

This story gets a bit long but, hey, it was a long and great trip so hunker down with a snack or two and join us on our trip to beautiful New Hampshire.

Fall Color in New England

Cindy is on the phone to tell us “Good Bye”. After a full day of work, we are finally ready for our long-anticipated trip to New England and we ask God’s blessing as we leave our home at 5:15PM, October 2, 2007, on a Tuesday evening. The little red Cavalier is loaded to the brim with all the things necessary.... like cameras and doll clothes for grandkids and snacks and sodas and plastic canvas projects and maps and a GPS ---- oh, and a suitcase of clothes too. Jim tells me that anything else would need to be hung on the outside.

It is a beautiful fall evening and WE ARE READY TO TRAVEL! Highway 460 to the Route 29 bypass is totally blocked so we turn-tail and try a different avenue out of town.

Hooray! We are officially out of Lynchburg and stop to top-off the gas tank in Madison Heights. Business 29 through town is bumper to bumper traffic. Apparently nobody is able to use the bypass today.

The mountains loom ahead of us as we pass by Patricia’s street. Once again, she is not waiting there for us so I guess we will have to go on without her --- and she didn’t leave the ham she promised at the corner for us either. Can you imagine!

Evening shadows drift over the mountains as the sun slides from view. All along the way vehicles are pulling into driveways and people are walking into their homes. It is suppertime and the world is slowing its pace. Everything seems to be at peace tonight. We claw our way up Afton Mountain, ears a-poppin’. Way off in the distance a church steeple reaches toward the sky from its lush green mountainside. Interstate 64 is one long necklace of truck-beads. Hillsides of black cattle are busy packing away a few last morsels of grass before bedtime.

It is dusk as we hurtle northward on Interstate 81. Pink-gilded clouds fluff high above yet more black cattle. A horse and rider trot across an overpass ahead of us at a much slower speed than all these trucks on 81.

The Dairy Queen in Harrisonburg yields some very HOT crispy chicken sandwiches. It has been a long time (eight hours and 110 miles) since lunch. We call Larry to let him know we are on our way and wonder how people ever managed to travel before cell phones.

Just inside Pennsylvania we stop at a rest area to stretch our legs.



There we find Kyle, a lovely, friendly caricature artist from Roanoke. Kyle is the type of lady who gives you the feeling that you have known her for years and years and we enjoy our chat with her. She has family connections with a restaurant in downtown Lynchburg; we need to scope out that spot when we get home.

Jim is running on adrenalin (since 4:30 this morning, no less....) and wants to go farther so we roll on through Chambersburg and other towns which are the boyhood stomping grounds of coworker Gary. There are huge barns and lit-up farmyards beside us. Daylight, where are you? I want to SEEEEEEE!

Traffic is running about 75% trucks and there are some mighty impressive rigs on this road tonight. Eventually, we find a safe place to sleep for a few hours, then drive on through mist and fog.

Daylight explodes over Scranton, Pennsylvania, with mountains all around us. Oh, such a gorgeous place! We leave Interstate 81 and turn onto Interstate 84 toward New York. Yesssss! The trees are full of color. It's gonna be a good day! A couple of renegade crows play a daring game of "chicken" with traffic and the side roads are dotted with school buses.

Patricia, you would love this trip. We planned to stop for a biscuit but this road leads us through a remote area. Where is that ham you were supposed to bring?

Aha! A sign promises McDonalds and breakfast ahead. Two miles off the interstate is Milford, PA. Like most little towns across our land, Milford exudes lots of civic pride and plenty of

antique shops designed to relieve tourists of their cash. Pretty pink roses beside the streets make their last hurrah for summer.

We cross the Delaware River and enter New York. Half an hour later Newburg, where we have reservations for tonight, appears before us at 9 AM. Well, this plan may need revision. A call to Super 8's 800 number changes that reservation to Albany, New York. Our navigator (That would be me.) apparently can't read the map and road signs because we are crossing the Hudson River and our turn onto Interstate 87 is supposed to be west of that river. Oops!! These sign guys pull surprises and called the road we were supposed to use the New York Thruway with no signs calling it Interstate 87. Time for an alternate path.

We drive through Poughkeepsie, New York, as we search for a way to Interstate 87 north. (Here is where Smith Bros. cough drops began in 1852. The last drops were produced in 1972 when the family business was sold to Werner-Lambert and the manufacturing of the drops was moved to Rockford, Illinois. Rockford is about 25 miles from my birthplace. Isn't it a small world?) I enjoy the name of this town. When I was a kid, the joke used to be that we were going to Poughkeepsie whenever we were just meandering on a Sunday afternoon to look at neighbors' crops. A monstrous bridge takes us back across the Hudson River and we eventually do find 87 northbound. Whew! The sun is poking through the clouds and everything looks better now. Maples are dressed in their finest red leaves. Pumpkin patches and dried corn fields add even more color to the scene.

Kingston, New York, boasts its proud history of being the state's first capital in 1777. Just to put that date in perspective, my Great Grandpa Saaijenga was born in Germany 45 years after this town was already a booming place. Well, the term "booming" might actually better describe the sounds when those British soldiers arrived here during the Revolutionary War and burned most of the buildings in town...kind of loused up Kingston's capital status.

Do you remember Washington Irving's story about Rip Van Winkle? Palenville was Rip's fictional home and road signs hasten to advise tourists of that proud fact. I bet old Rip would be a bit shocked today at all of the modern traffic passing by. His 20-year nap might be disturbed.

A stop at a service center near Malden, New York, yields a nice New York pin but no brass ornament for my collection. It is 78 degrees here at the moment. Ah, yes, we are in the cold, cold North now.

Eventually we find our motel near Albany, New York. (It is, in fact, in Colonie, where coworker Melissa Prinzavelli's parents live.) This motel isn't the finest place we have ever stayed but it is comfortable once I go to the office for soap. Oh, and the half & half curdles in my breakfast coffee. This Super 8 is probably not rated as "5 Star". No wonder they didn't charge much (\$48.00).

