

# *Sacramento December 2013*



*Bob and Molly Hillery*

*This was our end of year trip to California to visit our son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter to celebrate two birthdays (Bob's and Samantha's) and an early Christmas.*

*This year Samantha turned five and wanted a birthday party that allowed her to be the Disney character Ariel the Little Mermaid, so the function was held at an indoor swimming pool where more than twenty of her friends spent the best part of two hours in the water. Sammy was, of course, dressed as her character!*

*The selection of an indoor pool turned out to be very wise as Sacramento, and in fact the whole of the West Coast, was experiencing an unusually cold spell of weather. Most mornings we woke up to temperatures in the twenties and it struggled to get out of the forties even on the brightest days. After leaving Cincinnati basking in 60 degree weather (although that certainly didn't last) it was quite a shock to our system to find California much colder—and, of course, we weren't really prepared with appropriate clothing.*

*Nevertheless we had a very nice time as we always do on trips to Sacramento and got to spend some good chunks of time with Sammy and her parents. We also spent much of Sunday with Bill and Shirl, Cyndi's parents.*

*We had an unexpected bonus day when our return flight was delayed and we chose to stay in Sacramento an extra night rather than get part way home. This gave us another evening meal with Sammy. Our flights the next day were as scheduled and we arrived home safely—to very cold weather and a car engulfed in snow and ice.*

# *Sacramento, December 2013*

## **Wednesday December 4**

We left home around 7pm and had a very good dinner at Morton's downtown before driving to the airport Marriott for our overnight stay.

## **Thursday December 5**

We were up before 6:30 and got the 6:45 shuttle to the airport to catch our 8:25 flight to Salt Lake City. It was 60F and raining heavily when we left Cincinnati and the skies were cloudy until we were over the Plains. There was lots of snow in Western Kansas and over the Rockies and the ground was snow covered when we reached SLC. And it was 12F! We had a change here but actually got back on the same plane at the same gate for our onward flight to Sacramento.

We arrived on time just after noon to very low temperatures for Sacramento. It was sunny but only in the mid-forties with overnight lows forecast to be below freezing for our entire stay. It seems that Elizabeth had the best idea; this was Colin's turn for a weekend in Orlando for a mother-son visit to Disney World. Her text when she arrived said it was 79F and supposed to be in the low eighties for their entire stay.

Molly and I went to Starbucks for lunch after picking up the car and then checked in to the Spring Hill Suites in Natomas around 2pm. I went for a five mile walk in very pleasant weather – cool but bright clear skies – and then we both relaxed until dinner time.

We met Christopher, Cyndi and Samantha at “On the Border” for dinner at 6:30pm. We weren't disappointed to have an early meal as the time difference was beginning to make itself felt as we ate. However, it was lovely to see everyone again and to catch up a little since we last saw them in late August. As usual, Sammy was very good throughout the meal and held up her end of the conversation. She also gave us a small birdhouse as a Christmas present that she had made, perhaps with a little help from Grandma Schreiber.

We returned to the hotel about 8pm and were in bed by 8:30!

## **Friday December 6**

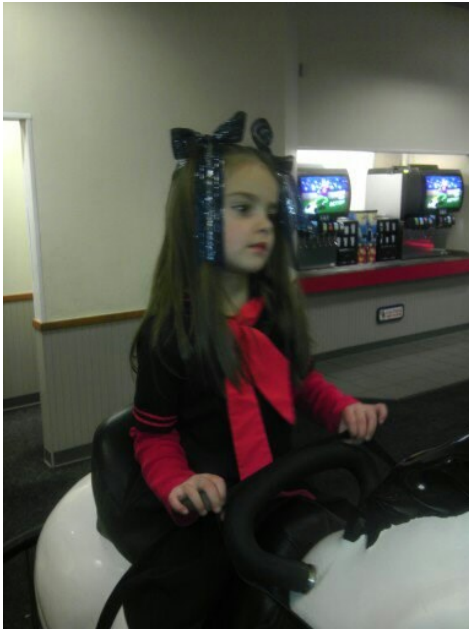
I woke up about seven so I decided to take a walk before breakfast. It was only 26F when I left and it felt pretty cold until the sun came through and it warmed up a little. I walked 3.8 miles and then Molly and I added another 0.7 as we walked to Starbucks and back.



We then spent the balance of the morning in the hotel before leaving to spend our afternoon with Sammy. Apparently on the first Friday of each month school lets out at 1pm so Sammy usually spends the afternoon doing “something fun” with Bill and Shirl. However, since we are in town, we were given the opportunity to spend quality time with her.

We went first to Chuck E Cheese. We had never been to one of these establishments but we had a good guide and we were soon eating our pizzas before starting the round of rides and games with our tokens. Sammy won 31 tickets which were good for two prizes – a tube of Smarties and a plastic whistle. We were sure that her parents would appreciate that later.





