Bleue.



We slept in Pohenegamook, QC, just north of the northernmost part of Maine. On the Canadian map, Pohenegamook is not marked as having a border crossing. The U.S. map shows it has a border crossing, but there are *no* roads leading to it from the US! On a house that straddles the border there was a plaque showing exactly where the border is. The resident told us he pays property taxes to both countries.

#### A House Divided\*

About 20 metres south of the border in Maine there is a gas station which has a large billboard facing Canada advertising its products and prices in Canadian litres. Again no road to it from the USA. It can be accessed only from Canada. However, the station being American, it sells at American prices and Canadians flock to buy without bothering with Customs and Immigration protocols on either side. Lots of interpretive signs/posts in the area mention the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842 which determined the border between Canada & the U.S. in this area. In fact, there is a park straddling the border with clear border posts showing which is where. It is properly called "Parc de la Frontiere." It is one of these fluid border situations that reminded us of Point Roberts off the BC border.

There is, however, a proper road crossing between the two countries. We observed a Canadian logging truck crossing the bridge-border into Canada loaded with raw unprocessed logs from US. This is quite a reversal from the practice in BC where unprocessed logs *exported*. Good job, New Brunswick! They wouldn't be the same logs, would they?! You know the mantra: What goes around comes around!  
Logs into Canada\*



the  
are

Importing US

Now we were driving north to St Alexandre-de-Kamouraska where we stopped at Charcuterie Boucher. We bought some sausages and also their "pork spread" which, according to Fran, is

almost as good as my homemade headcheese and has the same consistency. Now heading west through Ste-Helene and St-Pascal. Whole area is great farmland as far as we could see. We are now back at the St. Lawrence River.

Stopped in La Pocatiere for much of the afternoon. Toured around the College Hill area and saw a very impressive school building. It was built in 1821 for the training of priests; later it became a general boys' school. Today it's a co-ed Senior Secondary & University prep institution and still has a boarding section. We met someone in a grocery store parking lot whose children go there. He said it was not expensive as a school for day students but the boarding fees were quite high. His wife was from Vancouver and he himself had lived in Comox on Vancouver Island for some time. He was actually the first person on this long trip to approach us and ask us about our RV with its BC license plate.

In the same town we spent some time at the Musee Francois-Pilote. Quite an impressive four-floor collection of natural sciences and rural life culture. Even saw what looked like a very usable Apple computer in the technology part of the museum; how that dates us!



That night we slept in a grocery store parking lot in St-Jean-Port-Joli (population 3,400). The next morning was very cold and windy. We wandered around in Park of Three Berets, supposedly named after the three original sculptors who wore berets from dawn to dusk. All kinds of wood sculptures, many under the theme of “family” or “infinity” and some Biblical themes as well. Fran, my personal mermaid, posed next to a mermaid sculpture. The town describes itself as the “true wood sculpting Mecca.” Also visited the compound around Eglise de St-Jean-Port-Joli. The church was built in 1779 and has a very distinctive red sloping roof with two complicated decorative towers. A small museum and boutique Les Enfants du Soleil is right next door. They had crafts from five continents. Also stopped at a gift shop Le Coin du Souvenir which had lots of wood carvings as well as Inuit art objects.

Two Mermaids\*

Drove on to L'islet (population 4,000) and looked at the displays behind the Maritime Museum. They had an icebreaker *Ernest Lapointe* and a hydrofoil (hovercraft?) *Bras d'Or 400*. Exceedingly windy and too cold for comfort, so we didn't stay long.

Stopped in Montmagny (population 12,000). The tourist info office, which also serves as a ferry terminal, is the most beautiful tourist office I've ever seen. Huge windows overlooking the St Lawrence and several islands. A very young, eager and helpful staff suggested things to do and see in the area. He sent us to Old Montmagny which has a “unique European ambience” but that was a bit of a stretch after having seen so much real “European ambience” in Old Quebec! We *were* much impressed with the “Wall of Children's Art” with its seventeen exhibits. Struggled much of the afternoon in several small towns trying to find a *bibliotheque* to

do our email. Very poor signage, no posting of hours, and very little English spoken by staff; all they could tell us was that it's "not possible."

In Levis (population 123,000+) we drove down a *very* steep hill to the ferry terminal which would take us the short distance across the St Lawrence to Quebec City. We couldn't find a parking spot for the RV, so we went up the hill again and found Camp Fort Martinier along Highway 132. We wanted to go back to the ferry terminal by bus and cross the river to see the lights of the old city, but were too tired. Were we possibly starting to act our age? Instead, we sat around our beautiful campground overlooking the St. Lawrence while enjoying campfires both in the evening as well as morning. Wonderful campfire till 11 A.M. Finally it was warm enough to sit outside for breakfast. Camping just doesn't get better than that!

As we traveled on, we enjoyed lunch at a park picnic table right in view of the bridge crossing the St Lawrence to Trois Rivieres. Such a wonderful view. Also checked out a nice cheese store that sported "Gouda" in its advertising. Ah, Kuyper and Gouda have both come a long ways and are found in many countries! If the Dutch are proud of their Gouda *export*, why not of their Kuyper *expert*? Gouda may have tickled many a foreign *tongue*, but Kuyper has spiced up many a foreign *speech* with his wholistic Christian philosophy. Sorry, my Kuyperian soul just needed to express itself again after such a long time! And a... oh, I hope you've noticed the "tongue-speech" play?

In Nicolet, the Monde Museum on World Religions was already closed for the day. However,



on the same grounds is a Literary Park which was created in 1998 and pays tribute to 30 writers who have lived in this city. It features life-sized steel statues representing characters from novels written by local authors. Excerpts from their writings can be read from plaques along the trail. It is an exquisitely done exhibit that is a must-see in this city.

Parc Litteraire (Literary Park)\*

One thing different about this city is its huge *modern* cathedral, the first we've seen in Quebec. It seems that just about all of Quebec is living on borrowed religious capital from the past with its countless ancient churches, but here we have a refreshing change. In contrast to all the other communities, this cathedral gives Nicolet the appearance of continuing religious vibrancy and vivaciousness. That night we slept on a Walmart parking lot in Sorel-Tracy on our way to Montreal.

Drove the 65 km to Montreal on a *highway*, the first time in weeks that we'd been on a major, busy road. As we approached the city, we felt right at home, what with the heavy rains that greeted us. We drove to the downtown and parked right across from McGill University. The university was founded in 1828 and named after a rich Scottish fur trader who donated land and money. It is still one of Canada's most prestigious learning institutions; the lectures are all in English. We walked a bit around the campus but there was hardly any activity since the school was closed. We did check out the library catalogue only to find that none of my series is among its holdings. Must talk to the publisher! Had the university been open, we would/could have talked about that to a librarian. Of all days for it to be closed!

We spent several hours in Montreal's "underground city." This is an underground network of 29 kilometers in total, 2600 shops, 200 restaurants and 40 cinemas, theaters and exhibition halls. The whole network is linked by brightly lit, well-ventilated corridors and the temperature stays around 20C (68F) degrees year round. It's a whole self-contained world, shielded from the outside winter with its sub arctic temperatures. If you live in downtown Montreal, during the middle of its harsh winter you can go to work, do your grocery and all other shopping, see a movie and wear nothing warmer than a T-shirt!

After coming up from the "underground" we noticed the rain had stopped. So we took a walk to see the sights. It, of course, had all the regulars, some in French; if they were American, of course, in English. There was La Baie and there was McDonald's. First actual stop: Christ Church Cathedral (Anglican) built in 1859. It is much larger and has more grandeur than its Vancouver counterpart by the same name. "This church was the talk of the town in the late 1980s when it allowed the 'underground' shopping mall to be built underneath it. There are spectacular photos from 1987 which show the house of worship resting on concrete stilts while construction went on underneath." Seeing the size of the place, lifting it up can only have been a marvel of engineering. We listened to some street preaching (English translated to French) going on right in front of the church. Though we did not stop long to listen, I would expect it to be a case of Christ vs established religion, with the Cathedral representing the latter.

Then we walked on to the Cathedrale Marie-Reine-du-Monde (Mary, Queen of the World). It is a smaller, but magnificent, version of St Peter's Basilica in Rome. In addition to the usual green basilica dome, it graces thirteen wooden statues overlaid with copper on the top of its front façade. They represent the patron saints of the parishes that contributed financially to the building of this cathedral. Some Catholics dreamed of making Montreal the Rome of North America. "This landmark cathedral was built from 1870 to 1894 as a symbol of Catholic power in the heart of Protestant Montreal." All along we saw many statues commemorating English history, while street names were also mostly in English. This is clearly not a French city like all the others. The Catholic dream with respect to Montreal was never realized.

Then we moved on to the district called Place du Canada. There we came upon a very high monument of John A. Macdonald, Canada's first Prime Minister. He made his inaugural speech in 1844 to a joint French-English parliament in this area when Montreal was the capital of the United Provinces of Canada. It struck me that this important figure in Canadian history is not nearly as revered as is George Washington, his American counterpart, in the US, where it seems every state has a city or town by that name and every city or town has a street by that

name. Many people, including myself, have to think a moment when asked about our country's first PM. I'm glad Vancouver has a Macdonald Street and it's quite a prominent shopping place as well as a Transit destination.

Admired and photographed a large sculpture named "The Illuminated Crowd" (314 x 860 x 320 cm). The guidebook says that it is one of Montreal's most talked-about sculptures and the most photographed piece of public art, so we were right in step! Its plaque reads:

**A crowd has gathered, facing a light, an illumination brought about by a fire, an event, an ideology - or an ideal. The strong light casts shadows, and as the light moves toward the back and diminishes, the mood degenerates; rowdiness, disorder and violence occur, showing the fragile nature of man. Illumination, hope, involvement, hilarity, irritation, fear, illness, violence, murder and death - the flow of man's emotion through space.**



**The Illuminated Crowd\***

There are interesting ideological websites with enlarged interpretations of this sculpture that make for great reading. Some regard the meaning of the sculpture as a reflection of the financial institutions surrounding the place. Their buildings and workers are not part of the sculpture proper, but they are nevertheless part of it. The sculpture cannot be properly understood without taking its immediate environment into consideration. Sculpture and environment/neighbourhood interact with each other. Those who follow this interpretation accuse those neighbouring banks of creating the suffering and chaos of the vulnerable population at the back of the sculpture, while the happy crowd at the front are the beneficiaries.

The above interpretation is legitimate, but only one possibility. A major interest of mine being the interaction of religions, specifically Christians and Muslims, I also see this sculpture helps us understand how "trickle-down" religion tends to move from the visionaries, prophets,

reformers and revivalists, who represent the original fire and inspiration, down to the common folk who soon begin to mix the original inspiration with indigenous ideas and structures that distort the original to a point where it becomes something else, unrecognizable, often almost the opposite. This interpretation can *help* us understand the degeneration from new or revived religion to intolerance and violence at the hands of street religion. Notice the italic in the above sentence; this is by no means the full interpretation of the religious violence we are witnessing today.

It being Saturday evening, we took the Trans Canada to Dollard des Ormeaux, a suburb of Montreal, where the only CRC in town is located. The pastor's email address is [jhboer@yahoo.com](mailto:jhboer@yahoo.com)! It would appear that we are not related to Jacob & Joyce Boer, even though we tried hard to find some connection. They invited us in for tea and a prayer session with some French speaking Haitians who were visiting. Slept in the CRC parking lot.

We began the month of June by attending the CRC worship service and the local JHB invited the guest JHB to introduce his writing project. Very friendly congregation but only about 60 people there; some were Dutch immigrants from the 1950s. They lost a lot of members to the exodus of Anglophones to Ontario during the early 90s. Because of excessive talk of Quebec seceding from Canada, many large corporations moved their headquarters from Montreal to Toronto, a move that affected quite a few CRC members.

End April 2013, almost five year later, the other JHB visited Vancouver on behalf of CRWM and preached in our local CRC. We were quick to invite him for a lunch after the service and enjoyed the reunion. The delegation included Dorothy Wallinga, who was Fran's colleague during her teaching years at Godwin Christian in 1963-1965. Since then, Dorothy has become like the "mother hen" for CRWM whenever a meeting or conference is to be organized. She organizes and oversees the entire event like a mother hen with amazing efficiency and talent.

In the afternoon, we visited the CRC Seafarers' Ministry at Alexandra Pier in Old Montreal. We met the chaplain, Michelle De Pooter, a graduate of RBC who has worked at the port for some eight years and who kindly devoted considerable time to explaining their entire ministry, a joint venture with other churches. We explored more of the port area as well as Old Montreal. Another worker informed us that -30C (-20F) is quite normal in the winter and +30C (90F) in the summer. Also were impressed once again with the usefulness of shipping containers other than shipping. In the port area, there was a whole row of containers converted into small shops with tables and chairs on the sidewalk for relaxing. It is a neat arrangement that could turn "left-behind" containers into useful street furniture and provide small-time vendors with a safe and permanent facility. (In 2013, Vancouver City built a subsidized three-storey housing development of shipping containers that is very popular with its residents and looks very elegant.)

After carefully reading and consulting the English-French dictionary, we discovered that Old Montreal has free 24-hour parking in the port area. So we found a place along Rue de la Commune at Alexandra Pier, right across from the Seafarers' Ministry, and turned that particular spot into our home for a few days. There was a weekly three-hour window during

which the place had to be vacated for cleaning purposes. We parked in a parking meter zone during that period and then returned “home.”

The next day, we wandered around Old Montreal, especially along Rue Notre Dame. Spent time at Hotel de Ville (City Hall). From its balcony, Charles de Gaulle in 1967 yelled to the crowds outside “Vive le Quebec libre!” (Long live a free Quebec). “Those four words fueled the fires of Quebecois separatism and strained relations with Ottawa for years.”

Visited The Chateau, a building with an illustrious history that at one time was the Montreal residence of the Governor General. During 1775-1776, it was occupied by American invaders. It also housed courts of law for a time. Eventually, it was turned into a museum. During our visit, the grounds of the place were used for mock court sessions. I was “put on trial” here for the offence of lying and had the accusation of “liar” hung around my neck.



The Liar\*

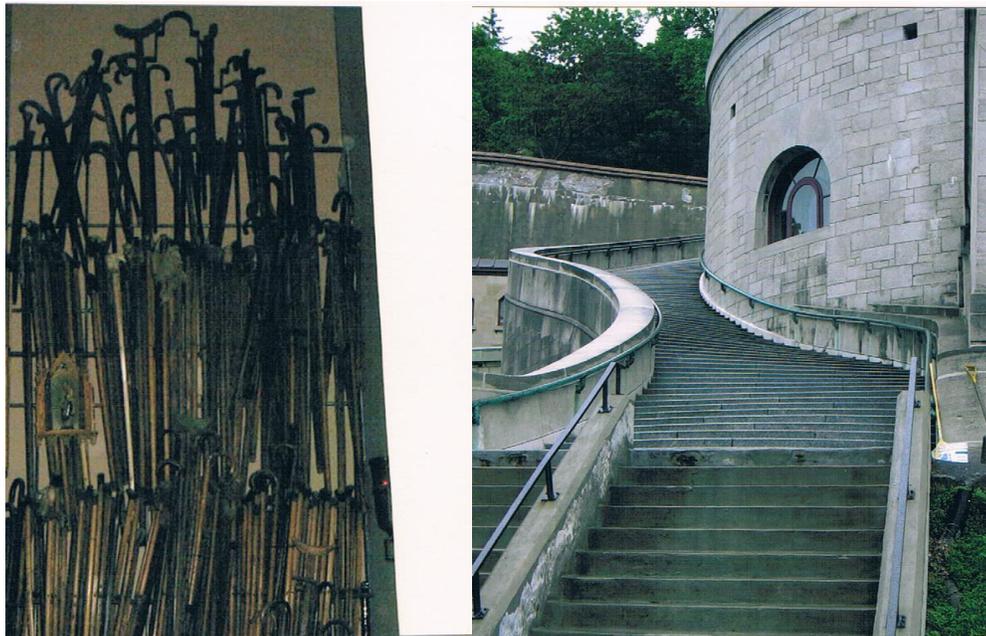
As I mentioned earlier, Montreal was the first capital of Canada. This came to an abrupt end in 1849. An angry crowd, protesting a law that required the Crown to compensate French Canadians for damages inflicted by the British army in the rebellion of 1837, burned down the capital building. As a consequence Montreal lost its status as capital, and the seat of government shifted back and forth between Quebec City and Toronto until 1858, when Queen Victoria declared Ottawa the new capital. Nothing was saved from the Montreal flames except a legislative mace and a portrait of Queen Victoria; that portrait now hangs in the federal parliament building in Ottawa.

We finally got our bikes down from the RV once again and pedaled along the seawall and port area. Also rode to the Clock Tower which commemorates all of the sailors and seamen who died in the world wars. Some have compared the Clock Tower to London’s Big Ben. We walked a total of 22,699 steps that day, almost 16 km. Again slept on Rue de la Commune in Old Montreal.

The following morning, we drove to the Mont-Royal area. We followed the map and took a long walk to get a fresh bagel. It turned out the place we had selected was just a bakery, not a coffee shop. So we turned around with the fresh bagels in a paper bag and walked the long way back to the RV to eat them. Then to Boulangerie Au Pain Dore for coffee and a baked treat. Drove through Parc du Mont-Royal. Montrealers are proud of their “mountain” park, but, wrote Fran, it’s obvious they haven’t seen the Rockies or Stanley Park!

We spent several hours at Oratoire St-Joseph. This is the largest shrine ever built in honour of Jesus’ father. The view of the city is spectacular from the balconies, and the oratory/shrine dome is visible from almost anywhere in Montreal. Inside there is a permanent exhibit of 250 *creches* (representations of the Nativity scene) from around the world; Nigeria’s *creche* was made with thorn carvings. There was also a complete wax museum of the Holy Family, one scene in which Jesus was at the deathbed of Joseph.

The place reminded me of Sainte-Anne-De-Beaupre, except that this place is dedicated to St. Joseph, the Catholics’ patron saint of all of Canada. Pilgrims, for example, climb the 300 steps on their knees, praying at every step. Here’s a little of its history. The place is a “tribute to the work of Brother Andre, a determined monk who first built a little chapel here in 1904. Andre was said to have healing powers and as word spread, a larger shrine was needed. So the church began gathering funds to build one. Rows of discarded crutches and walking sticks in a votive chapel testify to this belief and the shrine is warmed by hundreds of candles.”



Discarded Crutches\*

300 crawl steps—300 prayers\*

We left the Mont-Real area and drove to Montreal’s Olympic Park. At the centre of this area is the disastrous Olympic Stadium. It was built for the 1976 Olympic Games, but the Stadium was plagued with difficulties right from the start. A strike by construction workers meant the

inclined tower wasn't finished on time; in fact people began to sarcastically ask which Olympics they had in mind as it took another 11 years to complete the project! In the end the "Big O," nickname for the huge oval stadium, was redubbed "The Big Owe" by irate Montrealers. The Stadium was finally paid off in 2007; the total price tag was \$1.5 billion. The stadium looked quite deserted and it remains empty except for the occasional trade show. It appears that the design and construction of the place were faulty, for the retractable roof had to be turned into an intractable one, while a concrete beam collapsed over the heads of horrified spectators at a football match. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

Though there was much more to see and experience in Montreal, it was time to move on. So we headed for Ottawa along the Trans Canada and slept at a Walmart near the city.

