

## ***Southbound and East to the Midwest, destination Pasadena!***

**Subject:** BC's Inside Passage and Tofino

**Date:** Sat, 18 Sep 1999 20:19:46

We had an excellent trip down BC's Inside Passage. The ship was funny it really tilted hard into the corners and would rock side to side with hardly any waves on the water. The ship had a cafeteria and a buffet dining room. They also had a entertainer in the bar and a lot of space for walking around and nice chairs in the lounges. We were packed in with about 20 other RVs, most were 22-24 ft rental RVs. We spent the night in the parking lot and as a result I slept a lot better than in Skagway. Since we were the first one in lane eight with a half dozen RVs behind me there was little chance they would let me sleep in too long.



*BC's Beautiful Inside Passage*

We arrived at Port Hardy well past 11:00 pm it was a late night for us. We got up and headed down the road to the southern part of the island. We saw a lot of amazingly big trees, some neat mountains, a little bit of ice on the top of the mountains and made it as far as Campbell River before pulling into a campground for the night. It was nice to get to bed early. It is warm again as we have traveled a LONG way south in the last week.

We got up and headed toward the Pacific Rim National Park on the west side of Vancouver Island. Highway 4 across the island is an experience by itself. An 18% down grade, and more 40 kph corners than anywhere else we have

seen. We did manage to make it up to the 60 kph of the higher speed corners. The road's speed limit is 80 but we might have actually made 80 once or twice, for a few seconds. The views were spectacular, the rivers and trees were amazing. We tried to stop for the Cathedral Forest but all of the parking spots were full. So we will stop there on the way back. There is a tree estimated to be over 800 years old with most of them dating back to the last major fire to go through the area, 300 years ago.

We are here on a Saturday so that means a lot of the campsites are full, the park itself was full and we ended up heading toward Tofino to see if we could find another park. Tofino is the end of the road and there is 86 kms of no services so gas up before you make the trip. Tofino is a tourist town, art galleries, whale watching tours, fish shops, restaurants and lots of shopping. It looks like it is going through a major vacation condo expansion.

We checked out one place that was almost wide open, Bonnie didn't like the look of the power panel we would have to plug into but it checked out ok by the circuit tester, but the voltage checked in at a whopping 156 volts. Bit high for my taste so we sent looking for another campsite. We gassed up in Tofino after driving all through town and running out of road. We headed back toward the park, and found a camp site that had a good power and one campsite left. We settled in and walked on the beach with the pacific surf washing the sand beach. Our walk on the beach didn't get us any beach glass but we did have a nice walk on the hard packed sand. There are three or four beach front resorts around us.

We are at 49 08.0N Lat 125 54.2 W Long 193 nautical miles north, almost 60 degrees west (1/6 of the world), and 2734 nautical miles from our mooring in Douglas Harbour.

We talked to Carolyn "CJ" Monette, friends of ours from UNB. We are going to visit with her for a few days in Victoria. Bonnie has a bunch of things she wants to see in Victoria. We will probably park at Carolyn's and bus it from there. We did a bit of a route planning and from Victoria we will head to Vancouver, Kamloops, down the Okanogan Valley into the US, down to Snoqualmie (Twin Peaks) WA, down to Mount St. Helen's (Seaquest State Park), up the Columbia River Gorge to the Loho Hot Springs in Montana, Yellowstone, Crow Agency (Custers Last Stand), Devils Tower WY, Deadwood SD, Mt Rushmore, Crazy Horse Memorial, Custer State Park, and the Badlands in SD.

Rough but we are hoping to get this all done before winter pushes us south.

**Subject: Cathedral Grove, Victoria, and Awesome Cheesecake!**  
**Date: Thu, 23 Sep 1999 22:07:16**

On our way back through Pacific Rim National Park we stopped and did the Radar Hill and Rainforest Trails. Radar Hill was part of the Pinetree Line. A dismantled relic of the Cold War. It now gives a incredible view of the Tofino area. The Rainforest Trail is a boardwalk through the temperate rainforest. There are few temperate climate rainforests left. The dense vegetation in the undergrowth, high canopy and the high humidity were familiar. The temperature was just a lot different. Where we come from it isn't uncommon to see a large tree. What struck us was the number of absolutely HUGE trees.



*Largest tree and one of the windthrows*

Cathedral Grove is an experience not to be missed. This area was burned out about 300 years ago with a few trees that were spared and are around 800 years old. The biggest tree is about thirty feet in circumference. There was a large wind that knocked down a lot of wood in 1987. The windthrows are huge. We walked through paths cut through the trunks of the trees that were taller than we were. There is one tree that has a charred interior and big enough that you could stand inside of the trunk of this live tree. Amazing. If you are ever in the Port Alberni area. The Cathedral Grove is an amazing thing to see.

