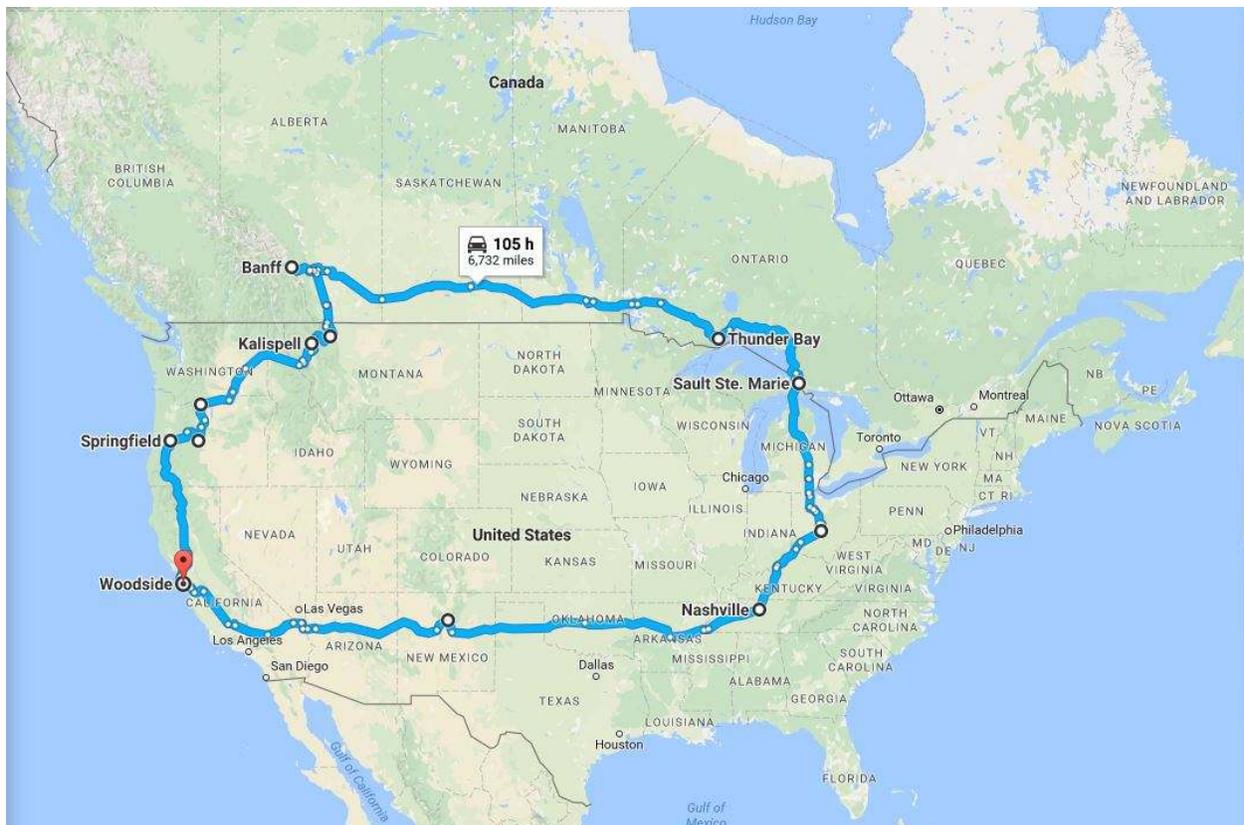


It's that time of year when you've once again been selected as part of the elite group of people who get to listen to the Craigs babble on about their summer trip! However, since it's our only way of keeping in touch with people from our collective past(s), we doggedly continue doing it ... so feel free to toss it before being forced to read any further! Note of warning: We have been doing this for a number of years, but our mailing list, which once numbered many dozens of correspondents, has slowly declined to the point that our contemporaries now number no more than a handful of names (compiled from the responses we get back each year). Given our ages, of course, this is hardly a surprise, but it does mean that the content has increasingly shifted away from topics of general interest to those of more interest to our own immediate family – a group who are compelled by politeness to read our babblings! So, be forewarned – it's not too late – you can still crumple this up and toss it into your bit bucket!