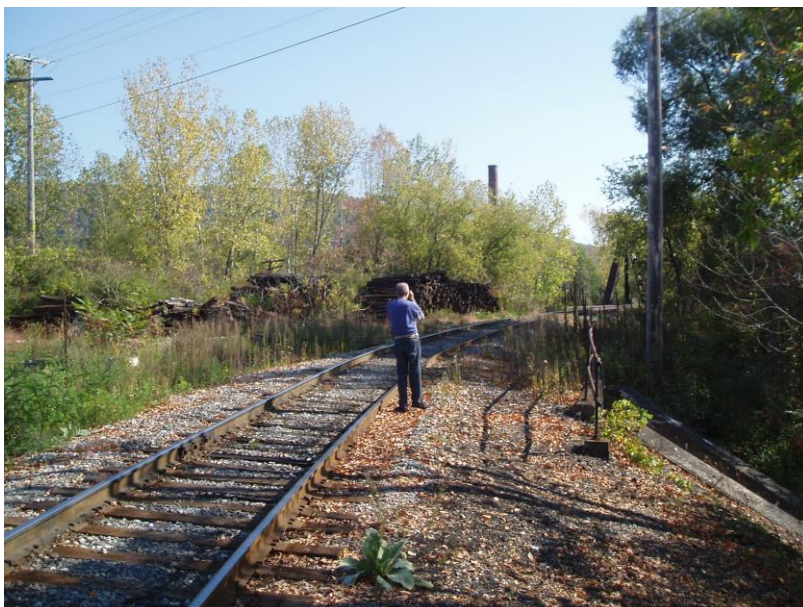
October 4, 7:15AM and we are headed north again. The sign on a church states, “Some things must be believed to be seen.” Soon we cross the Mohawk River and Barge Canal. It is wide and smooth; a motor boat is already rocketing eastward toward the sunrise. I87 southbound is a parking lot this morning but we are rolling just fine, thank you. Cosmos and black-eyed Susans are blooming in the center median.

We leave the interstate and are threading our way through rural New York State. Palatial horse farms are on luxuriant green hillsides alongside modest houses and mobile homes. In the village of Schuylerville Jim spots an old Boston and Maine depot (converted into a home) and we stop to get a picture, then cross the Hudson River again. Scenic Route 4 leads us along the Champlain Canal. Oh, such lovely countryside. As usual, my mind goes into its free-wheeling mode and I am immersed in the excitement of packet boats being towed by mules along this canal so many years ago. This sixty-three mile canal was built in the early 1800s to connect the Hudson River and Lake Champlain which gave merchants access to the Great Lakes.

We are 671 miles from home now and spot a sign for “The Office Bar and Grill”....bet lots of local folks go to the “office” on weekends. Hey! I just saw a snowmobile, all covered up on a trailer. Yup, we are getting into North Country. Velvet verdant alfalfa is about a foot tall in the fields. There must not have been a frost here yet.

In the little town of Fort Ann, New York, we park beside the railroad tracks and Jim has his camera focused on an abandoned depot. I am focused on an interesting pile of rocks alongside our car. The volleyball-size black specimen with white streaks will look just dandy in my collection back home in front of our house. Jim teases that he is getting worried about our gas mileage, but loads it into our trunk anyway.

Along the way we detour off the main drag and Jim clomps around the old Delaware and Hudson Railroad tracks.





Jim is searching for the old station in Whitehall, New York. In October 1975 he was here and took some great pictures of passing trains but we just cannot seem to locate it. A stop at a local repair shop yields the information that it was demolished about 15 years ago and has been replaced by an Amshack a few blocks away. Phooey! Whitehall is steeped in history. In 1776 the British Navy was planning to create problems for the revolting characters in the New World by cruising down Lake Champlain, then whizzing down the Hudson River Valley and eventually invading New York City. A fellow named Benedict Arnold (This fellow went on to some less patriotic endeavors later.) built some boats in Whitehall Harbor and headed the Brits off at the pass, thus Whitehall boasts being the birthplace of the U.S. Navy. (Actually, the Brits whomped Benedict's crew but, by that time, it was winter and the invaders were not especially thrilled at the prospect of tromping to New York City in snow up to their tushes so they stopped at Whitehall. By spring the Americans were better organized and were able to hold off the pests from up the Hudson River.) Marblehead and Beverly, Massachusetts; Machias, Maine; Providence, Rhode Island; as well as good old Philadelphia all claim that same distinction of being the birthplace of the U.S Navy, but Whitehall has a lovely sign at their city limits so they win the argument in my view.



10:40 AM. Down a long hill and around a curve is the Vermont State Line ahead of us.



I've never been to Vermont before but it looks just as pretty as New York did a half mile ago. The visitors' center has some piping hot Vermont coffee and it tastes so good!



Lumpy Green Mountains spread before us. The scenery looks like something from a calendar with classic sleepy, little towns and white-steepled churches nestled among the mountainsides.

On the south edge of Rutland is a garden shop with five or six life-size cows on its roof...not just real sure why that was done but it certainly does make you notice the place. Nearby is the “Thelma and Louise Sandwich Shop”. I think of my explorations with my pal Lottie eight years ago in Northern Illinois. She always called us Thelma and Louise and she would enjoy this adventure too. John Deere (the tractor guy) was born in this area in 1804 so I would expect to see a green tractor or mower in front of every garage but it just isn’t so. In fact, we do not see a single sign proclaiming John’s ties to this town.

Highway 4 takes us eastward past mountains all dressed for fall. We are in the Pico Mountain ski area but it certainly does not feel like snow today. A sign in front of the Killington Snowmobile Tours building shows 75 degrees and the parking lot is empty. A sign warns, “Moose crossing next 5 miles”. This isn’t Kansas, Toto! We go down a mountainside and seem to be descending into the very bowels of the earth. A brook, gurgling over the rocks, accompanies us down while sunlight dances among the red maples.



We stop to take pictures of a magnificent old barn and house below. They just seem to scream, "Vermont!"



Bridgewater, Vermont an interesting place. Years ago the farmers around here raised sheep and there was a large mill built in town to process all that "lanolin-laced gold". That's the mill in the 1980s below:



Eventually the sheep were gone but the town was left with an abandoned wool mill. What to

do!?! Well, the city fathers converted that old mill into a great shopping center/meeting center and even the local post office.