It was an easy early morning drive into downtown Ottawa. As to the city's status of national capital, a plaque summarized the story:

### CANADA'S CAPITAL

After the union of the two Canadas in 1841, Kingston, Montreal, Toronto and Quebec were in succession the seat of government. During the 1850's these cities contended for the designation as the permanent capital of Canada. When called upon, in 1857, Queen Victoria resolved the issue by choosing Ottawa. In 1867 the Fathers of Confederation re-affirmed the choice and Ottawa became the new capital of the new Dominion of Canada.

We found parking in a commercial parking lot very close to the Parliament buildings that we made our home for the duration of the visit. Did the tourist thing and took a free guided tour of Parliament buildings. The House of Commons was not open to the public because they were in session, but we did see the Senate Wing, the Peace Tower and Parliament Library. Very impressive. In the centre of the Library stands a white marble statue of the young Queen Victoria. The view from the top of the Peace Tower is magnificent. You can see much of the whole city, many bridges, the Rideau Canal and the Ottawa River. The Memorial Chamber in the Peace Tower is meant as a "place of reflection and solace to remember the sacrifice of the many Canadians ... who have died in military service." A plaque reads:

### THE PEACE TOWER

At the Heart of Parliament Hill  
A Story of Peace

Following the Great War (1914-1918), Canadians decided to create a monument like no other in memory of the service and sacrifice of the men and women who died serving their country.

By standing here now,  
you become a part of that remembrance.



**With its Memorial Chamber and Carillion,  
the Peace Tower was dedicated on July 1, 1927  
before a cheering crowd of thousands....**

### **John & Fran at Parliament Building\***

**The host in that room was a very knowledgeable young man, who gave us interesting and obscure details about the various wars in which Canada has been involved.**

**We also entered the room in which the Dominion of Canada was signed into being. There is a plaque which reads:**

#### **DOMINION OF CANADA**

**In this room in 1866-7 delegates representing the Provinces of Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, under the chairmanship of the late Right Honourable Sir John A. Macdonald P.C., G.C.B., framed the Act of Union under which all British North America, except Newfoundland, is now united under one government as the Dominion of Canada.**

**Then we followed a self-guided walking tour of Parliament Hill. There are 22 sculptures or stations, each one of which has an interpretive panel. Lots of sculptures of the Fathers of Confederation and various Prime Ministers. Station 6 is of "Queen Elizabeth II" on a horse. The explanation: "The horse Centennial was given to the Queen by the RCMP in 1977 to celebrate her 25<sup>th</sup> year as monarch. The Queen chose to be portrayed riding astride rather than the traditional sidesaddle, on the first equestrian statue of the Queen in the world. The monument was unveiled as part of Canada's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations."**

**Station 9 is titled "Women Are Persons!" Yes, it appears not all were convinced of that one! The exhibit is of five women who in 1929 "won a legal challenge to have women considered 'persons' under the *British North America Act*, making them eligible for appointment to the Senate." Here's their story: "This monument honours the Famous Five—and here follow the names--, all from Alberta. In 1928, after the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that women were not eligible for appointment to the Senate because they were not "qualified persons," the Famous Five went to the highest court in the British Empire. On October 18, 1929, the Privy Council reversed the Supreme Court decision."**

**In the light of this history, our current MP, Hedy Fry's T-shirt declaration that women belong both in the House and in the Senate, has full imperial backing!**

Unfortunately, today, nearly 80 years after the gate was opened, largely due to Prime Ministerial instigation, Canadian public opinion is veering more and more towards the opinion that the Senate is a useless institution of patronage without accountability and designed to reward friends of Prime Ministers and those who have helped prop them up in their positions of power. Why Fry is aiming for a seat in such an institution is beyond me. She has not responded to my letter asking her that question. Of course, there is a hefty monetary incentive attached to it that is enough for its privileged members as well as its hopefuls to ignore the widespread contempt and ride out the current storm about senatorial corruption without making any changes. Too bad for Fry that she is not member of the party in power at the moment and currently is thus hardly a likely candidate.

Station 12 is about the “Proponents of the Principle of Responsible Government,” Robert Baldwin (1804-1858) and Sir Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine (1807-1864). These two men are known as the fathers of responsible government, a principle adopted in 1848. It requires that the government, i.e., the Prime Minister and the cabinet, have the support of the majority in the House of Commons for all government bills, thus making government accountable to the elected assembly. When it fails to muster that level of support, the Cabinet has to resign. Isn't this common sense? Did this need to be decided? Yes and yes. Today, it is almost the other way around, with the PM and his office managing their “backbenchers” in the Caucus and forcing them to do their bidding. It needs to be decided anew and become the common sense once again.

On the grassy grounds in front of the main buildings there was lots of activity going on. We sat in front of the buildings for some time listening to music from the carillons in Parliament Tower. As we were hanging around in front of the Parliament buildings, an RCMP officer stopped us in order for us to take a picture with him! He also introduced us to his M.P. (Member of Parliament) who happened to be passing by. I was not so sure whether this was all staged or genuine. There was something about some symbols on his uniform that made me suspicious. But it was fun! The Fran-RCMP photo is mounted in the album next to a photo of the most famous citizen of Port Alberni, former Prime Minister Kim Campbell, who deserves a place in the Guinness Book of World Records as the only female Canadian Prime Minister with a term of a mere four months in 1993. As a former Port Albernian, I am proud of her!



Fran with the Fake RCMP\*

PM Kim Campbell\*

There was a man who apparently spends every day in front of the building all dressed up. He looks like a handsome Middle Easterner. He was demonstrating or “claiming his innocence,” but it wasn’t clear what he was innocent of! All officials and workers on the premise seemed to know him and be on good terms with him. A Catholic priest was sitting by a very graphic anti-abortion exhibit.

Then several people were trying to collect signatures to “Free Natalie,” a woman who had married a Saudi and ended up in Saudi Arabia. Her situation sounded much like the book *Not Without My Daughter*. Why on earth do people get themselves into such scrapes? Marriage cannot thrive when it is turned into a laboratory for superficial and ignorant types of tolerance and multiculturalism. That’s not its purpose. There is a reason for Western wives of Third World husbands joining in associations everywhere; they tend to be desperate and in need of companionship, advice and encouragement. This is true especially if the couple lives in the husband’s country. I am happy to report I know some successful ones, but they all need to stress themselves excessively in terms of tolerance, patience, adjustment, compromise and understanding. All of this is true with a vengeance if the husband is a Muslim living in a Muslim country. Then all bets, it seems, are off. It works best if both partners are *committed* Christians.

Several blocks down Wellington, the main street, is the National Library and Archives building. It is supposed to have copies of every book published in Canada and of every book written by Canadian authors, an important distinction. I am a Canadian author whose books were published abroad, except for my Christian-Muslim series. The latter were all listed, while they encouraged me to send copies of books I have published abroad.

Later, we returned to the National Library for the opening of the “Come celebrate 100 years of Anne of Green Gables!” exhibit. We were under-dressed for the event, so that we didn’t stay long, but we did enjoy their “light refreshments.” Then we went on to Byward Market, a name

left over from the days Ottawa was known as Bytown. (Lt-Col John By was the person in charge of building the Rideau Canal.) Lots of cafes and shops. We had excellent samosas and chai tea at a hole-in-the-wall Indian café. Also came across this sign:

**VINEYARDS**

**\$12**

**French Fries**

*Including*

**A Side Order of**

**Sirloin Steak & Caesar Salad**

Walked 24,915 steps (17.5 km) that day. Spent the night in a Shamrock parking lot (overnight parking for just \$5), across from a Holiday Inn Hotel, just a few blocks from the Parliament buildings.

There are several war memorials distributed near Parliament Hill. There is one honouring soldiers in former wars: “All these were honoured in their generations and were the glory of their times” (Ecclesiasticus 44:7). Another is dedicated to the War of 1812: “Fought mainly to resolve Anglo-American quarrels, this war marked the successful resistance of British North America to American expansion. It was followed by lasting peace.”

But there are also monuments to more peaceful scenes. One is dedicated to Terry Fox, the young man who ran himself to death in a cancer fundraiser and became a national icon of dedication and sacrifice. Another, made of welded copper, portrays a light-hearted family in a moment of intense joy. Then there is this “ancient” St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, originally built in 1828, then burned to the ground and rebuilt in 1872. We found a little sculpture called “Whatsoever” gracing the statement, “Truly whatsoever you did for one of the least of these my brothers and sisters you did for me—Jesus Christ (Matthew 25:40).” The sculptor, Timothy P. Schmatz, commented, “It is an image that is very much needed today, a reminder of humility and the Christian ideal of care.” Amen, totally.

We spent several hours at Rideau Hall and its Gardens. The grounds of Rideau Hall – 32 hectares (79 acres) of “rolling lawns, winding paths, forests and gardens – were originally modeled after the style of an English country estate.” The Hall was built in 1838 by a wealthy Scottish stonemason who helped build the Rideau Canal. It has been the official home and workplace of every Governor General since Confederation in 1867. The guided tour was led by a very enthusiastic well-informed young student. Though an interesting visit, recent appointments to this office have led me to lose respect for the dignity and importance of this office. The last two Liberal Prime Ministers have appointed very wonderful, capable and beautiful ladies to this office, but they had no political experience or standing in the country. It kind of cheapened the office for me. The current incumbent has a long distinguished career in the Civil Service that is more fitting for such an office. True, he is an elderly white male, a berated creature these days, but since when does that disqualify one from office? After all, such creatures, together with their wives, have done more to build up the institutions of Canada than any other.

We walked back to Byward to the same hole-in-the-wall funky Indian restaurant in Byward. That's when we experienced the first *heavy* rain of our whole trip about 1 km from "home," that is, Shamrock parking lot. So we flagged a taxi. The cab driver thought it was hilarious when he realized "home" was an RV in a parking lot and not the big hotel across the street. We had a wonderful sleep with the constant patter of rain on our RV.

June 5 was our 46<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We started celebrating early by going out for breakfast. It was good, but our own breakfasts cooked in the RV are better and have more variety! Visited the CPJ (Citizens for Public Justice) office. They moved from Toronto last year and have almost all new staff. They are one of several national Kuyperian institutions in the country; this one was started by Gerald Vanderzande, Member of the Order of Canada, who once visited us in Baissa, Nigeria. Perhaps I should say they *were* one of the Kuyperian organizations, for the current director told me that they are no longer Kuyperian but have broadened out. Well, you tell me what can be broader than Kuyperian and still be Christian? I had noticed their drift some years ago and had corresponded with them. Their response so dissatisfied me that I resigned my membership with great regret. They had become just another average Christian social justice movement with nothing distinctive. I can join such movements right here in Vancouver. Nevertheless, even now, years later, I kind of feel like an orphan. We did have a pleasant visit at their office without healing the rift between us. Their mostly new staff, including the new director, knew nothing of this history and could shed no satisfactory light on it.

Then we drove on to find the compound of the National House of Prayer (NHOP). This was started by Baptist Pastor Rob & Fran Parker from Vernon BC, who were concerned about the lack of prayer for governments in most churches. To raise awareness of this issue Rob walked (followed by his wife and others in a support vehicle) from Vernon to Ottawa. In 2005 the group purchased an old convent and since then have been using these facilities for seminars and meetings. Okay, an *old* convent, but by no means dilapidated. In fact, it is an elegant building in a nice residential neighbourhood. They want to encourage people to pray for local and provincial, but especially for federal government officials. We give them a small annual donation and till this day distribute their bookmarks to encourage others to pray for both governments and NHOP. One of their brochures reads:

#### PRAYER FOCUS

God's mandate is for the Church of Canada  
to continually uphold in prayer  
those in leadership  
(I Timothy 2:1-4)

Informed and focused prayer *can* influence  
the legislative decisions that affect us all  
and lead our nation into its God-ordained destiny.

**Our last stop was 24 Sussex Drive, the Prime Ministers' residence. No, we did not get in and had to be satisfied with a picture of me in front of the locked gate and with a sneak picture of the actual house between two trees. Canadian democracy still has a way to go!**



**24 Sussex Drive\***

**The next day, we left Ottawa early in the morning and drove in a south-westerly direction diagonally across eastern Ontario to Belleville (population 46,000) along Route 401. This is the home of Essence Publishing, the publishers of my series. We spent an hour and a half with Sherrill Brunton, who is the manager and the person in charge of our project. She is a wonderful Christian lady and a great manager. She did much to assuage my feelings of annoyance and distrust of the company. We found it very interesting to see the processes our series went through.**



**John with Sherrill Brunton at Essence Publishers\***

The weather was changing; it was getting hot and humid – close to 40C (over 100F) with humidity index, similar to the Grand Rapids climate. So it was a good thing we were on our way back to cool BC, for those temps are among the reasons we had moved there to begin with. Fortunately it cooled down at night. Slept in a nice but mosquito-plagued campground named Cobourg East in Crafton on Lake Ontario.

We continued along Route 401 through Toronto. Since we were not sure of the way, it was a kind of scary experience even with the “mild” Saturday pm traffic. I do not often feel that way in traffic, but Toronto’s is heavy traffic. Not knowing just which exit to take and which lane to be in is kind of nerve-wracking when driving an RV in which you don’t have much side view and your fellow drivers tend to be impatient. I suddenly found myself asking whether I’m getting too old for these adventures? What? Me? Too old at a mere 70? I told myself to put that away and never think it again! But I survived it!

We had arranged to meet Danlami Gomwalk, a young Nigerian friend related to the executed Military Governor of Plateau State, at a mall at the Dufferin/Yorkdale exit. Spent about an hour chatting with him and then proceeded on to Ancaster and found the CRC. A very friendly and welcoming custodian assured us the church parking lot is a perfect place to spend a Saturday night. So we did. The parking lot is right in the middle of a huge farm. The following morning, it seemed the corn, just a few yards away, had sprouted overnight and proudly peeked out of the black soil in neat little rows.

Rob & Fijtje Eygenraam, friends from Grand Rapids but now living in this area, met us for the Ancaster CRC service. Afterwards, we spent a few hours together in a park.

In the late afternoon, we drove to Waterdown (near Burlington) Canadian Reformed Church where Jan Boer, grandson of my South African cousin Jan Boer and son of Johan and Katinka Boer, who had immigrated here, was doing profession of faith. Both of us were amazed at this service. It was a hot, humid, most uncomfortable late Sunday afternoon, but the church was absolutely packed with people of all ages. Everyone was dressed up with all the men wearing complete suit and tie. The liturgy was very formal, not to say heavy, without any feeling of celebration because of the profession of faith done by a number of young people. That always is a matter of great rejoicing in any Reformed church I have ever attended the last few decades, but none of that was expressed. This kind of service was not altogether new to me, for that’s how the CRC was years back. But it has loosened up a great deal and has become much more personal and informal. I know of very few CRC churches that still have a second service, let alone one as formal as this one on such a hot day. So, we were surprised that such services were still held with so many young people attending in a smotheringly hot church. We were highly impressed, but also felt that it is only a matter of time before they loosen up—and see their second service diminish and then fade away. Hopefully, in due time we will be shown to be wrong.

We were invited to a barbecue at Johan & Katinka’s place, a proper South African *braai*. They are a wonderful family with their four children: Jan, Kristoff, Janni and Hannes. We thought their ten-year old Hannes looked a lot like my “little brother” Dick at that age.

Cousin Warner & Betsy Boer from Simcoe and their oldest son and wife also attended the church service and barbecue. We slept in Johan & Katinka's driveway.

On Monday morning, we went back to Ancaster to spend some time looking around the campus of Redeemer College. We had coffee with a couple of faculty members we knew from Calvin days, including Al Wolters. Then drove on to London, where we tried unsuccessfully to get a hold of the Seimens, former neighbours of ours in Jos. We then crossed the Canadian/US border at Sarnia/Port Huron and arrived at cousin Jan & Grace Boer's condo around 8 pm. The Canadian and main part of the journey was now history.

On June 11, we drove to Grand Rapids area and stayed there till June 22. We parked in Ray & Gert's yard and admired their gardens. Talked with Ray about his dahlia show at Barnes & Noble bookstore from a few years back. Spent lots of time with Fran's siblings.



Fran & Ray at Barnes & Noble\*



Fran & her Siblings\*

These are always memorable days of visiting relatives and friends galore, but few things that need special mention, for almost everything we did was what we always do in GR: socializing, eating and drinking. Of course, we went to the churches where we had special memories or connections. We spent one evening watching grand nephew Jacob Stegman play Little League Baseball. Much of the evening was spent arguing the pros and cons of home schooling, a practice and topic of discussion very popular in the Prins clan.

As to friends, again nothing unusual, though very pleasurable. The Blickleys proudly showed off their son's brand new medical facility on Michigan Avenue, GR's "Medical Mile." He established this facility against the will of the entire medical establishment—a true Blickley indeed! After we walked out of Arnie's Restaurant where we had breakfast with the Sheeres and reminisced at length about Lutjegast, we were about to drive off with the RV, when we saw Gerald & Jacie Hoogeterp about to enter Arnie's. They were Nigeria missionaries. We ran after them and asked them to join us in the RV and we would cook breakfast for them. Good discussion about stuff going on in CRWM and reminisced a bit about Gerald & Fran's shared birthday. Fran was born five hours earlier in the same part of Friesland. You may remember their joint birthday party we held on their 50<sup>th</sup> in Jos, the day of my Mother's funeral.

Spent much of June 18-19 on the Calvin campus, where the CRC Synod was meeting. There we met the two delegates from the CRC in Nigeria. They came to see our RV and were quite

impressed. Their first reaction was how useful such a vehicle would be for evangelism in Nigeria! I did not argue the point, but in my mind I disagreed quite strongly for various reasons. They were a bit concerned that a 70-year old man would drive for so many thousands of kilometers. After tea time together in the RV, they thought I should “rest.” I appreciated their warm concern for this former senior missionary of theirs. Actually, in typically Nigerian fashion, their suggestion to rest was mostly a thinly veiled excuse for them to leave.



John with CRCN Synod Delegates\*

Another very nice surprise was a visit from Ruthie (Koops) & Darren and family. They lived in London, UK, where we had met them some years earlier. They had come to the USA to visit Ruthie’s parents, Rob and Esther Koops, and their grandparents, who lived in Holland, MI, near GR. When we heard they were in the area, we invited them for a tea in the RV. We ended up drinking tea on the Calvin parking lot in the shade of the RV. She said this was the exact spot where Kevin had once taught her parallel parking!

Though we had been in Cascade so many times over the years, sometimes for weeks on end at the home of Mother Jennie and Jane, we had never noticed a really neat little park in the town on the Cascade River. There is nothing new in a small town having a park of course, but this particular one sported a couple of absolutely beautiful, expressive and complicated bronze sculptures. One was of a circle of five carefree children playing with abandon, just wonderful in spirit and expression. The other was of two fishermen obviously telling each other the classical story of the one that got away, with the one sitting on a tree stump and the other on the back of an oversized fish that was listening in on the conversation with some dismay.

We left GR on June 22 and headed south for the Warren Dunes State Park on Lake Michigan. Both of us have great memories of camping at Lake Michigan during our MI days. Francis & Trena agreed to meet us there. After serving them supper outside, we spent the rest of the evening in the RV because of rain. The next day was full of adventures with Francis & Trena. Some dune climbing, lots of beach walking and three campfires, partly against the cold but mostly for the *gezelligheid*. And as I always do when Francis the engineer shows up, I recruited him for some light R & M jobs on the RV. Francis is always eager to help along that line. Even though we had to defend ourselves against the cold, the next morning we had a delightful swim in Lake Michigan. That’s a real treat, because the water doesn’t often get warm enough for a comfortable swim this early in the year. After a 3 pm checkout, Francis & Trena headed back to Cincinnati, while we went on to Aurora, IL, to visit with brother Hendrik & Barb. That’s about an hour’s drive west of downtown Chicago. Stayed there for two nights.