Back in 2010 (CSMYF reunion year!) we did a circular USA trip which included the Eastern Canadian provinces from New Brunswick (on the Atlantic coast) westwards to Toronto, and this year we had hoped to tack on the rest of the so-called “Trans-Canada” highway by driving from Sault Ste. Marie in the Canadian province of Ontario on the Michigan/Canadian border to Vancouver in the Canadian province of British Columbia (just north of Seattle). The terrible forest fires raging in BC eventually scotched the Western portion of that plan (from Banff to Vancouver), but did allow us to catch a good bit of central Canada from Sault Ste. Marie to Banff, including the southern portions of the provinces of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Our trip was a 17-day shot, during most of which we were moving fairly fast, but it did include visits to daughter Julie in Santa Fe and son Kevin in Rockbridge, Ohio (just south of Columbus).



Thursday,	July 6	Left Woodside late morning, overnight in Needles, CA
Friday-Sunday,	July 7-9	Arrived Santa Fe, stayed over on Saturday and Sunday
Monday,	July 10	Left Santa Fe, overnight at Motel 6 in Sallisaw, Oklahoma
Tuesday-Friday,	July 11-14	Arrived in Logan late at night on Tuesday, July 11 and stayed for 3 days
Saturday,	July 15	Left Logan, dropped Julie at airport, overnight at Super 8 in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario
Sunday,	July 16	Overnight at Ignace, Ontario at Jordanian(!) Trading Post Motel

Monday,	July 17	Overnight at Broadview, Saskatchewan at Iranian Sweet Dreams Motel(!)
Tuesday,	July 18	Overnight at Okotoks, Alberta at business motel
Wednesday,	July 19	Back to US to Glacier Natl Park, overnight at Day's Inn in Missoula (Casino+truck stop)
Thursday,	July 20	Overnight in Madras
Friday,	July 21	Overnight at Kim's (arrived at noon after nice breakfast in Sisters)
Saturday,	July 22	Return to Woodside (total of just over 7000 miles on our Little Honda Fit!)

The principal goal of our trip was to pay a visit to our son, Kevin, and his family (wife Stephanie, kids Carly, Jake, and Briella) in the little hamlet of Rockbridge, Ohio. Their 16-year-old daughter Carly is a cancer survivor (see <http://skylanda.blogspot.com/2006/04/ohio.html>) from back in 2006, and the Cincinnati Children's Hospital was planning a private ceremony to add her picture to their wall of "10-year Successes" (a very small number, unfortunately). Our route took us through Santa Fe, NM to pick up our daughter, Julie, a family-practice physician (and currently Urgent Care and drug-addiction specialist!), who also wanted to be in Cincinnati for the occasion. We had also hoped to include our eldest daughter, Karen, in the trip, but her work schedule as a nurse in a pediatrician's office (along with her 6 children!) wouldn't permit her getting away for such an extended period of time. We ended up spending 2+ days in Santa Fe, 3+ days in Rockbridge, and about 12 days on the road, averaging between 500 and 600 miles a day.

The visit to Kevin and family was also motivated by our desire to see their new house in Rockbridge, Ohio, something to which we contributed by our recent decision to pass a portion of our estate to our children (and nine grandchildren!) while we are still around to see them enjoy it! Some 48 years ago we made a down payment on a tiny piece of country property in Woodside (home of the Silicon Valley digs of people like Steve Jobs and Larry Ellison!) and 14 years later we made a down payment on a second piece of property using the insurance money from the damage done by a redwood tree's having fallen on and crushed a good portion of the first house. These purchases eventually ended up providing us with a quite unexpected degree of leverage in the accumulation of odd dollars – items which our present advancing age and lack of imagination leave us largely clueless to take advantage of ourselves (even though we are looked on as little more than "po' folk" here in Woodside, our assets are of somewhat more value in the wider world!). Our children (who don't live in this area!) have long desired to buy property in their chosen hometowns (at about 1/10th the cost of what it would cost here in Woodside!), and so it seemed almost a no-brainer to give them a little boost in acquiring homes in whatever part of the country they chose to live. Having done this, the only request we have made of our children is that we be allowed to come by and "kick the tires" now and then to check on things, something we have just completed doing for two of our three offspring! They seem happy, and what more can parents ask for ...



Son Kevin with Kathy on 6 acres in Rockbridge, Ohio Daughter Karen's two youngest in backyard in Bakersfield, CA

In looking over maps for possible routes, we soon became intrigued by the possibility of steering our reliable little 2009 Honda Fit along the portion of the Trans-Canada highway we had missed back in 2010 and soon added the "Sault Ste. Marie to Vancouver" stretch to our planned agenda.

