

Subject: Yes there is a road!!
Date: Thu, 29 Jul 1999 23:35:43

As I mentioned nobody was willing to tell us if there was a road from the Sask side of the Cypress Hills Park to the Alberta side of the Cypress Hills Park. We had to turn off the road that said 16 km to the Alberta border on our way to Fort Walsh.

One question was answered but the little signs that said "Impassable when Wet" didn't turn us on a lot either. We quizzed the bus driver about the lane "I take my minivan on it." Ok what about a 28 foot motor home, fuzzy answer. We finally talked to a self described prairie boy that said it wasn't that bad a few times you had to get down to 20kph but it wasn't too bad. We'll try it.



Farwell's Trading Post at Fort Walsh National Park

Fort Walsh National Park is done in period costume and with people from two slightly different times. One was the time of the Cypress Hills Massacre. Camp Whoop-Up was the main area of the whiskey trade and the lawlessness was quite a problem. The Fur Traders would often increase the profits on the alcohol by watering it down mixing it with tobacco juice and sometimes outright poison the alcohol with strychnine. This was called Montana "Red Eye" or "Rotgut"

During the winter of 1872-73 a Nakota band set up camp near the trading post. At the same time a group of wolfers were in the area. Wolfers were people who traded in wolf pelts. One of their tricks was to kill a buffalo and then cover the carcass with strychnine. The wolves would eat the carcass and quickly die. The wolfers could then harvest the hides without making any extra holes

in them. It also had a lot of collateral damage to other wildlife in the area. Anyway the Wolfers thought that the Nakota had stolen their horses and both sides were liberally sauced up with rotgut and a shot was fired. The Wolfers took cover in a small coulee(ravine) and with repeating rifles shot women, children, and men indiscriminately.

John A. MacDonald (no relation that I know of) then prime minister of Canada heard of the Cypress Hills Massacre and decided that it was necessary to install some law and order. The newspapers of the time had many exaggerated descriptions of the massacre, even today there are many different versions of the massacre on record at the Fort.

The North West Mounted Police (precursor to the RCMP) marched west in 1875 and took two years to find the men accused of the crime. Fort Walsh was set up next to a fur trader that had squatted on the land. The fur trader was able to supply a number of goods required by the police as well as (and the information given says this was somewhere between THE NUMBER ONE MOST IMPORTANT REASON to being a passing interest) five very attractive daughters. It was not common to see five attractive white women in this area in the 1870s. Two daughters did marry officers, a third died just prior to the wedding.

The girl who played the wife of the head fur trader in the Farwell trading post is by far THE absolute BEST in period interpreter we have seen ANYWHERE. She was incredible an Oscar winning performance that gave us both a lot of laughter and a lot of information. She was a hoot.

Fort Walsh is 50kms from the nearest community, Maple Creek. Small signs warn you there is no gas or camping at the Fort. Gas up before you start the trip.

Now back to that road. Remember the one that no-one would commit to saying it was passable to us. It was no where near as bad as the Pictured Rocks road. If you are really worried about it, or it has rained recently don't bother and drive around. We drove through and it was rough and we could see that if it rained the road would easily turn into deep muck in a hurry, but we were fascinated by the scenery. At one point after you get to the pavement (in Alberta) there is a look off. You MUST stop at the look off. The area you are standing on was one of the very few areas not touched by the last glacier. If you were on the spot 10,000 years ago you would have looked down on the glacier. Not only are you extremely high and you can see the forest of the Cypress Hills you can see a LARGE area of the prairies stretching off forever to the east. The view is beyond words.

The good news for those not interested in dirt roads is that the look off is reachable from the west via Alberta without hitting a dirt road at all.

We are now in Elkwater Alberta on the edge of the Cypress Hills park. Tomorrow we head off to Dinosaur Park half way between Medicine Hat and Drumheller.

Subject: What can you really say about the badlands?

Date: Sun, 01 Aug 1999



We arrived on Friday about noon. Driving up to the badlands is driving through prairie grass and you see three flags in the distance. As you get closer you might notice a few cuts into the prairie landscape on your right hand side, but you can't see much, there are a few "interpretive" signs in the field that you can see. You go across a Texas gate and there is a sign that says "Dinosaur Provincial Park" and the road goes down over the hill and then you pull into the parking lot just before the dip on the right hand side. There are a bunch of people off on our left so we have lunch and then go right through the Interpretive signs that we saw coming in. Most of the people have moved on and we walk over to the area

surrounded by Interpretive signs.

And the whole world drops away, and you can see the badlands for as far as you can see. We decide to stay for two days instead of one.



