

Deer Lake Diary Redux

The pandemic tended to lock us away in separate cells and forever changed our flightier fantasies such as exotic vacations. But however repressed or deferred, such desires persist. Even old, retired folks who loll about their daily lives all day need vacations. The need may not be as acute as it is for hard-working mid-life crisis candidates, but it's a general requirement for the health of any member of the human species. I am not as attuned to this need as some – Kay for one; my life force is probably getting weaker. Metaphorically speaking I am a heavy Fe iron; home is a very strong magnet for me. But... the vestigial need is still there. There's something about Deer Lake... You may have read my account of when I turned 70 (that will be twelve years ago in a couple of short months) at that location. We experienced some ups and downs at that time... well, this time would have a bump or two as well. But other than during the worst of the pandemic, we usually visit Deer Lake a time or two every year and all of those are pleasant with nothing one could disparage as a 'bump', like our earlier trip this summer when Kay spent every single day swimming in the lake and I would interrupt my writing by walking the dogs down to the lake to cool off. To say nothing of the valued time with family.

Vacations provide a spark of spontaneity in our lives but planning a vacation does come down eventually to a mere rote decision operating on a short list of where to go. Deer Lake is high on any such list for us. Usually they are planned far in advance as was our summer week on the lake. But this was different with the persistent great weather on into October. Nola, the daughter who, with husband Clay and daughter Sierra are residents of Deer Lake, called to tell us that Judy Collins was having a concert on October 18th in Spokane of all places. And who knows where the time goes better than Judy Collins whose singing career spans seven decades. She's even older than Kay and I. So we have an ostensible reason for travel once Kay secures three tickets to the event (Clay and Sierra remaining rather uninterested in an aging Judy Collins).



So on October 12th we hit the road... well, roads: Two blocks up 3rd Ave SW to 356th Street to Parkway Plaza, fill up with cheap gas at Costco, then to highway 18 East through Maple Valley to I-90 and over Snoqualmie Pass, continuing on with literally miles of stop-and-go delays down to one lane and on through Cle Elum, Ellensburg, Vantage, George, Moses Lake, Ritzville (I've been

everywhere man!) to highway 31 at Sprage, and on through the major metropolis of Edwal to highway 2 at Rearden, back on 31 through Ford to Springdale and over to Loon lake where we hop on Agar Road and cross highway 395 still on Agar Road rather than turning left onto 395 up 2.4 miles to the Deer Lake Road. By staying on Agar rather than the preferred route of the Rasmussen family we save precisely 0.6 miles to where we hop onto the Deer Lake road to the ‘Y’ at the lake where we take the North Deer lake Road past the resort to the Rasmussen log mansion. It is getting dark by now. We park, do the kissy-huggy thing, let the dogs out, and decide the view back the way we came deserves the preservation of a photo.



So here we are at Deer Lake. We sup with the fam on one of Nola’s vegetarian specials, talk a while, and off to bed, and wake up to a beautiful day. The days were warm, but the lake is freezing such that no one but Clay Rasmussen can bear to swim in it, the skies were clear with no forest fire smoke, which is unusual for this time of year and weather in the Northwest in the global warming era. We walked daily with the dogs and although Lesa chafes at having to be on leash she insists on the walks. Nola has taken days off and is with us most of the time except for the six and eight mile runs that she and Clay do every day in preparation for their possible entry into the Thanksgiving Day half marathon in Seattle at Thanksgiving. Clay worked most days and Sierra also was very busy with her substitute teaching with noteworthy discussions taking place concerning her interactions with the students. In the photo at right below, Nola and Kay are shown relaxing in the ‘Parthenon’. At left, notice the fence at the top of the hill as alternative to an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. This will give some perspective to a later photograph.



Everywhere there is the beauty of the lake after the summer people have gone back to their proper place in the world with their speed boats, jet skis, screaming kids on and off their high-speed inner tubes, and the trolling fishermen in the mornings, all disturbing the surface of the lake. It is calm and the reflections of the hills on the other side are magnificent from the deck and on our walks. On some afternoons a slight breeze ripples the water.

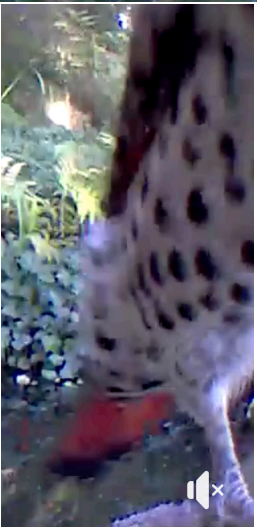
Carrick (my grand grandson who was born on the same day of the calendar year as my grandfather) came over on Saturday and we played cornhole on the deck. By forcing him to reset his score back to 11 when he went over 21, I was able to be competitive in a prolonged game.



Of course one might expect to see deer at Deer Lake, and one does. But at supper one evening Clay spoke of a discussion he had had with the local state biologist concerning the wildlife Clay and Nola encounter on their runs up through the hills behind their place. In addition to the deer and ubiquitous wild turkeys, there are cougar (in addition to the Washington State Cougar fans who raucously clutter the peaceful environment of the northwest), bear, moose, and a pack of wolves that one very seldom sees, but whose very existence keeps the biologist busy appeasing ranchers.



But the wildlife at Deer Lake concerned us less than the wildlife that took over at our ponds in Federal Way. After years of not worrying about the heron, one has found our place to be a charming fishing hole and with the dogs on vacation we installed a 'blink' camera by our big pond. The heron was taking advantage of our absence. He swam casually like a swan until we screamed at him through the camera which has two-way sound capabilities. Kay goes "SHOO SHOO" with a few other more fowl words they seem to understand and fly away only to come back later. A flicker seems to be enamored with the camera. Then the late-night raccoon visits and our local cat.