SF to Santa Fe, New Mexico (July 6-7) – We've done this stretch many times before using different routes and once even drove straight through in about 24 hours, following trucks (probably too) closely at night in order to avoid hitting moose, deer, and other animals that wander onto the highway after dark. This time, however, we didn't get away

until almost noon and got only as far as Needles, California. When we crawled into bed that evening around 11 pm, the temperature was 96 degrees. When we got up next morning around 8 am, it was well on its way to 120! And people actually live there ... There's a certain Zen-like quality to driving through the desert for hours on end, punctuated by occasional stops at places like Winslow, Arizona (for a milkshake – our adult beverage of choice!) and to pay tribute to the Eagles 1972 song "Take It Easy" with the memorable lines "*Well, I'm a standing on a corner in Winslow, Arizona and such a fine sight to see. It's a girl, my Lord, in a flatbed Ford slowin' down to take a look at me.*" Enterprising locals have formed a "Standin' on the Corner Foundation" to take advantage of the one memorable feature Winslow has to offer – its "Corner." Apropos to hardly anything at all, our own personal favorite for milkshakes is Baskin-Robbins with its offering of a "chocolate malt with vanilla ice cream" for which they actually weigh the ice cream to make sure you get a generous portion (unfortunately not available in Winslow, although a place called the Sipp Shoppe gets 131 reviews on tripadvisor.com – possibly straining the population limit of that estimable destination!). After many more hours of pure desert, the stretch of highway from Albuquerque to Santa Fe offered recompense with its spectacular afternoon views of descending summer rain from the black clouds frequently hanging low over Los Alamos off to the West. After parking the car at Julie's, we were lucky enough to notice a large screw embedded in one of the front tires, something the folks at Julie's tire place fixed for free due to her heavy utilization of their services during snowboarding seasons!

Santa Fe (July 8-9) – A highlight of our two-day stay in Santa Fe was a drive out to the little town of Abiquiu for an excellent breakfast on the patio of the Abiquiu Inn and a visit to the Echo Amphitheater not far from Georgia O'Keefe's Ghost Ranch – the sort of thing one does after having visited (and lived in) a place many times! One very odd site is the nearby huge earthen Cochiti Dam, built over the strenuous objections of the local Indian tribes, partially to serve as a commercial water sports attraction(!), but strangely designed to house an amount of water never ever available in the area – hubris on a massive scale. (From Wikipedia: *Construction of the dam was opposed by the Cochiti Pueblo Indians, who lost significant tracts of agricultural land as a result of the construction. The Cochiti Pueblo Indians filed a lawsuit against the Army Corps of Engineers regarding the inundation of their lands, winning the suit. In 2001, the Army Corps of Engineers made a "public apology" to the Cochiti Pueblo Indians!* – Thanks, guys ...).

Santa Fe to Rockbridge, Ohio (July 10-11) – Heading off for Ohio, the three of us (Kathy, Julie, and Bruce) set off in our little Honda Fit, dropping down from Santa Fe to Cline's Corners (famed among a certain set for its killer fudge offerings!) on what appeared to be a newly built four-lane highway – Highway 285, which is not at all the old two-lane road we once wound along through the little hill towns of yore! We then picked up Interstate 40 and followed it through Oklahoma, surprisingly quite green and pleasant for this time of year, not at all reminiscent of the "poor Judd is dead, a bullet in his head" Oklahoma some of us think of from the estimable R&H musical! We continued on through Little Rock, Memphis, and Nashville, marveling at the "newness" of these cities from the perspective of those who had not been through them for a number of decades, one of the more problematical sides of proceeding apace into and through one's seventies! Our one overnight stay was in a Motel 6 in Sallisaw, Oklahoma, which we suspect may have hosted a recent guest accompanied by a stray bedbug or two, something we have had the good luck never to have encountered up to this point. In particular, during my own many years of staying at somewhat less than marginal accommodations (including the \$4/night Keane Hotel during my Army days in San Francisco in 1961 and a similar accommodation in a 5th-floor walk-up firetrap in Manhattan that same year), I contribute my luck to the use of my own bedclothes (the European Youth Hostels I frequented during my 3 years of traveling last-class in Europe always required overnights to provide their own standard light fold-up set of bedding, not at all a bad idea!). In any case, our passage through Louisville and Cincinnati brought us to Rockbridge sometime just after midnight! Surprisingly, a full crew of 6 was on hand to greet us even in the dark of night, a welcome reception and respite after two very long days of driving.