On the way in one of the things that they have set up is a telescope looking at an archeological dig. It looks hot. You can see the heat waves, the kids are taking a break and laying around a couple are working on tans. The plaques warn of temperatures that approach 47C. 35 was hot enough thanks. It is a cool day where we are and we are wearing sweatpants. Down there it looks HOT. The badlands are a semi desert environment. The signs warn of Black Widow spiders, scorpions and Rattlesnakes. We drive down into the valley and follow the campground signs. We register at the concession stand. "There aren't any sites with electrical" She tells the owner of the 5th wheel ahead of us.

The weather forecast is posted by the counter. Today 18C Sunny with cloudy periods, Tonight 8c with increasing cloudiness. Tomorrow showers 18C (Gee 47C I need power to run the AC, 18C leave on the joggers we're comfortable. We settle in for two days. Once we are parked We ask where we can get tickets to the bus tour. "Field Station first building on the right as you came in." We walked over to the Field station. There are two seats left on the 2:30 tour. Great on we go.

Hillary takes us up on the tour. We are on a 24 passenger bus (full). We drove into the Natural Reserve. This area is gated off and no-one is allowed in without a guide. Hillary explains about the erosion that is causing the badlands. The three kinds of stone: Sandstone, mudstone, and ironstone. The Ironstone and Glacial Eratics (Glacier droppings) sit on top of the sandstone and mudstone and protect them from the water erosion. What is left looks a lot like the flowerpots at Hopewell Cape in NB (with no vegetation on top) only they are bigger and there are thousands of them stretching for 28 kms. Simply awesome. The badlands are eroding at a rate 10 to 100 times faster than the Rockies. The badlands themselves are only 12,000 years old, they will completely disappear in another 30,000 years (better come quick).

What makes this area special is that hundreds of feet of sandstone, mudstone were laid down in 2 million years (74-76 million years ago). During the time it was the peak of the dinosaur diversity, the heavy sit coming down in the water from the still forming rockies which buried them quickly and the medium was ideal for preservation, the area was a tropical rain forest environment hot and lush and perfect for lots of dinosaurs. When the last Glacier eroded away it happened to dam up on occasion and then release with a great flood. One of the floods removed most of the glacial till and left the iron and sandstone which are easily eroded. As the soil erodes it leaves the dinosaurs on the surface.

One of the hoodoos is called Phred and was given a lot of publicity when they were going for world



Phred will become Hump-free someday

heritage site status. It was a good view example of the erosion hoodoos and it looks like a camel. There are also 3 pyramid shaped hoodoos in the area. It was supposedly accidental, they say, that the meeting to make the decision was held in Oman that year.

There are lots of tours and walks that areas that you are welcome to explore. The Badlands bus tour was about 2.5 hours and Hillary was wonderful giving us lots of information about the geology, dinosaurs, cottonwood trees and the World Heritage Site status of the park. There are several stops for you to get out and see things. This was the first time they had been out in a week because of rains the previous Saturday (over 3in of rain in less than 24 hours) and they had to get contractors in to rebuild the road. They stop at an number of places you can stop. One is what they call the plexiglass pyrmid it is a plexiglass pyramid protecting a "bonebed". The bonebed is area of fossils that contains lots and lots of fossils usually not articulated(one dinosaur all in one place). The fossils in this bone bed contain a Duckbilled Dinosaur, a turtle shell, and sharks teeth which she pointed out to us.

Later on is a building next to a sandstone ridge that looks like it had a 20feet by 40 foot chunk taken out of it. It did, There was a fully articulated (all together) Corythosaurus which is sitting still in the original sandstone inside the building. The head has been replaced by an exact duplicate made of plastic, molded from the original and placed in the original position. (Apparently Dinosaur heads in good condition are worth some change.) The rest of the dinosaur is still here. Including on of the things that I though was really neat. A skin impression of the Corythosaurus. It's funny but it some how seems a lot more real when you can see what the skin of the thing REALLY looked like right there beside this pile of real bones.

We weren't able to get through the full route of the trail because the contractors were just finishing up the road so we headed back to the trail head. We did a walk on the trail between the Field House and the Campground and had supper then we went up into the hills to watch the sunset. Where we were the sun was setting behind the hill of the prairie so we couldn't get a good picture that way. The color changes in the sandstone badlands were beautiful to watch.

The next day we were in a lineup for the "The Bonebed Hike" at 7:30 and there were a dozen people ahead of us, gates open at 8:30 considering that there are 17 rush seats on the 34 seat tour we figure our chances are slim. We get tickets 32 and 33.

