

# RV-n-AMERICA 2015



# RV-n AMERICA

# 2015

# PAUL GRENIER

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ISBN:

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to my wife, Carla, for her love, patience and navigational skills which guaranteed our safe passage every year.

I Love You...



Happiness: is to have everything...you need.

Not, the need to have everything.

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**All royalties will benefit St Jude Hospital**

Pjgrenier

## PREFACE

I would like to take a few minutes here to introduce you to my wife Carla and myself, Paul. We are both working on our second marriages and we are both retired. During Carla's working years she worked for an Orthopedic Group as a Radiologic Technologist. As for myself, I have worn a couple of hats. I graduated college and worked as a pharmacist for twenty-five-years. At fifty, give or take a year, we both decided to officially retire from our professions. While in Connecticut we enjoyed square dancing and long weekends on our boat. In order to help us find our next work opportunity we travelled the east coast through Florida and back up again. Shortly thereafter we sold everything and moved to Florida eventually purchasing a Child Care Center in Greenacres, FL. About ten-years later we sold it and bought another in Titusville, FL. That facility ended up not being one of our better choices. By this time the square dancing was over as well as our boating life. Carla, at this time, had just retired. For myself I was challenged with few thoughts of how to fill the years I have left; Until a Grand Canyon vacation we took enlightened me.

Our lives would never be the same again.



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## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining Carla and I for our second year as we Travel America in 2015. This year we will be exploring the mid-west, leaving Orlando, and then driving NW as far north as the Wisconsin Dells.

This text is not a regular literary piece or novel like “Betrayal” or “War and Peace, nor is it a true documentary.” On top of that, right from the onset I wish to make clear, I am no James Patterson, as you will soon discover. The resource material for this composition is from our Travel Blogs. A Blog is a mish-mash of occasional entries. For you, the reader, to remain continually abreast of the timeline of the story, I am entering the day and month for your convenience. As we travelled in our motorhome, we would go on field trips to different venues in the location that we were staying at and then, quite often, do very little for a couple of days or even a week, which necessitates a date, from time to time, to avoid your feeling lost in time. I have tried to include as many photos as possible to make up for my lack of verbal expertise. Over the last eight-years we have travelled over fifty-thousand miles viewing so many places of interest and, often, just plain unusual points of interest.

I hope you will enjoy the overall scope of the story and hopefully this book might give you and your family ideas for a travel destination of your own.

Paul

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As I mentioned in the closing pages of last years' RV-n-America 2014 book we traded our fifth wheel RV for something a little bigger and much easier to handle.



Not much else has changed, however. Scoots is a little older a little heavier and much tamer than a year ago. Since then, she has been de-clawed, an action we had to take, but that's another story.

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Dennis, my brother, has been spending a little more time with us as well. It's our hope that he'll embrace this lifestyle, at least on a part-time basis, and possibly spend less time in Boca.



I think everyone reaches a stage in their lives when they realize that it's time to try something a little different for the few years we might still have. Dennis, on the right, is now trying to map out his future. Our travels this year will include Graceland, a house that sits on a rock, several caves and caverns and even a natural bridge. In the first book we mentioned that it's not our goal to visit only the well visited venues in America, but rather, to discover some lesser-known attractions that could be equally interesting. As with 2014, we will discover numerous churches, many with very interesting histories and or origins. Included in our travels this year will be America's biggest home, the birth-place of America's sports car and, of course a variety of campgrounds.



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## JANUARY 2015

### Christmas RV Park in Christmas, FL

Today was one of those quiet days, once again the day is over-cast and rainy at times. Floridians do not do well with gloomy days, and tomorrow is supposed to be the same.



As customary for Thursday night, we enjoyed Bingo. This week we did win one game of bingo while we were at Christmas RV Park in Christmas, CT, now we have laundry money for this week. Today will be spent with Mary Ann, Carla's sister, at her home in Port Orange, FL Scoots has been declawed and she is recuperating well in the coach. She is in a little pain and really dislikes the collar she must wear to prevent her from nibbling at her stitches. This Wednesday we will be going on a field trip to experience the Tampa RV Show, once again. It is inexpensive and very interesting. Next Thursday we will pack up and begin our trip to Tampa for the two-day stay. This is the beginning of our utilization of the Thousand Trails Camping for less. Thousand Trails will permit us to stay up to 14-days at their parks for nothing; saving us almost \$300 over the normal price.