On June 26, the return journey started in earnest. The first day we covered 1023 km and slept at Walmart in Mitchell, SD. According to Fran's journal, "almost all driven by John." This means that Fran drove part of it, probably 50 km while I was napping, but that was a significant 50 km, since she normally does not drive at all, as per her own choice. She just doesn't like to drive the RV. The second day we did 1070 kms without reference to Fran doing any driving. We stopped for a 5-cent coffee at the legendary Wall Drugs in Wall SD, where we have stopped a number of times during our cross country drives. Stayed overnight at Walmart in Billings, Montana. The third day we drove 1040 km on a hot and humid day. Tried to camp at Walmart in Moses Lake WA, but it was too hot and humid for me to sleep well. So, with Fran still trying to sleep on the RV bed, I drove on for another hour or so. Then stopped and spent the rest of the night at a roadside rest stop. I did manage to sleep some hours there.

Got going again early on Sunday the 29<sup>th</sup> and rolled into C&A's parking space at 7:30 am. Part of that day was spent at the sendoff of the CRC Sea to Sea Bike Tour at the University of Washington in downtown Seattle. We especially wanted to give our support to Agatha Vander Starre, our dear 76-year old friend who was going to do the first two weeks of the tour. Also encouraged our longtime friends, Lou Haveman and John Vander Steen, whom we met there and who planned to do the whole nine weeks of the tour. You've met Lou many times; John was the person we met half way up the Dempster Highway, remember?

It began with a very impressive "tire-dipping" service at Golden Garden Beach Park in Puget Sound area on the Pacific Ocean. First a buffet breakfast for all; then all the cyclists put their bike's rear tire in the ocean while all of us together said the Lord's Prayer. Then they cleaned the sand off their feet and tires and were divided into groups of ten. Each group was cheered off on their way with several minutes' gap before the next group was sent off. Afterwards we spent several hours enjoying the beach and the water together with Cynthia, Asia & Ezra. Even had an amazing Dutch Bingo match on the beach: someone who knew both Cynthia and Wiebe from Calvin days.

On July 1—Canada Day—we went to Dash Point State Park near C&A's house to camp with Asia & Ezra. A nice evening, not many mosquitoes, and a good campfire. A great camping experience for all of us. A leisurely morning with a nice campfire for us, while Asia & Ezra slept till nearly 10 A.M. After checkout we spent several hours at the beach. The tide was out so we could walk a looonnggg way. What fun to write in the sand, collect seashells, and walk bare feet! Returned to C&A's place that day. One night of camping was enough for the kids, fun as it was.

On July 3, it was back to Vancouver without any border hassles. A great nine weeks of adventures, living in our RV, seeing many "exotic" places, visiting friends and relatives and thirteen thousand kilometers of safe, mostly trouble-free driving. God was good to us and we were very thankful. But in the end, it's always good to be home again; there's no place like it. Or, once again, as the Dutch say it, "*Oost west; thuis best.*"

This was the trip that cost us an average of \$80 a day, including every cent we spent for whatever purpose, including repairs and gasoline at \$1.50 a litre in Quebec. Try outdoing that! \$40 a person a day and all that fun and adventure!

*A “Four-Corner” Trip (October-December 2009)*

There were two important dates ahead of us on our calendar. The first was the 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of sister Henrietta and Luke Glashouwer in Grand Rapids and a scheduled C-section for Theresa in California, diagonally across the USA. So we decided to make it an RV trip, first through the US to GR and from there to California. But instead of crossing the US diagonally direct to California, we would go far south from GR and then straight across the south to California. That turned it into what is sometimes called a “four corner” trip. Again, remember that much of this information comes from Fran’s travel journal and from the photo album.

We packed the RV, including the bikes on the back, and slept in it on our parking lot for security purposes and on October 17, 2009, hit the road at 4 AM and were at the Blaine border crossing at 5. With no one in line so early in the morning, the crossing was easy and no serious questions were asked. But we started out in heavy rain that lasted all morning and then some. The underpass where Interstate 5 meets the I-405 was flooded so that only one car was allowed through at a time. Shortly after that we saw a car that must have hydroplaned as it was completely turned around on the expressway and facing us. Theresa phoned to let us know that the latest x-ray showed that Baby Anneke is perfect in her snuggly womb! That was great news in view of Theresa’s lyme disease condition. Then we noticed that the RV water pump was broken, but decided to leave it for now. We followed I-5, I-90 and I-82 and drove 792 km that first day. We spent the night at a rest stop near La Grand OR on I-82.

This rest stop had an interesting historical display about the relations between American Indians and white immigrant settlers coming into the area. It was the kind of info that Fran said she had never heard in her journey through the American Christian school system. There was a lot of barter trade going on between the two peoples. The Indians supplied all kinds of food, while the immigrants provided the wherewithal for wearing apparel. Immigrants also bartered exhausted livestock, which the Indians restored to health for future trade. Indians were hired as guides and for help in crossing dangerous rivers. One immigrant writer wrote in 1853,

Oregon emigrants are in ten times the danger from speculators, ferrymen and traders than they are from Indians. Immigrants were duly impressed by the lifestyle of the local tribes and...noted that the Indians at this place are very wealthy. They have numerous herds of horses and possess many of the luxuries of life in abundance.

Had another early morning start and soon found ourselves in Mountain Time. The car stopped suddenly @ 8:30 am, about 16 km west of Ontario OR, without giving us any kind of warning. I tried to start it again every ten minutes without success. We had to do some phoning to get CAA and AAA organize a tow motor. Around 10 am a tow motor driven by a guy called Monty arrived and drove us into Ontario, where he parked us at ARP Garage. It

being Sunday, the place was closed. We had no choice but to wait it out till the next day. So we set up camp and decided to enjoy the day, especially since it was sunny with clear blue skies. We brought our chairs and table outside and made ourselves at home. We walked 15,719 steps that day, exploring the town. Monty was a Christian and invited us to his church's evening service, an offer which, to my later regret, we did not take up. We actually had an enjoyable and relaxing day on that parking lot, reading and sipping tea. However, since the use of our extensive telephoning on our Canadian cell phone cost us \$40, we decided to purchase an American phone and plan. We have used that phone and that plan ever since whenever we are in the US, for it is a very inexpensive plan that does exactly what we need.

The next morning, ARP Garage opened at 8:00. It turned out to be a very friendly place who knew what they were doing. The manager, after asking us some details, quickly concluded that the problem was a sheared distributor. He said our vehicle make and year frequently developed that problem, something similar to what we had heard in Williams Lake BC a year or so earlier. They found a new one in town quite quickly. The mechanic then said, "If you were my parents and planning such a long trip, I would advise them to replace the fan belt as well." So we took his advice and had the fan belt installed which we had purchased five years earlier in Dawson City, Yukon, from someone who said "just in case you need it on this trip." \$750 later, we were on our way early afternoon and managed to get as far as Snowville, UT, just over the border from both Oregon and Idaho, where we spent the night at a Flying J Travel Plaza after driving 471 km.

Though this part of the journey was not meant to be a sightseeing trip, we had decided we were going to spend some time in the Mormon capital of the world, namely Salt Lake City, Utah. Their headquarters occupies 35 acres in the city centre, where you find all their famous buildings. There was a constant flow of black-suited gentlemen into and out of a huge office building. We saw them everywhere as we were walking around the campus. They displayed only serious faces, never giving recognition, let alone a smile, to the visitors wandering around. There is the temple itself that non-Mormons may not enter. We *were* allowed into the Tabernacle, the home of the famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir and saw its remarkable organ. The choir's broadcast, Music and the Spoken Word, is the longest continuous running network broadcast in the world. It is heard weekly over 2,000 radio and TV stations worldwide and has 360 unpaid volunteer members. We entered the Family History Library to take a quick peek and looked for traces of Nigeria. We did find a surprise document on a wall about the Hausa people of Northern Nigeria and even a picture of R. C. Abraham's *Dictionary of the Hausa Language*, the one we kept at our elbows throughout our Nigeria years, but when we checked it out at the desk, they admitted they have no archival material on them. Well, it *looked* impressive! We saw someone with a T-shirt proclaiming, "Genealogists never die; they just lose their census!"

The entire campus is nothing but impressive, especially the hall portraying Mormon history in paintings, sculptures and artifacts. The campus itself is also littered with statues of Mormon historical figures and moments. All the while we were guided by a couple of enthusiastic young "missionary" volunteers, who come in scads from all over the world. Unfortunately, ours had serious problems with English.

When we left the campus through a main gate, we chatted with the security people there and expressed our surprise that their top leaders all looked so grim and unwelcoming. We explained that their behaviour is totally anti-missionary and will turn people away rather than attract them to the faith. They did not have a clue what we were talking about, something that surprised me, for they, too, were of the missionary faith whose training should have covered human relations such as this.

When we left Salt Lake City, we were done with sightseeing. From here on it was going to be straight driving to Grand Rapids with a one-night stop at Hendrik & Barb in Aurora IL. We did, but it was the most horrible driving experience I've ever had. The weather forecast for the next few days was, at they put it, "nasty." And so it was. All rain and wind with a little frost and snow interspersed. We saw the last bit of sunshine in Utah and after that it was nothing but hard and driving rain all the way through Wyoming, Nebraska, Iowa and Illinois, no let up till we arrived at Hendrik's place. All the way on I-80, with trailer after trailer throwing drums of water at the windshield as they left us in the dust—ah, in the water!

During this most horrible of trips, the RV was showing signs of tiredness as well. The fridge quit working, the first time since Quebec. Remember that one? The RV water pump broke down. The next day we noticed that the dumping mechanism was broken. At Hendrik's place, as I plugged in the RV, I got a shock. Oh, no! What was happening to our precious RV? And why all this so far from home? The shock was due to Hendrik's worn cord we were using, but the other stuff we would check out in GR. Somewhere along the line, the fridge "self-healed" and started working again on both electricity and propane.

Just one thing of note along the way. One night we stopped at a beautiful rest stop with internet access near Davenport, Iowa. It was such a luxurious place and so beautiful, we wondered if Iowa had money to burn. For a rest stop it was ridiculously luxurious. Never saw another even close to it in extravagance. Of course, I made a similar claim about the tourist info office of Montmagny in Quebec. To avoid the accusation of contradiction, let's just say "in the USA" and "in Canada" respectively.

Our first aim for this trip was to participate in the 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary celebration of Henrietta and Luke in Grand Rapids. We were behind schedule because of the car trouble in Oregon. Fran saw the stress under which I drove in these impossible conditions and kept reminding me that it would be alright if we did not arrive in time, but my stubborn self would not hear of it. I just kept on driving, determined to arrive on schedule. As the rains began to let up as we neared Aurora, so did I. After a one-night respite at Hendrik & Barb there, we celebrated Barb's 68<sup>th</sup> birthday with a humdinger of a breakfast and then proceeded on to Grand Rapids, still rainy but not the relentless stuff we had before. We arrived fifteen minutes before the celebration began! How's that for timing after a 4300 km drive? Fran wrote, "Thanks to God's protection and John's persistence and excellent driving, we made it!"

It was a wonderful "open house" celebration. Luke had been seriously ill. So, we were happy to see he was well enough to attend his own party. He still looked quite fragile, but, according to the family, looked much better than he had been. Lots of relatives and friends. Fran even met

some folks from her East Paris Christian Elementary and South Christian High days! Also the son of the realtor who sold the farm on 48<sup>th</sup> St to the Prins family in 1950 was there.

From this point on, we spent our days visiting and socializing with friends and family as we always do in GR, sleeping in our RV all over the place, but often on siblings' driveways. Of course, we attended services in the churches of our past. A couple of evenings all the siblings and spouses in GR looked through several boxes of Jane's slides of the 60s and 70s. Brought back lots of memories. Fran eventually had many of the slides printed up for a photo album.

On October 26, we attended the funeral of 86-year-old Gerry Vandenberg. She worked for CRWM as a teacher in the Tiv area of central Nigeria for 35 years. Met many former colleagues at the service. One of her students is now the Nigerian High Commissioner (HC) to Canada, who gave a very touching eulogy of her influence in his life. After the service, we met the HC and found out that he was a member of Plateau Church in Jos when Chris, Lydia's husband, was pastor there. The HC promised to help us get a visitor's visa for Lydia. Unfortunately, though we tried to establish contact with him from Vancouver, he never responded. We gave up on him.

We spent much of our remaining GR time with former Nigeria colleagues, pretty well all of whom you've met before. One whom we have not visited before in GR, but who played a large part in our lives at various stages was Eugene Rubingh and his wife Darlene. He did not remember that he's the one who "talked us into" going to Nigeria way back in 1965! Another interesting former colleague was Cornie Korhorn. True to form, prior to our arrival at his house, he had printed out statistics on how often I had attended Theological Society meetings in Jos & GR, how many papers I presented, etc. etc.! Only Cornie.

Then some "odds and ends" of a variety of people. There was cousin Jan & Grace Boer with whom we spent three hours talking and "buffet-ing." We visited John & Mary Ann Meyer, friends from Calvin College days. They are enjoying their retirement and all their fourteen grandchildren.

Of course, we took time to repair the RV and found the right person, nephew Dick Prins, son of brother Dewey. After buying the necessary parts, he was able to get everything working again, but it took him some hours. Unfortunately, after we left, we found that the water storage tank was still leaking somewhat. We were never able to get that totally repaired, so now we just fill it half way and then it does not seem to leak.

On November 4, we left GR and headed south. Our first stop was only a few km down the road at Moline, where we had breakfast with Carol & Ken Smith. Carol is a high school friend of Fran's. She had recently attended South Christian High School's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion and gave Fran a large up-to-date picture of their class of 1959. Fortunately she had identified everyone on a paper attached to the picture. After a truly delicious breakfast and sweet reminiscence, we were on our way along US 31 into Indiana.

Indiana is known for its Amish people, especially in the Middlebury, Elkhart, Goshen and Nappanee region in the north-central part of the state. We visited some touristy Amish Farm

compound. It is, of course, also known for its horse-and-buggy travel mode. We didn't see the real thing but we purchased a postcard featuring a huge Amish parking lot full of coaches as far as the eye could see. The front row had horses, also as far as you could see. We parked next to a buggy that had a person in it. So we started chatting and found the occupant, a lady, very friendly and open. A set of springs must have sprung on it, for the thing was off kilter and looked pretty funny next to our RV.



### Good Neighbours\*

We entered a nearby Amish Country Kitchen with two names: “Das Dutchman” and “Essenhouse.” This is a Babel kind of situation: confusion of tongues. “*Das*” is German for “the;” “Dutchman” is English for a person from The Netherlands, while “*Essenhouse*” is German for “eating house.” I won't go into the question as to why people of German descent refer to themselves as “Dutchmen,” except to surmise that their neighbours confused “Dutch” with “*Deutch*,” meaning “German,” for so long and so insistently that the Amish, rather than bucking it, simply resigned themselves to the name.

Not being hungry, instead of buying a meal, we bought a book about the Amish by an Amish author, which I read over the next few days. It shed a lot of light on what seem like gross inconsistencies in their way of life such as the questions asked on a document entitled “The Puzzles of Amish Life:” “Why is ownership of cars objectionable, but not their use?” Or, “Why are some modes of transportation acceptable and others forbidden?” “Why do the Amish use the service of professionals—lawyers, doctors, and dentists—but oppose higher education?” The answers are to be sought in how a technology or any type of education is seen as either strengthening or weakening the community. The Amish are not slaves to technology like the rest of us. They use it selectively and resist any expression of it which they deem to be socially destructive. They are not as crazy as these “inconsistencies” make them look. In fact, they are a very smart people who master the things to which the rest of us are enslaved.

*An inset:* The grossest—pun intended— example of our enslavement to technology is found less than a 100 metres from our apartment in Vancouver: a totally self-cleaning public toilet! You ought to see the complicated technology that supports its operation. Really seems like rocket science, when a well-designed shed around a pit latrine would do the job.

The next day we drove southward along Route 31 and smaller highways through flat farming areas. Both of us having been raised in agricultural communities, we always enjoy that kind of scenery, for it is such a clear demonstration of human smarts. Then spent a few hours in downtown Indianapolis, a place I had visited by myself in 1984, when I took delivery of my dissertation summary. There are several monuments to admire at the Monument Circle, the main one being the Soldiers and Sailors Monument. “It stands 284 feet, six inches high, only fifteen feet shorter than the Statue of Liberty” and is “recognized as one of the world’s outstanding monuments.” In 1902, it cost \$598,318; today that would translate into over five hundred million. It was erected to honour “Hoosiers” who had fought in five American wars. If you’re American, see if you can name them and against which countries! Also visited a Civil War Museum at the Circle.

Back to Highway 31 through lots of small villages. Crossed a bridge over the Ohio River and drove into downtown Louisville, KY, a city named after King Louis XVI of France. The city has free overnight parking; so we parked at 4<sup>th</sup> & Main in front of Galt Hotel. A woman named Thelma French Schneider had her first menial job in 1928 at this site, then known as the Columbia Building, the tallest skyscraper in the South, for \$12 a week. The Columbia Building cornerstone tells her story. At the time of her death, she owned the present building debt free! The stone said “an example for all young people of today that anything can be accomplished with hard work.” The stone was dedicated “In loving memory from her husband and family.” Yea, I can appreciate that! A Proverbs 31 woman!

Thelma was not the only successful entrepreneur to make the city her home. It is also the home to Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC). The Tourist Office displays a large effigy of Colonel Sanders along with the early history of the company. The founding owner of the original restaurant, Harland Sanders, concentrated on franchise efforts for KFC. He began using the name “Colonel Sanders,” grew a goatee and used a cane to build the southern gentleman character we all know.

He also started wearing his trade-mark white suit with a black string tie. In 1956, “the restaurant was sold at an auction for \$75,000—just enough to pay off the debts and loans. At 65, Harland’s monthly \$105 Social Security check was all he had to live on.” I refer you to Wikipedia for the subsequent history of its ownership. It ended up a Pepsi spinoff along with a few other fast food outlets: A&W, Long John Silver, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell. I’ve been identified with him repeatedly by the people of Trinidad, who should know, for they may well be the nation that eats more KFC chicken per capita than any other.



**Holding the Colonel's Hand\***

Louisville is also known for its Kentucky Derby and features some interesting horse sculptures, in extravagant colours, in the downtown. Wandered around in the entertainment district called Fourth Street Live and down at the waterfront. Lots of slave history here, including slaves escaping from Kentucky to Canada. Two historical markers tell the story of one couple who escaped to Canada:

### **KENTUCKY FUGITIVES TO CANADA**

**Thornton and Lucie (also called Ruthy) Blackburn** were slaves in Louisville, 1830-31. Thornton was hired out to Wurts and Reinhard's store at 4<sup>th</sup> and Main. When Lucie was sold to Virgil McKnight, the two escaped by steamboat. They were claimed two years later in Detroit by owners. The couple was rescued in "The Blackburn Riots of 1833," Detroit's first racial riot. Lucie and Thornton escaped to Canada. Two attempts to extradite them were refused. They moved to Toronto and began the first taxi service in Upper Canada while continuing to assist other fugitive slaves. Thornton died in 1890 and Lucie in 1895. Designated "Persons of National Historic Significance" by the Canadian Government.