We had a great time exploring Victoria. About the same size as Halifax and lots of neat stuff to see and do. We stayed with some old friends who are renovating their house and tried our best to stay out of way. They were really great hosts and ran us into down town many times, and gave us lots of great suggestions for things to see and do. We like old buildings and the Victoria Legislature buildings are really nice. They have thousands of lights that light up the outline of the building and white lights really make the place look impressive at night. The building has over 180,000 square feet of offices. The public washrooms have one inch thick marble dividers with nice carved wood doors.

We spent the first day just walking around. We were right downtown and had a chance to look over the lay of the land as well as the harbour. There were lots of nice boats to look at. Quite a few sail but most were power boats. Victoria is set up really nice for tourists and the blossoms were everywhere. We were going to go to the Empress for high tea, a classic Victoria thing-to-do, but were shooed away, the workers are on strike and they didn't want non-Empress guests milling about. The next day management closed the hotel for the first time since it opened. High tea will have to wait until next time.

Victoria is a wonderful city to roam around in. We loved toddling around galleries and different shops. Chinatown was really neat. We had a great lunch and found a print we almost bought, it reminded us so much of Rogue's Roost in Nova Scotia it was amazing. The gallery owner was also a sailor and said it looks like a lot of coves in this part of the world too. From Chinatown we drifted over to Market Square, a nice collection of different shops and restaurants, we spent quite a while looking around at different things. This time we were on a mission. Todd, Carolyn and Brad's first child was about to have his first birthday party! We were in search of a good gift. We ended up in Chapters looking for a book.



We had six weeks of mail waiting for us when we arrived and this naturally generated a few outgoing pieces of mail. We are gradually cutting down on the number of redirected pieces of mail. It does take a while until things get redirected properly.

Brad dropped us off downtown in time for us to take a shuttle to Butchard Gardens. Butchard Gardens was a limestone quarry that was converted into a garden, and what a beautiful garden it is. They have 55 full time gardeners and over 500 staff. We had beautiful weather and a great day visiting the gardens. Butchard Cove had a couple of sailboats on moorings and we understand that it is quite a party place sometimes. We'll have to stop in and see if we bring our boat around this way. We also have a hundred or so photos of the flowers too. Digital cameras are great, you can take as many photos as you want and the development cost is nil.

Our last night in town we went out to dinner to the Herald St. Café. We had a great meal with great company and the white chocolate orange cheesecake was to die for!

**Subject: Vancouver and into the Okanagan**

**Date: Mon, 27 Sep 1999 21:12:35**

Vancouver was a place that Bonnie and I had visited before. We visited with an old friend for a couple of days and Jon toured us around pretty good. We really enjoyed Granville Island. It's a great boat person place. The day we went looking around it was blowing 25-30 knots and the waves were 3-6 feet and breaking. Not fun in a small boat. There were a few large boats that were going out for a good sail, a couple of small boats were slogging their way in under a triple reefed main or a small jib. Both were overpowered and not having a good ride. Another small boat was heading out and were getting beat up

by the time we lost sight of them. The inner harbour was calm and tranquil with just the tinkling of halyards to warn of winds aloft. There are lots and lots of power boats, commercial fishing boats, and sailboats. We were in search of salmon at the fish market so we didn't spend much time in boat shops but Jon indulged us a little. Jon and Liz were great hosts, THANKS.

We left early in the afternoon planning to go to Kamloops but as we left late and Bonnie had a bit of a headache we changed plans and stopped for the night in Merritt. To get to Merritt we had to cross the coastal mountains and it was a long drive up, but nothing like the trip from Merritt to Kelowna (Route 97C). We were able to maintain our speed and when we finally made it to the summit we were greeted with a little sign, "Check brakes, 6% grade, 21 km". Millie's terminal velocity on a 6% grade is about 95 kph. In other words we coasted down hill without touching gas or brakes for about 21 kilometers maintaining a speed of 95 kph.

We drove up to Kelowna and stopped in one of the mall parking lots. This is a massive shopping area. We got lunch and walked over to Future Shop, picked up a CD and asked about a couple of things, memory upgrade and a new battery for the laptop. The battery is showing 0% but seems to be working ok. We got some groceries and picked up some cash. We want to do a restocking of the cupboards before we hit the states food prices are about the same in Canada and the US, which means they are about 40% more expensive in Canadian dollars. We didn't seem to be in the mood for it today.