Just ahead of us is a covered bridge so we turn off the highway to investigate. Oh, it is so pretty! A couple is enjoying a picnic along the creek bank and fishermen are busy upstream. Peace abounds. A few miles later I spot a snowmobile crossing sign.....just like in Northern Wisconsin.

Our friend Stacy Monroe is a cashier at our local Wal-Mart and Woodstock, Vermont, is her hometown. It is a comfortable place and we feel a connection to it because of Stacy. A bed-and-breakfast in the center of town is painted BRILLIANT yellow with grass-green shutters. Oodles of bright red geraniums spill out of window boxes in a riot of late fall color.



Jim takes a picture of the official Woodstock school sign.



Wait! I think we just heard Stacy's infectious laughter ring out across the football field. Her parents rest in a cemetery on the edge of town. Don't worry, Mom and Dad. We will watch over your little girl.

Just around a curve is a hillside filled with miniature Holstein cows.



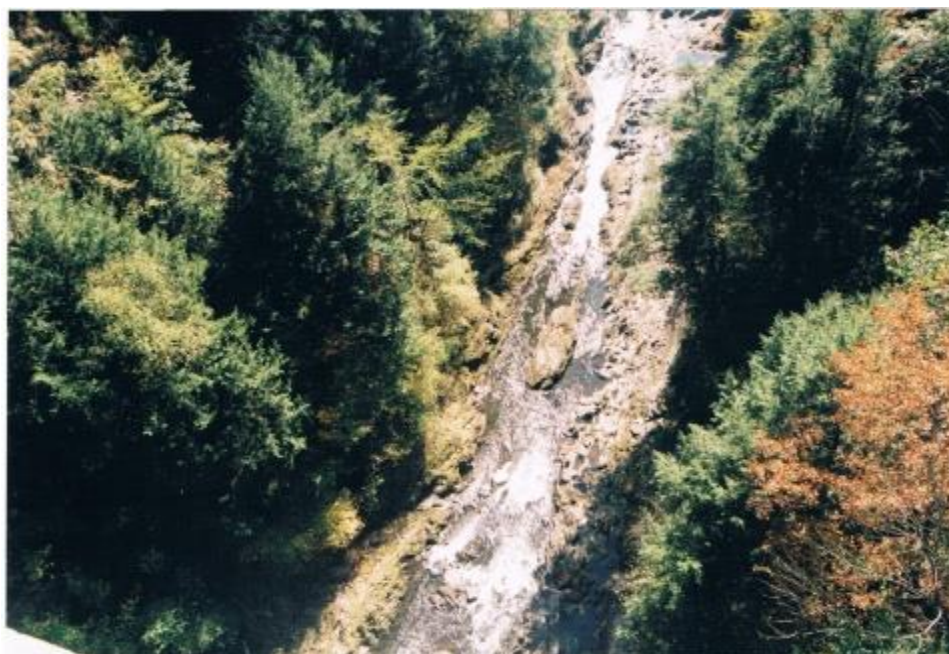
This seems like a good place to stop. It is a tourist trap/farm market and those stuffed cows, along with pigs, skunks, and chickens sell for forty bucks a pop.





What we do buy is a bright purple sweatshirt with “Vermont” across the front. It is a bit warm to wear that treasure today.

Stacy told us to be sure to visit Queechee Gorge and there is a knot of traffic ahead of us. Cars and tour buses fill the parking lot. But we want a closer look at this spectacular chasm in our earth.





Both sides of the bridge (built in 1911 when my mom was only a year old) have a protected walkway and we stroll 163 feet above the river. Of course! there is a welcome center and gift shop. We “help keep Vermont green” and leave with a moose cookie cutter and a Vermont pin.



White River Junction, Vermont's Super 8 Motel is our home for tonight but first we search out the refurbished depot/welcome center. Here a friendly attendant copies information from a rare local history book for me. Jim finds an impressive collection of old railroad equipment:



Here we meet up with a fellow who is king of the road:



The gal also gives us directions to the Denny's Restaurant in nearby West Lebanon, New

Hampshire. Yum!

Tonight we doze in front of the TV. We have worn out our eyes today from so much looking. Larry calls to check our progress and location. Ya gotta love those cell phones.

Friday morning, October 5. 799 miles from home; fog is everywhere and a jacket feels good. This fog is NOT cooperating with my desire to “see”! And it doesn’t pay a bit of attention to state lines as we cross the Connecticut River into New Hampshire. A few miles later at Claremont we come across the Claremont and Concord Railroad Corporation. Today its stock stands idle for the moment. Old locomotives and passenger cars are parked beside the main building, just waiting to fire up again for duty. They are still a power and community value. Don’t you just know, Jim has his camera a-clickin’.

After back-tracking across that Connecticut River again, we ramble along Route 5 as it hugs the west bank of that river for miles southward through rural Vermont. Many older houses have evidence of attached barns, even though many of those barns have long since been converted into garages.



Very few buildings in this area are built with brick. About 75% are wooden with just a few fashioned from stones and rocks. The Vermont Country Store offers lots of old-time products at tourist trap prices.



We are in covered bridge country now and rumble across the Worrall Bridge. One of 100 still-standing covered bridges in this state, Worrall Bridge, built in 1870, boasts a sign at its east edge stating, "Speed Limit- horses at a walk, motor vehicles 10MPH". About a mile west is the Bartonsville Bridge, where we spend some restful time, just soaking in the peace.



Cars rattle across the bridge on their way to someplace important as a young couple across from the parking area hammer away at their task of readying their chicken house for the coming winter.

Just up the road is the beautiful Inn at Cranberry Farm, a bed and breakfast where you can go for a weekend of scrap booking for only \$450.00 per person. (Wonder if we should make reservations for next weekend there?) High up on a hill about a half mile away a bright red caboose peeks out of the trees and Jim is more than happy to dodge wet white sheets, flapping on the wash line, as he gets the perfect picture of it in somebody's back lawn.



The Green Mountain Railroad is running today and it passes by the bridge on its way from Bellows Falls, Vermont. Happy passengers wave as their trip is recorded on Jim's film.



Their next stop is Chester Depot and we chat with many of them as they mill around the little town and scope out the local antique shops.