The bonebed tour leaves at 9:15 and gets back just after noon. Our guide gives us a great history and explains what you can see in the walk if you look. Petrified wood is everywhere, Not only do they have hundreds of dinosaurs (35 different species) but they have hundreds of plant fossils including magnolia trees, breadfruit trees and many other trees we were familiar with from the tropics. She explains the factors that would have effected the bodies how they may have been killed at once (over 300 dinosaurs are in the area of a football field.) There are lots of indications of stuff and it is all real neat stuff. No matter how many times they say you can't help but see lots of fossils here. I sort of said to myself "Ya YOU can see fossils, you know what your looking for"



Vertebra emerging from the sandstone with a quarter for comparison

Well ANYONE can see fossils here, EVEN ME. You are walking on hundreds of them. They are everywhere. This site was worked on for 12 years and when the paleontologists were done they left it so we could see it as they saw it. (One area they have protected from further erosion). I have pictures of ribs, vertebra, femurs, leg bones amazing stuff, many in the same picture. You have to see this to believe it. Phone for reservations!

After we were done with the bonebed tour we came back for lunch and then went on the publically accessible areas and did most of the walking tours We walked for over 4 hours this afternoon (after a 3 hour walk in the morning).

Subject: Red Deer and Edmonton
Date: Wed, 04 Aug 1999 14:24:07

We went to Drumheller and visited at the Royal Turrell Museum. It is really a good dinosaur museum and they have spectacular exhibits. One of the things they have is a couple of full size T-Rex skeletons. MAN those suckers were big. If you have never seen one they are one impressive beasty. Theirs came from the Crows Nest Pass on the divide between BC and Alberta. They also had the China feathered fossils on display. They caused quite a stir in the archeological world not long ago and I understand that it is the best evidence yet that birds evolved from dinosaurs. They also have a great aquatic exhibit and a large Burgess Shale exhibit. They also have hikes you can do into the badlands around Drumheller and you can see a dinosaur dig or even participate in one. We passed on the hikes we were kind of hiked out and headed toward Red Deer.

We arrived in Red Deer Alberta to visit my step-sister Mary and her husband John. They moved out west in the early 80s and as a result we haven't been that close. We have really enjoyed the chance to spend time together and get closer. We are having a great time visiting with them and their friends in Red Deer.

We took a tour out to "THE BEACH" at Sylvan Lake. We did this on the Monday of a long weekend and it was hot weather so it was PACKED. There was people everywhere and all along the beach people were laying, walking and picnicking. Sylvan Lake beach is not quite like the beaches we were used to up to this point. But for a place that doesn't have a lot of lakes where you can put a boat, this place is a mecca for the area.

We all got a chuckle out of the bunch of guys who figured they would never get a picnic table that day so they brought their own. Not one of those nice collapsible picnic ones a full 4 by 8 foot picnic table made of 2 by 6s. I don't think they loaded it when they were parallel parked because it sure made it much more interesting to unload it when they were.

Mary works three days a week and she had the day so we did a day trip to the West Edmonton Mall. What a place. We had a great time touring around, we had a list of a few things we wanted to get so we picked up two of the three. Not because we couldn't find batteries just the price was a bit more expensive than we could get elsewhere.

The mall is the second biggest in North America and it is pretty impressive. The ice skating rink had a group of young players getting instruction. The submarines were not terribly busy. Only one of the four were actually moving. The submarines run on a track and never actually submerge. The Amusement park was busy and have a neat walkway that actually walks down the inside of the 360 loops of the

roller coaster. It was neat to stand in the middle and see the people zip around you. Mary didn't like it a lot. The wings of the mall have different themes and they have a "little Europe", "Bourbon Street" and others. They also have an inside water park with lots of slides and a full sized wave pool, with bungee jumping if you are so inclined. We had a great time walking around and looking at stuff. They had a gallery that had a number of Frederick Hart sculptures mostly in Lucite a couple in bronze. They were very impressive. Price tags were too. Frederick Hart did part of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington. Very nice stuff.

We came back to Red Deer and then went to supper at Shaunay's a really neat restaurant. We had a great meal of Bison and Ostrich and both were tasty. Bison's better. We came back to Mary and John's and had dessert. Godiva Chocolates from West Edmonton mall and the raspberry dessert wine from Ontario. It was too good to finish so maybe tonight we will finish it.

We are working hard at trying to figure out a schedule for the next few days. The parks lady says the trip between Banff and Jasper is "totally OK" to do with our RV. Mother called this morning and has "important mail for us". Now where does she send it, Red Deer (we wait), Edmonton (we travel via Banff and Jasper and come back to Edmonton, this adds a lot of miles and days to our intended route), or Fort St. John BC where we have friends. Sigh.



Statues in the Bourbon St. area of the West Edmonton Mall

We are itching to get back on the road. In our heads the trip between Banff and Jasper and out of the park is the crunch trip that will tell us if we are going to have problems in Alaska. We would like to do the trip and still have time for repairs if necessary before we eat all of our "free" days.