We then drove to Walgreens where we picked up some wrapping paper and Sammy came back to our hotel to help wrap some gifts. We then took her home, returned to the hotel for a quick clean up and were picked up again before six for our dinner reservation at the Melting Pot. We had an excellent meal and great company. In addition, Sammy managed to do quite a large chunk of her homework between bites of her meal! We were dropped off at the hotel soon after 9pm.

### **Saturday December 7**

I once again took a walk before breakfast and Molly and I had coffee and a pastry in the room before leaving to meet Christopher, Cyndi and Sammy at Mimi's for an 11am brunch. We then went to their house for the afternoon where we had our "Christmas" (and my birthday) and watched the slide show of our trip to India and Nepal.

**"Christmas" 2013**







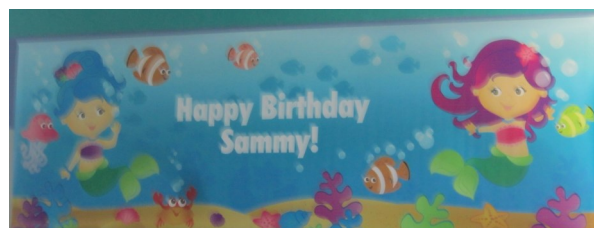
About 6:30 we went to dinner at Tuk Tuk and had a very good Thai meal before having ice cream for dessert at Coldstone. We then returned to the hotel about nine.

### Sunday December 8

I was awake at 6:30 so went for a walk on what felt like the coldest morning so far. It was actually just above freezing but there was sufficient breeze to make it feel very chilly. On my return, Molly and I walked to Starbucks for breakfast.

We left the hotel soon after ten and went to Christopher's home to help with the outside decorations. It was still quite cool so we didn't spend as much time outside as we might have done but we did complete some of the lighting.

At 1pm we went for lunch at Rubio's (a new one for Molly and I) and then drove to Rancho Cordova for Sammy's birthday party. This was held at indoor swimming pool so we were soon watching about 20 young kids having a super time in a pool to themselves. As usual Cyndi had prepared everything in a fully coordinated theme – this time, Mermaid. Sammy had a complete mermaid swim suit (which unfortunately didn't work very well) and everything else (table cloths, snacks, craft table, gift bags) had a mermaid or fish relationship.







Sammy and most of her friends spent about 1 ½ hours in the water and then ate snacks, enjoyed cupcakes and sang “Happy Birthday”. Each guest brought a gift but the opening of each was saved for later. No-one seemed to mind and everyone had a great time, each thanking Sammy and her parents as they left.



We followed this with dinner at Fresh Choice with Bill and Shirl as well as the Hillerys and then we returned to Christopher's home for more socializing – and gift opening. Molly and I exchanged Christmas gifts with Bill and Shirl and we all called it a night about 8:30.

### **Monday December 9**

I was up soon after 6:30 and went for a walk, after which we spent time in the room packing and killing time until it was time to check out. We had breakfast at iHop and then turned in the car and checked in for our 1:30 flight to Salt Lake City. However, just before we were about to board it was announced that our plane had suffered a bird strike on landing and was leaking hydraulic fluid. This was to cause "some delay" so we immediately got on the phone to Delta to find alternatives. The best offered was to stay in Sacramento another day and take the same flights on Tuesday that were scheduled for today.

So, we rented a car again and got a room at the Spring Hill Suites and when we told Christopher and Cyndi about the delay they immediately postponed a planned dinner date with friends so that they could eat with us this evening. I had time for a short walk before getting ready for an unexpected (but very pleasant) meal with them at the India Oven restaurant.

We used points to pay for the hotel and so the \$200 compensation we received from Delta just about covered the cost of dinner and the rental car so we had an extra night with our children and granddaughter for almost no additional expense.

### **Tuesday December 10**

We followed the same routine today as yesterday – coffee in the hotel, a short walk, breakfast at iHop and turn in the car. The flights were scheduled to be on time (again) so we were hopeful that we would indeed get back to Cincinnati today. Unfortunately, Elizabeth and Colin are still stuck in Florida due to flight delays; that after staying an extra day due to Colin's stomach upset. It sounds as though he is OK again now so all they can do is wait it out and hope – as do we.

We made both our flights and both were on time. Elizabeth and Colin were a couple of hours late so not as bad as it might have been. However, we both had a lot of snow clearing to do before we could drive home. We had missed an ice storm, followed by six inches of snow, then a couple of days of thawing and re-freezing and a final additional two inches of snow. It took us about 30 minutes to get the cars cleared of snow so we could drive home. Welcome back to Cincinnati – but we had a great weekend in California and Colin and Elizabeth enjoyed their (much warmer) time in Florida