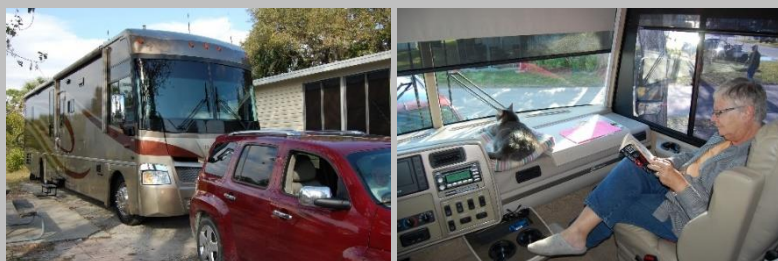
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Our three months in Christmas was very enjoyable. Bill and Gina are the new owner/managers and are doing a great job. Virtually all farmers and truck drivers, and there are many, own fifth-wheels. If I could have managed ours, we would have kept ours as well. Hank, a solo camper, who we got to know a little better than the others is a friend of the campground owners who lives in Vegas. He came to Christmas for the season. He had the opportunity to enjoy Christmas RV Park for only a few months then passed away during his stay here. He enjoyed his gambling but mostly his vodka.

### **Our new home: Itasca Suncruiser 38**

29<sup>th</sup>. Yes, we did it once again! Let me show you some pictures. You will have to excuse the mess since we took these pictures right after we arrived in Peace River, FL.



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As it turned out it was a close trade on our 5<sup>th</sup> Wheel for the Suncruiser. The additional cash could be justified on the new tires and window dressings which would have cost us over ten thousand dollars to do ourselves, not to mention the inconvenience. Carla's refrigerator is a little smaller than the full-size residential she had to give up, but this one will have enough storage space for our needs. The windows are full view with no split windows to obscure the view outdoors. Imbedded in the dinette seats are two huge "drawers" for storage of dry goods and other kitchen items. We still have room to spare. Scoots enjoys snoozing where ever space is available. Counter space in Carla's kitchen area is awesome. Thankfully this coach did not come with an oven. Seldom does anyone ever use the RV ovens anyway.



Carla mostly appreciates the extra drawer space. Countertops are Corian. At first this may not look very big, but for an RV it is. The drawer sitting on the counter is not clutter, just a unit that is not going back as easily as it came out. The pictures on this page are those of this Suncruiser after it was updated. In a few months we will be having the linoleum and old shag carpet removed and replaced with what you see in these pictures. New flooring will be replaced in December this year.

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This little section located across from the television/fireplace wall unit will be in high demand by both of us. However, as I mentioned once before, living in a Motorhome has limited wall and storage space, besides, at our age, we have no need for more stuff.



We look forward to hearing how family and friends are doing more than anything else. Another unique feature of our coach is the sink in the bedroom, as seen in the picture above. In the more expensive and much larger coaches you will find a bath and one half. Without a doubt this would be a very nice option, but it would add thousands to the cost of the coach not to mention an additional seven feet for the length. This will work great for us.

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The picture below shows the TV/Fireplace unit. In the hall area is a generous closet area with drawers on the lower section. There are also drawers by the bed unit and under the bed as well.



By everyday standards, those living in real homes, this minimal space might appear to be impossible for storage and living space to live with, but it's not. In fact, we have space yet to use in both the closet area and drawers as well. A rule RVing folks learn early is that we carry all that we need and what we will use on a regular basis. *There is rarely a day that goes by that Carla and I do not give thanks to Him for giving us the opportunity to enjoy this life style.*

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Opposite the TV “section” (*not big enough to call it a room*), as seen in the picture above, hangs a cross stitch picture of our anniversary date, a reminder for me. It was a wedding gift and is treasured. Joyce MacDougall did the design work and her husband, Don, built the frame. For 25 years it has hung in our bedroom, but the wall in the back of the coach seemed very appropriate. I've yet to forget our special day. Sadly, these two items have used up just about all our available wall space. *No! This does not mean we should start looking for a bigger coach.* Our holding tanks are empty, and we are ready to travel, again. It is the 25<sup>th</sup> and our rent is paid. The electric will be paid in the morning. We hope to be on our way by 11 am Thursday morning. We should be on the go quite a bit from now on;