Bonnie is in doing laundry so I had better wrap up this email. Now what do we do about that darn mail. We want to do a little shopping for RV toys before we leave. Things like extra jerry cans for fuel and the little map of North America that you fill in the states and provinces as you go. Red Deer seems to be RV central the road in is loaded with one long line of RV places. We should also do a real provisioning run before we head into Alaska. Maybe that would be better left until we get back out of the parks.

Sigh, that darn mail.

Subject: Sundays
Date: Thu, 05 Aug 1999 11:51:51

Yesterday may have been Wednesday but it sure felt like a Sunday. We got up late after talking to Mary late into the night. We had bought a dozen Godiva chocolates (4 different kinds, one for each of us) to share over our raspberry desert wine we got in Ontario. The chocolates were SO rich and the wine SO sweet we had to split it over 2 days. It was REALLY good.

We had a great time in Red Deer, Alberta. John and Mary Sansom were incredibly welcoming and generous with their family and friends. We had a hoot. Jason is their son and is working as a pipe fitter at a chemical plant in Joffre. He and his wife Laurie stopped by a couple of times. Jason is a big guy and the last time I saw him he was about 10 and skinny as a rail. He played football in High School. Kelly got her Commerce Degree in tourism and is working at the University of Alberta (Edmonton) in the Conventions and Tourism Department. Kelly stopped in to say hi with her boyfriend Jeff on the way back from Calgary. He is a cop in Edmonton and had a shift starting that afternoon. Kelly has developed into a beautiful young woman. John and Mary are justifiably proud of their two great kids. It was wonderful to see them all. Jason and I had a great time talking investments and stuff.

One of the things that we think will be a great keepsake of the trip would be a map that you fill in the states and provinces as we visit them. The current style is a "Stick-on-"states/Provinces. This is a mylar sheet that sticks on the side of the RV and you stick on states as you visit them. We like the other kind that fits on the door of the RV and could be easily removed when we wanted to sell the RV. We figured we could get one in Red Deer but didn't have any luck. Our neighbor Paul has one and we asked for info that should help track it down. The other option is to get a piece of whiteboard and stick the Mylar to it. Bonnie called a bunch of places, Mary tried a few too, and none seemed to have what we wanted.

We are going to be leaving toward Calgary, Banff, and Jasper. We were talking to John Sansom last night and he suggested nipping down to Red Deer via Route 11 between Banff and Jasper on the weekend. We had a real good time here so we might do that. We still have a number of play days that we can use up. I am quite nervous about Millie and the Rockies. Millie has a exhaust manifold that has a broken bolt on the bottom left hand side on the right hand side of the engine. We talked about getting it fixed before we left Fredericton and spoke to a mechanic about it. You can hear it ticking(exhaust leaking by) when then engine starts up but the engine is hot it seals over ok. Our mechanic said that he could fix it but to do it you basically remove the engine out the front of the RV fix it and put it back. He also has known engines to go a very long time in that state, apparently the Ford 460 is known for that little bolt problem. The seal got a little worse going though the Gaspé or the Mohawk Trail (It takes a little longer to seal now than it did). So I'm kind of nervous about the Rockies. If Millie starts being a pain then we will bail out via Route 11 or limp back to Red Deer via Edmonton. If she is going to break it would be best if she broke while we have 10 "free days" rather than none. It was the noise that supposed to be fixed by the dealer that never was. Kind of like the oil leak that they never fixed either. (Mechanic was right about that one, a bottle of power steering leak stopper seems to have done the job nicely)

Yesterday we took advantage of Mary's washer and dryer and Bonnie played house in the RV and I finally got my emails turned into a more "book" like journal. It is now a little over 40 pages of 8.5 x 11 10 point type. So all the people that print the journal have wasted a lot of paper by now. ;-)

So we are heading off today, we have a stop to make at Canadian Tire and Safeway to make and then off to Banff.

Subject: Rocky Mountains
Date: Fri, 06 Aug 1999 23:36:46

We woke up to hear that there was a mudslide closing the highway between Banff and Lake Louise. We have a great time trying to figure out if we should go or not. We had information that the road was going to be open with one lane each way tonight or the roads were closed for 3-4 days or just plain

indefinitely. We called Banff National Park (they were the indefinitely) and found out that there was actually 2 mud slides one 5 km west of Banff one on the Trans Canada further west.

Well we decide that we would go to Banff and if the road opened we would go on to Lake Louise and Jasper and if the road was closed we would go back to Red Deer and then go in at Rocky Mountain House and on to Jasper and up.