*Presented by African American Heritage Foundation  
And the KY African American Heritage Commission  
Kentucky Historical Society  
Kentucky Department of Highways*

Another marker tells the story of a Black slave named "York," who lived most of his life in Louisville but went along on the Lewis & Clark Expedition to the Pacific from 1803-1806. He was the "first African-American to cross the US coast to coast and made important contributions to the success of the expedition." I confess to doubting his being the first. With so many slaves in the country, it is quite possible, if not likely, that some unknown slave owner crossed the continent with a slave before that time. There would be no record of this.

We wandered around the very creative Louisville Waterfront Park. Saw a sign there about the importance of the Louisville wharf during the Civil War years. Also saw the paddleboat "*Belle of Louisville*" docked at the wharf and a huge marker showing how high and how often the Ohio River has flooded in the last century.

Just before we left Louisville, a Black mother and child were walking down the sidewalk beside our RV. We overheard the child asking her mother what kind of a vehicle our RV was, so we invited them inside to take a look. The child was quite impressed and said "I want to buy one!" Well, at least the child knew it had to be *bought* and not just picked from a tree.

Continuing along Route 131, we drove on to Fort Knox and spent time at the General George Patton Museum, where there are huge displays of all the wars, including the current ones, in which the US has been involved. A brochure says,

Every generation has its heroes.  
This one is no different.

In honouring the legacy of General Patton,  
the General George Patton Museum celebrates  
the heroism of today's modern soldier. We strive to illuminate the  
unique brand of leadership embodied in the United States Armed Forces,  
practiced by its members on the battlefield and on the home front.  
America's brave fighters and your families—we salute you!

It is also where the nation's Gold Vault is located. A brochure tell us, "The US Bullion Depository holds one-third of America's gold reserves behind a 20-ton steel door. A drive by the vault is a must, for visitors to...the area." Unfortunately, the Gold Vault is off limits; even stopping on the road to take a picture is not allowed. But you know, we have a picture of it in our album—from another brochure! It does indeed look like a forbidding place, where I would not like to get caught. I suspect they would not have treated us gently as American officers did when they handed me over to Canadian authorities back in 1958.

We stopped at Mammoth Caves National Park, just west of I-65, near Brownsville KY. With 640 km of passageways, it is by far the world's longest known cave system. Note that popular "-est" word. These caves have not only long passageways but also a long history. Slaves were sent down to get the saltpeter which was used for ammunition during the War of 1812. Though the weather had been rather cold the past couple of days, it was warm enough that evening to sit around a campfire, even though it was pitch dark. We had a leisurely morning enjoying another campfire, a proper shower, and doing laundry.

As we crossed the border into Tennessee, we picked up a booklet named *A Path Divided* with some state history. In February 1861 the state voted pro Union; in June 1861, they voted pro South. The governor had used pressure "to preserve our way of life, including slavery."

Drove on to Nashville, the Music City. We found a good parking lot right in downtown at \$6 for 24 hours. Another RVer saw us and asked if they could park next to us. Turned out they

were from the Netherlands and were driving a rental RV from Las Vegas, Nevada to Orlando, Florida. No matter where you go, you run into Dutchmen!

From 10:30 A.M – 4 A.M there are live bands and singers *everywhere*, along with neon signs, especially on Broadway Street. You can walk into a restaurant or bar, sit for a while, listen to music and then move on. No waitress comes to take your order. If you need something, you go to the bar and order it. If not, no sale takes place, but no one is bothered by that. We walked the pedestrian bridge crossing the Cumberland River towards a huge sports stadium. Impressive buildings everywhere, including a magnificent Visitors' Center. A Symphony Building with bike racks in the form of a treble clef and tiles with sayings from Plato and others.

**Plato:**

*Music gives soul to the universe,  
Wings to the mind,  
Flight to the imagination  
Life to everything.*

**Johann Sebastian Bach:**

*There's nothing remarkable about it. All one has to do is hit the right keys at the right time and the instrument plays itself.*

**Dolly Parton in the Music Hall of Fame:**

*Country music is music with a lot of class. It's just ordinary stories told by ordinary people in an extraordinary way.*

**Duke Ellington:**

*If it sounds good, it is good!*

**Merle Haggard:**

*Country songs are the dreams of the working man.*

Another sign represents the wisdom of the charity:

**PLEASE DO NOT GIVE MONEY TO VAGRANTS**

Most of them are professional con-artists. The others are addicts that will use your money to buy drugs or booze. If you wish to donate to those who are truly needy, we recommend:

Then follow the names of four of the ministries catering to those "vagrants." It is the same advice given in Vancouver by the police and similar ministries. It is the only advice that keeps

me sane and my conscience somewhat clear as I walk the streets of our own city, while we do our giving where we have more assurance of its effectiveness. Perhaps you'd call it "tough love"?

Fran took a picture of me with my hands on the shoulder of an Elvis statue. A record—pun intended!-- of 19,845 steps (almost 14 km); I thought the pedometer was overly generous, but Fran insisted, "A step is a step!" But was it really a record? Reflect on earlier travel reports in this volume. Maybe just a record for *this* trip?

The American South is, of course, full of churches and home of the Southern Baptists, with every community having its "First Baptist Church" (FBC), the southern counterparts to Quebec's cathedrals. We attended the Sunday morning service in Nashville. It was one great big dress up party with all the men in suit and tie and all the women in their latest duds. The liturgy as formal as Baptists can make it. They had a huge and excellent choir with good congregational singing and lovely organ music. They pretended to be hospitable with their announcement: "If you are visiting, let us know and we'll point out the good restaurants for you!" So much for Southern hospitality! At least our local FBC invites people once a month to come for a \$5 lunch at Hobbit House, right next door to the church.

As if there were not enough church buildings in town, we observed an outdoor preaching session with a young preacher in charge and most members of the audience also of his generation. We did get the impression that the Christian religion here is more mainstream than in our neck of the woods, where it has been marginalized by the secular crowd. I can just about imagine the contempt with which a CBC journalist would condescendingly describe the place with epithets like "fundamentalism" and "extremism." Well, of course. We're Canadians, right?

The next day we enjoyed a lovely 20°C and took a long early morning walk along Cumberland River, a tributary to the Mississippi River. Had interesting chats with several people, especially with Blacks. This was so different from what the Canadian media would lead us to expect; they were so much more friendly, helpful and hospitable.

There are lots of historical signs down by the river, including this one:

#### TIMOTHY DE MONBREUN

Jacques-Timothy De Montbrun, born on Mar. 23, 1741, in Boucherville, Quebec, was the first white man to live in the Nashville area. Beginning in 1769, he spent several winters here trading for furs. He served as Lieut. Gov. of Illinois Country, 1783-86. He became permanent resident of Nashville in 1790, operating store and tavern. Died at home on this site, Oct. 30, 1826. (Differences in spelling of name are original.)

Several historical plaques testify to early skirmishes, not to say "wars," between Indians and settlers in the area. There was a "Battle of the Bluffs" on April 2, 1781, during which the settlers let dogs loose on the Cherokee Indians, allowing the settlers to escape back to their fort. The Indians were driven off, but many settlers were killed. Another plaque tells of a

brave soul who won many battles against both Indians and Spanish. He participated in a certain expedition that “ended Indian atrocities on the Cumberland River.”

We left Nashville via the Red Bridge—it was red in colour-- over the Cumberland River and drove a short distance along I-65 on to Franklin TN. It seemed like the entire downtown was dedicated to Civil War history. Here one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War, known as the Battle of Franklin, took place. Within five hours on November 30, 1864, 2500 Union soldiers and 7000 Confederate soldiers were killed; this included thirteen Confederate generals. Other plaques offer different scenarios of that Battle of Franklin, when nearly 1,000 of the 3,500 Confederate soldiers became casualties. However, a marker at the nearby McGavock Confederate Cemetery claims that 1496 soldiers lie buried there. You may do your own research to get at the real facts!

Testimony to the help the local churches rendered to the wounded and the dead is replete in the town. Officials of the US Christian Commission arrived soon after the battle to help the fewer than 1000 residents in organizing care. All suitable buildings in the town, including barns and stables, were recruited. They also helped the wounded from the Union army, which others had abandoned.

In the city square there stands a very tall monument of a Confederate soldier; no memorial of a Union soldier. As we heard, “the Civil War isn’t over yet; the South will rise again.” Another square had both the Confederate flag and the U.S. flag and bricks to commemorate soldiers from the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Spanish-American War, WW I, WW II, Korean War and Vietnam War. There was an entire empty space with no names on the bricks. Why none for the Civil War when the town’s history and economy centred around that?

But there is also Indian history here in Franklin. A marker tells this bit of history:

#### CHICKASAW TREATY COUNCIL

In the spring of 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act providing the President with the means to exchange the lands of the five civilized Indian nations of the Southeast for lands west of the Mississippi. On August 20, 1830, Andrew Jackson met in Franklin with the Chiefs of the Chickasaw nation to begin a series of treaties which removed the tribe to Oklahoma. “Sharp Knife” as the chiefs called Jackson, was the only US President ever to attend an Indian removal council.

Another good day for walking – 19,460 steps! We camped on a Franklin street that night.

On November 9, we crossed the border into Alabama. Some very friendly and chatty lady attendants at the Visitors’ Office and Fran showed pictures of grandchildren to each other! A large rocket from NASA is on display outside the Center; Huntsville, Alabama, is close by and has a large NASA station. Several memorials about the Korean and Vietnam wars are on the grounds. Also a large plaque about a visit to this area by Hernando De Soto, a Spanish explorer, in 1540, when they were in search of the Mississippi River.

**Drove through more villages and noticed those First Baptist churches everywhere. And also we saw lots of Edward Jones Investment offices everywhere. In fact, we had begun to notice them all along the way on this trip. We asked ourselves about our not having noticed them over the years, when they are scattered throughout the country in almost every community of any size at all. We lived in GR and never noticed them, even though there are several there. We began to suspect that they might be more in number than Baptist churches and McDonalds! We never noticed them till we began to use their services in Vancouver and then they popped out of the woodwork everywhere. For me to fail to notice them might be expected, but for hawk-eye Franny? That's inexplicable.**

**Spent a few hours in Athens (population 21,000), northern Alabama on I-65, and learned about the devastation during the Civil War in that city. On May 2, 1862, Union troops under Col. John Turchin (Russian name: Ivan Vasillevitch Turchinoff) "sacked and plundered" the town. The soldiers even stabled their horses in the churches, burned the pews for firewood and destroyed the interiors. The Colonel was court martialled for encouraging these actions, but was actually promoted to Brigadier General one day before the court martial, because his wife had appealed to Abraham Lincoln for clemency.**

**We admired the old and new First Presbyterian Church and the Court House in the town square. The church won a "beautification" award, but I read that as "beatification!" and wondered how that could bring a reward. We bought a few Arch books at a Christian bookstore for the grandkids.**

**We continued driving on to Cullman, AL, along secondary highways that run parallel to I-65 and tremendously enjoyed the lovely farms and the magnificent "plantation" style homes with their huge balconies and pillars, but could not forget the slave culture on which such communities were originally built.**

**We stopped in Cullman AL to see the amazing Ava Maria Grotto. This Grotto "consists of a landscaped hillside of 125 small stone and cement structures, the handiwork of the creative genius, Brother Joseph Zoetl, a monk of the Abbey for almost 70 years." A write-up tells us:**

**This diminutive monk began making cement replicas of shrines and buildings almost 50 years ago. As his efforts improved, more and more visitors from the surrounding area came to view his 'sermons in stone,' until finally, in 1934, with the dedication of the Grotto, his creations were made accessible to tourists....**

**Many of the replicas are of famous cathedrals. They include scenes of the manger, Mary's well in Nazareth, St. Peter's Basilica, the Statue of Liberty and the Red Cross Tower as a tribute to its work during WW I. I don't know what kind of photographic wordsmith would be able to describe this Grotto. Short of a visit, only photographs can do justice to this amazing work of art. Brother Zoetl died in 1961. Some years later, a few more humorous additions of a Lizard Condo and a Squirrel Crossing were contributed by a caretaker whom we met.**



The Manger Scene

House of God

## Two Grotto Examples\*

Drove on to Birmingham, AL, and had a hard time finding the Visitors' Center. It was getting dark already and the skies looked a bit threatening. The man at the Center told us there was not much to see or do in that totally-gutted city center but that it was perfectly safe to walk and park our RV. However, a woman who was just leaving work told us it was an absolutely unsafe area after dark unless we were prepared to sleep with a loaded gun next to our pillow! We readily believed her, for the place was in ruins with signs of violence and shootings all around us. She gave us directions to the nearest Walmart in the suburb of Fairfield. So that's where we spent the night with the clatter of heavy rain on the RV the entire time. That rain was caused by a hurricane further down south. Fran decided that evening it was time to start knitting the baby blanket for Anneke.

First thing in the morning we listened to the weather report: Tropical Storm Ida in the Gulf meant rain all day everywhere in the whole state of Alabama! This wasn't just rain; it was buckets without letup. We had hoped to visit "The City that Changed the World" according to the travel brochure, especially the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and the famous 16<sup>th</sup> St Baptist Church, but with the constant rain, we decided to leave the area at 8:30 A.M. I regret we made that decision, for this was all pretty historical and interesting stuff. We could have managed the rain somehow. After all, our sightseeing would have been inside. Indeed, but these were pretty serious buckets, unrelenting buckets! And so we missed visiting the city where "the second American Revolution took place in the streets. The city was a battlefield for America's Civil Rights Movement, a struggle for simple decency and common sense." However, we would run into plenty more civil rights stuff in the cities ahead.

We continued southward along I-65 through all this bucket stuff, worse even than the relentless rains we had during the northern eastward part of the trip. The saving angle was that Ida had caused traffic to reduce and slow down. The rain created almost a sheath between us and our surroundings, so that we did not really see much of anything during the drive. We stopped in Clanton, AL, to do email, banking and read newspapers. By now we felt isolated from the world, for we had neither heard nor read any news ever since we had left GR.

Despite Ida's rain, we decided to push on to Montgomery, our southernmost destination. The city's name has an interesting Canadian connection. It was named for General Richard Montgomery who is famous for leading the 1775 invasion of Canada during the American Revolutionary War. He captured Montreal in November but died on December 31 during the

**Battle for Quebec City. In 1818 his body was returned from Canada for burial in New York. The fanfare surrounding the return of his body occasioned this city in Alabama to be named after him.**

**Again we had a hard time finding the Visitors' Center as the signs didn't seem to follow through. But persistence paid off and we found a huge covered place, the "Train Shed," to park for free on the platform (*perron*) of Union Station right by a well-used railroad track at the Alabama River. It is a very interesting Visitors' Center with lots of informative panels about cotton, slavery and the Civil Rights movement. Also a very talkative staff! We even sat in their rocking chairs and sat indoors to watch Fox News since it was still windy and rainy outside. We were not able to get Fox News in BC at the time, but had heard about it and were curious. When the Visitors' Center closed at 5 pm we went and sat in the RV and were able to read by making use of the light from the "gable-roofed train shed."**

**We got up at 5:00 am and walked and walked and walked all over downtown Montgomery. The streets were pretty deserted, probably because of the Veterans' Day holiday, but some told us this was quite normal. There were lots of totally rehabbed areas in the downtown with many apartment buildings, retail space etc., but they all seemed empty with "for sale" and "for lease" signs everywhere. Met a lady who told us she was renting a downtown apartment for \$200 a month. Of course, she was pretty happy about this situation, but we never have had such a feeling of poor planning and desolation in the midst of such beautiful spanking brand new and rehabbed buildings.**

**We visited the Riverwalk Amphitheater area, but much of it was flooded because of hurricane Ida. Near it were what looked like a row of vacant grain elevators. They were not totally unused, for they had tenants: a River District Substation and a Police Station. Paddle boats seem to be popular in the South; it seems that every large community on a river has one; Montgomery has its Harriott II, the first Harriott dating back to 1821. The Convention Center has beautiful rugs and paintings and lots of affable people! In distinction from the empty buildings, we just loved the sociable and friendly human atmosphere that surrounded us. Everywhere people were friendly and welcoming.**

**We did a lot more walking to visit the many historical places in this city. After all that walking (15,000 steps) we were tired and hungry and thus started looking for a restaurant. Daisy's Diner served us some real hometown southern cooking: fried green tomatoes, fried okra, lima beans, corn nuggets, collard greens, corn bread, fried chicken and pineapple casserole for dessert! Mmmm!**

**And now for the historical part of the Montgomery exploration. Along with Birmingham and other southern cities, Montgomery has a proud civil rights history. However, prior to that, there is also Indian and French (Canadian?) history. A historical marker provided by the National Society of Colonial Dames in America, recounts the following history:**

#### **STRUGGLE FOR COLONIAL EMPIRE**

Here on May 24, 1703, Alabama Indians ambushed the first French explorers from Mobile, killing three and wounding two critically. The Indians were armed and were used as pawns by British agents from Carolina in the European struggle for dominion over North America.

Turning to the history associated with slavery, emancipation and the civil rights struggle, we visited many places/buildings and read many simultaneously fascinating and sobering historical markers. One read:

#### **MONTGOMERY'S SLAVE MARKETS**

The city's slave market was at the...Court Square. Slaves of all ages were auctioned, along with land and livestock, all standing in line to be inspected. Public posters advertised sales and included gender, approximate age, first name (slaves did not have last names), skill, price, complexion and owner's name. In the 1850s, able field hands brought \$1,500; skilled artisans \$3,000. In 1859, the city had seven auctioneers and four slave depots....

Then came the American Civil War during the Lincoln presidency and the secession of the southern states. Montgomery is full of historical reminders of these events. All kinds of plaques and markers celebrate them: "A Nation Divided;" "Cradle of the Confederacy;" "Dexter Avenue" along which the inaugural parade for the first and only Confederate President moved; "First White House of the Confederacy;" "United States Flag Raised over Alabama Capitol, Apr. 12, 1865;" "Confederate War Memorial;" We received the definite impression that in the minds and hearts of the locals, the Civil War is not yet over while the Confederacy still lives on and one day will come into its own.

Moving along to emancipation, on another marker we read:

#### **FIRST EMANCIPATION OBSERVANCE—1866**

Montgomery's first observance of the signing of the Emancipation Document was New Year's Day at Wilson's Grove.... A parade formed at Gilmer's Warehouse.

All the elite and the city's organizations, including the Governor, legislators businessmen, clergy and their churches and a band, were awarded their proper places in the parade.

Speakers...included Holland Thompson, first Black alderman and a state legislator, who advised "show by good conduct, industry and fidelity, that the year 1866 was a Year of Jubilee instead of insurrection." He also told the crowd to acquire land, homes and education for their children.

From emancipation to the realization of human rights was quite a time span. Rosa Parks provided the sparks. Here's the story according to a marker:

## ROSA PARKS MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT

At the bus stop on this site on December 1, 1955, Mrs. Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to boarding Whites. This brought about her arrest, conviction, and fine. The Boycott began December 5, the day of Parks' trial, as a protest by African-Americans for unequal treatment they received on the bus line. Refusing to ride the buses, they maintained the Boycott until the US Supreme Court ordered integration of public transportation one year later. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led the Boycott, the beginning of the modern Civil Rights Movement (CRM).