2:15PM and we are rolling southward, still along that beautiful Connecticut River, but now in New Hampshire. Two railroad snowplows are sitting along a siding, just waiting for their chance to make the snow fly again.

At Keene we make the turn onto Highway 101, the road eastward to Bedford and Larry and Ellen's home. Dublin Pond glows in the autumn sunlight to our right. Two hundred forty two acres of glass-smooth water mirrors gold and crimson beauty on its shore as boaters enjoy the glorious afternoon...one more scene to store in my memory bank.



Another “Moose Crossing” sign reminds us that we certainly are not in Virginia.



We are HUNGRY and Milton has a McDonalds to fill our tummies. A call to Ellen reveals that we are only about ten minutes from their house and she gives us specific directions for a shortcut there.

Hooray! We find their large green house, nestled among tall pines and still-blooming flowers.





Ellen is on a soccer run this afternoon so we stow our gear in the guest bedroom and relax. It has been a long ride!

Ellen's lasagna lives up to her gourmet reputation and the evening passes in a hurry. Emma wants Gramma to tell blackmail stories about her dad and aunts and uncle. This is possible and I gladly give her ammunition for the next family reunion. There are new doll clothes to try on the dolls, a Halloween decoration to hang, and early Christmas gifts to open.



Sleep comes easily in the bed which my parents purchased in 1941 in Northern Illinois.

Balance	- -	\$	250 00
Deposit	- -	\$	
Deposit	- -	\$	
Total	- -	\$	
Am't this check		\$	51 45
Balance	- -	\$	

No. _____ Date 3-29 1941

To Yeath


For Bedroom suit

Framed sale bills from my father and Larry's Great Grandpa Faist adorn the walls.

FOLKERT SAALJENGA

FRIDAY, OCT. 4

TIME—1:00 p.m.
REASON—Due to health reasons
LUNCH STAND ON GROUNDS



IMITATED BUT NEVER DUPLICATED

LOCATION
1 mile North German Valley then 1 1/4 miles East, 3 miles South Elbert Corners then 3 1/4 miles East, 4 miles West of Seward on Edwardsville Road.
WATCH FOR GREEN ARROWS!

49 DAIRY CATTLE

Holsteins

A Home Raised Herd, ABS Bred for 13 Years.
Records of milk sold show this herd average to be 40 lbs. of milk per cow per day for the 7 1/2 months of 1963.

- 27 Cows, milk age, all stages of lactation
- 10 Heifers, Bred
- 2 Heifers, Open
- 3 Calves, 8 to 12 months
- 4 Calves under 4 months

3 Guenserys

Machinery

- Casa VAC Tractor, Cultivator
- L.H.C. Indegate Seeder
- A.C. Scar Mower Attachment
- A.C. Pick-up Attachment
- Wagon on Rubber
- Green Chop Box
- Feeder Box
- Heavy Duty Malco Mow 48-ft. Bale Conveyor with Hangers and Cut Off and 1 h.p. motor, like new
- Barb Cleaner, chain for 28 cow barn, like new
- Country Tank Heater
- N.H. Cylinder Shelter
- 10-in. Barb Fan, 1/6 h.p. High Speed Motor
- Huma Road with Attachments for Casa 6-A Combine; also Pick-up for 6-A Combine
- 20 Cow Chains
- Gasoline Lantern

Dairy Equipment

- 4 Surge Units
- 2 L.H.C. Stainless Units
- Delivered Pump, 1/2 h.p. motor
- Pipe Line for 28 Cows
- 14 Water Cups
- 8-Gal Milk Cooler
- 24 10-gal Milk Cans
- Pails and Strainers
- Wash Tank

FEED

- 1200 Bales Alfalfa-Brome Hay
- 450 Bales Straw

CLERK
C.H. Cleveland, Freeport

AUCTIONEERS
Dale DeVries, Pearl City
Russell Schier, Oregon

CASHER
Lucille Lettig, Freeport

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	328-1137	348-3134	3-1338	4-9700	7-1331	718	333-0020	374-2334

We all attend Anna's soccer game and cheer on the team as they win 3 to zip.





Next project is to assemble the troops for the trip to Maine. Because there is an influx of “leaf-lookers” in the area this weekend, not one rental van or SUV is available and we won’t all fit in one vehicle so Ellen volunteers to stay home.

Highway 101 is our avenue of choice today. Yesterday it led us across southern New Hampshire but this morning the signs tell of Plymouth and the seacoast ahead. Highway department sand farms are filled to the rafters; Old Man Winter will soon make a big dent in the current supply. Aha! A turn northward onto Interstate 95 promises the Maine destination. This road is packed with traffic today.

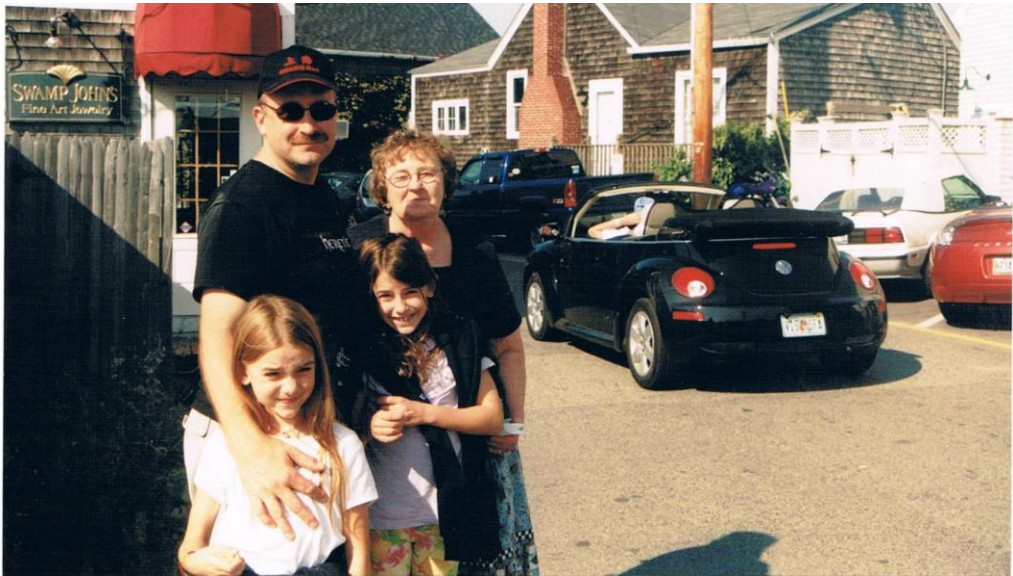
We cross the breathtakingly beautiful green Piscataqua River Bridge (built in 1971) into Maine.



