

Sacramento, Northern California and Oregon



July, 2011

Bob and Molly Hillery

This was really two trips in one. We flew to Sacramento for another visit with Christopher, Cyndi and Samantha and then added a six day drive through Northern California and Oregon before flying home from Portland.

So, in addition to a delightful weekend with our youngest grandchild (and her parents), we also saw the Coastal Redwoods, Crater Lake, the mountain peaks of Central Oregon and the Columbia River Gorge. Despite the fact that we had visited all of these places previously (some more than once) there is always something new to see and we had another great trip.

Sacramento and Oregon, July 2011

Wednesday July 27

We left home soon after 7pm to have our “usual” dinner at Morton’s downtown before staying at the airport Marriott overnight.

Thursday July 28

We were up about 6:30 and caught the 7am shuttle to the airport. We were soon checked in and through Security and had about 30 minutes in the Crown Room before our 8:30 flight to Salt Lake City. This flight left on time and was uneventful – and we even got a fruit, cereal and pastry breakfast. The ongoing flight to Sacramento was similarly on time and we arrived to temperatures around 90F in Sacramento around noon.

We stopped for coffee after picking up the car and then checked into the Courtyard at Natomas. We relaxed there until 3pm when we left to go and watch Samantha in her gymnastics class. She gave us the biggest smile as we walked in and seemed to thoroughly enjoy her class. We were quite surprised at how accomplished she was in some of the activities.



We left the class and immediately went for dinner at Mimi’s. Again, Samantha was very friendly and talkative and very well behaved as usual. It was a very pleasant evening but, with travel and jet lag we were glad to get back to the hotel at a reasonable hour.

Friday July 29

We walked to Starbucks (2 miles round trip) for breakfast and then I went for another 4 ½ mile walk in the neighborhood around the hotel. Despite temperatures heading towards 100F it felt much more pleasant than any of the walks of the past week at home and I remained relatively cool.

Molly and I had another Starbucks “lunch” and left for Christopher and Cyndi’s home around 3pm. There we met Samantha (ready to jump in the pool) and Christopher. We didn’t feel comfortable supervising Samantha in the pool (we hadn’t brought our swimwear anyway) so Christopher “made a deal” with Samantha which she readily accepted. This was to play with Grandma and Granddad for an hour while he did some work and then he would take her in the pool.



So, we spent a good hour playing with various toys indoors and Samantha was perfectly happy. However, when daddy appeared in his swimwear, she was immediately ready to jump in the water. We watched her play (she can almost swim unaided) for an hour before returning to the hotel to get changed for dinner.

Tonight all five of us met at "On the Border" for a very pleasant meal and another interesting time watching Samantha. We are constantly amazed at her ability to sit and amuse herself throughout a rather prolonged dinner hour. It was about 9:30 tonight when we returned to the hotel.

Saturday July 30

We once again walked to Starbucks for breakfast and then we went to do a little shopping. We returned to the hotel about 10 and then left again to meet Bill and Shirl, as well as Cyndi, Christopher and Samantha for lunch at Café Europa, a Greek restaurant about 20 minutes drive from our hotel.

It was a very good meal and it was nice to chat with Bill and Shirl again. In the afternoon Molly and I went to Christopher and Cyndi's home and watched our slide show of Vietnam and Cambodia while Samantha slept. We all then spent an hour in the pool before taking a short break before dinner at Pooja Indian restaurant.



Sunday July 31

We drove to Starbucks for coffee this morning as we were having a large breakfast at the Black Bear Diner at 11am. After that we enjoyed another swim in the pool and a showing of our Southern States and England photographs. We were also given the large prints of the family photographs taken at our "Birthday Bash" in Ohio in April.

Tonight Bill and Shirl babysat Samantha while the four of us enjoyed a super meal at Casablanca. This is an authentic Moroccan restaurant where we had eaten once before and provided a very enjoyable last evening for this trip. We said our farewells about 9pm after another great visit to Sacramento.

Monday August 1



We were checked out of the hotel soon after 8:30 and went for breakfast at iHop. After that we drove via Woodland and Clear Lake to Ukiah for an over-night stop before entering the Redwoods area.