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*The beginning of our 2015 Travel Season.*

## FEBRUARY 2015

### Peace River RV Park

2<sup>nd</sup>. We left our winter campground, in Christmas, with a positive attitude as we begin our 2015 travel year with a well-tuned coach. We arrived in Peace River RV Park in Wauchula, FL on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February which is conveniently located right off US 17, very easy entrance with excellent directions to check in when you arrive parking is very easy as you check in.



The pool and club house have two swings on their porch.

This is the street we are camped on, nothing to brag about, the rent is perfect at zero dollars. Warning signs are comforting, at least no snakes. Warning us as we approach the Peace River of

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alligators. We enjoy a walk going towards the Peace River. We ran into a young couple prospecting for, would you believe; dinosaur bones?



*I did not think so*, how about shark teeth/bones. They told us the entire area was all flooded once upon a time, *and yes, they did find teeth!* This is the Peace River. We were surprised how fast the river was flowing.



This was a "back to nature" walk at the RV Park. The trail we took was just one of five in the area. Eventually we came back



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to civilization. This young couple, previous page, each had their own "electric motor bikes", beats what we own.



The trees here are exquisitely covered with moss. This does not do the trees much good, long term. Modular homes are also available to rent as well. These are not that expensive to buy. New they run around 50K, used around 25K up, depending on size and amenities. Walking dogs is a local pastime here.



A selfie, *Carla said I could not do it!*



The campground also provides pool tables and Wi-Fi media

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meeting room. Log cabins are also available to rent. As typical with TT (Thousand Trails), all sites are back in. The back lower portion of the campground is subject to a muddy condition after heavy rains. In general, this park will make for an excellent stay.



Last Monday was a quiet day with Bingo in the evening... *we did not win*. Wednesday evening was Bingo again and Carla won \$12...*Laundry money, about time!*... Thursday was their annual roll out party. We just found out that the entire park was invited to an outdoor buffet with every finger food you could imagine. The party was held outdoors on the front and back porches of the club house. Strawberries with three trays of warm chocolate available not to mention veggies galore. No way of knowing how many showed up, I estimate close to four hundred were in attendance. A Chinese auction with some very nice and expensive prices were in the offering. On Friday the HHR must go to the doctor. At the end of the day the bill was *less than \$20; priceless!* What a beautiful, Saturday, daytime temperature around 70 degrees and nothing but blue skies. Carla and I took a short walk to the club house. A craft show was taking place in the parking lot, but nothing much to look at. Then we walked over to the pool area hoping to snatch one of the two swings. **Feb. 7<sup>th</sup>** Each is being occupied by campers with Kindles or tablets.

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Campers in western parts of the country are expecting to experience the “Pineapple Express”; torrential rains. Northeast is expecting 8-15 inches of snow. *Being stuck in Florida is not that hard to take!* Rain is what we are expecting on Monday however. Sunday we will be visiting Mom in Boca, it has been a while since we have visited last. Below you can see the pool and hot tub located on the campgrounds.



I am tired of the hike and decided to give my foot a rest and have some ice cream. Mr. Carl, a solo camper, was sitting in the swing next to us. Chatted with him and gave him some additional information on Thousand Trails (TT) camping packages. Currently he is not a member but I am sure he is giving it some careful consideration. Turns out he was single camper just down the street from us last week. His goal is to head toward Vegas this summer. In a couple of weeks, we will also move on from here to Bradenton, FL and stay at the Winter Quarters Manatee Campground for three weeks From Manatee we will experience Lake Placid, The City of Murals.

### **City of Murals Lake Placid, FL.**

Today, the 10<sup>th</sup> we will be visiting, Lake Placid, the City of Murals. Never thought we would experience such an awesome visit. Lake Placid is in the center of Florida.