This river is actually a 12-mile-long tidal estuary which is considered one of the best harbors on the east coast. The very strong tidal current helps keep the water ice-free. Road signs indicate Navy yards and towns that I've only read about all my life.....and now I am here! We are such a long way from my German Valley, Illinois, roots. "Who woulda thunk?!" just nine years ago that this would be a part of my life. I am SO blessed! A little building along the road displays a sign on its roof, "God Bless America." I heartily agree.

U.S. Highway 1 is lined with tourist fiscal reduction opportunities, ready to lure in fresh business as heavy traffic crawls into Ogunquit, Maine's city limits. A young man walking beside us is making better time than we are. Perkin's Cove, a part of Ogunquit, is ahead of us as is the Atlantic Ocean and about 50 kazillion people and cars...and they all want the same parking place. Larry says it is as busy here today as it is in the middle of summer.





The Marginal Way walkway leads us along the incredible rocky coastline for about a mile.



Flocks of Canadian geese wing their way southward high above us as slippery brown seals dive under and around gulls and one lone brown duck. The tide is low right now but will be about ten feet higher in a few hours so now we can see the seaweed slimed over rocks.



I think I see Big Ben way out there on the horizon. As we walk this path, the last purple asters compete with a single magenta rose for our attention.

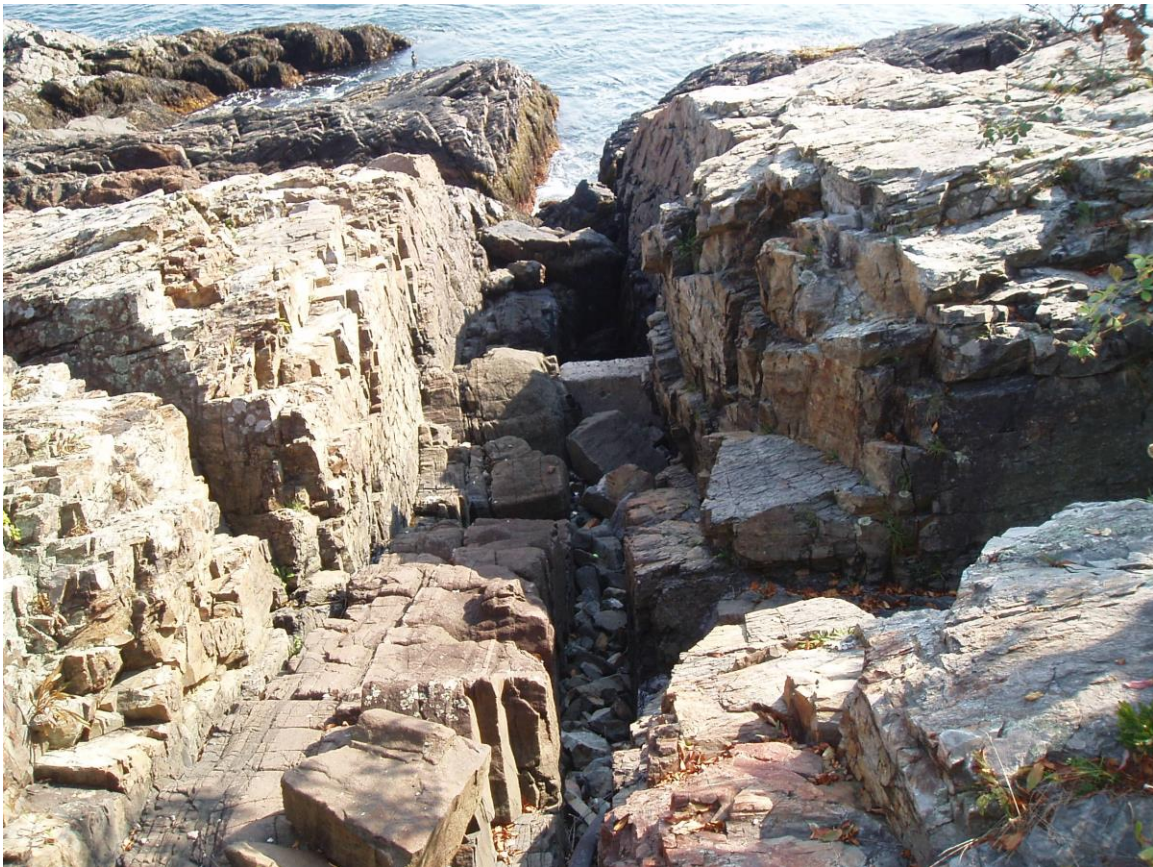


Emma and Anna scramble out on the rocks and bring me a handful of water-smoothed rocks. Oh, they feel like velvet on our cheeks.....I will treasure them mostly because my granddaughters gave them to me in this special place.





I stand here and just LOOK at the majestic sight in front of me as waves crash ever higher over the huge boulders far below us.





It is not one whit easier to leave this spot today than it was nearly two years ago and tears of emotion flow as my Jim slips his arm around me. We stand in silence, just watching this beautiful and powerful ocean.



The eyes of my imagination are seeing ancient Viking ships and pirates and British war ships and fishing rigs and graceful sailboats with billowing white sails and....hey! How in the world did Popeye and Bluto get into this picture? We best come back to 2007. Larry says we can go over to the beach at Wells and walk in the ocean. OK, LET'S GO!!!!

Slowly we creep our way out of Perkin's Cove where all resorts are "Happily Filled". Sidewalks

are carpeted with a mass of tourists. Judging by all of the bulging shopping bags, most of the pedestrians are doing their best to help out the local economy. Ogunquit has a “slam dunk” today.