Rockbridge + Cincinnati (July 12-14) – Besides looking over Kevin and Stephanie’s 5-bedroom house(!) and 6 acres of land(!), the big event of the week was the trip to Cincinnati to visit Children’s Hospital and participate in the ceremony for the 10th anniversary of Carly’s recovery from leukemia, which included hanging a picture of her in the children’s cancer wing of the hospital.

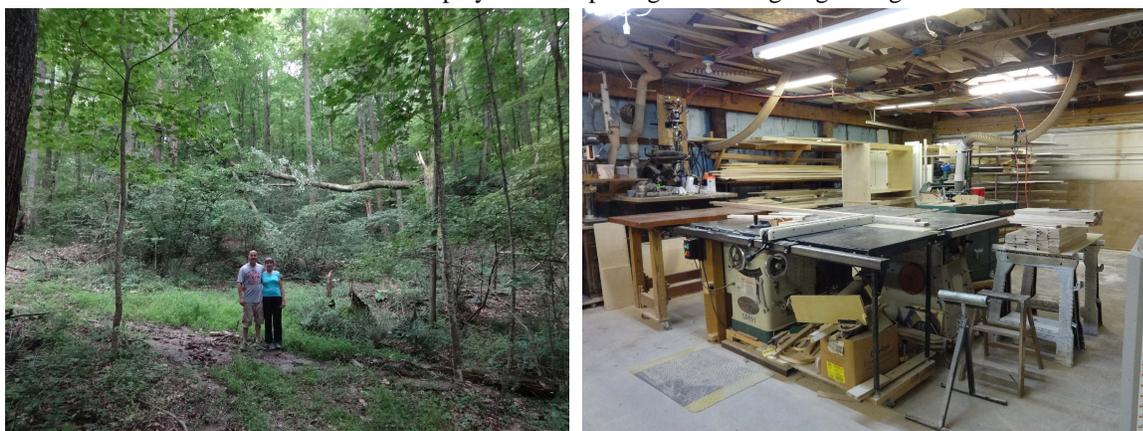


Kevin, Carly, Stephanie, Briella, and Jake Carly with Coordinator Mark Mueller and Dr. Sonata Jodele Carly and boyfriend Patrick

The lady in orange in the center picture is Dr. Sonata Jodele, the physician who back in 2006 had insisted on continuing treatment (including a bone marrow transplant) even after the other doctors had given up hope for Carly’s case (Carly had already been moved to the wing where it was expected that children would simply die, and she spent several months there in an induced coma). Dr. Jodele is originally from Czechoslovakia and has been at Children’s (as it is called there!) for over 15 years, but recently decided to leave to return to practice in Los Angeles because she felt that many of Cincy’s “foreign” patients (principally from the Middle East) treated her as an appendage to the staff because she was a woman, often simply looking past her to speak to a “real” doctor, i.e., a man – her departure will be a real loss to their staff!

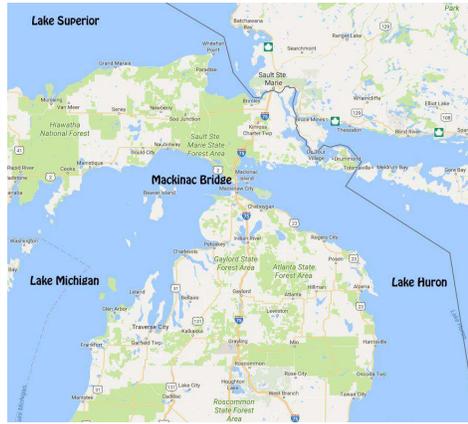
Carly - 17 years of age
Photograph was taken at Eden Park in Cincinnati Ohio on October 29, 2016, over 10 years ago following a very complicated bone marrow transplant for Philadelphia chromosome-positive ALL.

After a celebration dinner at the family’s favorite local barbecue joint (Texas Roadhouse in Lancaster!), we all retreated back to the Rockbridge house for an house-inaugural game of “spoons” – the rather noisy and animated game frequently played during evenings at our ski/snowboard get-togethers. For documentation purposes, Stephanie was the eventual winner after an abbreviated sudden-death playoff to keep the game from going all night!