The journey to Ukiah took us over the mountain range north and a little west of Sacramento. The scenery was quite varied: golden hillsides, thick green forests and lakes interspersed with a large number of vineyards and wineries and occasional orchards. We took a short detour into the town of Clear Lake (alongside Clear Lake itself) in search of a coffee shop but didn't find anything to suit so we continued on through town. We took a route that appeared to rejoin our westward road a little further west but soon got hopelessly lost on the myriad of minor roads around the lake. It wasn't until we capitulated and plugged in the GPS unit that we were able to find a route that got us on the right road

again – somewhat east of the point at which we had left it! Nevertheless, the drive was very pleasant and we did find an espresso shop in Lucerne before continuing on to Ukiah. We arrived at the Fairfield Inn there soon after 2pm and relaxed in the room until dinner time.

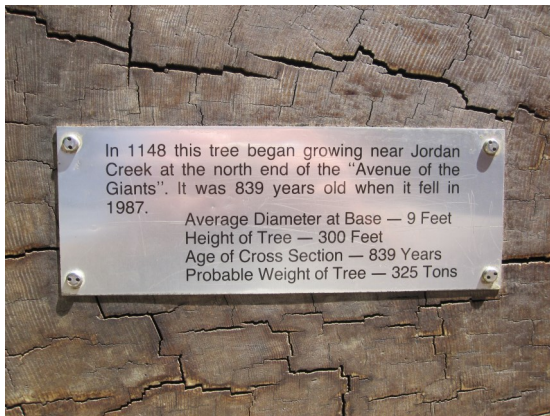
Tonight we ate at a rather nice Thai restaurant just a few blocks from the hotel.

Tuesday August 2

We were checked out by 8:30 and had a breakfast sandwich at a local Starbucks. We then drove north for about 20 miles on US101 before heading west over the coastal range to the Pacific Ocean at Fort Bragg. We then drove north along the coast before US1 turned inland to cross the mountain again to re-join US101.



Shortly after that we turned on to the Avenue of The Giants, the 35 mile stretch of Giant Coastal Redwoods. These are the tallest trees in the world (well over 300 feet in many cases) and have diameters in excess of 12 feet. They are generally up to 1000 years old but some are said to have lived for as long as 2000 years. It was very pleasantly cool (low seventies) in the



trees and we took a couple of short trails into the thickest parts. This is now a State Park and is being preserved as nature intended so we not only saw very tall trees upright but many that had fallen and just left where they fell. In fact, the fallen ones generally gave a better impression of the size of the trees and particularly of the massive root system they have.

We then drove on to Eureka and ate tonight at the Carter House, a rather exclusive Victorian Hotel. The food and service were good, although they did have difficulty fixing a Manhattan!

Wednesday August 3

We had breakfast at a local Starbucks and then went to the Tourist Information Center to pick up a brochure for a walking tour of the Historic District. This ten by three block area is filled with late 1800s architecture (primarily from the Gold Rush era, although lumber money came later) in many different styles. The brochure helped us identify each building and gave us a little information on the style and its use throughout the past 150 years. The walk took about an hour and then we drove to perhaps the most famous building – the Carson Mansion (below bottom right, together with the more restrained Carson House) on the northern edge of the old town. This is a huge house (now a club) and looks like something that Disney would be proud of.



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We then drove towards Oregon through more of the Redwood State and Federal Parks. We stopped at the Lady Bird Johnson Grove, at an elevation of 1200 feet, and took the one mile loop walk, again aided by a useful brochure. This particular grove, unlike the sea level Avenue of The Giants that we saw yesterday, has many other varieties of trees in addition to the Redwoods. This was as a result of several factors: the area had been heavily logged up to fifty years ago leaving open areas for other flora to grow; the remaining forest has been left untouched, so fallen trees provide a starting point and nutrients for new growth; and, although I am not clear on this, I believe the altitude was an additional factor in that the coastal fog reaches not only the Redwood canopy but also provides water for the smaller plants. Whatever the reasons, it was a very pleasant one hour stroll in sixty degree temperatures.