Wells, Maine, is a small settlement with modest little million-dollar homes along the oceanfront. Location, location, location! About a half block from the shore we park behind the home of one of Larry and Ellen’s friends. This house is routinely rented for \$5,000 a week during the summer while the owner travels....pretty sweet.

A couple of months shy of 65, I finally get my feet in the Atlantic...and I stay there 45 minutes as the tide rises. Never in all the world has such a hick farm girl from Northern Illinois experienced such a miraculous thing! Water swirls more and more sand around my feet and more tears of emotion flow.





A bottleful of ocean water goes home with us. (*Note: in 2015: That ocean water is in a cruet on a shelf above our kitchen sink in Lynchburg, VA.*)



A good bit of sand also goes home with us in our shoes.

The sun is getting low as we travel Interstate 95 southward again. Oh, such a splendid day this has been! Very few semi tractors and trailers travel these roads...perhaps because of the lack of manufacturing in this area.

Ellen has baked a chicken and prepared my favorite-in-all-the-world fennel potato dish for dinner tonight. Fresh apple pie and ice cream is the grand finale, then Ellen and Jim discuss the best way to get to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Monday. A thunderstorm adds zip to the evening.

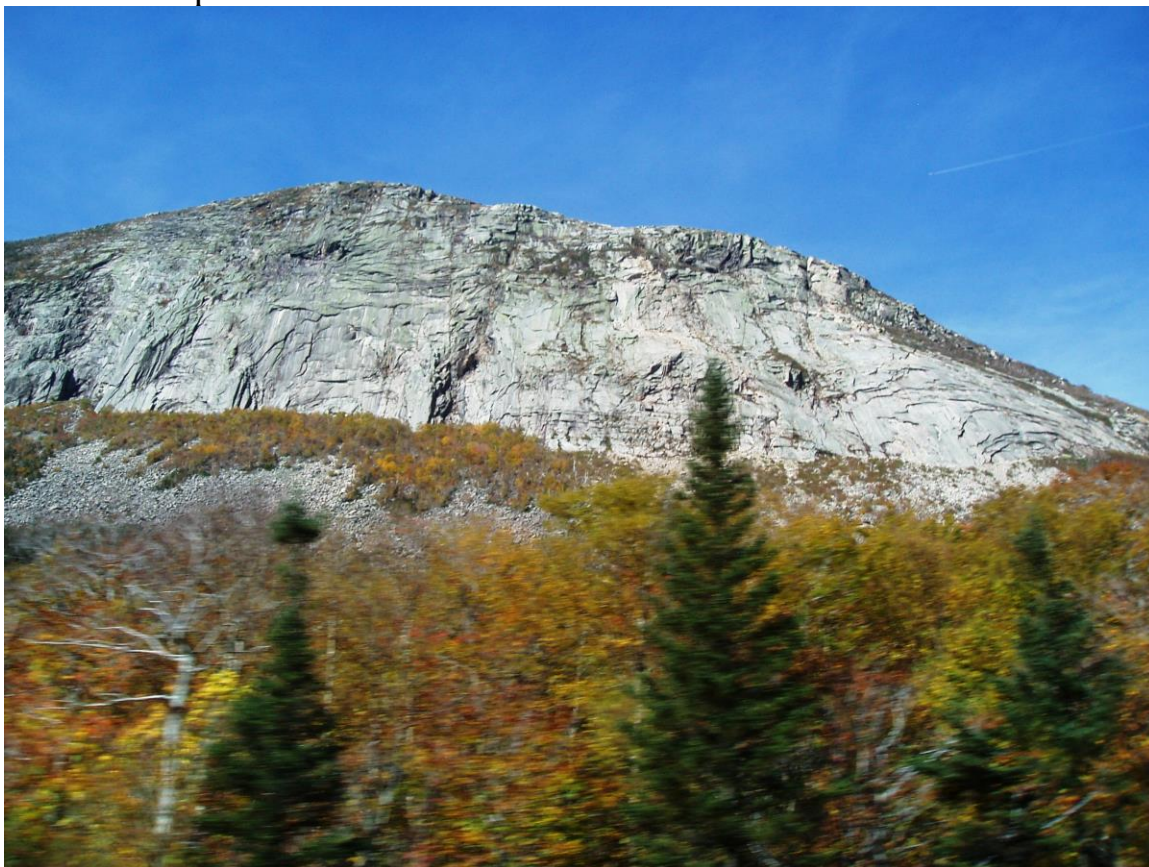
Sunday, October 7. The sky is gray and the wind is sharp. Ellen's yummy fresh raspberry muffins fuel-us-up for the day. We travel to Nashua to watch Emma's soccer team play to a score of one to one.



Then Larry, Anna, Jim, and I head north. None of the presidential candidates are in Manchester today (Obama was here this past week.) so we continue on.

Hooray! The sun has finally won its disagreement with the clouds and now can glow off the color-splashed mountains ahead of us. Oh, such a glorious sight. My heart is singing today.

Majestic whitish-rock peaks soar above the tree line.



At their feet gold and maroon trees sparkle before us.



We round a curve and Mount Washington looms ahead of us in the distance.



Less impressive is the statue of a moose painted to resemble a zebra. Equally dorky is the bumper sticker that advises, “My other car is a broom.”

We park along the highway and look at the Mount Washington Hotel at Bretton Woods. The facility is being remodeled so we can't just drive up to it. It looks to be HUGE - all snowy white with a brilliant red roof. In 1944 the Allied nations met here for a world monetary conference.



But it is time for lunch and Fabyan's Station and Restaurant is open and already filled with hungry customers.



Transoms above doors are fashioned from colored glass panels and prints of old trains abound on the walls of this restored depot. A sense of proud history permeates this building. In the late 1800s trains delivered “well-heeled” tourists from large eastern cities right to the front doors of the famous resorts for summer vacations in the cool mountain air.

Tummies full of sandwiches, we pass the Conway Scenic Railroad where folks are eagerly boarding the hissing and smoking monster for a ride through the White Mountains. It is a gorgeous day for such a trip but our destination of the day is the top of Mount Washington. Our road threads among 40 miles of drop-dead scenery and curves and awesome sights; sometimes we are seeing mountain tops through the sunroof. Ski lodges are at the ready but their customers today are running around in short sleeve shirts. They best enjoy this warm weather while it lasts.