That was 1955. Ten years later, according to yet another marker,

## BLOODY SUNDAY

The CRM was still struggling to win the right to vote for Blacks. To help gain national awareness, civil rights leaders planned a march from Selma to Montgomery, a distance of about 75 kms. The Governor of the state, George Wallace, made plans to stop the march at the Edmund Pettis Bridge, which crosses the Alabama River at the outskirts of Selma. When the 600 marchers tried to cross the bridge, mounted deputies and state troopers waded into the marchers' ranks and attacked them with clubs. The defenseless demonstrators, predictably, fell back after sustaining injuries. When the national networks aired the attack, a cry of outrage helped to swell the ranks of King's



followers.

**Martin Luther King Leading The March\***



We met a 74-year old gentleman named Sam Cook,\* who said he had been a driver for Martin Luther King Jr. Dressed impeccably in a suit and walking with a cane, he was on his way to the Veteran's Day celebrations. We thought it odd that a man that age with such a background was left to scamper around by himself. We wondered whether he told us the truth or whether his imagination was running away with him.

We continued walking around and saw all kinds of historical places; the Court Square Fountain where the Selma to Montgomery march ended;

the Dexter Ave churches: United Methodist, Anglican and King Memorial Baptist; the Capitol Buildings and the First White House of the Confederacy where Jefferson Davis lived during his presidency. Our heads began to swim in all this history. It was time to move on, but in a different direction; we had gone south as far as we had planned.

We traveled west to Selma, Alabama (population +/- 20,000), another hotbed of Civil War and the CRM. But before anything else, something more personal. It was here that we saw for the first and only time a branch of the US Royal Bank of Canada, at the time called “RBC Centura Bank.” All our stateside income gets deposited in that bank. It is convenient for us, for it allows for seamless transfer of funds to our Canadian RBC account. We have never seen its US head office; in fact, we don’t know exactly where it is, since we have several addresses.

The Library, Visitor Info Center and Chamber of Commerce were all closed because of Veterans’ Day. We found a nice parking place on a street with four historic churches around us and the chiming of church bells on the hour, appropriately called “Church Street,” and stayed there overnight. We walked a record distance that day of 20,982 steps or 14.68 kms. After you’ve read about all the historical places we visited that day, you will understand why we walked so much. But before the history, first a bit of wandering sightseeing. After all, we were tourists.

The next day—November 12—gave us lovely weather so that we decided to go for a bike ride in downtown Selma. We checked out the restored historic St. James Hotel. This hotel was built in 1837 and is “among the oldest functioning hotels in Alabama and one of the few remaining antebellum riverfront hotels in the U.S.” During the Civil War, the hotel was occupied by Union troops who, therefore, spared it while they burned two-thirds of the city. It then stood vacant for one whole century!

Then we biked across the famous Edmund Pettis Bridge to the National Voting Rights Museum and Park area. This historic area is not kept up well so that some signs are hard to read. Martin Luther King Jr led a historic march on March 9, 1965, as you have already read. Both Blacks and Whites were involved in these Civil Rights marches according to the murals and memorials in the park. Then we meandered with our bikes through the Old Live Oak Cemetery where there are many graves/memorials from the Confederate army, including Jefferson Davis, Robert Lee, and several of Pres. Lincoln’s brothers-in-law. One large marker reads, “In graves, there is glory in gloom.” The combination of huge mature oaks, large grave monuments, a deep feeling of history and a degree of neglect gave the place both an eerie but also an aura of peace, rest and awe.

Like all North American places with a history, Selma’s history includes struggles with its original inhabitants, the Indians.

1702                      ECOR BIENVILLE                      1743  
The First Recorded Name of Selma

This tablet commemorates the engagement between  
JEAN BAPTISTE LE MOYNE DE BEINVILLE,

**Governor of the Province  
 and  
 THE ALIBAMO INDIANS  
 In 1714, Bienville made a friendly visit to this section.  
 Erected in 1932 by  
 The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America  
 in the State of Alabama**

As in Montgomery, Selma's historical memory concentrates on slavery, the Civil War and the CRM, especially on the latter.

Two markers tell the main story.

**THE SELMA MOVEMENT  
 (The Beginning)**

The major civil rights protest, which focused national attention on the issue of racial discrimination in voting & led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, was centered in Selma.

In January of 1963 local citizens organized a voter registration class & by February others were in Selma to assist with registration. Local law officials & blacks seeking to register to vote soon clashed & this received widespread news coverage.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. came to Selma in January of 1965 to lead the drive for the vote. This began the marches to the Dallas County Courthouse, the great number of arrests, the ensuing violence & the national media attention on Selma & the issue of voter registration

Then another marker with the same heading:

**THE SELMA MOVEMENT  
 (The Prize)**

On Sunday March 7, 1965, 600 people led by Hosea Williams & John Lewis began a march to Montgomery to take their quest for voting rights directly to Governor George C. Wallace. At the Pettus bridge they were met by state troopers who used horses, tear gas & billy clubs to break up the march.

A march on March 9, led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. met the troopers at the same place & turned around without incident.

The Federal Court ruled the march was legal & with Federal protection 4,000 began the march to Montgomery on March 21. Camping along the road the protesters reached 25,000 in number by the time they reached the State Capital on March 25.

National news coverage of these events secured widespread support & led to the approval of the Voting Rights Act on August 6, 1965.

Then there are three markers honouring various leaders of the Selma-Montgomery March. One is in memory of the “Reverend Hosea Williams,” of whom we read “He fed the hungry” and is described as “unbossed and unbought.” The second is for “The Honorable John Lewis, who is credited with his “Get in the Way” kind of attitude and who is quoted, “When we pray, we move our feet.” The third plaque is for two people, “Amelia Boynton Robinson” and “Marie Foster” who are described as “Mothers of the CRM Before and Beyond the Bridge.” They are admired for their “Don’t let nothing turn them around” kind of attitude.

In a park dedicated to all this CRM history, a stone has been placed with a quotation from Joshua 4:21-22: “When your children shall ask you in time to come saying what mean these stones then you shall tell them how you made it over.

It was not all friction and strife in Selma. A more peaceful memory was of

### THE SLEEPING PROPHET

Edgar Cayce (1877-1945), was internationally accepted as an extremely gifted psychic. A humble man, he never profited materially from his psychic ability, but used it to help “make manifest the love of God and man.” Operated his photography studio and lived in this building from 1912 until 1923. Many psychic readings were given here during that time.

As we continued on our way, we crossed the state line and entered the State of Mississippi, aka “The Magnolia State.” The choice of the magnolia as the Mississippi state’s floral emblem is a natural one. At least that’s what the school children of the state likely thought back in 1900 when they chose it over several other native flowers. Though slower to act, the state’s legislature eventually followed suit and the magnolia was named the state flower of Mississippi in 1952. Across the state, magnolia trees line city streets and adorn suburban yards. They can grow up to 80 feet high and 50 feet across—the crown, that is, not the trunk!

We were welcomed again in another beautiful State Visitors’ Center. The Southern states surely try to impress people with their elaborate and majestic Welcome Centers when all you really need is friendly people handing out some maps! Drove along Interstate 20/US 80 the



rest of the day and stopped for the night at the Morton Rest Stop close to Jackson (population +/- 180,000), more than halfway across the state.

Early next morning we drove into downtown Jackson. It was another lovely day, so that Fran took advantage of it by relaxing on a street bench enjoying a bit of time on knitting enjoying a bit of time on knitting Anneke’s blanket!\* We met a very affable city

employee at Jackson City Hall who gave us lots of information on history in general and the Civil War in particular. A sign on the city hall informed us that it was built by slave labour in 1846-1847 for a total cost of \$7,505.58. It was used as hospital for both Union & Confederate soldiers during Civil War. The City Hall was miraculously spared even though much of the town was burned down three times and became known as “Chimneyville.”

Another city worker was busy planting flowers but also ready for a chat. He told us that driving and touring the way we were doing, “that’s livin’!” The whole downtown looked very clean and livable, partly because there were no electric or phone lines overhead; they had only underground optic cables. You can’t say that of many American downtowns.

We were really surprised at finding an International Museum of Muslim Cultures at the Mississippi Museum of Art. (See *Saudi Aramco World* Jan/Feb 2006 issue “Mississippi’s Muslim Museum.” You can find it on the Internet. The website of the exhibition itself is < [www.muslimmuseum.org](http://www.muslimmuseum.org) >.) It is a unique institution in the US, “dedicated to educating the public about Islamic history and culture, the contributions of Muslims to the global community, and the diversity of the Muslim community: past, present and future.”

There are two separate exhibitions. One section is on “The Legacy of Timbuktu” with the subtitle of “Wonders of the Written Word.” It “features ancient Timbuktu manuscripts uncovering Africa’s literary culture and celebrating a glorious age of learning and empire building.” These manuscripts have been found in Timbuktu and all over Mali; very similar to the stories we heard and the manuscripts we saw in Mauritania.

The second exhibition was about “Islamic Moorish Spain: Its legacy in Europe and the West features artifacts and interpretive information on Muslim rule in Spain, (including) its contributions to the fields of philosophy, science, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, agriculture, commerce, architecture and the arts.”

The place was managed by a graceful and friendly Black lady who had converted to Islam. This project was her mission to the world on the glory of Islam. Well done, indeed. We spent several most pleasurable hours savouring the place. This visit was definitely a cultural highlight of the trip.

We drove on to Vicksburg (population +/- 27,000), Mississippi, at the “bend” of the Mississippi River, the river that forms the state’s western border from north to south. We were welcomed by another great southern Visitors’ Center. Mississippi was explored in 1540 by Hernando De Soto, a Spanish Roman Catholic—what else for a Spaniard?—explorer known for his cruelty, one of thousands of European “Christians” who managed to combine the religion of love and compassion with unspeakable cruelties, the result of Europe’s forced mass conversions. The place was colonized first by the French in 1699, then became a British colony in 1763, a Spanish colony in 1779, U.S. territory in 1798 and finally became the 20<sup>th</sup> state in 1817. Given its history of jurisdictional seesaw, it’s high time it changes hands again—almost two centuries under one single regime?! Of course, it hoped for such a change in the Civil War, but without success.

Somebody in Vicksburg had a deep sense of history. There are some historical markers there that go into great historical details about the place's "prehistoric settlement," in others words, its Indian history as far back as 2,000 BC. One mural depicts an Indian situation of around 1,000 BC. As interesting as that history is, I'm afraid I have to direct interested readers to the internet for those details. The same holds for a plaque with detailed history of early explorations.

Turning to more recent history, Vicksburg endured a siege during the Civil War from May 16 to July 4, 1863. Gen U.S. Grant "cut off all supplies during this period and drove the citizens to caves to escape the shelling." Confederate General J. C. Pemberton surrendered on July 4.

As to more recent touristy stuff, we came upon a brochure advertising "Riverboat Cruises for Every Occasion" that caught our attention. The brochure mentioned praise, dinner, blues and educational cruises. The Praise Cruise was, "complete with dinner and a show – provided by praise teams from area churches." We were hoping to take a sunset tour on the Mississippi River, but, as there weren't enough people, the tour was cancelled.

Then we saw the sign for a campground at Ameristar Casino for only \$25 a night which included a free buffet breakfast, laundry and showers! So the first night in an actual campground with electricity and water since we left home on Oct 17! And guess where we went for breakfast the following morning! The buffet was delicious and we savoured the experience. We learned that Mississippi is the most obese state in the nation, with Alabama the second. We certainly saw evidence of that at the buffet: Many customers could hardly get themselves seated in the booths! As to the free buffet, we have the bill in the photo album to prove it. "Grand Total \$0.00." Not so sure they made any money on us!

We spent time in the old downtown of Vicksburg. There is the Corner Drug Store which has "a fascinating privately-owned collection of Civil War...and pharmaceutical artifacts" with "antique reproductions available for purchase." Interested readers can pursue this interest through their website < [www.vicksburgcornerdrug.com](http://www.vicksburgcornerdrug.com) >.

Then there is the very surprising Biedenharn Museum of Coca Cola History Memorabilia. The secret recipe for Coke came from a pharmacist in Atlanta, but it was first bottled here in 1894. According to a plaque:

#### **JOSEPH BIEDENHARN AND THE FIRST BOTTLING OF COCA-COLA**

On a summer day in 1894, Joseph Biedenharn, a candy merchant and soda fountain operator, had an idea that would reshape the soft drink industry. He took the popular fountain beverage, Coca-Cola, put it in bottles and delivered it to rural areas outside of Vicksburg. It was the first time Coca-Cola had been sold in bottles. Mr. Biedenharn created a totally new concept of marketing the beverage and established the cornerstone of the independent network of franchise bottlers who now distribute bottled Coca-Cola all over the world. Born in 1866, Joseph Biedenharn was the eldest of eight children and in his teens became part of the candy business founded by his father

and uncle. Later he and his brothers Will, Harry, Lawrence, Herman, Ollie, Albert and sister Katy acquired franchises to bottle Coca-Cola in Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. The building where the first bottling took place, was built in 1890 and is operated today as a museum interpreting this important moment in our Nation's history.

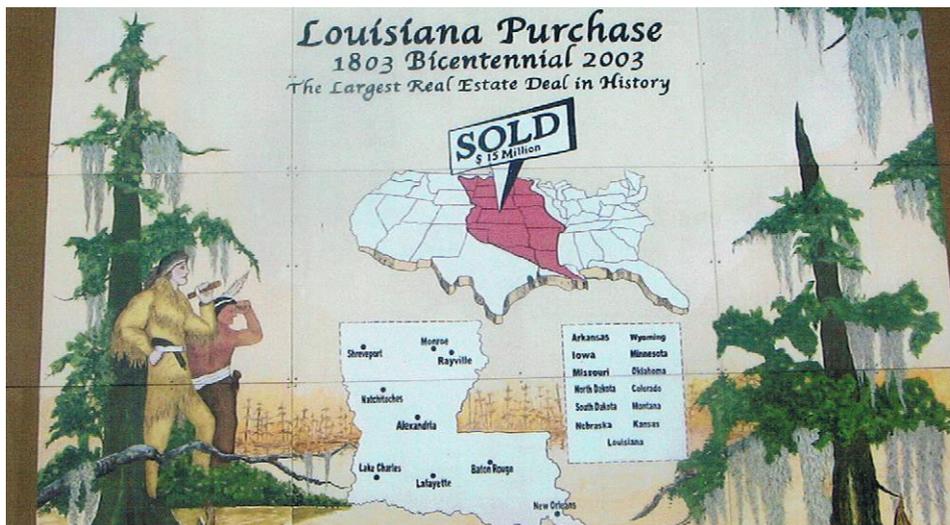
Among other things, the museum features over 100 Coca-Cola items in the gift shop. It's an amazing display of the different bottles produced over the years, even if all are clearly recognizable as Coke bottles. Like the billions of human faces, all with the same features but each with its own individual expression. There are even Monopoly games featuring a Coca-Cola carton on the box. An amazing ad urges the consumer to "Drink Coca-Cola from a bottle through a straw," presumably the latest in technology.

We admired many of the Riverfront Murals on the floodwall on Levee Street. There were 32 of them, depicting various periods of the city's history. One of them had the painting and story of an incident that has greatly affected the world of children, the story of President Teddy Roosevelt's Bear Hunt. He was about 25 miles north of Vicksburg for a four-day bear hunt. The President said he "did not anticipate the pleasure of killing a bear so much as the pleasure of a few days of complete recreation in the woods." When the hounds cornered a 235 pound bear, his guide tied it to a tree and called for the president, but he would not shoot it. The political cartoonists had a heyday with this story while toy manufacturers were soon producing "Teddy's Bears," which were later renamed Teddy Bears.

We crossed the Mississippi River and stopped at the Welcome Center in Louisiana. This was the first time we had an unpleasant experience at one of these centers as a very old and tired-acting white woman in charge was not interested in giving us any helpful information.

The signs welcoming the traveler to the state were in French as well as English and the road signs mention "parishes" instead of counties. We saw lots of cotton fields near Delhi, Louisiana. Clearly the end of slavery did not spell the end of cotton culture in the state.

Following I-20, at Rayville a huge billboard celebrates the Louisiana Purchase.\*



The purchase is billed as “the largest real estate deal in history.” For \$15 million--\$230 million in 2012 dollars-- the U.S. purchased an area now covering all or part of thirteen states, reaching from the Canadian border down to New Orleans, an area of 2,140,000 square kilometers or 828,000 square miles, more than twice the size of BC and just short of 50 times the size of The Netherlands. That comes to less than three cents per acre in those days or less than 42 cents per acre in 2012 dollars. It was purchased from France, with both countries having their own political reasons for the transaction.

We continued west on I-20/US 80, which were really country roads and spent the night on a Walmart parking lot in Minden. From there it was a short morning drive to Shreveport (population +/- 200,000), Louisiana. It was very quiet in downtown, but then what would you expect on an early Sunday morning? It is another great example of a totally restored downtown. About the only signs of life were city workers putting Christmas wreaths on lamp posts with the aid of hydraulic lifts. They told us they had a total of 540 to put up, so that they were starting early in the season. The downtown Festival Plaza sports many huge billboards about music, fun, celebrations and Mexico. Their Waterfront Park has huge beautiful artificial steel-and-wire magnolia flowers. The city is on the Red River, which forms the border between Louisiana and Texas and then continues south toward the Gulf of Mexico.

On November 15, we crossed the state border into Texas. Their first sign of the hugeness and the big thinking of Texans was their Welcome Center. Some interesting state facts are the following:

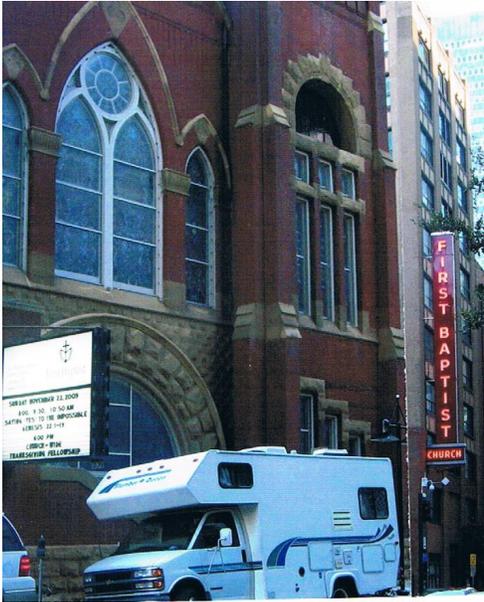
- It covers an area of 267,339 square miles or 7.4% of the nation. That is, second largest in the union after Alaska and less than one-third of BC and more than six times The Netherlands.
- It is the only state to have joined the US by treaty instead of annexation.
- It was an independent nation from 1836-1845.
- Six flags have flown over the state, but there have been eight changes of government: Spanish, 1519-1685; French, 1685-1690; Spanish, 1690-1821; Mexican, 1821-1836; Republic of Texas, 1836-1845; United States, 1845-1861; Confederate States, 1861-1865; United States, 1865-present.

Following I-20 West, we headed for Dallas (population +/- 122,000). Upon entering the state, it was unusually hot and humid, but as we drove on, the temperature dropped and stormy winds arose, so that by the time we arrived in Dallas, it was uncomfortably cold and windy. We headed straight for Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) close to downtown. DTS, you should know, is a famous major seminary of the fundamentalist stripe and breeding ground for premillennial dispensational theology. We found good street parking at the curb bordering on the campus, very close to the campus library and to the well-known Baylor Medical Center. We made that our home for the next couple of days. It was Reading Week, so that there were not many students wandering around on campus.