Two more shots at Kevin and Stephanie’s – Kevin and Stephanie on their 6 acres of wooded property and a picture of half of the “pole barn” garage with the previous tenant’s huge cabinetry shop (now gone!), which was big enough to run his entire business out of -- soon to be converted to who-knows-what – perhaps a “man cave” for the gentleman of the house.

Rockbridge to Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario (July 15) – Julie had to get back to work in Santa Fe, and so unfortunately couldn't continue the trip to Canada with us. We dropped her off at the Columbus, OH airport and bade her farewell, then headed directly North for the Canadian border. There is a spectacular bridge crossing at Mackinac Straits between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron leading to the border at Sault Ste. Marie, although we had forgotten to sign our passports which we had renewed a year or two ago and absentmindedly filed away. We were chastised by the border crossing guard, many of whom take themselves very seriously these days – certainly understandable considering recent events, but probably a bit of overkill for a couple of old Anglo dudes like ourselves.



Spectacular Mackinac Bridge on Lake Michigan just south of Sault Ste. Marie

(Quick geography lesson – the Canadian provinces from Sault Ste. Marie going West are Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, although we never made it to BC because of the fires raging there which sent dense smoke all the way into Alberta!). The route of our journey was simple – follow Canadian Highway 1 (the Trans-Canada Highway, marked by signs having a white maple leaf on a green background) westwards from Sault Ste. Marie as far as we could go before the fires in British Columbia made it impractical to go any further!

Sault Ste. Marie to Ignace, Ontario (July 16) – Big decision in crossing the border was whether to try and make it on credit cards alone without actually buying any Loonies or Toonies (the Canadians quit printing paper bills back in the 1980s and use one-dollar and two-dollar coins called Loonies and Toonies, the Loonie referring to the Canadian loon, the bird embossed on the coin!). We had absentmindedly left a whole pile of Loonies at home from our last trip to New Brunswick back in 2010 and had no desire to add to that stash. We drove through Ontario and passed our first big test by stopping for lunch at a Subway in a place called Wawa(!), passing with flying colors (only problem is that American credit cards frequently require a zip code, while Canadian cards don't, making the use of outside pumps at some filling stations a bit of an adventure – tip: you go inside to pay!). Beautiful drive along the north shore of Lake Superior with alternating scenes of evergreens and water. We reached Thunder Bay a little too early in the day to stop, and since (despite the name!) it didn't seem that compelling, we pushed on down the road. There was a very attractive place to stay in the little hamlet of English River with a camp-like setting on a small lake, but other folks had called ahead and made reservations (no fair... we were there first ... oh well, onwards!), so we stayed in the next little town up the way, a place called Ignace, which featured a colorful, although somewhat sketchy-looking place called the Trading Post Motel (advertised as the soon-to-be Motel 1!), populated by a randy-looking group of action figures and other miscellanea ...



It was here that we first encountered the phenomenon of the Canadian emigré – a population of folk from all over the world who comprise a contemporary wave of emigrants to Canada. They seem to be hard-working, resourceful folk who are willing (and able!) to put down stakes in the middle of nowhere to try and make a better life for themselves – perhaps something like America was at one time. As we were parking the car, we were met by a very animated, although very rumpled, Danny DeVito look-alike, who turned out to be the proprietor. We were a little skeptical of the place and asked to see a room first, but he took no offense and told us, “Trust me -- they are very nice.” Our room was, in fact, quite well set up, and when we absentmindedly pulled out cash to pay him, he noticed right away that we had dollars (not loonies), but said he’d be glad to take them, saying, “The room is \$71 Canadian, or \$61 American, or \$60 if you don’t have a dollar!” He was a hardcore bargainer, originally from Jordan, and had worked in a couple of Northern American cities (Chicago, Detroit), eventually making his way to Saskatchewan, then to Ontario to the tiny hamlet of Ignace in the sparsely populated middle of Ontario. His entire family had apparently accompanied him during his North American Odyssey (unclear exactly how many members there were), and as best we could tell they all lived in a small tin building adjacent to the motel office, taking care of the various mundane day-to-day chores of running the motel. We never met or saw any of them, as he apparently considered himself to be the front man for the operation (and very probably the only English speaker among them). We were looking forward to another cross-cultural experience by having dinner across the highway at a place that advertised “Indian food,” but the sign must have been left from a previous owner, as we ended up with a club sandwich! There also appears to be a certain loonies-versus-dollars issue, with the exchange rate currently at about 1.25 loonies to a dollar – a big change from as recently as 2013 when the two currencies were almost at parity.