When we got here we found out the road was open one lane each way. We talked to a group of 3 British guys who were dumping their tanks at the dump station. They were renting a rig about the same size as ours. I was dying to ask how much but didn't. They had just made it through the mud slide area. Lake Louise tomorrow.

We are camping in Tunnel Mountain Campground with mountains all around us, 3 of the 4 have snow on them. This is as close as I really need to get to snow. It's 17C and I can look at snow, not too bad. We came though some quite hot and humid weather and there is supposed to be thunder showers tonight. We watched some real good thunder heads form west of us and we heard a few rumbles but things are quiet now.

Mary was certainly right about the Rockies. In Calgary you can see them on the horizon in the haze. As you come though the foot hills they seem to be there but a LONG way a way. Then suddenly they are there and shortly after that they are OH MY they are close!



We found a few things that we are interested in touring at Banff. So tomorrow we should be able to see a few things and then tuddle along.

We on our way out of Red Deer we stopped at a Canadian Tire and picked up couple of 20 litre fuel tanks. They are tall and slim and fit behind the tire mounted on the back bumper. We figure since we can't get Millie full we should probably have a little spare capacity. I got them tied on pretty good before supper and we should be able to fill them tomorrow. We also stopped at a Grocery People store, kind of a food warehouse place where we started our provisioning run for Alaska. We picked up a lot of basic supplies but we couldn't find a lot of the stuff we needed. When we got to Calgary (which you can see from a LONG way away) we found a Safeway and picked up almost all of the rest of the stuff we needed. Other than buying milk, bread, and meat we are probably self sufficient for the better part of a month. So Alaska's legendary food costs should be less of an ordeal on the budget.

We are actually pleasantly surprised at the costs thus far in the trip. We seem to be building a reasonable rainy day kitty. Although when we picked up the bank statements this month it looked like one of the brokers that are supposed to deposit money in our account last month didn't get the job done. Hard to say which one at this point so I might make a call tomorrow and do some checking.

Annoying.

Some numbers if any one is interested for June and July we went through 1370 and 1750 litres respectively. We spent 8 nights in campgrounds in June and 24 in July. In June we got 8.80 miles per Canadian Gallon and in July 9.04 miles per gallon

We did get our credit cards when we were at Mary's so they will not expire on us until after we are back in NB. The automatic bill payments for Internet and phone are updated so we should be ok with that for the rest of the trip.

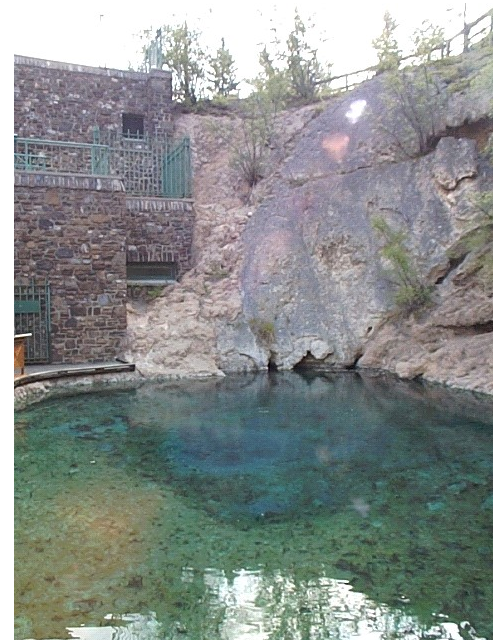
Subject: Banff

Date: Sat, 07 Aug 1999 00:48:55

Well we had a great time in Banff. We went to the Cave and Basin National Historic Site. Canada's Park System is due to the hole three guys found in the ground. This hole in the ground was a Cave leading to the sulfur springs. The guys figured that these springs were a gold mine and laid claim to it. The land agent was sent by John A. to investigate. The land agent came back and told him they were worth "a Million Dollars", he didn't tell the three discoverers. They were given the "right of discovery" but not "right of ownership". In other words \$900 each and sent packing.

They set aside as a federal reserve of 10 acres around the Cave and Basin Springs in 1885 and then two years later became a national park and was expanded to 260 square miles as the Rocky Mountains National Park. This is considered the birth of the national park system in Canada. At the time there were only two other national parks Yellowstone in the U.S. and the first national park in the world somewhere in Australia.

They don't allow swimming in the cave or the basin any more. There are approximately 5000 snails that live in the hot water and these small creatures (about 3 would fit on the nail of my little finger) are the only ones that exist in the world. The basin is really quite neat, you can see the bottom clearly (about 7.5 feet deep in the deepest point) There is a section at the bottom of the basin that you can see churning with the hot water bubbling up through the purple and blue silt. There are lots of little bubbles of hydrogen sulfide, sometimes they are pretty big bubbles. The whole area smells like rotten eggs. The water in this pool is about 30 C. Bonnie has a book from her visit here in 1980 and they didn't mention the snails and the pools were open for swimming. She missed her chance and didn't go swimming. We were in the hot springs in Grenada. They were neat.