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This mural is 27x13 feet and was completed in 2006 and is called THE SCRUB JAY'S WORLD. Each mural, you are about to see, contains secrets, items that do not belong, dates and even omissions. Carla and I were able to find many of these hard-to-find items, but never found them all. The scrub jay bird is very friendly but is endangered. When hungry it won't hesitate to sit in your hand and beg for peanuts. These birds' mate for life. The mural honors the founders of the Lake Placid Mural Society. It was completed in 2014. In 2013 Lake Placid won the coveted title of "America's Most Interesting Town."



THE OLD POST OFFICE. This mural is a whopping 70x14 feet. It was completed in 1996. This Post Office has been in the same location since 1919. On a mail run in 1919 from Arcadia to Lake Placid the mules bolted after they were startled by something. All was lost including the mules. It has been re-

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ported that the remains of that day can still be seen at the bottom of the 60-foot-deep Lake Buck. I took this picture for Abby to enjoy. Almost everything that could support a mural, has a mural; awesome!

**TURPENTINE INDUSTRY.** Previous page Completed in 1994 and measures 62 feet by 14. Personally, I have never given turpentine much thought; especially where one might find turpentine except at Home Depot. As the story goes, the Coachman's Consolidated Naval Stores owned over two million acres of Florida's pine forests. Workers remove the bark from pine trees and collect the gum from these trees. The gum is collected and refined into turpentine



**THE LOST BEAR CUB.** Lake Placid was once one of the best bear hunting grounds in the country. Vegetation and berries made for easy eating and bears grew fat. It has been told that at times the mother bear would be killed. If she left cubs behind, many times they were taken and kept as pets and became very friendly. The Lost Cub symbolizes Florida's last habitats as a warning to the possibilities of extinction.

**DR. MELVIL DEWEY.** (Right) Dr. Dewey was an educator, librarian, visionary and inventor of the Dewey Decimal System. In 1895 in built a resort area for his friends in Lake Placid, NY.



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35-years later, around 1927, he built a lodge on Lake Childs and had the lake's name changed to Lake Placid. Around the same time, he had the town of Lake Stearns changed to the town of Lake Placid. He also was instrumental in having the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad build a Depot in Lake Placid as well, talk about connected!



**CELEBRATE LAKE PLACID.** In 2013 Readers Digest voted Lake Placid “America’s Most Interesting Town”. This mural commemorates that title. This mural is a collage of several murals that exemplifies many of the high points of Lake Placid. This town prides itself on being small only in size and population and its geographic position in the center of the state.

**CALADIUM FIELDS.** This mural was completed in 1995. It turns out that, they call Lake Placid, the Caladium Capital of the World. Additionally, 95% of the world’s caladiums, are grown in Lake Placid. Normally I probably would not have even taken this picture except that, several years ago at our Titusville home, we began replanting these flowers, from the wild. The thing that fascinated us about this plant was that every year we would have double the plantings from the year before. It has been said that “When God finished creating flowers, he turned a flower into a leaf.”

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THE ROSE MAN. Completed in 2003 this mural tells the story of the Rose Man. Since 1990 the Rose Man, Mr. Willard Campbell, made it a life's work growing beautiful roses only to give them away daily. His flower beds consisted of 150 tea rose bushes and 40 miniature bushes. He gave his roses away to businesses, individuals and most of all, hospitals.

BASSIN. Completed in 1993 it won first place in a national contest in Air Brush magazine. The bass in this area often weigh in at over 6 pounds and reaches 18 inches in length. Lake Istokpoga, at over 27,000 acres, is the lake to fish. It connects with dozens of smaller lakes and rivers which stretches over 100 miles through Kissimmee and Orlando to the North and Lake Okeechobee to the south.



This mural was painted of a clown on a metal canvas attached to a park bench. Then again, this was another example of the practical application of art to beautify and entertain.

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TRAIN DEPOT. Completed in 1995. It reiterates the efforts of Dr. Melvil Dewey, whom we spoke of earlier. Through his efforts a depot was built in Lake Placid which greatly added to the growth of this small town. The Atlantic Coast Railroad began servicing Lake Placid in 1927. This mural was painted by a father and son team from Chemainus, BC.