Ignace to Broadview, Saskatchewan (July 17) --.The day after our Ignace eye-opener we drove across the rest of Ontario, through the largish city of Winnipeg in Manitoba province (relatively narrow in its southern part), and then into Saskatchewan province. Winnipeg is a fairly big city that is attractive in places, but marginal in others – probably an unfairly hasty assessment, since we could only view it from the passage of Highway 1 through the middle of it, although Canadian cities often have the look of having been through a lot of stiff weather.

Southern Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta are all about Canola – a fascinating and controversial plant grown in vast quantities from rapeseed and used both for cooking and for biodiesel (‘rape’ apparently being the Latin word for ‘turnip’). The name "Canola" is purportedly a combination of "Can" for Canada, and "ola" for oil (similar to the older ‘Mazola’), although one source claims that it stands for Can(ada) + o(il) + l(ow) + a(cid) – who knows?



Map showing Canadian rapeseed cultivation



Vast fields of Canadian rapeseed stretching to the horizon

Non-Obligatory Canola Primer (extracted from Wikipedia) – Brassica oilseed varieties are some of the oldest plants cultivated by humanity, with documentation of its use in India 4,000 years ago, in China and Japan 2,000 years ago, and in Northern Europe for oil lamps since the 13th century. Its use was limited until the development of steam power, when machinists found rapeseed oil clung to water- and steam-washed metal surfaces better than other lubricants. World War II caused high demand for the oil as a lubricant for steam engines.. When the war blocked European and Asian sources of rapeseed oil, a critical shortage developed, and Canada began to expand its limited rapeseed production. Rapeseed oil extracts were first put on the market in 1956–1957 as food products, but these suffered from several unacceptable characteristics, principally a distinctive taste and a disagreeable greenish color, due to the presence of chlorophyll. It also contained a high concentration of erucic acid which, consumed in large quantities, may cause heart damage. Feed meal from the rapeseed plant also was not particularly appealing to livestock. Canola itself was bred from rapeseed in

Canada in the early 1970s, with a variety developed in 1998 considered to be the most disease- and drought-resistant canola variety to date. This and other recent varieties have been produced using genetic engineering. In 2011, 26% of the acres sown were genetically modified (biotech) canola. About 44% of a seed is oil, with the remainder as a canola meal used for animal feed. Canola oil is a key ingredient in many foods, and its reputation as a healthy oil has created high demand in markets around the world. Overall it is the third-most widely consumed vegetable oil. Europe has also invested heavily in infrastructure to use canola oil for biodiesel.

Wow -- that explains all those fields of yellow stuff!!

So, after finding out all there is to know about Canola(!) we ended up staying in another spot right on the Trans-Canada highway called Broadview, very similar to the previous night's stay in Ignace, but this time at a place called the 'Sweet Dreams Motel.' Again we had a very pleasant encounter with a total foreigner, also drawn to Canada by the unique opportunities of the wide open spaces. This time it was a courtly, older Iranian gentleman who in a previous life had been a civil engineer. He had come to the States many years earlier, raised a family, but sadly had become divorced. At some point his children offered to buy a place for him to quietly retire in Canada, an offer which he took up and which led him to the 'Sweet Dreams Motel.' We would perhaps question our own children's motives were they to offer to buy us this particular property, but he seemed quite happy and had a lady friend who lived right next door who gave him someone to talk to!

We continued our introduction to the Canadian diaspora by walking across the traffic-less Trans-Canada Highway to a lightly patronized little restaurant called Al's Steak House – sort of an over-achiever-of-the-week name for little old Broadview, but the place served up a very tasty fish and chips along with a very good Caesar salad (we passed on the steak!). We were very well attended to by a well-groomed middle-age-ish Asian lady, who was Chinese and who had immigrated to Canada several years earlier to allow her daughter to obtain an education - another member of the Canadian emigré crowd who hadn't hesitated to settle in the middle of nowhere (literally!) in order to give her family's next generation a shot at an education and a better life (the daughter was living and studying in Vancouver, way over on the West Coast in British Columbia). The cook staff were also both Asian (a somewhat startling ethnicity for the plains of Central Canada!), and it reminded us very much of our own families a generation or two back (coming from places like Counties Cork and Clare in Ireland, Moncton in New Brunswick, Vilna in Russia, Rheinland-Hesse in Germany, Alsace in France, etc.). Deja vu all over again, and more power to these hard-working folk from the far ends of the Earth ...