The springs were given all kinds of health benefits. Cures for eczema, arthritis, and rheumatism were mentioned. They even bottled the stuff for drinking. Analysis of the water shows high content of sulfur (used in a lot of skin creams, I can vouch for a long soak in a hot tub of water being good for arthritis!) and it was slightly radioactive. The sign said it about the same levels as basements in Calgary or Toronto.

After leaving the Cave and Basin we went to the Banff Springs Hotel for lunch. We passed on the

restaurant serving \$16 appetizers and when down stairs for the \$5.50 appetizers. I can recommend the Vegetarian Chili and the Buttercup Squash Bisque. The Bisque reminded both of us of the Pumpkin Soup we loved in the Caribbean. All it needed was the hot sauce. The warm apple cake was excellent, the fruit topped sponge cake was good but I think we would try the fruit flam instead.

It was a cloudy day and for most of the morning the mountains were covered in cloud. When we came out of the Banff Springs Hotel we walked down to Bow Falls and there is a lots of white water but not a lot of falls. The bow river here is very brown from the landslides and not it's normal green from the glaciers. We went up the gondola on Sulfur Mountain and walked around on the boardwalk up to Sanson Peak. A weather observatory that has been closed for quite a while now. You can look in at the stuff that was used in the observatory from many years ago. The 8 minute ride on the gondola brings you up to 7497 feet. There is a walk you can do to the top but we didn't figure we were up to it. The Sanson peak is about 200 feet higher than that. We did get some absolutely spectacular views. (And lots of pictures).

We left the gondola and if you ever come here in an RV the upper parking lot has MUCH better space for RVs than the lower one.

We filled up our two jerry cans full of fuel and headed out. We joined the northbound lineup at the mudslide about a kilometer away from the slide but we never stopped and were able to go about 30 kph the whole time. The other side was STOPPED dead, the little flag person was trying to get people moving faster but it looked like people were stopping to look rather than move along. The traffic was backed up at least 5 to 10 kilometers in the southbound lane.

When we got to the Lake Louise Campground it was about 5:30. They were full but there is an overflow campground (read gravel pit) 7 kilometers east of town where we are sitting with about 60 other rigs and a few tents. Renting RVs is a big business in the area it seems. There are over a dozen rented RVs here and there are about four or five rental companies represented. Self registration, and cheap.



With all my fussing about the road, only Route 1 is open at the moment. It stays in the valley the whole way and Millie's cruise control only needed help once to maintain the 90 kph speed limit. We are going to go visit Lake Louise tomorrow.

Subject: Lake Louise up to the Athabaska Glacier

Date: Mon, 09 Aug 1999 02:03:55

Since we had a real easy time breaking camp and not much for scenery we got up early and headed toward Lake Louise. We were the second RV and there were about 15 cars ahead of us when we got there. There was a cool breeze down off Victoria Glacier making ripples on the Lake. It is truly a place every one should see some day. We walked along the lake and we got a chance to see mountains very up close.

I have a picture of Bonnie standing next to a rock wall. It goes straight up many hundreds of feet. IMPRESSIVE. If you are in Lake Louise I would recommend the walk around the lake. The walk shows many different views of the mountains and the reflections of the mountains in the lake is really pretty.

As we walked the clouds cleared and the breeze dropped so the lake and the mountains got clearer and clearer. The walk takes you up to where you can see the white glacial waters mixing with the greenish turquoise of the lake. VERY pretty. Most of the glacier water is almost white because of the rock flour suspended in the water. They have had a lot of water here this year and with the mud slide things are really running wide open. A lot of the brooks are showing the more normal green color.



Bonnie at the foot of the wall

We went looking for a coffee shop in Chateau Lake Louise but the one we found was busy and had at least a 20 minute wait. All we really wanted was coffee so we left. When we came out there were probably 10 large tour buses out front and HUNDREDS of people. We really appreciated the quiet time we had with the lake.

After Lake Louise up a long road is a place called Moraine Lake. It was featured on the back of a Canadian twenty dollar bill many years ago. The artist who did the engraving did take some artistic license but the area is truly a spectacular treat for the eyes. And if you are in the area the view will amply reward the time it takes to travel out to the Lake. If that isn't enough the deserts in the coffee shop are pretty good to. When we were there a grizzly bear was starting to be a concern and they would not allow people to go onto the trails in groups less than 6.