We decided we needed a day of rest, for I was tired of all that driving and thus spent much of the day in the comfort of the library. In addition, by now it was biting cold, something we had

not really counted on. While I chose to rest, shield myself from the cold and enjoy the library facilities, Fran did some exploring on her own.

Early November 17, we took the very short drive to the actual downtown. Again, we parked right in front of another famous religious Dallas landmark, namely First Baptist Church (FBC)! This one is huge. A huge campus and huge plans for renovation, even though it already takes up several city blocks and looks to be in great shape. One promotional brochure was titled “Belief is Building.” A few quotes from it: “We want to create a spiritual oasis that the residents of Dallas, not just church members, can enjoy.” “The finest facility in the heart



of downtown Dallas ought to be a worship center dedicated to Almighty God.” “For the first time in many years, the First Dallas Campus will be easily recognizable as a church in the heart of the city.” As a Christian missionary, I can only laud such ambitions for the heart of this great city, though I confess to being somewhat uncomfortable in the midst of this church’s unprecedented ostentatious comfort. It is an exaggerated representative of a very opulent Christian congregation whose brothers and sisters in other parts of the world live with chains, in cells and slave camps, suffer hunger and every other kind of deprivation. I both admired the facility and was offended by it. But in spite of all that, I love that grand type of American vision; it reminds me of the grand Nigerian style, especially that of the Yoruba. None of that small CRC stuff I complain about in Volume 2 of this memoir.

### FBC in Dallas, TX\*

The security and information people from FBC Dallas showed us the sanctuary, courtyard, center stage, dining rooms—note the plural—, café and then the Prayer Room on the seventh floor with a great view of the city. There were beautiful paintings of N.T. scenes in a hallway near the café and very unusual paintings of N.T. characters in the Prayer Room itself.

Walked to Thanksgiving Square in downtown Dallas, where we saw two meaningful memorial stones. The first one is from the Seneca Nations of Indians: “Give it your thought that with one mind we may now give thanks to Him, our Creator.” The second one from Abraham Lincoln in 1863 reads: “We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God.” Fran asked, “Has anything changed?” Indeed, that could have been written today.

We left Dallas around noon and headed north in the direction of Oklahoma. We stayed on secondary roads parallel to I-35 through ranches, farms, oilrigs and refineries. At Oklahoma’s Welcome Center we met a Dutchman. Fran was impressed that I could tell where he was from in The Netherlands from the way he spoke English. He was from Hoogkerk, the hometown of

my Michigan cousin Jan Boer, only some 15 kms east of Lutjegast. We spent the night on the Walmart parking lot in Paul's Valley, Oklahoma.

The next morning, we drove on to Oklahoma City (population +/- 532,000), the capital in the centre of the state. One thing that struck us was a mural depicting the political configuration early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century of what is now the USA. Many states, including Michigan, were then mere territories. West of the lands included in the Louisiana Purchase was a huge chunk of the present south-western states and California that was then Spanish territory, while the North-West was depicted as the black unknown.

Another thing that struck us was the Land Run Monument, where we read these two signs:

Obtaining 160 acres in the unassigned lands quickly became a national passion fueled by the desire of countless Americans to have their own piece of land.

On April 22, 1889 one of the significant events of American history swept across this location and some 2,000,000 surrounding acres. On that day more than 50,000 men and women rushed to stake their claims in the Land Run of 1889. That one day changed the face of the land and the course of its future and led to the creation of the nation's 46<sup>th</sup> state – Oklahoma.

Apparently by the end of the day, the population of Oklahoma City had increased by 10,000! The day and the event were celebrated on the Bricktown Canal and depicted by means of many historical markers, murals and the amazing Oklahoma Land Run Monument, a collection of larger-than-life but very life-like bronze statues of horses and their riders pulling their wagons.

The monument is described in a brochure as follows, "The frenzied energy and emotion from one instant during the 1889 run is captured in bronze. Through Paul Moore's masterful hand, a still and silent sculpture comes to life. The art is one of the world's largest bronze sculptures taking at least eight years to complete."



### **Oklahoma Land Run Monument\***

Nowhere is there any sign of awareness that those lands were probably occupied by Indian natives, let alone signs of remorse or awareness of wrong doing. It is like a conspiracy of silence as if no one ever heard of Indians. It is all hoopla and victory.

However, elsewhere we located a historical marker that actually acknowledged the presence of Indians in the territory and their claim on land:

#### **BRAND NEW STATE!**

**In the summer of 1889, buildings were replacing tents, disputed claims were being resolved, and residents of the unassigned lands were meeting to organize a territorial government and to petition Congress on the issue. Congress responded on May 2, 1890, by establishing a new territory known as “Oklahoma” which in the Choctaw language means “land of the Red Man.”**

**The Oklahoma Organic Act created the territory. It also attached no-man’s land, today’s panhandle, and declared that as lands in Western Indian Territory were opened to homesteading, they, too, would become part of Oklahoma Territory. Lands were opened through runs, lotteries and allotments. In 1896 Old Greer County also became a part of the new territory. As a result “twin territories” came to exist, Oklahoma Territory to the west and Indian Territory to the east.**

**In 1898 the Curtis Act phased out tribal governments in Indian Territory, granted U.S. citizenship to their members, and established private land ownership. A constitutional convention that brought the two territories together to create one state government was authorized by the Oklahoma Enabling Act of 1906. Delegates eventually resolved social, legal and political issues to submit a constitution to a vote of the people. It passed by a wide margin on September 17, 1907.**

**And then some more interesting information on another marker:**

#### **OKLAHOMA CITY OIL FIELD**

**Oklahoma City oil and gas field discovery well brought in December 4, 1928, approximately six miles southeast of this marker. From such beginning, the sprawling Oklahoma City oil and gas field became one of world’s major oil producing areas, ranking eighth in the nation during her first forty years of existence. In this time the field yielded 233,343,000 barrels of oil.**

**Discovery and development in the Oklahoma City oil field added great stability to economy of both Oklahoma City and state of Oklahoma, providing financial incentive for cultural and industrial progress.**

And so, with oil revving it up, Oklahoma became a state with a viable economy. It thus was only fitting that the State Capitol features an oil well and rig prominently located on its grounds. The claim is made that this is the only capitol with that distinction. Whether that means within the US or in the world, I do not know. Besides, the question is irrelevant, since for most Americans their country *is* the world.

We spent considerable time wandering along the mile-long Bricktown Canal and the Entertainment District with its huge historical murals. There is also the impressive underground with its banks, post office, barber shop and lots of restaurants. Above ground again, there are hotels and the Convention Center.

Then spent some time at the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum which commemorates the Federal Building bombing of April 19, 1995, by Timothy McVeigh, an event Muslims always refer to when they are accused of terrorism. It is a piece of modern history very tastefully and respectfully done. A brochure describes it as “The 30,000 square foot Memorial Museum (that) allows visitors to experience that day and those that followed, through the voices, images and artifacts of survivors, family members and rescue workers.” See < [www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org](http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org) >.

Apart from the inside museum with its memorabilia and artifacts, there stands the lone surviving tree held together with steel cords. There is the large pool there that beautifully reflects the trees planted around it. There are also the stylized cement chairs, one for every victim, along with the Children’s Wall depicting their expressions of horror and mourning. Finally, there is the white-robed sculpture of a mourning Lord Jesus with His right hand covering His face. A visit to this place is a must for all visitors to Oklahoma City. It effectively helps you to appropriately enter into mourning for the death and destruction that took place on that day.

When we were finished with Oklahoma City, we drove westward along I-40 on to Elk City (population +/- 12,000), OK. Went to a recommended restaurant for an “all-you-can eat” catfish dinner. During our first house in Alberni (1952-1953), we used to fish in the Kitsaksis Creek right in front of the house in the very centre of the city, and would sometimes catch catfish, but always threw it back in as “inedible.” I did not know why, but simply believed the locals that it was inedible. In later years, I became acquainted with “southern” cuisine that often includes delicious catfish! So, we looked forward to a treat. Unfortunately, though it was “all-you-*can*-eat,” it was hardly “all-you-*want*-to-eat.” We ate most of our first plate, but stopped there; it simply did not live up to our salivatin’ expectation. We thank the local Walmart for their hospitality that night.

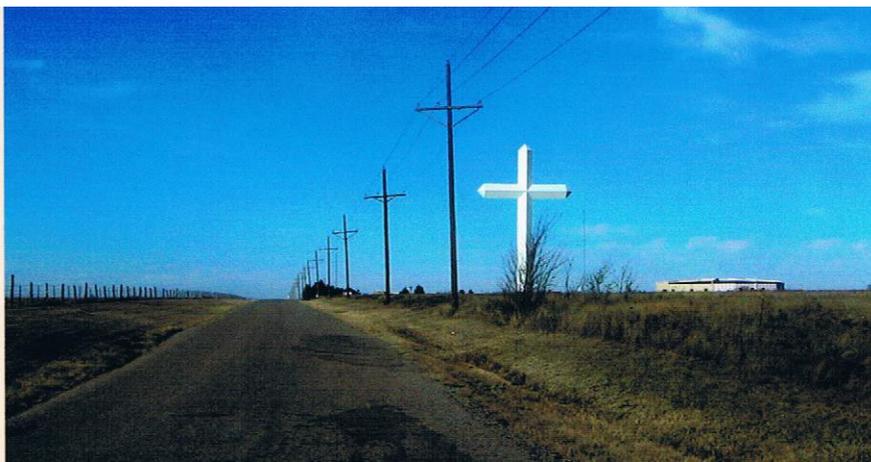
On November 19, we re-entered Texas, this time in its northern panhandle and stopped at a Safety Rest Stop at McLean (population +/- 1,000). This was originally built as a tornado shelter for the residents of this very windy area. We read lots of interpretive panels about Indians, buffalos, wind energy, canyons and the dust storms of the 1930s, going back all the way to 10,000 years ago, when a mammoth ancestor of the elephant roamed its plains, “standing fourteen feet tall and brandishing sharp tusks up to sixteen feet long.” Climatic changes caused the disappearance of these giants. From here on, the story tells of various

Indian tribes and their interactions, with the Comanche eventually becoming “Lords of the Plains, renowned for their extraordinary horsemanship, their daring and the ferocity with which they defended their lands.” A decade of fierce battles between the Indians and the American Army ensued, during which a young Chief Quanah Parker emerged as leader of the Indians. After he was decisively defeated by the superior weapons of his enemies, Parker became a peace maker and mediator between the two parties. He often traveled to Washington DC, where he befriended President Teddy Roosevelt. Subsequently, the President accepted Parker’s invitation to a Panhandle bear hunt. The Chief also became friend to the rancher community and became wealthy enough to build himself a large white mansion with seven stars on its roof, one for each of his seven wives. He died in 1911. His headstone reads: “Resting here until day breaks and shadows fall and darkness disappears is Quanah Parker, the last Chief of the Comanches.”

If nothing else, Texas is known for its lust for the gigantic, no matter what, including its own size and its cowboy gallon hats. The “...est” words are among their favourites! Another example was the XIT Ranch. Legend has it that the XIT initials stand for “Largest in Texas.” The ranch covered all or portions of ten counties in the state, had 1500 miles of fencing and 110,721 cattle. At its peak, some 150 cowboys worked the ranch; they rode more than a 1,000 horses and branded 35,000 calves a year. It had 325 windmills. Prior to the arrival of hide hunters in the 1870s, “millions of buffalo roamed the panhandle,” but, Texas doing things in a big way, within about a decade had reduced them to near extinction. Now *that* was a huge accomplishment, hugely negative, that is, a “negativest.”

For unknown millennia, the Texas Panhandle was “a vast sea of grass” with buffalo and other animals roaming about freely. Both ranchers and farmers were in need of protecting their holdings and their crops. So, one Joseph Gidden from Illinois invented and patented barbed wire, a fence “as light as air, strong as whiskey, and cheap as dirt.” Though a simple invention, it ended the days of the open range “and the west would never be the same again.” While ranches increased in the Panhandle, they could not *all* be along streams, creeks and rivers. As they moved inland, the need for water sources arose. The early wells with water raised manually bucket by bucket soon were found insufficient for hundreds if not thousands of cattle. The solution came from the settled east, where windmills were discovered and used to pump water in the Panhandle. The windmill soon became a common landmark. In one place, not far from Amarillo, there is a nine-square mile site that has 80 huge wind turbines producing enough power for 26,600 homes. They are arranged and designed in such a way that allows crops to grow between them and does not disturb grazing animals, with the rotor turning only 21 times a minute.

In the very small village of Groom, we saw something that could only be in Texas: the largest



—note the “...est” word—cross in the western hemisphere, called “The Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ.”\* As it is 190 feet tall, it can be seen for almost 35 km. Its arms are

110 feet wide; the entire structure, including the foundation, weighs two and half million pounds.

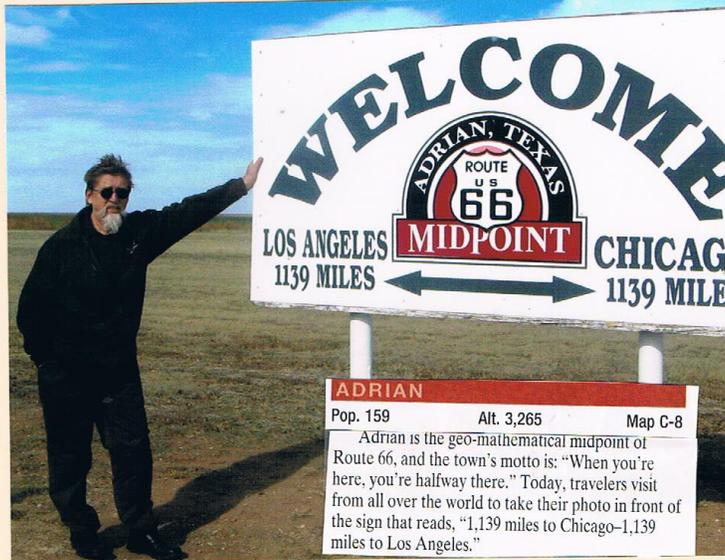
Scattered around that cross are bronze life-sized depictions of various scenes of the *Via Dolorosa*, the Stations of the Cross. On top of a rise, approachable by a long flight of stairs, stand the three crosses with Jesus and the thieves. A work still in progress was a communion table with Jesus and just five disciples. Though it is a scene inviting you to linger and meditate, we didn't stay outside long because it was very windy and cold. We did spend a little while looking around in the Gift Shop, very expensive and very Catholic. However, the main structure is that huge empty cross, not a crucifix, in that it does not feature Jesus on it. That makes it more of a Protestant depiction than Catholic. The entire exhibit is one gigantic presentation of Good Friday and Easter.

Then another “only in Texas” phenomenon: a truck stop close to Amarillo, named “Jesus Christ is Lord Rest Stop.” A high, huge billboard—well, it's Texas, right?—lit up at night, visible from afar, literally shouts it out:

**JESUS CHRIST IS LORD,  
Not a Swear Word  
TRAVEL CENTER**

A semi is parked on the property with the same announcement along with the three crosses painted on both the cab and the separate “bedroom” behind it. The gift shop is well stocked with fairly expensive T-shirts and sweatshirts, almost all of them featuring the same slogan: “Jesus Christ is Lord, not a swear word.”

I definitely felt that Texas is the very opposite of BC when it comes to Christianity. They shout it out in larger-than-life configurations for all the world to see, making escape impossible; in BC, the churches have accepted the verdict that it is politically incorrect to publicly “impose” the religion on the people and so we have a whispering rather than a shouting church, a wimpy religion rather than a robust one. That Texas stuff is that awful “fundamentalism.” Well, yea, there is that and it's not always pretty, but when I am asked to choose between shout and whimper, I know where my vote would go. Why should secularists have the right to shout, while Christians are restricted to a whimper? The worst of it all is that Canadian Christians have by and large accepted that status. Go for it, Texas! It was too early in the day to overnight there, but it would have been meaningful to have spent the night in the shadow of that huge cross. I kind of regret we didn't, but we did have a birth schedule to meet....



As we were traveling along, we kept seeing signboards with references to “Route 66,” which was made (in)famous by Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*. It was the main original road from Chicago to Los Angeles, all along featuring museums in small towns and larger cities. It has also been dubbed “Main Street of America.” The village of Adrian (population 159), TX, along I-40 and not far from the border with New Mexico, sports a Welcome sign.

**John at Midpoint\***

As you can read on the sign above, “Today, travelers visit from all over the world to take their photo in front of the sign.” Of course, Fran dutifully took my picture leaning on the welcome sign. After all, I had driven many more than 1,139 miles or 1900 kms to reach this place.

For many kilometers, I-40 runs parallel within only a few metres from the physical, still paved, Route 66. It kind of looks like a local service road, except that it no longer offers services. I am not sure whether people still drive on the road. And with this, we have reached the end of Texas, the second time, the only state with that distinction on our journey. Or did we hit Indiana twice as well—into and out of Michigan?

At the New Mexico Welcome Center we met a motorcyclist touring from Montreal to Vancouver via the U.S. Southwest. As usual, my eyes turned green with envy; it’s the kind of trip I would love to do sometime, but it’ll never be more than a dream. This state or parts of it, like neighbouring Texas, has also been part of a succession of regimes. A list of “Five flags Flown over Old Town” of Albuquerque includes Spain (1598-1821), Mexico (1821-1846), Confederate State (1862), USA (1846-present), New Mexico (1912-present). It is worth noting that there is no reference to any Indian period here, in spite of the fact that Indians have a sizable presence in the state.

Stopped in Tucumcari (population 5500) on old Route 66. Looks like a poor town with lots of old houses and boarded up businesses. There is also a lovely train station but no trains. Lots of desert country, no trees, cows or horses. Quite warm in the daytime but *cold* at night! Well, that’s desert country for you everywhere. We were grateful for our RV furnace as we spent the night at a Travel Center near Clines Corners.

On November 20, we drove into Albuquerque (population +/- 902,000), at the convergence of I-40 and I-25, the largest city in New Mexico, but not its capital. It was founded in 1705 and named after a Spanish Viceroy with an impossible long name, who was Duke of Albuquerque, a village in Spain. At that time it was a Spanish colonial outpost, which explains the city’s historical Spanish cultural heritage, as per the author of a Wikipedia article. Fair enough,

Spanish indeed. However, to us who are more accustomed to the Muslim architecture of northern Nigeria than to the Spanish, it seems like a Muslim heritage. That, of course, is no surprise, since the Iberian peninsula—Spain and Portugal—was in Muslim hands for about seven centuries, so that Iberian architectural style was predominantly Muslim. Though I have made earlier comments of this nature in the report on our first California journey, Albuquerque's style is Spanish/Muslim with a vengeance. This style in Spain and Portugal is often referred to as "Moorish," from the North African Moors who had put their stamp on it. One way in which the style in Albuquerque differs from that of northern Nigeria is the dominance of colour variation. The Nigerian city of Kano, for example, is a dull brown throughout, the colour of the desert. Somehow, over the centuries, this dull brown morphed into Albuquerque's explosion of colour, caused especially by the omnipresence of flowers. If you were to page through our album, you would clearly see the difference.

