



Merry Christmas 2007



Dear

6 December 2007

Christmas greetings! The last half of this year has included several trips but none that were lengthy. We did travel a long distance however. We went as far as Denali National Park in Alaska.

DERRY'S NEWS

As we were writing our July newsletter, Derry was going to intermediate training classes. He graduated on 6 July. The classes have been helpful as he has learned some things like sit, stay, come, etc. Often, however, he only does something when he wants to. We have found we have to trick him into relinquishing socks or underwear which he likes to steal and carry around the house. We celebrated his first birthday on 18 July, and he earned the privilege of being able to wander freely around the entire house.



Derry on our bed with his Dragon.

This autumn Robert installed a door for Derry so that he could go from the dining room into the store room and from there into the dog run. It took him all of a few minutes to begin using his new door and the freedom to go outside when he needed to. We wish we had put that door in 20 years ago for Pico. We always had to open the dining room/store room door for Pico when he would tell us he needed to go out.

NAVAJO LAKE

Derry took a brief trip with us late in July when we took our motor home to Navajo Lake for 2 nights. We joined Linda's brother and his family there. We saw this Mallard couple out on the lake one day.



Mallard couple on the lake.

We could only stay a brief time because we had to come home and pack for our trip to Alaska.

NORTH TO ALASKA

We had originally been committed to attending a Kliever family reunion early in August. However, we learned that the reunion was cancelled, and we were able to join a group of friends from our church on a cruise tour of Alaska. Linda had been in Alaska for an hour or so when we made a stop there on our flight to Hawaii in 1979 for our honeymoon. Robert had lived there for a year in 1964-1965. Our ship, the Sapphire Princess, sailed out of Vancouver, British Columbia. We made an early flight to Seattle and then spent two nights with Robert's cousin, Dave Malseed, in Anacortes, Washington. Dave's wife had died tragically in April so we wanted to spend a little time with him. We took a delightful trip up the Skagit Valley to visit the fly-in at Concrete, Washington.



Moonrise at the Concrete fly-in.

On Saturday, Dave drove us to Vancouver where we said farewell and boarded our ship. Soon we met up with our friends. There were over 120 in our group. Most were from our church, Hoffmantown Baptist Church. We also had people from other states who knew our senior pastor, Wayne Barber, who was leading the group.



Linda and Wayne waiting for our ship to sail.



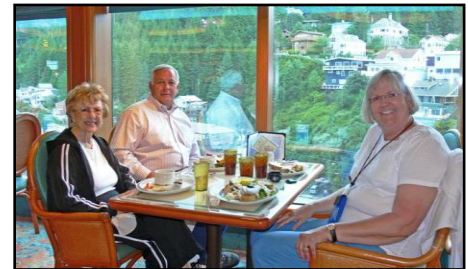
Most of our group is in this photo.

During the cruise, we all got together six times for fellowship, teaching, and worship. Brian White set up audio and video capability while Terry Adams, our music minister, led the musical portion of our meetings.



Terry Adams ready to lead the music program.

During our eleven days together, we had the opportunity to get to know some friends better. (Often around the dinner table.)



Sharing a dinner table with Dave and Tess.



Linda's fellow teachers, Lovelia and Francis.



Eating again. With Ken Shirley.

We sailed from Vancouver late on Saturday afternoon and spent the next day at sea heading

north. On Monday morning we made our first stop which was at Ketchikan. We took a tour to Totem Bight State Historical Park and also did some shopping and other sightseeing.



House at Totem Bight State Historical Park.



Eagle up close.



Creek Street in Skagway.

On Tuesday our next stop was Juneau, the capital city of Alaska. We were excited about visiting Juneau because Linda has college friends, Fred and Sherri Morino, living there. Robert also has a third cousin, Caroline Bruschi, there whom he had never previously met. In planning our trip we discovered that Fred and Caroline knew each other through their work. We all had supper together. Earlier in the day, we went on a tour to Mendenhall Glacier and then walked through town and visited the city museum and a Russian Orthodox Church. At the Glacier viewing area we were able to see salmon, bears, and a mother bear chasing the salmon.



Eagle welcomes us to Juneau.



Salmon swimming in the creek.



Mother bear before she got hungry for salmon.



Robert at Mendenhall Glacier.



Caroline, Fred, Linda, Sherri, and Robert.

Our third stop was Skagway. We took a ride on the White Pass and Yukon Route. This train takes you up to Canada over White Pass, the route the miners took in the gold rush of 1898.



Train leaves for the pass.



The old trail of '98.

After shopping around town, we returned to the ship where we were greeted by humpback whales.



Whale diving by the ship.

On the sail from Skagway to Whittier, we spent the first day in Glacier Bay National Park. It was an unusually clear, beautiful day.



Lamplugh Glacier and Mt Cooper.

The top of Lamplugh Glacier is about 155 feet above the water.



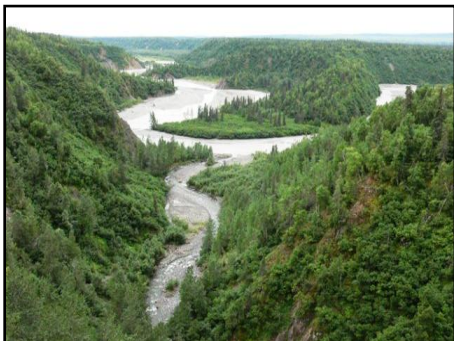
Johns Hopkins Glacier.





More Glacier Bay scenes.

Our next destination was a tour in College Fjord. On 4 August we disembarked at Whittier and boarded the train for an all-day ride to Denali National Park.