We visited my sister the short distance over to Loon Lake. She has felt better in her life, but that's true for most of us octagenarians. We had a good visit but it would have been cruel to provide a photo since of her (or me) she was not her most photogenic self. But the view of Loon Lake out from her sitting area was certainly worth a photo.



So that gets us up to concert night. We are ready for Judy Collins. We had a rather spectacular Mexican food dinner in north Spokane, taking our time so as to arrive at the theater without too much time before the show. But when we got to the Bing Crosby Theater it was dark and the Marquee read, "An Evening with Judy Collins Rescheduled from 10/18 to 11/29". Apparently, Kay had been 'notified' on the 14th but she hadn't 'noticed' until we read the marquee. Of course we had already driven 325 miles to get there by the 14th so it wouldn't have made any difference.

Judy broke her arm.

Well that was a bummer! But we accessed some of the old folk song favorites on the internet and the three of us had a mini concert on the way back to Deer Lake still somewhat disappointed.

So... bright and early next morning with the Deer Lake dew floating in from the narrows such that I thought there might be a forest fire up that way, but no. Nola said, "That's just deer lake." We did hugs around before Clay and Nola left for work and we packed up for the trip home.



Kay suggested I back the car up to the door rather leaving it on the concrete pad on which suitcases roll rather than gravel on a sloping road where they don't. Being the agreeable person that I am, I acquiesced as usual. I got the car jammed full of baggage, just missing a few bags, when the car decided I had made a mistake and, like everything in the universe animate and inanimate, it felt authorized to teach me lesson number 9,999,999,999 plus or minus a few. So it proceeded to attempt the tricky maneuver of crashing through the barrier to the road 30 feet below. It failed of course, but with the barrier shattered, the left front wheel over open air and the rear right off the ground. This non-fatal accident was not without severe consequences to the car (and my considerable pride). Quick on my feet, although I could not catch the car as it headed downhill,



I proceeded to the neighbors where construction workers were busy and asked them if by any chance one of them could spare a few minutes to come and hook a chain on the car to pull it back on the road, Sierra found a chain up the hill in Clay's utility building. The guys hooked the chain from their pickup's rear bumper to the rear axel of our Ford. The pickup didn't have four-wheel drive and the wheels spun all to no avail. So Sierra and Kay got busy on their phones to find a wrecker who would come and pull us out.

It was a gentleman from the 'God-Fearing Brothers Wrecking Company' (Yeah, that's their name and I did not tell the brother who came about my religious persuasion, maybe he thinks once-saved-always-saved, who knows) in Chewelah who came. He did not look saintly nor act acrimoniously; he was very competent and able to yank the car back onto the straight and narrow. But I suspect that as is usually the case with such salvation, it is not a quick and easy fix to life's problems. In this case, it was the front end that required a couple of coat hangers to enable the four of us Westerners to get back home in four pieces. It's amazing what an old fart and a green-haired girl with a masters in the classics can do with two coat hangers. It isn't pretty, but it got us home.



Now all we had to do was load the dogs, Lesa deciding she needed to pee on Sierra's carpet before Sierra could drag her across what Lesa had decided was too slick of a garage floor for good footing. The front door on the driver's side works (in a manner speaking) without a door handle on the outside or operable window control, which is a little inconvenient. I opened it from the inside; Kay got in and we were on our way. Five and a half hours later we were where we belong.

Damages have yet to be assessed. There is the barrier that belonged to the neighbor. Three sixteen foot treated two by six railing boards were destroyed. Some parts of them were on the road

below that Sierra had gone down and picked up. The buried 8 by 8 posts held amazingly without seeming to have budged. So that barrier has to be fixed for the next guy.

So we're home and all seems safe and sound -- even the cat that we got to know a little via our pond camera with voice exchange. I called him after putting some food out and he came close enough to check me out in real life. The heron and racs had not showed for a couple days (and nights after Kay scared the bajeesuss out of the heron with her fowl mouth. But he just showed up; the blink camera went off as the heron flew in so I ran out there and scared the hell out of him myself! He flew off one more time. The dogs were out there last night barking so evidently the job of clearing the wildlife is a work in progress. We have yet to find out how much the barrier, two fenders, front bonnet, and right car door will cost.

We took the dogs to the dog park the next day and Lesa ran all the time we were there so glad to be off leash. We are all in recovery from what was mostly, and should have been totally, a great vacation.

SPECIAL NOTICES:

I would just like to be clear on one point: The sum of the lengths of two sides of a triangle are NEVER less than the length of the third side (in this case Agar road from 395 to the Deer Lake road). In this case that has been in question that sum is six tenths of a mile longer.

Also, in addition to Carrick Jaxson Vaughan, the other person in the family to have been born on May 25th was my grandfather, Carrick's great great grandfather William Hatchett (Bid) Vaughan, of whom along with my grandmother Dixie is shown in this photo that I copied from one that my sister Darlene Dixie nee Vaughan recently received from Jean (formerly Vaughan as my father's second wife).

Finally, with regard to excuses for the car taking off down hill on my watch: I had hauled out more heavy crap and crammed it into the car on many trips up and down Nola's front steps and was staggeringly exhausted. I am an OLD man! And since I know that Babe is over a hundred in dog years, I wanted to make sure that I was close enough to Nola's newly refurbished rock curb that Babe could easily make the jump into her back seat compartment. So I backed the car up and came forward to get a little closer. I stepped out to verify that I was close enough before putting the car in Park and it got away from me. My bad!!!!!! Okay, I'm done.