We are now parked in Kelowna and sitting quietly along one of the creeks leading to Okanagan Lake. We spent quite a while trying to download email this morning and it bombed out. We couldn't maintain a connection long enough to get our mail downloaded. This afternoon I tweaked a few settings and tried again. This time after 30 minutes we managed to get our email downloaded and seem to be working again.

There are a couple of neat things about the lake. They have a floating bridge, and there is supposed to be a lake monster!

The pontoon part of the floating bridge is 2100 feet long, the typical pontoon is 200 feet long, about 50 feet wide, and 15 feet tall, with about 8 feet draft under normal conditions (if you load it with trucks I wonder how much it would sink, probably not that much). The pontoons are hooked together so they act as a single unit 2000 feet long. There is a lift span that can be used to allow boats through, the lift span is 265 feet and can be lifted 60 feet. Each pontoon has a 70 ton anchor off each side sunk into the lake bottom 25 feet. It opened in 1958 and is the only structure of its kind in Canada.

The lake monster's name, Ogopogo, came from a music hall song popular in the 1920's. It has been called a number of things over the years: a Devil Fish, Snake, Sea Serpent, Big Lake Devil, Oar Fish, Giant Sturgeon, and my favorite "That Thing". In 1926, the government announced that the new ferry for Okanagan Lake would be equipped with monster repelling devices, and we think we have neat technology these days!

**Subject: Okanagan Valley and wine country.**

**Date: Wed, 29 Sep 1999 19:45:42**

The Okanagan Valley is another surprise for us. We were expecting a much broader and greener area than we got. It is a long narrow area with good sized mountains on either side. There are places where the hills remind us of the escarpment in Whitehorse. At the southern end lies Osoyoos, where we are at



the moment. Just north of Osoyoos is Canada's Pocket Desert. They also have a lot of winery's here. The area receives somewhere between 6 to 9 inches of rain a year (depending on which brochure you read) and to grow grapes you need a lot more so irrigation is required.

The Wine festival lists 33 Vineyards, it starts in a few days. We did a tour of the Tin Horn Creek Winery, the view was worth the steep climb to the winery. We really enjoyed the samples and bought a couple of bottles. The wine festival looks like a feeding frenzy and a lot of fun. We noticed a couple of signs saying this and that event are sold out. We probably won't stick around for the Festival. We are getting nervous about the weather. We hit snow going through route 97C, seeing it on the ground around you is one thing but when it starts hitting your windshield it is time to start thinking south. We wanted to see a number of things in the US mid west so we soon have to be making tracks if we are going to make it without the weather shutting us down. The low mountains are starting to look a little gray on top.



We stopped a bunch of times today to check out the abundant fruit stands in the area. We bought tomatoes 69 cents a pound, apples 25 cents a pound and pears 35 cents a pound, as well as corn and blackberry jam. Our biggest problem will be eating them all before they go bad.

There were a couple of signs in fields near Merritt "Your in cattle country, Eat Beef". So tonight we had BBQed corn, steak, and vine ripened tomatoes with a Tin Horn Gewurztraminer. GREAT food and really fresh.

We visited the grocery store today to stock up on nonperishables. \$95 dollars later the cupboard doors still close and we aren't piling food under the table. (We did going into Alaska). We did our bookkeeping last night. In August we bought just over 2000 liters of fuel (at Alaska and Yukon prices). So far in September we are just shy of 500 liters, most in BC prices.

We tried to get into Inniskillin Okanagan but they were closed up preparing for the wine festival. We tried Castle Creek but they didn't have another tour for 3 hours. Castle Creek is high up in the hill and has an AWESOME view. It looks like a castle with a couple of doors that are probably 5 feet by 9 feet and are about 6 inches thick of carved wood. I gave it a big heave and just about pulled my arm off catching the door, opened real easy.

We did have success at the Osoyoos Desert Center. (<http://www.desert.org>) It is part of the Sonoran Desert, with starts in Mexico and ends here the Okanagan valley. There is only about 9% of the ecosystem remaining relatively undisturbed, 847 acres. The center is trying to acquire more and more of it but doesn't look good. A couple of years ago a group got a few hundred acres declared as unsustainable (forget the right word at the moment) and is now growing grapes. There is a \$500 million casino scheduled for another plot which the aboriginal community say they are going to build and the government says they aren't. Desert is unlikely to survive one way or the other.