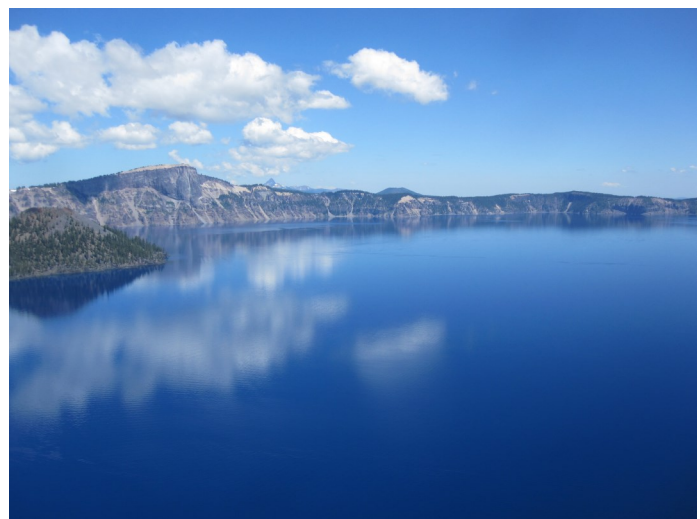


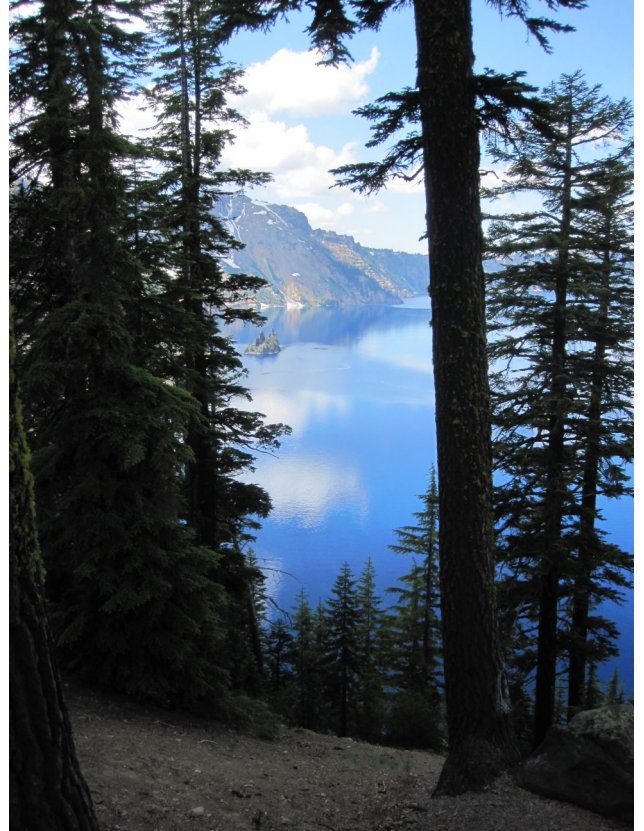
We then drove directly to Medford, Oregon (with a brief nap break!) through heavily forested and quite mountainous countryside. As we approached Medford we could see on snow-capped 9000 feet mountain in the distance.

We arrived in The Fairfield Inn about 6:30 and soon had a reservation for dinner at the old train depot in Downtown. The food was good and the service pleasant; all in all an interesting experience in our "own" compartment.

Thursday August 4

We left Medford after breakfast and drove directly to Crater Lake where we spent about three hours. It was a perfect day; almost clear blue skies and temperatures around 70F at the crater rim. The crater is the result of a volcano blowing its top 7700 years ago and leaving a 3000 feet deep crater. This has now filled to a depth of a little under 2000 feet and is fairly constant as a result of snow melt, rain and equal evaporation. The water level is about 1000 feet below the crater rim which is itself at an elevation of 7000 to a little over 8000 feet. The crater is almost six miles across and the "Rim Drive", which encircles the crater at or near the rim, is 33 miles in length and affords some spectacular views.





Crater Lake

It is indeed the views that are the highlight of this natural phenomenon, despite its impressive statistics. The lake is a deep blue, the rock faces are grays, browns, reds and black and interspersed with beautiful green fir trees. The white of the snow caps adds to the overall beauty.

The snow this past winter was a record (almost 700 inches) and great piles still exist, many 15 to 20 feet deep. It would appear that they will remain until the first snows of next season arrive, perhaps as early as a month from now. The record snowfall has also delayed the blossoming of the abundant wildflowers around the lake so another set of colors – purple, yellow, red and blue – were also present at the edge of the road.

From Crater Lake it was an easy two hour drive to Bend where we checked in to our hotel around 4:30pm.