'Sweet Dreams Motel' Corporate Headquarters



'Life is a Bowl of Cherries' and 'Weenie Wagon' divisions (immediately adjacent to the Sweet Dreams establishment!)

Broadview to Okotoks (Calgary), Alberta (July 18) – On only our third day in Canada we found ourselves headed straight into dense smoke from the fires in British Columbia. After having breakfast at the "Indian Head," a sort of local "not-to-be-missed" (!) truck-stop type of place (very Canadian looking, but apparently owned and run by second-generation Asians, again in a very remote area), we stopped at the Alberta Visitor's Bureau right on the main highway (i.e., Highway 1 – the Trans-Canada Highway!). The woman behind the desk had probably already way spent way too much of her life behind that particular desk, as she gave us a rather mechanical rendering of what to see and do in Alberta – not really that helpful, since she said the smoke and ash would be no worse in Banff than it was here (not even close!), but she did give us instructions for finding the nearest A & W which improved her popularity rating with us considerably (surprisingly, to us at least, the Canadian arm of A&W was sold off from the American group in the 1970s and has

operated independently ever since, having more locations than the U.S. despite only having one-tenth of the population, and it has even been expanding!). Leaving the A&W (regretfully!) we drove on to and through Calgary, stopping in a small town called Canmore just short of Banff (a ski resort we were familiar with from having spent a week there with our kids during the drought years of the 1980s in California), but the smoke and ash were so bad we decided it would be foolhardy to go any farther, so immediately turned around and drove back to Calgary (the small Alpine-like valleys seemed particularly conducive to trapping the smoke and were almost intolerable!).



Shots of the sun through the smoke and haze at mid-day ...

We got a quick glimpse of the site of the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary, then gradually made our way south out of the city, eventually ending up in a small relatively smoke-free suburb called Okotoks where we found a very pleasant, businessman-oriented motel at about 10 pm – right across the street from a Denny’s restaurant which, although we think of it as being a 24-hour chain, is only open to 10 pm in Canada!

Okotoks to Missoula, Montana (July 19) – We were greatly disappointed at having to cut our tour so short, since just north of Banff (up towards Jasper) is what is rumored to be a spectacular area called Icefields Parkway, which we had planned to visit. The smoke (and ashes in the air!) had become so heavy, however, that we decided it was simply time to hotfoot it out of Canada while we could still breathe! It amazed us that people would actually stay and vacation in such an area, but in order to get reservations at that time of year it’s often necessary to pay well in advance (as much as several hundred dollars a night for a small condo unit with no refunds!). Because of this, people simply apparently gut it out and go on with their planned tours, although to us the whole thing seemed like something out of a nightmare. The next day we regretfully left Canada (along with its very friendly people and rewarding hospitality) and returned to the US, this time flashing our freshly signed passports in the ranger’s face, who smiled approvingly (perhaps his colleague at Sault Ste. Marie had called ahead and warned him to keep an eye out for suspect Yankee scofflaws carpetbagging their way from the East!).

One of the advantages of exiting Canada where we did is that it put us in the immediate vicinity of Glacier National Park in Montana – a place we had tried to visit back in 2010 during our circular visit of the US. Heavy snows that year had failed to melt at the higher elevations, blocking our passage through the park. This time around we were able to drive easily from East to West through the entire park, passing through all elevations without any problem.– at least some consolation for our not having been able to visit Icefields Parkway in Canada. In general our visit this time was a very pleasant experience with a stop for lunch at the entrance at a place which allowed us to make our very own root beer floats (a first for us in a commercial setting!). There was still some smoke from the Canadian fires (but not too bad), the crowds of people were well behaved, there was a very nice stream for wading, and a pleasant lake for viewing. Our return to the US of A had gone smoothly, and we couldn’t fail to be pleased with that! We drove through Kalispell on the way out down along Lake Flathead (lovely name!) with the odd feeling from the traffic, the roads, and the water-skiers that we had somehow been transported back in time to the 1950s! We spent the night in Missoula in an odd sort of Day’s Inn connected to an Indian casino – another reminder we were in fact back in the States!!