*Spotted Lake near Osoyoos*

The desert is an amazing place. There are hundreds of species of insects and plants here as well as many endangered and "red-listed" animals. The Borrowing Owl, the Spadefoot Toad and the Northern Rattler to name a few. The Borrowing Owl is about the size of a Robin and lives in the ground. When threatened the young make a noise that is indistinguishable from the noise of a Rattler. The Spadefoot Toad has a interesting way of adapting to an extended drought, when it's numbers are too small the toads will start generating offspring that have a deformed mouth that allows them to be cannibalistic.

This piece of desert has all kinds of nasty little things. Rattlers and from the description of effects of the poison the worst of all is the Black Widow Spider. Wasps and fire ants are just some of the minor irritants.

The Desert Center opened in July 1999 and is not quite done yet. They have a little over half of their two kilometers of raised boardwalk completed. Nice to be ABOVE all of the nasties and looking down to appreciate them, from a safe distance. If you are in the area a guided tour is a neat way to spend a couple of hours.

Behind the desert is a road that leads back to Vancouver if you follow it for just a few minutes you come to a lake called the Spotted Lake. The water is rich in mineral deposits and they form huge rings on the water surface. Well worth the drive up the steep road.

**Subject: Grand Coulee, a broken ice dam and Twin Peaks!**  
**Date: Fri, 01 Oct 1999 21:44:42**

Well yesterday we left Canada for our journey across the states. They take you a little more serious when you say your planning to stay about 6 months. We had to go into immigration and fill out some paperwork. Our first time that customs was more than a hesitation. The young lady was quite pleasant. Reminding us that if we are away from our home province more than six months you loose all medical coverage. The Good Sam Club has a medical plan deal worked out with a company and has two versions one that is pretty cheap while your medicare is in effect and one that is not too bad after the insurance has expired. I doubt we could fly home for what it would cost for 6 months of the expatriates health insurance.

We were surprised with what we found in Washington. We were expecting mountains, lush green fields, orchards and rolling hills. We entered Washington in the Okanagan Valley and drove through miles upon miles of colorful desert. We landed Steamboat Rock State Park near Grand Coulee for the night.

The Grand Coulee Dam was a depression project that employed thousands of people building the large dam. It is still one of the largest concrete structures in the world. Over 12,000,000 cubic yards of

cement. We were lucky enough to land on the last night of the laser light show they do at the Dam. We took a shuttle from the campground and watched the impressive show. When built in 1989 it was one of the most powerful laser shows on Earth. Each of the four lasers generates 50 kilowatts of heat and each one is cooled by 6 gallons of water per minute. They open the flood gates just enough to coat the walls with a white foam of the water rolling over the face. This 13 acre face is the screen for the laser show.



*View from Steamboat Rock State Park*

The geology here is truly spectacular. We saw massive house sized boulders sitting in the middle of fields. The four hundred feet high walls of the cliffs go straight up and then are flat as a prairie on top. These canyons were formed during the last ice age. A finger of ice blocked a river which formed Lake Missoula. This lake was over 2000 feet deep in places and had an estimated capacity of over 500 cubic MILES of water. This amount of water eventually broke through the ice dam and when it broke free and it **BROKE FREE**. The rage of water tore through the Columbia River basin and flowed toward the Pacific at an estimated speed of 65 miles per hour. The raging waters carved out an area called Dry Falls. Dry Falls started out 20 miles from it's current position and it's horseshoe shape is a

classic example of its type of erosion. The water was over 300 feet deep going over the falls.

The time estimated to dump the 500 cubic miles of water? It seems to be debated a bit but one is 48 HOURS the other is 2 weeks. Water was 400 feet deep at Portland and large boulders were carried in icebergs as far as western Oregon.

It was hotly debated until the advent of high altitude surveys. Pictures of the curious formations in Montana that were suddenly recognized by geologists looking at high altitude photographs. These were ripples of sand like you would see walking on a beach, only they are over 3 stories tall, evidence of Lake Missoula.

We left Dry Falls and headed down toward the Ginkgo Petrified Forest. We did the interpretive walk and the examples of wood they have are really neat. Elm, Walnut, Ginkgo, Douglas Fur, and Spruce are present in petrified form. The growth rings are easily visible in a lot of them. Unfortunately they are protected from close inspection by a cement and steel cage. When the signs inform you that taking stuff from the park is larceny you know they must be just a bit POed at the amount of stuff leaving the area.

We followed I90 to Snoqualmie (where they filmed one of Bonnie's FAVORITE shows: Twin Peaks) and had supper at the Great Northern



*Dry Falls formed by a broken ice dam*



(actually called something else but that was Bonnie's name for the place). They didn't even have pie on the menu!