New Mexico's dry climate brought many tuberculosis patients to the city in search of a cure during the early 20th century, and several sanatoria sprang up on the West Mesa to serve them. Presbyterian Hospital and St. Joseph Hospital, two of the largest hospitals in the Southwest, had their beginnings during this period. Some of the city's most influential citizens came because of this factor.

At the center of the Old Town stands an old church that was started in 1706, one year after the founding of the city itself. It is the oldest building in town and named San Filipe de Neri Church, after King Philip of Spain. King Philip a saint?! Oh, well, perhaps according to the Apostle Paul's definition? We read a little bit of Civil War history, but it certainly seems not of major importance here.

All the little restaurants, gift shops and art galleries give the place a very touristy kind of atmosphere. We enjoyed a lunch of stew and fry bread at the very pretty Julia's Café, while listening to a South American musician playing a lovely Romanian flute-type music in the village square. Bought a CD from him and had an interesting discussion with him. The downtown also featured very up to date bronze sculptures of "Sidewalk Socials," a boy on a skateboard and a woman in a business suit on her way to work. We spent a bit of time at the library to check on our email, but had to get an actual library membership card, since they had no guest passes. In spite of all of these attractions, there were few people on the street until later in the evening, when the shops and restaurants all filled up, but the streets were still barren. We had a really fresh taco from a sidewalk vendor who had just opened up. He said he planned to stay open till 3 A.M. We parked for the night on a downtown street, across from the library.

The next day we continued our westward journey along I-40 towards Gallup, NM, to spend the weekend with our old Nigeria friends, Rob and Esther Koops, who now live there in their "retirement." To get there, we crossed the Continental Divide near the town of Thoreau at an elevation of 7,275 feet. It is acknowledged with the usual hoopla this Divide creates everywhere. However, it is a different kind of divide here, for it is not rivers here that flow into different directions so much as rain. After all, this is a desert place. Even the divided rain must be minimal.

Drove on to Gallup (population +/- 20,000), NM, still on I-40, and met Rob & Esther at their home. We had a wonderful weekend of fellowship and reminiscing about Nigeria and even pre-Nigeria days. After all, we met Rob at Michigan State University back in 1965, when we found ourselves sent by the same mission board in the same Hausa class to prepare for ministry in the same country. Yet, we had never been told about each other! If you have read the Nigeria part of these memoirs, you will understand that we shared many memories, including the friendships between our kids, friendships that are still intact, particularly with daughter Ruthie. We have met her in London, UK, and had tea with her and her family on the Calvin parking lot in Grand Rapids. Wiebe has visited her more than once in South Africa, where she and her husband serve with SIM.

The Koops live in this area, because Rob lived here as an MK (missionary kid) when his parents served here as teachers in a CRC mission school for the Indians. He never lost his love for the area and decided to return there for their “retirement.” There is a good reason for those quotation marks, for both of them—the Koops, that is—continue their linguistic services in African Bible translation projects. They travel back and forth, while Rob also teaches linguistics at a local university.

But first things first. Shortly upon our arrival Esther told us about the cold weather forecasts: highs of 60 F (15 C) and lows of 15 F (- 10 C) were in the forecast for the next several days. It gets cold in NM at this time of the year. After all, winter in the desert! The RV was not winterized and I did not know how to do it. It was Saturday afternoon and not a single RV place was open. We scrambled around till we got permission to park it in the heated garage at the local Rehoboth Christian School for the weekend, while we moved into the Koops house. This was our first time since October 15 of not sleeping in the RV—a month and a week. We had been bothered by cold weather for some time already, but this was over the top—or is it “under the bottom”?—for which we were not prepared at all.

We had an indirect connection with the person in charge of this garage and who gave us permission: He was a friend and former neighbour of my brother Jim, who had spent several seasons at this school as a volunteer accountant. You see, for almost a century, Gallup and this school were all part of a CRC mission effort among the Indians in this area. When CRC Home Missions advertised for a volunteer accountant, Jim and Wilma came forward.

We continued to look for someone who could help or teach us how to winterize the vehicle. A friendly neighbour was able to help us, so that we could safely park the RV outside overnight after the weekend, when the proprietors needed the space. However, we bought double the amount of fluid we were advised to get. The helping angel got his reward in the form of winterizing fluid for his own RV.

We did a lot of sightseeing with Rob & Esther, for this desert area was very beautiful, what with its interesting rock formations and its colours. Among other places, they took us to picturesque Window Rock with its huge natural gaping hole that in effect is a window that allows you to look through it and see the mountain behind it. There is also a very unusual memorial to the Navaho Code Talkers. It was such a good experience to see such gallantry memorialized on the part of this often-despised people. The signboard said:

During WW II, the Japanese were able to break almost any American military code. Then over 400 Navajos, with 29 being the original Navajo Code Talkers, stepped forward and developed the most significant and successful military code of the time using their native language. “Were it not for the Navajos, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima,” according to Major Howard Connor. Far from their homes, these brave young men served our nation with honor. Sadly, the tale of their exploits remained a closely-guarded secret for decades in the event that the Navajo Code Talkers’ unique talents would be needed again. Many Code Talkers have passed on never knowing of the honors a grateful nation bestowed upon their remaining brothers. It was not until 1968 when the Navajo Code was declassified.

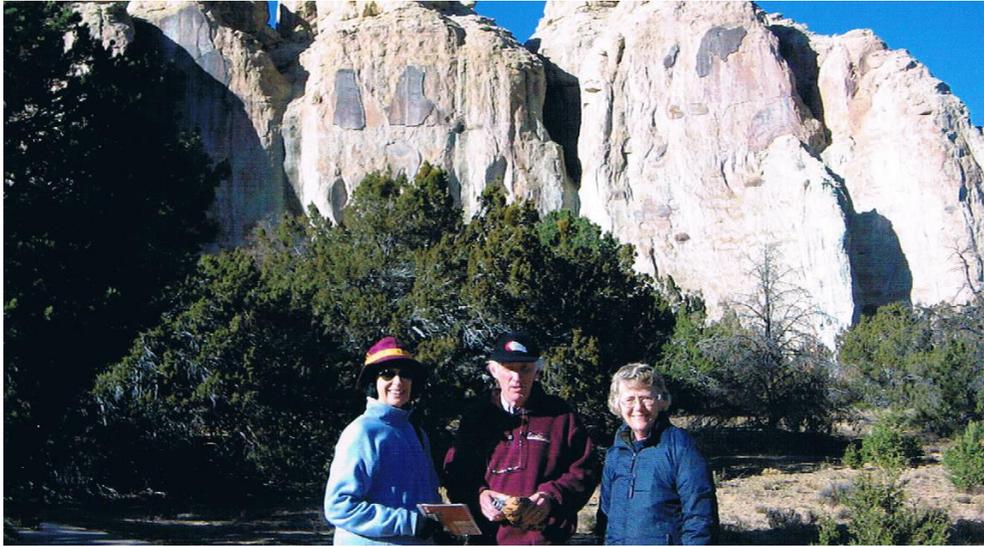
From there Rob drove us through some rough unpaved mountain roads without quite knowing where we were or how to get back. This took us into the dark of the evening. On the way we stopped at a Navajo Nation grocery store which looked much the same as any other grocery store, except that most of the shoppers were Navajos. That is a significant observation in contrast to earlier reports about some Aboriginal stores in BC selling almost exclusively junk food. According to Rob, the total population of the Navajo Nation is about 400,000.

I have already told you of the special mission relation the CRC has had with the Navajo people for over a century. On Sunday morning Rob took us for an early ride around the campus of Rehoboth Christian School. He also took us to the Mission Cemetery where early generation Christians and some missionaries are buried, including Rolf Veenstra, a long-time popular columnist in the denomination’s *The Banner*.

Then we all went to Church Rock CRC for both Sunday School and the church service. Based on what we saw that day, it was a small, friendly and enthusiastic church, mostly Navajos, including the pastor. The CRC denominational membership statistic is 68 members, quite small. We met a Calvin student who is part of a group spending a year at Rehoboth Christian, first a semester as a teacher’s aide and then a semester as student teacher. After the service, I caught the pastor wiping the table after refreshments had been served and praised him, “I’ve never seen a servant pastor like you.” He was as pleased as the punch he was wiping off the table. The website for this church is < [www.zunichristianmission.org](http://www.zunichristianmission.org) >. You should know that most CRC congregations have a website. You can usually find them by using their specific congregational name or by searching for the name of the denomination (CRC) plus the name of the town or city, always ending with “org”.

In the evening we attended a Thanksgiving Day Ecumenical Service at the Episcopal Church. There we met the Van Andels, whose daughter Kelly was in Fran’s 7<sup>th</sup> grade English class at Hillcrest, when they spent the 1988-1989 school year in Jos.

On Monday morning, Rob & Esther took us to El Morro National Monument close to Zuni, New Mexico. Also known as “Inscription Rock.” The natural monument, a mountain really, “preserves over 2,000 inscriptions and petroglyphs around its base.” Depending on the angle of the sun, the colour of these mountains can change from bright gold to very white. The area had a very mysterious aura about it, as you can see from our album.



**Fran with Rob and Esther at El Morro National Monument\***

**The Monument Park also contained a place called “Oasis.” A signboard at the Oasis read,**

**Long ago the 150 miles from Albuquerque to Zuni took 9 or 10 days. Imagine the relief travelers must have felt when they reached this shady little oasis after walking or riding a horse for days across mountains, desert, and lava rocks. The water here was not just refreshing – it was a lifesaver.**

**We took a short hike in the monument area and saw lots of writing (hieroglyphics) on the stone walls. We also enjoyed reading the historical panels in the Visitors’ Center; lots of stuff about revolt and resistance on the part of the Indians. One brochure reads:**

### **SHADOWS OF THE PAST**

**Today El Morro dominates a remote and beautiful land. Modern travelers pass it by, indifferent to the pool of water that once caused people to come this way. The desert oasis has lost its power.**

**Yet the past lives on. Pueblo farmers and Navajo ranchers, Spanish and Mormon settlers – different cultures, different eras, still echo in the ways of their descendants.**

**At El Morro they paused to record their passage. With joke or boast, or merely initials and a date, they speak to us of bygone times. Even the stone is not eternal, but wears away and some day El Morro itself will be a memory. For a few centuries more the inscriptions will remain, recalling the ghosts of long ago.**

An entire photo album page is devoted to the ups and downs of the history of the area, starting around 1550, mainly a struggle first between Indians and Spanish; later, between Indians and Americans, with the latter eventually gaining the victory. During the 1600s, church and state vied for dominance in the area. This wrangling weakened Spanish control and encouraged the Indians to unite and drive out the Spanish. They were independent for twelve years, but then the Spanish returned with greater force and eventually hoisted their flag over NM—until the Americans won out with their treaty signed in 1868 and peace returned to the area. So, at least, it is interpreted in the Visitors' Center. Or was it merely “peace?”

Another destination of this side trip with Rob was Zuni (population +/- 6500), another century-old center of CRC mission effort, some kms south of Gallup on Route 53. There is a Zuni CRC with an attendance of around 150. We are told that out of a population of about 10,000 people, only two percent are Christian, that is 200, 75% of which are CRC apparently. The CRC denominational statistic for 2013 is 285 members. That is not a great number, considering an entire century of witness. There is also a Christian School with 72 students this year. The principal there was a childhood friend of Rob during their days at Rehoboth Christian. We enjoyed a cup of tea at her house.

The Zunis are the largest of the Indian tribes—“Pueblos” as they are called—in NM. Their self-description reads,

We are considered the most traditional of all the Pueblos, with a unique language, culture, and history that has resulted in part from our geographic isolation. A sign reads:

Our year is marked by a cycle of traditional ceremonial activities, which make Zuni unique. The most sacred and perhaps the most recognized is the annual *Sha'la'k'o* observance. Please be aware that there are restrictions in place for non-Zunis wishing to witness our religious activities. We ask that visitors respect our cultural privacy by following appropriate etiquette.

So, they have very strict rules and allow little picture taking. They keep to themselves and to their own culture and religion. They live together, fairly crowded, in their towns, not all scattered the way the Navajos do. They look very Mexican. This conservative portrait probably accounts for the meager harvest after a century of mission. Contrasted to CRC missions in Nigeria with its hundreds of thousands converts, that of Zuni is a mere pittance.

On November 24 we left Gallup around 9:00 A.M. and soon found ourselves crossing the state border into Arizona. We may have left one state and entered another, but we were still in Navajo country, a typical colonial situation where the White conqueror ignored tribal lines in determining state or national borders. Did a short detour through Painted Rock National Park with its amazing rock formations and fiery colours covering the place as far as the horizon. In the distance we could see Humphreys Peak Mountain which is 12,633 feet high. So, we had the desert behind us and the mountains before us. What a world! But we had seen nothing yet, what with one of the seven natural wonders of the world just ahead of us.

We drove through Flagstaff, Arizona, where there is a small CRC with 29 members, also Indians I surmise. We did not stop there but continued on to the grand prize before us: Grand Canyon National Park. Seniors are spoiled in that they are offered a \$10 one-time fee for a life time of free entrance to all U.S. national parks. This “deal” holds for seniors and everyone else accompanying them. They are also charged a mere \$8 for a camping spot. We found a spot and built a campfire for the evening against the biting cold, but even a campfire could not keep us warm. So we went inside the RV early. Camping in the Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona—what a privilege!

Took the park shuttle bus—again, free!--through the park. Got off the bus at different stops to admire the views and check out the information at the Visitors’ Center. Did a bit of rim walk where you could see for miles across and deep into the canyon. What a spectacular place and what amazing statistics:

It covers an area of over 1900 square miles and contains 277 miles of the Colorado River. The Grand Canyon is probably the world’s most spectacular example of the power of erosion—a chasm 277 miles long (measured by river course) and up to 18 miles wide. The canyon bottom below Yavapai Point is 2,400 feet above sea level, 4,500 feet below the South Rim and 5,400 feet below the North Rim—making an average depth of about one mile.

We stopped for a hot chocolate at Hermit’s Point to warm up from the biting cold and the sharp gusts of wind that seemed to blow right through all the sweaters and coats we could find in the RV. We have a picture where I am sitting in a small nook with a hot chocolate on the table before me and a copper plate with a Psalm from the Bible next to me on the wall, another reminder we were in the free and relaxed US, not in Canada with its restrictive secular tunnel vision. A 63 year old fellow tourist told me I really did look like a hermit!

The 7,000 feet altitude with the dryness and cold bothered me more than I had anticipated, so we didn’t stay in the park as long as we should have. I started getting annoyed with the persistent cold and desert-style dry weather day after day, not to speak of the nights. That’s the last thing we had expected in the South. It was a case of not having done our homework before we left home. I just wanted to get out of there to where it was warmer. I haven’t studied climate patterns in the area, but I suspect that in the summers the place is as nasty and hot as in the late fall it is nasty and cold. Not my kind of climate. We continued west on I-40 to Kingman, where we availed ourselves once again of Walmart hospitality.

In the early morning of November 26, we left behind us one of the most astounding works of creation—“nature” as some prefer to call it—to an equally astounding work of culture, engineering to be exact. In the one case, we have God working through His “natural” laws; in the other, we see the results of people imaging God in cultural creativity. We turned north-west on Route 93 in the direction of Hoover Dam and the Nevada border. As we drove north, things warmed up fast, so that by the time we reached the Dam, we unpacked ourselves from the sweaters and coats and could walk outside without jackets! Boy, did we ever appreciate the warmer weather! After so many days and nights of that cold stuff, we had had enough of it.

Hoover Dam was an amazing engineering feat for the 1930s. At this particular time, they were quite low on water but not the lowest ever recorded. There was lots of new construction and plans in progress as well. Because it was Thanksgiving Day, the regular Visitors' Center was closed, but there was still plenty to see, admire and enjoy. You will need a more artistic writer than myself to be able to describe more adequately this marvelous combination of human engineering in an even more awesome divine creation. Even our pictures, impressive as they are, cannot do justice to the place. The proportions and dimensions are just too awesome.

When we were satiated with the Dam, we crossed the state border into Nevada, drove through Boulder City, a beautiful resort-like town, very Spanish in appearance and continued on to Las Vegas (population +/- 600,000). We made our first stop in the Fremont District of the city, a large covered but not enclosed area; lots of activity going on, lots of people everywhere, etc. Enjoyed all the huge neon lights and watched a street artist doing his demonstration. Relaxed on the outside patio at Hennessey's for wings and beer, while watching all the goings-on. Loving downtown crowds as we do, it was just such a fun introduction to an unusual over-the-top, almost mythical kind of city or, as some would insist, "sin city." You think it's more sinful than other cities?

Then we drove on to the city centre, to what is called "The Strip." First we did a drive for several miles through the strip. Then we were told of an amazingly good parking spot by a fellow RVer from BC who always stops in Las Vegas on his way down south for winter: a great free overnight parking lot behind Bally's Casino/Hotel, right in the centre of town. The only thing that separated us from the main drag, "the Strip," was the row of hotels. So, along with many others, we parked there free of charge throughout our stay in the city. Quite amazing really for a city that is so charged with making money.

From our "permanent abode" we started *walking* the Strip. The glitter of it all simply overwhelmed us. Architectural imagination stretched to its limit! But was this beauty or just obscene ostentation beckoning us to some of the worst of human inclinations? We wandered through some casinos and hotel lobbies and began to muse about the proverb, "All that glitters is not gold." It was nothing but glitter and all based on gold, though you probably should not ask whose gold!

We were amazed at the number of people who were *not* at home enjoying their Thanksgiving turkey dinner! At one casino buffet there were at least 500 in line awaiting their chance to attack their turkey. The wedding chapels, of which there were plenty, most of them hidden in the cavernous recesses of these hotels, were closed because of the holiday. Names of some of the hotel/casinos: Bellagio, Bally's, Caesar's Palace, Planet Hollywood, New York, Monte Carlo, Paris Eiffel Tower.



**Coca Cola Bottle in Las Vegas\***

The next day we took another early morning walk down the Strip again and walked in or by many of the same casinos as last night. By going slower, more details caught our eyes. We read signs that said “Paradise just got better.” “Las Vegas – the most exciting city in the world.” There was this huge Coca Cola bottle, higher than the mature palm trees next to it. A huge replica of the Statue of Liberty stared down on the hubbub below. A large castle straight from fairyland with tens of colourful turrets had found its way among the city’s highest structures. Shades of Paris were provided by the Arc de Triumph in the Paris section. And in the dark of night? Nothing but one sea of every colour ever seen by the eyes of man, a kaleidoscope that no one single person could have consciously designed; just the result of thousands of humans doing their own thing with little or no regard for the neighbour. There are really no words to describe Las Vegas, but here are a few attempts: amazing, creative, dazzling, hopeful, intense, ostentatious, show-off, messy, frivolity maximized. One bus sported “breathtaking” in huge letter from front to back. Maybe “over the top” says it best after all!

Continued our trip by following Routes 160 and 190, we crossed the state border into California and drove straight on to Death Valley National Park. Once there, we toured around to see the amazing sights of this park. The average precipitation per year in the park is 4.9 centimetres (1.94”). The average November daytime temperature is 24°C (76°F); that’s not so hard to take, but the record during that month is 36°C (97°F). The hottest month is July with an average of 45°C (115°F) and a record of 57°C (134°F). That’s a different story. Notice what time of year it’s best to avoid this park!