Moraine Lake and it's \$20 view

We left Lake Louise and headed north. We looked at the gas gauge and figured we had plenty of gas to get to Saskatchewan River Crossing, the next gas station over hundred kilometers away. We could gas up there before making the next long run to Jasper the next gas station.

Well if you are going to do a rip-off you should be blatant about it. I figured that gas would be more expensive than in Red Deer (the closest town to Saskatchewan river crossing.) When we filled up in Red Deer it was 53.9 cents a liter. We were very pleased in Banff when we filled up it was the same price as it was in Calgary 55.9 cents a liter for regular unleaded. The Saskatchewan River Crossing gas station was charging 69.9 a liter for regular and I ended up paying 75.9 cents a liter for high test. 16 cents a liter sounds just a bit extreme. Jasper was 57.9 for regular and I figured that was a pretty reasonable price considering it is a tourist town.



Algae causing the pink in the overhanging glacier

We did make it to the Athabasca Glacier. The road up from Lake Louise to the Glacier is called the Icefield Parkway. It is truly a spectacular drive and the road is really good. We make it through the Bow Pass and Bonnie didn't notice. Millie was able to keep up speed pretty good, the Sunwapta Pass is REAL hard to miss. Millie was able to maintain about 40 kph for the worst part of the hill and came through without a hitch. The mountains are really impressive for someone who has never seen them before. ME!

The Athabasca glacier is fed by THE largest ice field in the Canadian Rockies, the Columbia Ice field. The Columbia Ice field also straddles the Great Divide.

Which means it feeds water into three oceans, The Pacific (We passed within 15 miles of the headwaters of the Fraser River, just over the hill ;-), The Arctic (we walked over the beginnings of the Athabasca river, which flows into the Mackenzie and into the Arctic), and The North Saskatchewan flows west and eventually drains in to the Atlantic Ocean. It covers 325 square kilometers and is over 30 stories deep at it's deepest point. They are predicting that in a hundred years The Athabasca Glacier may be a memory. We walked up to the toe of the glacier and they have different markers for different years. Bonnie was here in 1980 and it was a long and steep walk to get to the Glacier, at least several hundred feet.

We did the tourist trip up onto the ice, it was fun. They have 19 especially designed vehicles for traveling up on the ice. They are huge, and the guides are good. "I've worked here for two years at Glacier Park, course yesterday I was a janitor". They are good at their banter and told you lots of neat stuff, most of which I can't remember. The ice field tour was worth the trip. It is quite awe inspiring to stand on that big a piece of ice. The Snow Dome that caps the mountains in the area is quite literally a snow dome. It looks a lot like a layer of icing on a cake, in this case 100 foot thick icing. Our weather course is actually coming onto play here in the mountains. We could see a number of places where the air was being lifted and cooled becoming cloud and snow on the top of the snow dome. Where we were, a 1/4 mile away, it was sunny.



Walking on the Athabaska Glacier

We got back from the Snow Coach tour and walked back to the RV parking lot by a sign. Self Registration for Camping in the parking lot \$7.00. We nosed around until we found a reasonably level spot where we could see the glaciers and parked for the night. We ran the generator in order to download the pictures from the camera to the computer. Another 137 pictures to annotate, sigh. As the sun sets it highlights different areas of the glaciers. Most of the colors are bluish green and white. On the top edge high up on the mountain is an area that is blushing a watermelon pink caused by an algae that lives in the ice, and their pretty too.

It was cool in the mountains. But it really was nice to see the early morning sun on the glaciers.

The animal life here is pretty neat. They have things called Urban Elk. Basically Elk that have adapted to live in an urban area. There are lots of signs EVERYWHERE about wild animals, things like the Elk really are wild and can become aggressive if encroached upon. One of the things they specifically mention is that getting your kids to stand close to an elk for a picture is a very bad idea especially when there are young nearby.

Lots of elk, lots of young, lots of kids and lots of pictures. Where is Darwin when you need 'em. We need some adjustment to the human race. We have seen mothers trying desperately to feed their kids to elk, black bear, mountain goats, the odd waterfall and a deep crevasse in the ice for fun, and of course, the picture. Most of the elk we have seen has been in the towns. Except for one, a VERY large male with VERY large antlers on the road between the Glacier and Jasper.



Snow Lizard in the mountains

We stopped at the Athabasca Falls, and it is an impressive falls that roars and boils down through a small cut in the rock. It was hard not to be impressed by the power and beauty of the Athabasca River as it descends through the rock carving its way. There were quite a few people there the day we were there and a number of bus tours were evident.