We did spot a diner that claimed "Home of the Twin Peak Pies" (Tomorrow's lunch)

We are off to Mount St Helen's tomorrow, then we will curve out back east along the Columbia river gorge. We were originally planning to do the Oregon side but the smaller road on the Washington side may be a nicer trip. The Oregon side has the freeway and slower is sometimes nicer.

**Subject: PIE, traffic, and Mt. Saint Helen's**

**Date: Sun, 03 Oct 1999 20:45:45**

We left Fall City this morning and drove back through Snoqualmie. On our way into town we had a flash of a black dog running across our nose. We slammed on the brakes laying down nice black marks but not in time. I swerved to straddle and there was a thunk under the RV. Oh shoot, me thinks, then there was an identical dog running even faster off on the right side down onto the tracks and was gone. I got out to look for his twin and couldn't find it. I walked all the way around in case the back wheels were covering the body. Nothing. I got in and move the RV off to one side. The woman behind me said "You must have just tapped him cause he's gone". The fourth car behind me was a cop who checked to make sure we were ok and then held traffic until we were underway again. We stopped in town and checked things over. Other than fried nerves nothing seemed worse for wear. Somewhere there is a dog that complaining bitterly about NB drivers.

We just had to stop for coffee and PIE! The cherry pie is really good and the dinner was actually the one used in Twin Peaks. They even have a map of sets used for Twin Peaks.

The rest of the trip was rather uneventful as long as you don't count the traffic outside of Tacoma, 12 lanes of highway all full with the slow lane (including me) doing 60 mph and up.

We made it to Mount St. Helen's Visitor center in time for us to get a quick tour before being kicked out. Things are closing a little earlier now. Seaquest State Park across the road from the visitor center is really a nice park with big spots, lots of them are powered but tonight we opted out. The pass is good for 3 days at the visitor center so we are planning on sticking around the area for another day. We are about 30 miles away from the mountain now and are looking at it side on. There was a large bulge that formed just prior to the eruption .It was growing at 5-7 feet a day until May 18, 1980 when there was a sudden landslide and then eruption. Between the two, within about 30 seconds, they reduced the height of the mountain by 400 meters. The pressure wave was measured in Maryland a few hours later. The mountain was giving lots of warnings of indigestion (about 10,000 earthquakes) prior to the eruption and lots of scientists came to watch.

They have lots of before during and after photos. Amazing stuff.





The next morning we went to the Johnston Observatory. Some of the best multimedia stuff we have seen in a long time. All of it done very well. We were really impressed by the whole facility, but what a view. The lava dome building in the crater is about a half mile wide and 1000 feet high. With the binoculars you could see steam rising from the lava dome in places. There seemed to be smoke rising from the crater but it was really the fine dust rising up due to rock falls within the crater. The rock falls are nearly continuous. They have 3 seismic drums and good explanations about the different signatures of different events, like rock falls, earthquakes, and magma movement. The movies they show are really interesting and give you some of the tension of the time. They learned an awful lot about volcanoes because of Mount St. Helens and you get a glimpse of some of it. They also spend a lot of time describing each of the separate events that made up the eruption.

The first thing was the buildup. The growing pressures of the magma that caused a bulge to grow on the side of the mountain jutting 800 feet from it's former outline. The land finally gave way and the largest landslide in recorded history flowed down a river bank leaving Hummocks and debris in the river valley in places 600 feet deep. The mudslide washed away houses. Videos show houses flowing downstream turning in circles until it fetches up under a bridge where it is destroyed.

After the landslide removed the weight from the magma, the pressure was released EXPLOSIVELY and laterally! Sideways not UP! The blast flattened trees up to 27 miles away. Spirit lake, the "Jewel of Mount St. Helens", was hit by the blast and the water of the lake was pushed up to 800 feet up the valley picking up the trees leveled in the first instant and washing them back down into the lake by the receding water. Spirit Lake is now much shallower and bigger than it used to be. Two new lakes were formed by the eruption. The column of smoke and ash reached 15 miles into the air and circled the globe in days. Surprisingly enough Spirit lake recovered much faster than the land around it. The process surprised the scientists with how fast it went from an anaerobic organic soup to life supporting lake.

After the pressure was release came the pyroclastic flows made up of rocks, pumice, ash, and gas were traveling at speeds up to 100 mph with temperatures of 1500F. Through the afternoon layer upon layer of these flows were built up. The groundwater under these flows eventually felt the heat and became superheated. The pressurized steam erupted like geysers through the flows with incredible intensity and the odd explosion formed craters. Some are hundreds of feet deep and 1/4 of a mile across.

