

Dear Friends,

July 15, 2011

Back on May 30th, we left Woodside, California to start out on a trip around the circumference of the United States (with the northern portion done partially in Canada). On July 8th, after almost 6 weeks and exactly 12,537.4 miles, we are again in Woodside, right back where we started from. It's been a great trip, and we owe its success to the people we stopped and visited along the way, including old friends and family in Colorado, New Mexico, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Virginia, New Brunswick, Ohio, Iowa, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. There were many more stops we would like to have made, but we were bound and determined to accomplish our original mission -- to spend enough time up in New Brunswick, Canada to be able to research Kathy's Acadian roots -- a project which took us a long ways both North and East to little places like Moncton, Shediac, Memramcook, and Grande-Digue -- all of which are between the Bay of Fundy and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, a couple of hundred miles north of the Maine/Canada border. It turned out to be a fruitful quest, thanks to a place called Le Centre d'Études Acadiennes Anselme-Chiasson, which has taken the trouble to collect both birth and marriage records from churches all over the small area -- not at all an insignificant undertaking. Kathy's family names of LeBlanc and Arsenault are not only extremely common in that area, but also very intertwined due to marriages between people having the same names (Arsenault to Arsenault, for example).

Both the LeBlanc and Arsenault names pop up in relation to the conflict between the English and French, dating back to the early 1600s and culminating in the "Great Upheaval" or "Expulsion" of 1755, when the English attempted to remove some 13,000 French Acadians from Canada by enforcing a 1710 ultimatum which required the French Acadian settlers to swear allegiance to the British Crown and renounce their Catholic faith. Those who refused (virtually all) were placed on ships and deported, while others migrated to Spanish-owned(!) Louisiana, becoming today's Cajun population in that area. Others remained in the New Brunswick area by emigrating further north. Longfellow's 1847 poem *Evangeline* describes the separation of a young couple during that time, using the fictitious names *Evangeline Bellefontaine* and *Gabriel Lajeunesse*. A later (1907) version of the tale by Felix Voorhies, said to have been written to establish that Longfellow's characters had a real historical basis (apparently to promote tourism), identified the "real" *Evangeline* as being *Emmeline Labiche* and her betrothed as *Louis Arceneaux* -- a spelling variant on the same name as Kathy's great grandmother, *Rosalie Arsenault*. The *LeBlanc* name also appears in *Evangeline* as *René LeBlanc*, the notary who records *Evangeline's* dowry. All of this makes for great family history, and we plowed into the whole thing with real religious fervor. It also provided a great background for exploring a part of Canada previously totally unknown to us ...

Our route looked approximately as follows (followed counterclockwise due to weather considerations!) ..



Along the way, we were able to stop and visit folks such as Kathy's sister, Rosalie (Denver), and our daughter, Julie (Santa Fe), giving Kathy an assist on the "slack line"



A quick stop in Clovis, NM linked us up with "colorful" ex-Army buddy John and wife Shirley -- both Episcopalian ministers and still very active in their field, followed by a trip to Oak Ridge to visit former Atlantans Jenny Lou and Charles, who are very, very nicely set up in beautiful surroundings in Oak Ridge.



An all-too-brief stop in Marietta, Georgia linked us up for a mini-reunion with Jill and friends, with whom most of our correspondents are very familiar (sorry, Jack, you weren't in any of the pictures!!) ...



A southerly swing to Howey-in-the-Hills, Florida (surprisingly or not, the former hometown of one of Malcolm's 1960's-era Atlanta girlfriends) linked us up with Kim's daughter Julie and son-in-law Russ (no picture!) and our old, but freshly painted 1969 Austin-Healey Sprite (belonging, since a number of years ago, to Russ and Julie). A nice surprise was lunch with Bob and Perry Lynn Rader (Bob's a high-school classmate of Jill, Kim, and Bruce).



Moving north from HITH to Augusta, Georgia, brought us back into contact with Malcolm's sister, George-Ann, a true belle of the South, matriarch of her very large family, and enthusiastic supporter of Augusta civic life (Malcolm's daughter Joy is 3rd from the right) ...



Moving north again through Cape Hatteras and Kitty Hawk brought us to Norfolk, Virginia and a delightful afternoon with Aaron, very successful former student of Kathy's (who just bought his own très chic hair salon -- shown in the picture), and his life partner, Chris, former nuclearsub crew member!



A long drive from Norfolk to New Brunswick led to many unexpected discoveries, such as the somewhat startling claim made by the little town of Shediac, NB, that it is the lobster capital of the world. One might suspect that there are a number of other places aspiring to such an elevated position, but probably none can make the claim of having the largest lobster in the world, as well as one of the Northeast's friendliest genealogists -- Edgar Leger, retired business professor from Moncton University ...



Quick stops in Quebec City, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and Niagara Falls, with a mugging cop in Ottawa and a huge crowd of tourists at Niagara Falls ...



... took us to Logan, Ohio to reconnect with son Kevin and family (with cats, dogs, and Stephanie growing in a family way by the moment!)



A stop in Ames, Iowa connected us up with musician friends David and Pamela shown in their Ames residence (they are normally Bay Area residents) along with Pamela's delightful 94-year-old mother and gardening fanatic, Mary



A long swing from Ames, Iowa north through Minnesota, then Fargo, ND, followed by Bismarck, ND, followed by lots of Montana, led us to Glacier Park, Montana (left, below), and then to Bonners Ferry, Idaho and neighbor Nancy (right, below), spending the summer in her native surroundings before returning to being our neighbor in the fall. Her 266-acre farm, 3 miles from the Canadian border, is a marvel to see, and she and her daughters, Janet and Joy, are keeping it in the family while renting it to local Mennonite ranchers, hoping to be able to preserve it intact for the future ...



Two quick stops after leaving Bonners Ferry took us through Spokane and Lake Hawser, hometown and favorite fishing spot (respectively) of Craig family relatives Henry and Eva George of the Spokane-based (sadly now-defunct!) Henry George Construction Company. Lake Hawser was also the long-time residence of old friends, Bob and Robin (2nd from left and on right below) ...



Next we turned our sights towards Seattle and a posse of Bay Area ex-pats, arriving just in time to watch 4th of July fireworks from a Seattle lakefront restaurant, along with marvelous hospitality in friends' homes, first in Peg's posh Green Lake digs, then in Bob and Robin's beautiful Japanese-themed home across the way in Bellevue. And the sun was out the whole time ...



The last stop on our itinerary was Pleasant Hill, Oregon, country home of Bruce's sister Kim and her husband Fritz, which they have transformed into a beautiful farm setting, replete with horses, cows, sheep, goats, dogs, cats, chickens, ducks, and other animals that come and go (even llamas?) ...



All in all a wonderful trip, and many thanks to all of you who made it possible. A 12,500-mile circular drive through the US and Canada would not have been the same experience without all the stops along the way to re-connect with the many friends we have been lucky enough to make through the years. We highly recommend the experience and would be happy to host anyone looking for a landing spot on the West Coast -- just as we were so graciously hosted by many others ...

Cheers, as always, Bruce and Kathy