We read a story about visitors underestimating the dangers of being in one of the hottest places in the world and how heat stroke can be a quick killer. Someone named Gerhard Jonas wanted to hike the few miles from Furnace Creek to Zabriskie Point, even though it was already 38°C (100°F) in the shade. His wife was going to drive and meet him there. He thought it would take only 30 minutes for the hike and so he carried less than a liter of water with him. After three hours of waiting, his wife became worried and asked the rangers for help. By that time the temperature had risen to 45°C (112°F). A quick over flight in the park

airplane spotted a figure fitting his description. Although rangers reached him one and a half hour after he was reported missing and less than five hours after he started his hike, they found him dead. The culprit? Heat stroke.

We went to the Visitors' Center at Furnace Creek and watched a slide show about the desert and the park. That night we camped in the Park at Sunset Campground for \$6 and attended the evening ranger program at the Visitors' Center. It was a light-hearted lecture and slide show about the history of human interaction with Death Valley National Park.

Next day we experienced "rainfall" and then saw a beautiful rainbow in the desert. Fran commented, "I think I counted 142 drops in all!" Though it did not feel that foreign to us, such a rainfall is an unusual event for this area and thus, without realizing it, we were privileged to witness it.



Badwater is one of the few places in the park that has water, but it is too salty to drink. The story has it that an early surveyor mapping the area could not get his mule to drink the water from this pool. So he recorded on his map that the spring had "bad water," a name that stuck and is now official. We took a walk on the salt sludge at Badwater, which from a distance looks like ice and took pictures of some of the eeriest and unearthly but also most naturally colourful scenes in the world.

This area is at the lowest elevation in the U.S. at 85.5 metres (282 feet) below sea level. It is by no means the lowest point in the world. A map of other low spots throughout the world shows that the Dead Sea in Jordan/Israel is 414 metres (1360 feet) below sea level. It does not even refer to one of the most famous low *countries* in the world, The Netherlands! Nevertheless, record or not, 85.5 metres *is* low. We have a photo of the RV parked on the salt flats in front of a high bluff that has "sea level" marked on it so high that it makes the vehicle look puny.\*

Then we drove a short distance, again within the park, to Natural Bridge Canyon. The short half-mile hike was well worth the effort to see some truly astounding natural canyon bridges, or "natural overpasses," since they connect two mountain walls to each other, leaving a wide road running underneath them. The overpasses are high and wide enough to allow semis to drive through, except that the road itself is too rocky for them. The road or wide trail ends, according to the information marker, at a "dry waterfall," a term I cannot quite swallow, pun

unintended though intentionally left in place when recognized! I would say it just runs dead into the mountain side, where at one time there may have been water.

Next section of the park is called “Artists’ Drive,” aptly named as every corner reveals new colours and rock formations. The next area is named “Stovepipe Wells.” It is fairly mountainous with a seriously deteriorating road, but without proper signs to alert drivers of the dangerous curves, including hairpin curves, ahead. Also saw a few huge cactus “trees” all by themselves in the sagebrush, sticking out like sore thumbs. All the while we had been climbing so that at Towne Pass the elevation was 4956 feet *above* sea level with more hairpin curves. We exited the Park at a little place called Panamint Springs, where petrol was for sale at \$4.29 a gallon, by far the most expensive on the whole trip. Well, what did we expect? This is crazy California.

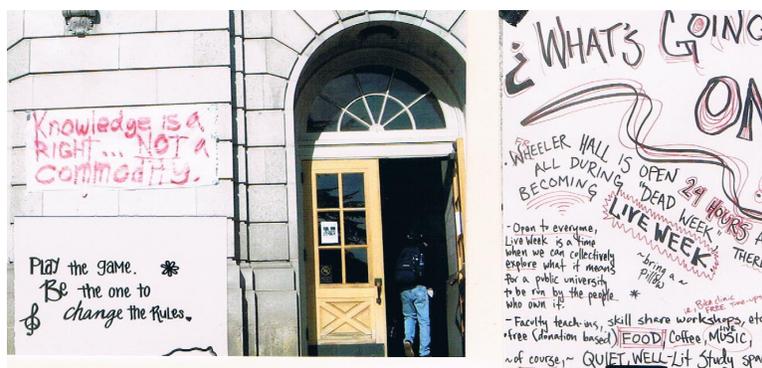
We headed north-west along Routes 190 and 136 to Lone Pine, where we stopped at a Visitor Center to check on road conditions, for we had heard reports on the radio about snow ahead. We had intended to keep going *north* and then turn *west* at Yosemite National Park on the way to Suisun City, where Kevin & Theresa lived. But we were warned about the snowy conditions and high mountain passes on that route. They advised us to turn around and go *south* around the mountains toward Highway 99 at Bakersfield. So a sudden change of plans! 200 miles extra! Thanks a lot.

We spent the night at a truck stop in Mojave. The last picture we have of this trip before we arrive at K&T’s place is of Fran sitting in the RV, feverishly trying to complete the blanket she was knitting for Anneke. We spent much of November 29 driving along Route 99 with its hundreds of orchards, vineyards and farms, to arrive at K&T’s place in Suisun City, just off I-80, north of Oakland, at 3 pm. For now, we would rest from all this travel, enjoy the company of K&T and await the arrival of Anneke. The story of both visit and birth is told in Chapter 40 in Volume 4.

From that chapter you know that we camped on the streets of Berkeley during the time Theresa, Anneke and Kevin stayed in the hospital. It was not pleasant camping, for not only did we have to move the RV every two hours during the daytime, but it was bitterly cold, unusually so according to the locals. We did take time out to explore the town as well as the (in)famous Berkeley campus of the University of California, that hotbed of dissension and of every leftist cause you can imagine. As we walked towards the entrance to the campus, we were “welcomed” by a group of Asian girls, who were similarly just entering the campus. We tried to have a bit of a conversation with the group, but we did not get much further than smiles and laughter and manual motions on the part of all of us, but we all enjoyed the hilarity of this Babel-type mutual welcoming event.

Berkeley, of course, developed a reputation of dissent and rebellion way back during the Hippie days of the 1960s. By now the student body looked quite middle class and establishmentarian, but the blood of dissension is still flowing in their veins, it seems. Though the context was not clear to us, someone posted a notice about Wheeler Hall being open 24/7 for “Live Week.” On the outside wall, next to the entrance into Wheeler Hall, we read two graffiti challenges to the establishment. Despite these symbolic challenges to the existing order, everyone marched dutifully around the campus armed with little more than the traditional

computer. Well, at least a few nods towards their tradition of rebellion. The former hippies were now the deans dressed in the established fashion of the day, running the place in quite orderly fashion.



### Protest Alive and Well at Berkeley University\*

On December 10, three days after Anneke's appearance, Fran and I went home to Suisun City ahead of the rest to turn the heat on in the house. Good plan: the temperature was down to 45°F inside, not a good temp for a new baby. We enjoyed taking care of Anneke and Theresa for the week. The story of that week is also found in Chapter 40.

A week later, we left Suisun City and drove to Chico, CA, where we spent a few hours with Herm & Bea Gray, colleagues from our Nigeria days, a delightful elderly couple. Drove in a no-nonsense style along I-5 all the way to Seattle, a surprisingly interesting sight-seeing trip. Arrived in Seattle on the 19<sup>th</sup> and spent a few days with C&A and family. We especially enjoyed celebrating Ezra's eighth birthday on December 21.

We arrived back home in Vancouver on December 22, just in time for Christmas. What a trip and what a homecoming!

### *Border Tales*

Over the decades, we have crossed the Canadian-American border from Yukon-Alaska to Quebec-Maine countless times and in different vehicles--by train, bus, car, cruise ship and plane, even as a guest of the US Immigration! Most crossings are mere formalities, inconvenient only because of the time wasted. Sometimes they are more than formalities. In this short section I want to bring together all these stories by merely mentioning stories already told in earlier chapters and volume, while being more expansive of more recent ones. Gathering these stories and comments in one place should give you a more comprehensive and correct picture than just having them scattered all over the place.

Blaine WA is the crossing we have used the most over the years, when it comes to land crossings, even before I went to Calvin College, but it seldom created any problems for me. Relations between the two countries were easy, open and marked by trust. The first time I ran

into trouble was the time the US arrested me for hitchhiking in 1958, a story I told you in some detail in Chapter 9, Volume 1. Though I almost forgot about the incident, it began to haunt me four decades later during our post-Nigeria years. I never realized that I had actually been arrested and deported. Those are heavy words for a hitchhiking incident. Since when was hitchhiking illegal? During the 1950s, it was a common way for young men to travel. No one ever explained it to me.

Only a few months later, when I crossed by Greyhound to study at Calvin College, it was not brought up, even though I crossed at the same place. The incident did come up when I applied for immigration in 1996, but it was dismissed as light and without consequences. My case officer laughed it off. It was treated seriously when I applied for a Nexus card in 2012, but that story comes up a few paragraphs further down.

First back to 1958, when I crossed by Greyhound to go to Calvin. I was fully armed with all the paper work, including the famous I-20. However, I was the reason the bus was held up to the displeasure of my fellow passengers. Officers checked over my documents and grilled me thoroughly. Perhaps I looked too much like a millworker instead of a polished student. I need to remember that incident every time our Greyhound is held up for someone else and not judge the person who is the reason as illegal or whatever. I was never held up again for that reason, possibly because I had gentrified at Calvin and had begun to look the part.

Since then, I/we have crossed so many times and in so many places that I cannot remember or detail most of them for you. Apart from occasional flights out of Vancouver, most of our crossings were either by RV or by Greyhound. There was a special place on both sides for buses to be processed. The bus would arrive and the driver would instruct everyone to stay put until further instructions. He would leave the bus and close the door. I often feel uncomfortable during that time: what if something happens on the bus and we cannot get out? After all, there are enough stories in the media of goons becoming violent on a bus. The driver has to take all the luggage from the compartment below and put it on the ground, after which we have to come out, carrying all our belongings with us, select our luggage and bring it into the Customs facility, where we have to file past officers who ask us a few questions and check our credentials. Those without proper documents are sent to a special office and the bus has to wait for them. Usually the problem is with rough-looking young people. Sometimes the wait is long and we passengers scowl at the offender(s). At such times I have to remember my first Greyhound crossing as told above. Sometimes, the driver is told to drive on and leave some passengers behind. The uncertainty of all this means that you should always take an early bus if you are planning to fly out of Seattle, for you never know how long you will be held up.

Probably the most frequent crossings back and forth on a daily basis was during our Arctic tour in 2004, when we would move back and forth between BC and Alaska, sometimes a couple of times a day.

Over the years, most of our crossings either way have gone smoothly without any incidents. You would think that crossing with an RV would cause delays, for an RV has a thousand places to hide illegal stuff, but, no, in most cases both sides ask us a couple of questions about food, alcohol, tobacco and guns, and stuff regarding residence, citizenship and destination.

**That's it; they take our word for it and wave us on. In spite of their denial, I am sure that most officers make most of their decisions on basis of profiling and a careful observing the reactions of the person being interviewed. Occasionally we are subjected to random checks when we have to park the vehicle, give them the keys and we wait in the office. Other than that, plus, of course, the long car queues at Blaine, no hassles.**

**We moved from Grand Rapids to Vancouver just a few days after 9/11 with a Penske moving van full of furniture. That would have been a time we could have been held up for a long time, but, no, things moved along efficiently. We were held up by Canadian officers, because Fran applied for "landed immigrant" status. Otherwise, we were never held up on that side. Once we were "caught" with a couple of oranges aboard our RV, but were simply instructed to drop them in a waste container in sight of the officer. No further incident on the Canadian side ever.**

**On the other hand or side, we are occasionally instructed to come into the US office, while our RV is being searched. Usually that is because of their policy of random checks. However, once we told them we had one single red pepper aboard. Now that became what they classified as an "incident." We had to park the vehicle and come into the office. Over an hour passed before we were released! That was after we had stood in the car line for over an hour already. It was part of the post-9/11 paranoia that is plaguing our neighbours.**

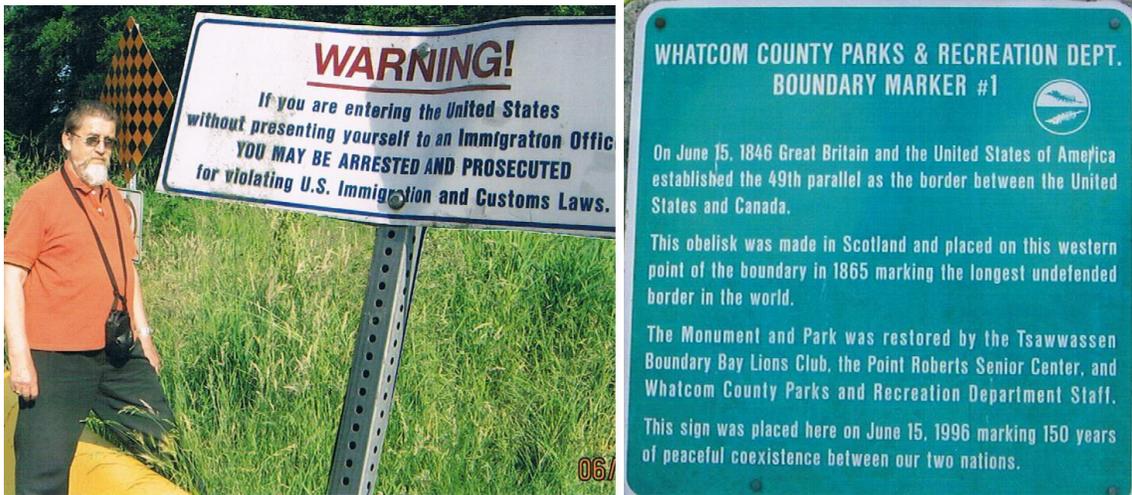
**Point Roberts is a little sliver of five square miles of American territory jutting out into the Georgia Strait, just below the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel and "hanging" on to BC's Tsawwassen. Small as it is, both Canada and the US maintain full border services there, because of the heavy traffic. Apart from the main road connecting both sides, the border is rather carelessly maintained. Some Canadian property owners have their garden behind their house, on properties that seem to straddle the border. Residents from both sides casually cross the border as they walk their dogs along the beach.**

**Some roads from both sides run dead into the border. At one place, there are cement barriers, preventing cars from crossing, but hardly pedestrians or bicycles. There stands a monument on the US side that commemorates the treaty establishing the border. It is accompanied by a historical marker in Whatcom County that reads:**

**On June 15, 1846, Great Britain and the USA established the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel as the border between the USA and Canada. This obelisk was made in Scotland and placed on this western point of the boundary in 1865, marking the longest undefended border in the world. The monument and Park was restored by the Tsawwassen Boundary Bay Lions Club, the Point Roberts Senior Center, and the Whatcom County Parks. This sign was placed here on June 15, 1996, marking 150 years of peaceful coexistence between our two nations.**

**The monument and sign are only a couple of meters south of the border. I find it interesting that people from both sides of the border restored the monument. As friendly as that sounds, it did not prevent the US from putting up a threatening sign at the end of a Tsawwassen residential street, less than a metre from the border. The Canadian side is residential with children playing on the street. These children grow up with that threat in their face on a daily**

basis. What attitude will they develop towards their neighbour? I remember a neighbour in Lutjegast who regularly threatened children who trespassed on his property. As children we thought him weird and unfriendly. 70 years later, that is still the first thing that comes to my mind when I think of him or when I see that property during a visit. Of course, the US is accustomed to being disliked and has never shown any concern along this line. She just continues to do her thing throughout the world.



**You Are Warned!**

**Border History\***

In spite of all that, Fran took a picture of me with one foot on the Canadian side of the cement barrier and the other on the American. How reckless can one get? That could have become an international incident! I took a picture of Fran strolling just south of the line, carefully ensuring that no toe would straddle it! She's always been more careful than me.

We met up with an interesting ambiguous border situation during our 2008 Quebec adventure, but that story has already been told earlier in this chapter.

Our most arduous crossing was on December 26/27, Boxing Day 2012, when we were to fly Vancouver-Atlanta to spend time with the W&J family. It should be understood that when flying into the US out of Vancouver, you go through US Customs and Immigration at the Vancouver Airport, not within the US. It is, I believe, part of the US policy of keeping terrorists and other unwanted persons at bay *before* they enter the US. I suspect it is good business for Canada to host such facilities.

While in line at the airport, we were stopped by a US official who noticed on the computer that I had a green card even though living in Canada. I suspect it had come to the surface during their Nexus search about me. She ordered us into the back room, where "problem" cases are processed for secondary inspection. We were told to sit down and wait. While others came and went, we just sat there for a full hour without explanation. Finally, an officer called us to his window to interview me. When Fran came along, he rather curtly told her to return to her seat and keep out of it. However, since I am hard of hearing and had a hard time understanding

the serious Chinese brogue of the officer, Fran with her sharp hearing, from her distance would sometimes correct my answer until the officer asked her to join me to help out. He asked me many questions about why I had not handed in my green card. He would ask the question, then record it and my answer on the computer, all of this taking a long time. Then the issue of my deportation came up as well. Again, many questions. But when he heard that I had gone to a church meeting at that time and that we were missionaries, his tone became more friendly and helpful. At the end, he released me together with a record of the entire interview, instructing me to have it on me every time we cross the border. If it comes up again, I should show them this document. I was grateful in a way, for that green card issue had been bothering me for a long time. Afterwards, when we read the transcript, we were shocked at the poor English and even now wonder whether it will pass as a legitimate Uncle Sam document. My consolation is that it has a case number on it so that it can be verified. The next three times we crossed the border till this day of writing, no one has raised the issue.

By the time the officer released me, the plane had left an hour ago. US officials had notified them we would not make it. So when we came to our gate, they allowed us to rebook same flight next day without extra charge. We could go home.

Now the question is whether I should continue my quest for a Nexus card, but as for now, I have decided to forget it and suffer the long lineups at the border. I will not appear to them as a good candidate with two of my brothers already being *personae non grata* in the US and myself having this deportation on my record. All of us have our mother's maiden name in our files, a factor that will likely immediately surface and trigger the connection between these three dubious characters. I will leave sleeping dogs lie, though officially I have been cleared. It is not worth the effort with the US being that paranoid these days. Fran and I need to have continued access to our kids and grandkids and thus cannot afford to have suspicion raised every time we cross the border. They have succeeded in turning me into a compliant tail-wagging puppy! America has done it again!

That's a pretty pitiful statement to make at the end of 42 chapters of memoirs covering an eventful life, of a person who has always chafed at the bit at restrictions to his freedom! So it is, but, fortunately, it is by no means the last or most significant thing to be said of me. It is a mere aside, but definitely an irritating and annoying aside.

### *Closing Comments*

This is the end of our written story as *we* have recorded it, freckles, hiccups and all, but we know of another and much more important book in which our names are written with indelible ink and on indestructible paper, *The Book of Life*, written by our Heavenly Father/Mother. The great thing about it is that from ancient times on it has been backed up by the original divine version of CrashPlan!

As to our life story, we may not have that many days left for travel and other adventures, but as the last stanza of the hymn *Amazing Grace* puts it,

We have no less days

To sing God's praise  
Than when we first began!

That's what counts. That's our Christian hope.

*Laus Deo* (Latin)  
*Halleluja, lit my sjonge* (Frisian)  
*Pries de Heer met bliede gal'mm* (Gronings)  
*Prijs de Heer met blijde galmen* (King's Dutch)  
*Alhamdu Lillahi* (Hausa)  
*Praise be to God*  
(Take-off from Psalm 146)

May 9, 2014