If you ever get the opportunity to make it to southern Washington it is well worth the trip into the Johnston Observatory, truly amazing stuff. The Johnston Observatory is about 5.5 miles from the lava dome. The Coldwater Lake Observatory is much further back and is interesting but not as well done as the Johnston Observatory.

**Subject: Walla Walla Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.**

**Date: Tue, 05 Oct 1999 20:18:18**

Walla Walla Washington was a maintenance stop for Millie, we were slightly overdue on her 5000 km oil change and Walla Walla had an oil change place big enough to handle RVs and was small enough to be reasonable to move around in. We stopped at a place called the Pit Stop. Normally the quick oil places are pretty good if they wash the windows and vacuum under the driver's seat. This place Bonnie really liked. They vacuumed the whole carpet in the RV including under the kitchen table and washed EVERY window. Bonnie's work done for a month! ;-)



*The majestic Columbia River*

We ended up getting out of the oil change place pretty quick and headed downtown for lunch. Walla Walla is about 29,000 people and has a good sized wine industry. We stopped into a tasting place and picked up a couple of bottles. Almost next door is a place called the Merchants Deli and French Bakery where we stopped for lunch. The place was voted best deli, best music venue, and best people watching in a public survey. The food was pretty good and we picked up a couple of cinnamon buns in our continuing North America bakery challenge. We will try them tomorrow morning. The people watching was pretty good too. We ate at one of the tables on the street and really enjoyed the nice warm air and sunny skies.

They have an interesting "number system" for taking orders. We put in our order for lunch and they handed us a playing card "King of Clubs" when the order was ready they hollered out our King of Clubs and delivered our order.

The architecture in town is nice and the people really friendly. Had a great time and we spent most of the afternoon walking around Walla Walla Washington.

We jumped back in the RV and headed toward Hells Gate State Park in Idaho. We are crossing the "thumb" of Idaho heading toward Montana and looking at the maps, there aren't a lot of campgrounds open on the east side of the thumb. We didn't want a real long day tomorrow so we had to make at least into the west edge of Idaho. Hells Gate is as close to edge as you can get. We are camped on the bank of the Snake River, and across the Snake River is Washington.

Lewiston, Idaho right across the Snake River from Clarkston Washington (any guesses that this area is part of the Lewis and Clark Trail would be correct) is a SEAPORT! Ocean going freighters travel 470 miles up the Columbia River to pick up grains, timber, and other riches from the interior. On one stretch of road we were close to the Columbia and had a chance to watch a sailboat going up river wing on wing and just FLYING! (For the non sailors wing on wing is when you are sailing with the wind right on your back and you have the main out on one side and the jib out on the other, looking down from the top it would look like a bird with two wings spread out on either side of the hull.)

We went through incredible farms of corn, wheat, and onions today. MILES and MILES of them. At one place we drove by a food processing plant and wondered what they were processing, moments later we got the smell of onions. This was confirmed by a passing LARGE open dump truck style tractor trailer full of onions. The bulk of the area would be desert without extensive irrigation.

**Subject: Montana**

**Date: Thu, 07 Oct 1999 17:23:27**

BIG Sky Country! More than a slogan, it DELIVERS! Hard to believe but the lowest point in Montana is on the Kootenai River (1820 feet) in the Kootenai Mountains! We were traveling west from Idaho on

190 through the passes. Homestate pass was 6375 ft. After a long haul uphill we made it to a 5 mile long 6% down grade and started up a long hill not labeled as a pass but it sure felt like one, about 3 miles into the hill they had the chain-up area for the trucks. (Chains are required for the passes in winter). Then a few miles later of steady uphill we crested the "pass", greeted with a incredible view of a plateau with mountains on either side. The down was not even posted as a significant grade and about a half mile down was the chain-off area. We're high here at 4080 feet according to the GPS, 0.3 miles north of our Douglas Harbour mooring, and a tad west.

We also passed the continental divide and are currently within walking distance of the junction between the Jefferson and Madison Rivers. Where "According to the Geological Survey, this is the headwaters of the Missouri River" the way it is worded makes it sound like the park service has taken some flack and is pointing a finger at the Geological Survey "don't blame us they said so!"

We did a walk from the campground at Missouri Headwaters State Park to the Missouri River headwaters. Not what we typically think of as headwaters. The junction of the Madison and Jefferson rivers is a very deep and turbulent area with lots of whirlpools. There was a fur trading post nearby but it has long since been washed away by the spring floods.

