

Grab your cup of coffee and come along with us today.

Leaf-Looking, October 2009

The air has a nip this morning as we scrape the windshield. This hot coffee will hit the spot!

Daylight begins to master darkness and the mountains appear as black silhouettes. Houses are simply dark shapes with bright, square dots, randomly placed. School buses, their blue/white strobes flashing, scurry to gather their charges for the first day of another week. Westbound traffic on Route 460 is zipping toward Roanoke; there seems to be a sense of urgency as they rush along.

Gradually the sky behind us glows with the promise of sunrise and those mountain silhouettes turn dark hunter green. Lighted pumpkins are displayed along our way.

At last daylight wins its eternal battle over darkness ---- well, maybe just for today --- and those mountains again change color, this time to the golds and maroons of fall. The lawns and pastures are frosted with a white glaze. A field of black cattle, munching grass, pays no mind to the ice crystals around their hooves. Many trees ahead of us have lost most of their leaves and look like brown lace spires reaching upward toward Heaven.



We park along the fog-enshrouded James River at Rocky Point. To my right tiny leaves flutter

earthward at a steady, unhurried pace, much like the drip-drip of a leaky faucet. Maybe the trees really are leaking their leaves.



Mr. Sun is burning through the fog and spotlights the railroad tracks. Ah, the signals are set up for a meet and the scanner verifies this. Jim is a happy camper, his camera-at-the-ready for action. Smartweeds, their dark pink flowers a final reminder of summer, form a weave of beauty. Several leaves investigate our windshield, then slide down to become part of the fiber of Mother Nature's new fall carpet.

An eastbound train passes with its cargo of glistening, black coal, more of Mother Nature's fibers. A faded-red, abandoned barn stands vigil over an empty mountain pasture.



One lone fisherman is trying his luck along the river. Jim hands me a colorful maple leaf. I am so blessed!

Empty hopper cars chase locomotive #5348 westward as they continue the constant flow of coal to feed our nation's hungry industry.

Not a wisp of clouds mars the clear, jewel-blue sky. Sun-lit mountains sing with color as we thread our way among the trees along Virginia's backroads.



Kentucky Coffee trees are still green but their brown seed heads stand at attention. Two horses stand at attention, too, as we pass by.

Around a sharp curve is a small white house; next to it is a pile of junk and a discarded whole-house air conditioner which speaks of progress and improved summer coolness indoors. Up the road a bit is a large, abandoned house with missing windows --- natural air conditioning. If that old house could talk, I wonder what stories it would tell. Neatly stacked firewood portends warmth when all these golden leaves are but a memory.

We travel through a golden hallway today. Not so gorgeous are the vultures that are checking the pavement for the latest lunch entrée.

Graduates of "Mountain Grazing School" (See "In the Mountains Again" for more info on this

special school.), herds of cattle navigate steep pastures. In the village of Eagle Rock two young men are busy bringing cartfuls of warmth-potential firewood to a fast-growing wall of wood just inside a house yard fence. That wood will be mighty handy in a couple of months.

Route 43 from Buchannon to the Blue Ridge Parkway is a four-mile, upward-avenue of yellow and red and green trees, sharp curves, and humongous rocks. I'd sure think twice about using this road on an icy winter day! The higher we climb, the prettier it gets.



We are driving through the majesty of God!

A stop at the Peaks of Otter Visitors' Center to see former coworker Betsy yields disappointment.



She is busy running errands this afternoon so we leave a message for her. Her knowledge of local roads and attractions are an asset to this place.

OK, Guys, the sun is getting low and it is high time to head for home. It has been a great day for “looking” but the best place to see is still 1131 Heath Avenue.



My cousin, Sylvia, recently sent a comment to her sister, June, on Facebook. It was, “The older we get, the faster we get older.” Our lives are very much like leaves. We are green in our youth, but learn a few things along the way and get a lot more color in our old age. The trick, it seems to me, is to appreciate and enjoy the color while it is here. Happy Fall!