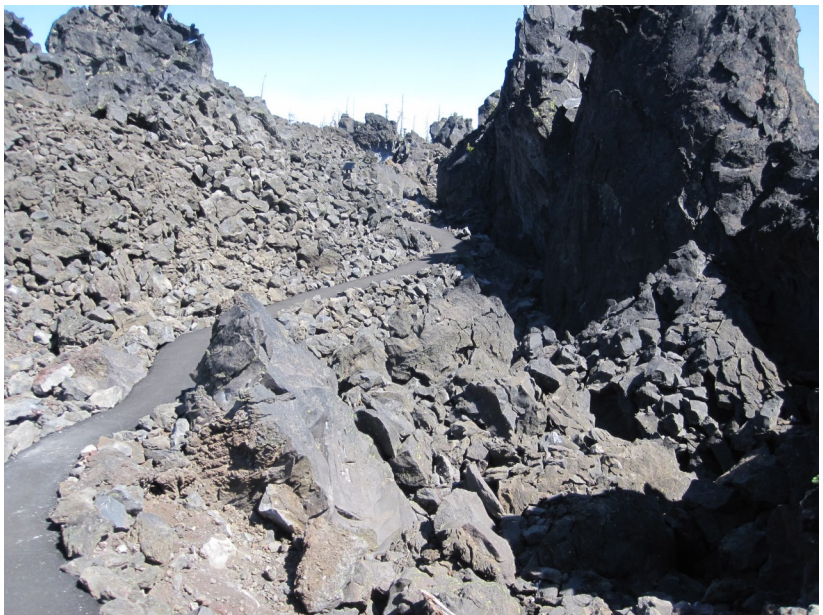
Just before we left for dinner there was a heavy hailstorm, followed by an even heavier rain. It didn't last long but it was certainly a surprise after the beautiful day we had had. It soon cleared and we drove to the restaurant in dry sunshine again and had a delicious steak dinner at The Brickhouse, in a clearly new and quite trendy part of town.

Friday August 5

After a leisurely breakfast downtown we left Bend and drove via Sisters (with some amazing views of the Three Sisters Range (climbing to 10,000 feet) and then reached the lava fields at an



elevation of over 5000 feet.



These fields (over twenty square miles) were formed with the relatively recent (1700 years ago) eruption at Belknap Crater on the McKenzie Highway. Short paved pathways lead into the lava fields themselves and are easily

accessible from the road, which runs along the perimeter of the lava flow. It's an interesting and unusual landscape and, whether reached from the west or, as we did today, from the east, it just seems to appear out of an otherwise tree-covered mountainous byway. We spent about an hour there before descending through a heavily forested canopy on a winding road until we were almost back to sea level.

Here we turned north, climbed to 4000 feet again and then descended to less than 1000 feet on our way to Salem. Then we picked up the expressway for Portland which was easy going until the final 25 miles or so. There, a combination of road works and Friday afternoon traffic slowed us to a crawl for most of the remainder of the trip to the Courtyard near the airport.

Tonight we had a late (8:30) dinner reservation at Salty's on the Columbia River. We have been there several times and always enjoyed the meal and the view: we were not disappointed tonight.

Saturday August 6

After breakfast on a cloudy morning we drove across the river into Washington State and headed east on the north side of the Columbia. The clouds soon began to break up in a very gusty wind and by the time of our first stop it was virtually clear blue skies. We watched wind surfers battling the wind and the strong current of the river for about 30 minutes before driving on to cross back into Oregon at The Dalles.



The Columbia River and Mt Hood

From there we headed west to Hood River for a Starbucks lunch and then continued towards Portland. We stopped at Cascade Locks and had a nap overlooking the river before driving back to the hotel. We arrived there about 4:30 and made another reservation at Salty's for our last evening meal out west for this trip.

Sunday August 7

We were checked out of the hotel and at our "local" Starbucks before nine. Our flight to Minneapolis, scheduled to depart at 11:44, was now delayed a half hour but it appeared that would not affect our onward flight to Cincinnati. By the time we reached the airport, this delay had stretched to 45 minutes, but everything should still be OK.....

As it turned out, the flight was about 45 minutes late but we lost no further time en route and we were able to make our connection in Minneapolis with ease, despite a 30 minute walk between gates.

We were home soon after 11pm after another pleasant visit with our granddaughter in Sacramento and an interesting five day trip through Oregon.