Tomorrow we should be in Yellowstone National Park for a visit to Old Faithful and a few more geysers. We are planning a few days in the park to see some of the sights. There is supposed to be a frost tonight (Our first). We did some planning last night and a week from now we should be in Deadwood South Dakota for another mail drop. If the weather holds as nice as it has been, we may swing a little further east and pick up a few of the states we are unlikely to be able to see if we don't. We are currently thinking a trek to the Lincoln Boyhood Memorial in Indiana, but we both think we're pushing our luck.

Considering that Fredericton has had snow already, we are really pushing it.

**Subject:       Yellowstone**  
**Date:           Sun, 10 Oct 1999 20:14:19**

Ok, everybody's heard of Old Faithful, even me. But what about the NEAT geysers, like Castle (older than Old Faithful), Grand (Higher than Old Faithful), Giant (can erupt up to an hour!), and Turban (so regular you can practically set your watch by it) and the colorful pools, Belgian, Chromatic, and Beauty pool . I never heard of them and were just as interesting as Old Faithful. When we got here we figured we would just spend a little while at Old Faithful and then work our way back through the basins and drives to the campsite. There was so many neat things to see and spend time watching that we were too late to see anything beyond the Old Faithful area.



*Grand Geyser eruption*

We saw and got some great pictures of Old Faithful. It erupts regularly and has a large parking lot nearby, probably explaining it's popularity. They can predict when Old Faithful will blow her top plus



or minus ten minutes and she erupts 21 to 23 times a day. Other geysers are even more regular, Turban a small one, erupts every 20 minutes. Grand which is higher than Old Faithful erupts every 7 to 15 hours. Turban typically triggers Grand and we were just a few minutes from Grand when she blew. We did see the eruption but not up close (we were on our way back doing a brisk walk and then all out running) but was still erupting when we got front row seats for the last half of the eruption. NEAT STUFF.

We had to make our way back to the campground and see if we could get our pictures downloaded before the 8 pm quiet time. There is no power at the campground so we have to use the generator to download the pictures from our camera and recharge our phone. (95 pictures)

The way back proved a mite interesting as well. A lot of the animals come out at dusk. We passed one flock of cars watching buffalo down in the woods, another at a clearing watching a few more, at the end of a clearing the cameras were pointed at another area, A WOLF. For a wolf we stopped, even if they are transplanted Canadians! Bonnie got out the binoculars and we watched for a few minutes before moving on. We don't like to disturb the animals so we tend not to stay long. We drove off and about three corners later there was a buffalo on the side of the road, on the inside of a blind corner. Bonnie got within about six feet of a very large buffalo. Apparently Darwin processes are a little more active here.

We got a big yellow piece of paper all by itself when we checked into the campground. "MANY VISITORS HAVE BEEN GORED BY BUFFALO" A buffalo can weight 2000 pounds, sprint to 30 mph (3 times faster than you!) They may appear tame. Do not approach a buffalo. (With a neat little drawing of a person with a camera flying through the air with a buffalo giving him a lift.) Darwin alive and well. We were by our buffalo before we really had much of a chance to say hi, it was more of an OH SH\*T!

The Old Faithful Inn is an amazing structure and if you are in the area it is definitely worth a stop for rubbernecking. The entrance is truly something to behold. At \$100 to \$150 a night, we like our campground for \$15. There is no TV, no telephone, and no pool at the Inn.

We spent our second day in Yellowstone covering from Old Faithful back to the campground at Madison Jct. We stopped in at the visitor center to get the predicted time of the eruptions, and since the movie was starting in a few minutes we stayed for that, then Old Faithful was going to erupt in a few minutes after that so we stayed for that. We didn't dare say any longer or we would be leaving Yellowstone on Nov. 7 when they close the place to wheeled vehicles. We did work our way back to the campground through the different basins, drives and boardwalks, but that was all we got done. There were lots of really neat things to see including a herd of Buffalo in the parking lot of the Grand Prismatic Pool. If you ever get the chance to see the Grand Prismatic Pool, do it is truly amazing.

The Grand Prismatic Pool is surrounded by algae beds that are many different colors, the all over background is kind of a soft pink then there are great streaks 4-8 feet wide of red nearly black, orange, yellows, and bright pinks. The pool itself is a clear on the lip, bright green further in and a deep blue in



*Beauty Pool*

the center. It was cool today with a strong breeze so steam was a problem when trying to get good pictures. The sun shining on the pool did produce reflections off the water in the steam and it looked like there was red, green, blue as well as the abundant white fog rising from the pool.