Jasper is not quite as touristy as Banff but it is a neat little town. The CIBC has a great looking bank. There really is a rail yard here and it is used. We did the trip up to Whistler and up on the Tramway. The road up to the tramway is worse than the pass. But we finally made it and got a parking spot just as some pulled out. I got in line and Bonnie ran back to make a bagel for lunch on the way up. The line was moving slow enough that we ate in line. The air was thin but making up for it in velocity at the top of the mountain. We came down before we made it to the top. The Alpine flowers were pretty and the 200,000 people a year they take up to the mountain is having a bad effect on the once lush alpine meadow. We were real careful not to step on ANY vegetation including lichen.

We were talking about food and over the last 24 hours we had Amish Baloney from Ohio, ice cream from Tillsonburg, oranges from Red Deer, steak from Calgary, bagels from Winnipeg, pasta from St. Catherine's, and wine from Oromocto (last bottle).

We had great hopes to go up Route 40 to Grand Cache and then to Grand Prairie. We made it to the provincial park and it was worse than any of the roads as far as hills. We stopped in an Alberta provincial park and were going to turn back in the morning. No since making this trip worse than it had to be. The park was self registration and \$16 per night, this basically gave us a flat spot on the ground and a pit toilet. I was interested in a shower and it wasn't available here. We moved back onto the Yellowhead highway and ended up at the Lions campground in Edson, \$12 per night, no electricity sites left but HOT SHOWERS!!! Bonnie found the road in the MilePost Guide to the Alaska Highway that the road from Grand Cache to Grand Prairie is dirt, over 100 miles of dirt. Glad I chickened out.

This was our third night without power and we can run the RV indefinitely without it, our biggest

problem is our toys. We have four things that we "need" AC power for. Our water-pic with tooth brush, our laptop computer, our digital camera, and our cell phone.

We have a little ProWatt 150 inverter by StatPower. It plugs into a 12 volt cigarette lighter socket and produces 110 volt AC power to run our toys. It will quite happily run our Waterpic (we used this on the boat last summer), or our computer. I don't like plugging too many things into it at once so to download pictures from the digital camera to the computer I need to plug in both the computer and use the AC adapter for the digital camera. For this I look for another power source. The cell phone does not like the inverter at all. The adapter just gets hot and although it looks like it is charging it doesn't. The cell phone is an important part of our breakdown kit and needs to work when we need it. The cell phone is also on all of the time. (We didn't have great service in the Rockies, no surprise.)

We bought a small Honda generator (450 watt). It was designed to give clean quality power for computers. It is also quiet. If I point the muffler away from the RV and tuck the generator under the back left hand corner of the RV (where our plug in cord is located) we have to listen to tell if it is still running. We have had a number of neighbors run generators beside us and ours is a lot less noise than theirs. We are also quite a bit smaller than theirs, I would wager. It will not run the microwave but would run our hand tools. The past couple of nights we have run the generator to download the pictures from the camera. It has a 200 watt mode and a 450 watt mode We run with 200 watt mode and I haven't seen the overload warning light yet. When it is running it automatically charges the house battery. The only time it works at all is when Bonnie runs the water pump which puts a load on the 12 volt system which loads the charging circuit which loads the generator. We have used it many times and it just works.

Subject: Grand Prairie
Date: Tue, 10 Aug 1999 01:08:27

Well we had our second problem with the RV that sent us scurrying to the Ford dealers. This one was a little scary at first. The road to Grand Prairie from Edson is quite hilly in places, nothing too serious but there are hills where Millie slowed to 70 or less and laboured under the load of groceries packed in for the trip to Alaska. All of a sudden Millie sounded like a jet engine talking off. The engine just roared. We slowed down it roared less but still roared. We pulled into Fox Creek and pulled over. All of the instruments were ok so I pulled into a garage and opened the hood. I was scared that it was the transmission packing it in and we had lost 3rd gear or something. I checked the transmission dip stick and the fluid was still a nice clear red, not even hot and smelled fine to me. The garage didn't look open so I got in and drove down the street being very careful to listen and feel for the shifting of gears. All smooth and in their normal speed range.

The PetroCan mechanic was really a nice guy and came out for a look. He did a little test drive and listened to it shift and the noise. He opened the hood and checked the Transmission fluid, clear red, smelled good. Reached in and pulled on something. "Your fan is seized. You should get it fixed sometime soon but there is nothing serious wrong." He checked for parts but there was none in town. He suggested checking in Grand Prairie.

After 200 kilometers with a jet engine beside us getting it fixed in Grand Prairie was an excellent idea! We registered in the campground and asked where the Ford dealer was. Within minutes we had our nose stuck into the repair bay. "Yep Fan's seized" \$225 and about an hour later we were back on the road again, quietly.

I did a bunch of phone calls to check on family and friends and we are planning for a noon arrival at mile 0 of the Alaska Highway. Tomorrow night we should be in Fort St. John staying with friends of Bonnie's.