An ancient Bombardier snowmobile sits on a trailer alongside a tiny cabin. We wonder if that that thing still runs.

The Mount Washington Auto Road is bumper-to-bumper today as we pay our \$39.00 to make the eight mile trip to another world.



They do give us a CD which tells about our trip ahead. In 1861 this road was finished and is owned now by the Mount Washington Summit Road Company. The average grade is 12% and we start our journey through flourishing forests, then realize the trees are getting shorter and spindly.





Soon we are above the tree line and the view is awesome.



I think I have spotted Big Ben again. Oh, it looks like we are on Mars or something with huge black boulders beside the narrow road. The edge of the road is right along a whole lot of empty

sky. The blacktop turns to gravel and we are almost to the top.



A horrendous wind slices through our hair as we climb the wooden stairs the rest of the way to the peak. Forty-seven MPH is supposed to be the wind speed today but it feels more like a hundred when combined with a temp of 37 degrees. (This is the very spot where the world's fastest wind was recorded in April 1934, a mere 231 miles per hour.) Hissing and snorting, spewing thick black smoke into the crystal clear air, the cog railway steam engine completes its journey to the peak and passengers spill across the summit. Now you certainly know Jim has his camera at the ready and gets some impressive pictures of this unique rail system.



The observation deck is wind-swept, to say the least and we lean into the gale as pictures are

snapped.



Jim says that he is so cold that he thinks one of his eyeballs is ready to fall out ----- time to get this guy into warmer conditions.

The visitors' center is warm and full of souvenirs and hot food and tourists. It is a great place to get more pictures of that railway.....through the windows! But the sun is getting low and we still need to go back down that eight-mile Auto Road so we descend the high wooden stairway toward the parking lot with the wind at our backs.



A man's cap whizzes past my ear....it looks like Jim's. Hey! That IS Jim's! Someone ahead of us makes a mighty grab for Jim's lid and all is once more OK in our world as we climb into Larry's car for the eight mile trip back to the base of this mountain.



We notice that the Mount Washington Cog Railway train is also leaving the top of this 6,288' heap of rocks and its silhouette against the late afternoon sky is mighty impressive.



Such a surreal experience this has been...well worth the trip and the thirty-nine bucks. The Mount Washington website will certainly be more meaningful to us since we have actually been here. I am so hooked on this place!

Our trip back to Larry's home is slow as we crawl along the highways with all the other tourists. A sign proclaims the presence of Castle in the Clouds, a mountaintop estate built by a wealthy shoe manufacturer in 1913. Doesn't that name just sing to you? Ellen has a warm supper waiting and we spend the rest of the evening just being family. Oh, and this family is the proud owner of a blonde wig so everybody (except Jim..he has the camera) has to model it tonight:





It is raining this morning (Monday, October 8) as we pull away from the still-dark house. It is hard to leave these loved-ones behind but we have a long road home ahead of us. Ellen suggested last night that we take several back roads and we are soon in Massachusetts. Worcester is impressive with stately old buildings but my mind is on another track, as usual. Years ago on Florence Road in Illinois, Cranes Grove School was remodeled into rental apartments. One renter was the infamous Mrs. Smiddy who hailed from Worcester. She kept the neighborhood hopping for about a year and I wonder if she still has ties with this town. It is still raining as we cross US Highway 20, which would take us all the way to Freeport, Illinois, within five miles of my birthplace.

Rain continues as we cross the Connecticut state line. In Hartford, modern tall buildings mingle with very old structures and just ooze character. Some of the famous people who lived here in the past were Kathryn Hepburn, Mark Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Linda Evans, and Sophie Tucker. The gold capitol dome flaunts its place of honor but my mind is back, once again, in my childhood. Hartford is the home of Hartford Insurance Company and my dad bought that insurance for years from Ted Cordes. I doubt that Ted ever visited this city but I certainly do remember many times when my parents visited Ted and his wife Fannie in Freeport. My parents rented 30 acres of cropland from Annie Ackerman and Ted also was her agent, so all business was done through him. (That brings to mind the night my folks visited Annie in German Valley. It was the dead of winter and her house was SO! COLD! And I remember her giving my folks a cup of tea but it was not even steaming anymore when she placed it before them. Isn't it amazing, the things one's mind drudges up after so many years?)

One more time we cross the Connecticut River (We followed that same river Friday for so many miles as it bubbled along between Vermont and New Hampshire.) and wonder at a quarry operation which is actually quarrying away a small mountain. Rolling westward on Interstate 84, our liquid sunshine is abundant as we approach Waterbury. These guys have a great traffic pattern! Eastbound lanes are directly above us and the vehicles are roaring along at a record pace. I sure do hope those drivers keep it between the guard rails and do not come down to our level for a visit.

Finally, sunshine breaks through the gloom near the New York state line and it highlights the lovely prison decorating both sides of the road at Beacon. We probably won't ask for roadside assistance at this spot.

Do the people here realize what beauty they have in their back yard? We soar almost in the clouds over the Delaware River at the spot where New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania touch hearts. You can see about ten feet less than forever up that long river valley and it looks to be a great place to search for visual memory treasures.

One brave little maple tree, maybe all of fifteen feet tall, stands along the road among much taller nondescript peers and shows off its autumn red glory. Kind of reminds me of "the little engine that could". Frackville, Pennsylvania, is near here. This area was deeply involved in anthracite coal mining in the early twentieth century, lifting almost 50,000 tons of the black stuff a day. Now that industry has almost ceased here but they are a proud community and are busy rebuilding their town with modern pursuits.

Let's take a shortcut to Lancaster! We veer off the interstate and cruise along an interesting back road through more mountains and cross the Appalachian Trail, which runs within twenty miles of home...but that would be a long walk so we best keep on driving. Large farmyards in the valley are beside cornfields, ripe for the harvest. One combine is doing its job as the dust flies around it. An Amish farmer and his horse are peacefully arranging a late crop of hay into long sculpted rolls, ready for baling.