The Great Fountain Geyser was really neat too. We stayed for quite a while to watch the eruption. Unlike most that are quiet then erupt and then go quiet, the Great Fountain Geyser's eruption will look like it has gone quiet only to burst forth with energy again. Within sight of Great Fountain is the White Cone Geyser, a massive cone built up after thousands of years of eruptions the mouth is down to about 4 inches wide now and does not have a very long or high eruption. We got a little too close to the White Cone Geyser and both Millie and I got soaked.

We headed over to the Fountain Paint Pots area. This area has the Fountain Paint Pots which is an area of boiling mud. It looks like bubbling latex paint with shades from off white to a pale red. It also has a Furmarole, something like a geyser with no water. Any water making its way in is quickly vaporized and expelled. Sounds like a blast furnace in full operation. There are also more hot pools of crystal clear, blue, and green water, as well as geysers and algae beds.

While we were downloading pictures (110 of them) we had a large male elk walk by within a few feet of Millie's windshield. He had obviously been fighting with someone and definitely looked a little worse for wear. We did get a picture of him through the windshield.

Tomorrow we will work our way out of the park. We intended to visit a number of places on the way out and if we make it to Mammoth Hot Springs by early afternoon we will head out of the park and if not we will camp there.

Roaring mountain, Obsidian Cliff, and the Lion's Gate (called Golden Gate in another brochure) were real interesting stops but they were also short stops.

We did stop for a little over an hour and a half at Mammoth Hot Springs. Around hot springs there is usually a mineral deposit which gradually builds up over time. Old ones have what looks like a terraced buildup from different rates of flow over the years. The Mammoth Hot Spring are hot springs that have formed large terraces. The boardwalk says there is a 300 FOOT gain in elevation. We did see Millie from the Canary Spring. She did look a LONG way down.



*Mammoth Hot Springs*

We got out of the park and drove around Gardner twice (missed the Route 89 sign the first time), and headed out on the road. We are back in Montana and will be heading toward Custer's Last Stand Memorial tomorrow. Then we will tuck down into Wyoming to see the Devil's Tower and then over to Deadwood for a day or two of sightseeing and day tripping.

In case your wondering, 311 pictures in Yellowstone!



**Subject: Devils Tower**

**Date: Tue, 12 Oct 1999 19:36:44**

We are sitting outside on a cool night watching the sun set on Devils Tower. The light is fading now and the shadows are darkening the groves in the rocks making the spire seem more and more ominous.

Devils Tower, perhaps best known as a backdrop in Close Encounters of the Third Kind, is a volcanic plug standing tall and rigid as the sedimentary rock was eroded from around it. Long ago the magma flowed up to the surface of a great plain, the top of the plug was poorly insulated and shows cracks caused by the sudden cooling of the magma. The bottom was insulated by hundreds of feet of soil which allowed the magma to cool slower and much harder. It is made up of four and five sided columns that are much freer of the checks that allow erosion. The soft sedimentary rock gradually eroded away leaving the volcanic plug 1280 feet

higher than the surrounding plains. The tower is so hard that it is believed the last major column to break free of the tower did so nearly 10,000 years ago.

The tower is of significant value to aboriginal Americans and there is a lot of legends that surround the tower. One I like in particular goes something like this:

There were seven little girls that were being hunted by great bears and they climbed up onto a rock to escape. They prayed to the great spirit to rescue them and the rock began to grow, the bears jumped and clawed at the tower of rock as it rose and made the great scratch marks in the side of the tower. The tower came so high that the seven girls reached the sky and became the constellation Pleiades. (Often called the Seven Sisters)

According to one of the guides about 12 minutes of Close encounters were actually filmed here. Most of the filming was done around a 30 foot scale replica.

There were at least three sets of climbers climbing the tower while we walked around the base. The paved path travels around the base of the tower and in some places it is close enough that you can lay your hand on the tower, other places are far enough back to allow picture taking. We stopped a number of times and watched the climbers. The acoustics of the tower are amazing. You could hear climbers talking as well as the doves living in the cliff cooing. You could hear the tinkle of the climbing equipment as the climbers rose up the sheer rock, even though they were hundreds of feet above.

One of the first climbers actually drove a series of wooden stakes into the cracks and created a wooden ladder up the side of the cliff. You can still see it. Since then there have been many routes made up the mountain. Over 3000 have climbed up the mountain this year with over 1500 making it to the summit.

We enjoyed watching them, from the ground!