Scenery from the train to Denali.

Denali is Mt. McKinley, the tallest mountain in North America. Unfortunately the weather was overcast while we were at Denali. We did enjoy our tour in the Park even if we could not see the mountain.



Linda with a bronze moose at the lodge.

We also took a jet boat tour on the Nenana River. While we were on the tour we panned for gold and found a few flakes.



A real moose in the park.

On the third day ashore, we took the bus down to the Princess McKinley lodge. That evening the clouds began to lift from Denali. The next day was clear and beautiful. We spent that morning at Talkeetna on a jet boat tour on the Susitna River. The view of the Alaska Range from the river was outstanding. We had lunch in Talkeetna and were joined by the rest of our group who had participated in other activities.



Mount McKinley (Denali).

Then we rode the train south to Anchorage and spent the night there before flying back to Albuquerque. When we got home, it was nice to see that Derry had not forgotten who we were.

BUHRER FAMILY REUNION

One pair of Linda's great-great-grandparents were the Buhrrs. The Buhrer family has a reunion every Labor Day weekend. Linda had never been to one of these reunions so we determined to go this year. The reunion is always held in the clubhouse in Zook, Kansas. Zook is close to Larned, Kansas, where Linda's father was born. We reached Larned in our motor home after an overnight stop in Texas. We found Linda's ancestors graves in the Larned cemetery and stopped to see the ruins at the site where the old family home had stood. It was a very old stone structure that had been torn down. Linda's grandmother had been promised that the historic structure would be preserved, but unfortunately it was destroyed. The Buhrer family descendants gathered for supper on Saturday along with a get-together time and fireworks display. On Sunday we all gathered for a noon meal and auction.



Auction at Buhrer reunion.

Since many of her distant cousins were unfamiliar with Linda's branch of the family we gave a pictorial power point presentation to introduce her branch. We enjoyed meeting many cousins that Linda had not known.



Robert in a rut.

While in Larned, we went to see the section of Santa Fe Trail ruts that have been preserved there. Fort Larned was one of the forts that guarded the trail.



Linda's oldest cousins (98 and 101).

The only surviving member of the previous Baxter generation is Linda's aunt Sue. We went to visit her in Salina, Kansas.



Linda, Derry, and Aunt Sue Baxter.

A short distance from Salina is Lindsborg. We had enjoyed a visit there several years ago, so we spent a night on our way to Hillsboro. Linda's maternal ancestors had first settled near Hillsboro when they emigrated from Russia with many other German Mennonites. From Hillsboro, Linda's great grandmother moved to Fairview, Oklahoma, and obtained farmland there in the run on the Cherokee Strip. We drove down to Fairview to visit some of Linda's cousins who live there. Leonard and Leona Vogt and Carolyn Winter are cousins on Linda's mother's side. (The Kliever family)



Leonard, Leona, Carolyn, and Linda

We also wanted take a look at the two farms in which Linda has 1/4 ownership. It had rained 5.33 inches the day before in Fairview. That did not bother us until we tried to drive out to see the new oil well by the 80-acre farm. In spite of using 4-wheel drive, the mud that had washed off of the field proved so slippery that we slid off the road. In spite of some manual pushing help from the oil drillers, we could not get back up on the road. We called Alan Boehs, who farms our property, and he was able to pull us out of the ditch. After the weekend, we returned home from Fairview.



Oklahoma mud and Alan to the rescue.

We were happy to have Linda's cousin, Carolyn, visit us from Tucson, Arizona, shortly after we returned from Oklahoma.

APPLES AND ROCKS



In late September, we went up near Cochiti Pueblo to buy apples at Dixons farm and also to visit the Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument. This photo is of a red chile ristr hanging at the farm.



See why they are called "Tent Rocks".



Tent Rocks skyline.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN RAMBLE

In early October we went up to Farmington, NM, for the Rocky Mountain Ramble motor home rally. About 500 motor homes were there, and we enjoyed seeing some of our friends again. Linda also has a cousin living in the area, and we visited with Gayle while we were there. Every time we travel northwest from Albuquerque we see Angel Peak a short distance south of Bloomfield. We had never been to the recreation area near the peak, so one afternoon we drove out there. The peak sits in a highly eroded landscape that is not evident from the highway.



Linda and Derry overlook the badlands.



Angel Peak.

When we stopped for lunch at the recreation area we discovered a horned lizard (horny toad) near the car. Robert had never seen one in the wild before.



Horned lizard comes to visit.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The trip to the rally was a short one and was our final motor home trip for the year. Since then,

we have made two one-day visits to Santa Fe, the capital of New Mexico. One visit was with our senior adult group from church, and the other was just to see the Egyptian exhibit at the New Mexico art museum and the Gee's Bend quilt exhibit at the Folk art museum.



The cathedral in Santa Fe.

We have been busy learning new music for our choir's Christmas musical, to be presented on 9 December. We had a quiet Thanksgiving as Linda's brother's family was in Colorado. That weekend we finally had snow in this part of the country. Derry continues to amuse us with his antics.



Derry on the bed again.

THE BOTTOM LINE

We continue to be thankful for the Lord's providing for us in all ways. We trust in Him, and pray that you will do likewise and enjoy a blessed Christmas season as we celebrate His birth. Best wishes for a healthy and prosperous new year.

Love,

Robert + Linda

and Derry



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Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



The Alaska Range as we saw it from Talkeetna.

Le Gach Deaghui i gComhair na Nollaig agus na Bliana Nua. Frohe Weihnacht und ein glückliches neues Jahr!