Missoula to Madras, OR (July 20) – Up early for a drive through Coeur d’Alene and Spokane down to the North side of the Columbia River, then over to the Dalles and down to Madras for our last commercial overnight, staying in Madras since Redmond and Bend were both full up due to a chili cooking festival! We bandied about the idea of trying the chili offerings, but were fortunate enough to stumble across an A&W on the road to Redmond, which (fortunately!) more or less scotched the chile idea for the evening!

Madras to Kim's (Bruce's sister) in Springfield, OR (July 21) – Up early again for an excellent breakfast in Sisters, then through the Hoodoo ski resort (where we once skied with Kim's kids quite a few years ago), down to the MacKenzie highway along the MacKenzie River, then over to Springfield, Jasper, and Kim and Fritz's farm in Pleasant Valley. Had to stop in Springfield, of course, for a last Baskin-Robbins chocolate-malt-with-vanilla-ice-cream visit! (Mighty righteous, mighty righteous ...). As always Kim and Fritz were very hospitable – feeding and housing us in great comfort – and, of course, it's always fun to visit all of their animals – dogs, cats, chickens, ducks, goats, horses, cows (no Chester – their now-extinct bull – although still a steak or two in Cary's freezer!), and probably others as well! Their yard and garden are both in magnificent shape with lots of new greenery to block them from the road (and from their neighbors!). We never know when a visit there will be our last, as they show little inclination to travel very far from home themselves, and our own visits up in that direction also tend to be only very occasional. Ah, who knows ...



Kim's to Woodside, CA (July 22) – The drive from Eugene/Springfield to Woodside was uneventful, except for an alarming moment while passing through Vacaville at 65 mph when a loose tire came bouncing out of nowhere across the road and struck the front bumper of our car, taking both the license plate and mount with it to Lord knows where. It was one of those incidents that could have been quite dangerous, but ended up with nothing more than a lost front license plate and mount (we have been trying to contact the California DMV to find out what one does in such a case, but budget cuts have made their phone tree wait quite long, and we have not yet been successful in actually making any sort of contact with them – welcome back to California!).

To those who have made it this far, we once again extend our greetings and an invitation to visit our little house in the redwoods should anyone ever be in our part of the world – just south of San Francisco in the hills immediately behind Stanford University and halfway to the ocean!

Cheers, as always, Bruce and Kathy Craig (and all others involved!)

From Julie's long-ago blog (while studying at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine), regarding Carly's situation in 2006 ...

Sunday, April 16, 2006, Ohio – A couple days after the term ended, with a month's vacation ahead of me, I hopped yet another trans-Atlantic flight back to the States. My mother flew out from California, and we met up at my brother's house in Cincinnati to visit for a few days and celebrate a few birthdays (hey little brother, the next one will be thirty!). We took the kids and all to the zoo, ate birthday cake, and generally had a fabulous time. I don't usually fly across the ocean for birthday parties, so you might be wondering why I went all the way to Cincinnati for such a quick visit.

Everyone who is family already knows this, but anyone outside the family probably has not heard. In January, my brother's little girl, Carly, was diagnosed with leukemia. She is six years old. Specifically, she's got Philadelphia-positive B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia. Because hers is something of a rare type of cancer, it's a little harder to cure than the usual childhood leukemia. She is now in remission after several rounds of chemotherapy, but her kind of cancer does not stay in remission without drastic treatment. So in May she will be getting a bone marrow transplant. She will be in the hospital for anywhere from a couple of months to a year recovering and rebuilding her immune system. She's got a tough time ahead of her, but so far she has weathered the hospital stays and the chemotherapy and losing all her hair before she even finishes kindergarten with courage and grace and wisdom you'd never expect from someone so young.

So if you're a praying type of person, prayers for this little girl are welcome. If you're a good thoughts/good vibes type, feel free to send good thoughts and good vibes her way. If you're a check-writing type, the Cincinnati Children's Hospital is a wonderful institution that has given Carly and the whole family the best of compassionate and competent care during this difficult time. And if you're the type that can give a little more of yourself, please consider signing up for the bone marrow donor registry. All it takes is a simple blood test to type your marrow and the commitment to donate if ever a person in need matches your type. With no matches in the immediate family, Carly would be in dire straits without the amazing generosity of the anonymous people who signed up for the registry not knowing if they would ever be called to help a stranger in need. Many people on the marrow registry never get called to donate, but there might be someone out there who matches your type, right now, facing a very short future without a marrow donor. You might just save a life.