Meyerstown has a pretty sign at the edge of town, extolling its existence since 1768, a few years before even the Declaration of Independence was crafted. Oh, such history! But you also need to know its original name was Tulpehocken. Yup, I'd have changed the name too.

A semi-load of white oinkers leads the way down Pennsylvania Highway 501, all the way to Lancaster, right past a house with a faded Confederate flag fluttering by its side. (Oops, did we make a wrong turn somewhere and wind up in Alabama?) Yesterday at this time we were about 500 miles north of here, starting our ascent to the top of Mount Washington.

Jim checks in at our Lancaster motel and is given the key to an already-occupied room. We

eventually get a room all our own, then find some good supper. Of course, you know the next destination is the farm country east of town. Horses are still pulling racks of emerald-green alfalfa hay from fields before the rains come in.



The air echoes with the “clop-clop” sound of folks going home to their own little private corner of the world, away from the prying eyes of tourists like us. Even the horses seem to know supper is ready in the Dutch Country.



There has been no frost yet so the tidy farm yards are filled with gorgeous flowers and pumpkins still dot the fields.





Dark brown tobacco hangs from barn rafters like curtains. The barn sides have long sections pushed outward to facilitate air movement but it certainly looks like the barns' walls are self-destructing.



A buggy and horse are parked in the lot at a local bank and the Amish man, in his traditional black garb, is getting cash from the ATM machine. Such is the blend of tradition and modern conveniences.

Tuesday, October 9. Clouds are in the east as knots of Amish kids are gathered along the streets for their buggy-bus rides to school. Mommas, barefoot, wait with their offspring. One little boy zips by us with his bike/scooter. These things appear to be foot-powered scooters made with front and back wheels from a bike (for ease of speed) plus handlebars and bike baskets to haul their Thermos coolers of lunch. That kid won't starve today, judging by the size of that bright blue cooler. Laundry is already dancing from pulley-enhanced clothes lines. Buggies and horses wait at-the-ready in front yards.

We see that another new section is being built on to an already humongous farmhouse --- must be another new generation ready to take up housekeeping on the family homestead. One mamma, dressed in black with a white apron, hoofs it along the road, wearing her spiffy white Nikes.

We park along the tracks at Irish Town Road crossing and simply allow the tranquility of this place to seep into our very being. Four little girls, each with their hair pulled tightly into a bun at the back of their head and each wearing a black apron over their crisp jewel-tone dress, scoot their way across the tracks beside us. They, too, have large, brightly-colored coolers in their baskets. They wave at us and shyly say, "Hi". The "hip" little boy behind them is wearing modern sunglasses as he cruises along being "Mr. Cool".

Across the tracks from us is a modern manufacturing company. In front of it is a shed which houses a single buggy plus a place for the unhitched horse. That horse sticks his head out of the doorway and watches as other horses pass by. There is a steady stream of kids on scooters and mammas in buggies. Six pretty young ladies ride by in a large buggy pulled by a single steed, but they do not even look our way. A young man roars by, driving an old International tractor with no tires. It is running on its rims, yet another of those scooter/bikes trailing behind it.

A bed-and-breakfast establishment in town has life-size statues of cows and sheep in its front lawn. Those fake cows just do not measure up to the real things we have seen out in the fields today. We spend a few hours at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania. I think we could spend all day here but the Strasburg Railroad across the street beckons and the excursion train is about ready to pull out.



In beautifully restored passenger cars, our group bounces along between fields of baled cornstalks and soybeans and cattle.





Amish farmers are hard at work, doing the things that need to be done before winter comes.



All too soon our train ride is over but now it is time to invade the gift shops. Jim buys a book he

has had his eye on and I find a Chicago Great Western pin. This is the railroad which ran through German Valley and two miles south of my birthplace. I pin this trinket on my jacket and I am a little girl once more, waiting at the old depot in German Valley as “Grampa” Dick Bokker picks up the mailbags, then delivers them to the tan stucco post office/Weiman’s Store in his old dull-black coupe. Oh, I can even feel my dad’s protective hand on my shoulder as the train rolls by. (“Grampa and Gramma” Bokker were an elderly couple who often came out to our farm to help out with repair jobs and canning. Mostly, they came for a few good hot meals since their finances were meager and my folks tried to help them make ends meet.)

Ok, Linda, back to 2007! Supper at Lancaster’s Cracker Barrel proves to be a good decision, then we migrate back to our favorite Dutch Country rail- fanning spot, Irish Town Road crossing.



The buggies are out in full force tonight.



One man passes with a buggy-load of wood shavings. That horse has a serious pull going. Two young boys have gas-powered weed eaters in their baskets and go about their late summer responsibilities. Another zips by on roller blades, wearing a jaunty straw hat. Rain chases us away just after Jim gets a great picture of a passing commuter train. An Amish cookbook becomes a part of my treasure trove before we retire to our motel.

This is our day (Wednesday, October 10) to go home and it is barely light as we cross the fog-shrouded Susquehanna River. There is a Caterpillar Tractor factory in York. That cap that Jim almost lost on Mount Washington has the Caterpillar logo (given to him a few years ago by our friends Larry and Denise Lane) and would fit in nicely in this town.



Also in York is a Harley-Davidson factory, employing about 2,800. Today's beauties are a far cry from the first one designed in 1903 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, using a tomato can for its carburetor.

Our trip home is leisurely and enjoyable as we amble along the interstates and back roads of our great land. Parked beside a shed is a very old blue Ford which could easily have been Stan Dieken's "Blue Bird" in the early 1960s...but that is fodder for another story sometime. Near Gettysburg, I think I see Lincoln thumbing a ride. The Shenandoah Valley, with its flourishing farms and huge barns, never ceases to impress with its beauty and industry. Mount Jackson, Virginia, has painted its water tower to look like a basket of apples, touting their main local claim to fame.



We turn off Interstate 64 and curve down Afton Mountain, continuing along winding country highways and past modest homes. Sun-dappled roads spread ahead of us. It almost seems as though the earth is holding its breath in anticipation of the coming winter. Dry brown leaves flick against our windshield and the car's heater feels awfully good.

After driving 1,824 miles (plus all the miles Larry drove), 1131 Heath Avenue comes into view. This is the best part of our entire trip! I am SO blessed!