Lake Placid was not always as notable as it is today. The story begins in the early 1990's. Harriet and Robert Porter had just retired and were planning a vacation trip to Canada on their Gold Wing Motorcycle. If it were not for the Porter's visiting this small town in BC, Lake Placid might look far different than it looks today. In fact, the town would, most likely, still be known as Lake Stearns. Freight trains still pass-through Lake Placid. The RR Depot is now the home of the Lake Placid Historical Society.

### **Valentine's Day Clown School**

What a nice weekend we had. We travelled to Ft. Myers, FL for our coach to be worked on. As we waited for the coach, we met Larry and Marsha. We first met them a couple of weeks ago as we were transferring our belongings to the new Winnebago Suncruiser. They had just purchased a 2010 Tiffin Phaeton forty-footer. The work for each of our coaches was taking longer than expected so we each changed our plans and decided to spend the night together and go out to dinner at Cracker Barrel Restaurant. We got together for breakfast the next morning as well. No complaints on the food...Excellent! What a pleasant day this was. (19<sup>th</sup>) This morning we were fortunate enough to meet up with Stanley and Cathy Parker. Long story short, back



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in '67 I went to work for his father, Stanley Parker, Sr. He owned Parker Drug Stores in Littleton, NH and was a legend in his own time. Back in this day if a pharmacist was lucky enough to own one drug store, he was happy. Stanley Parker had four pharmacies at the time and, I was told that he once operated over twelve in its hay day. Now back to the original story. I first met young Stanley and his wife at the time in 1967 just before Christmas. It was a very brief introduction and never thought I would not meet him at least not again until 2015. We were told that he had died. Then by accident, as RV people tend to continue bumping into one another, we met folks that were from Littleton, NH and knew Stanley and Cathy, reassured us the Stanley was alive and well. We contacted Stanley and Cathy and then met up with them for breakfast the next day at Pioneer Restaurant. The meeting and the food were so good that we were there over three hours. Pioneer staff began asking us if we would like to stay for lunch as well, we declined. We each went our separate ways and promised to try to meet up again before we left the area. That afternoon we had to prepare to leave the park for Ft. Myers, FL. To fix a couple of minor problems at North Trail RV. Our appointment in Ft. Myers was for 10 am so we were compelled to do the three-hour trek in the evening- *not what I was looking forward too!* We arrived at Cracker Barrel in Ft Meyers just after 9 pm. For an overnight stay. Next morning, sadly we had to wait six hours for the coach to be looked at. Work was completed at 6 pm, too late to drive back to Wau-chula, so it was back to Cracker Barrel (CB) along with Marsha and Larry, Motorhome friends from ours, for another night at CB.

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It has been a good, long, and tiring day. Doing this mural trek is fun but it would have been better on a cool day and bring water. We got to this mural and took the picture. Then we noticed it was on the side of a building advertising a Clown School. I was curious, Carla not so much, *but that is the fun in being married*. We walked in and took a left and found the museum of clown portraits.



Mr. Toby is the Manager and Clown School teacher. We were told that this was possibly the only museum dedicated to Clowns. The museum contains hundreds of pictures of clowns of the past and their many make-ups.

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One of the most famous of these clowns was Red Skelton. The museum has several portraits of him on their wall. Another of the greats was Charlie Chapman. As seen in the next picture applying make-up. (Previous page bottom right) The museum is very proud of this photo. I am not sure, but I believe it is a one-of-a-kind collector's item.



Many portraits are about Ringling Bros. Circus. The founder of the American Clown School in Lake Placid was Keith Stokes, also known as Toby. At this time, he was retired but had a need to stay involved. As a cure for this need to stay active he volunteered his clowning at hospitals in the area. Patients loved him. With his need to do more in the early 1990's he started the American Clown School. He graduated his first class in 1993.

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To assist financially to this effort a non-profit foundation was established. Big AL will be your host should you visit this unique shop. If you are lucky Toby will be there as well.

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## MARCH 2015

Today is the beginning of March and arrive at the Winter Quarters Campground. Yesterday we experienced a very heavy rain-fall. To add to that we were in the lower section of Wauchula, known for flooding. Sure, looks serene and harmless, doesn't it? We spent all day yesterday watching those large and heavy diesel pushers being stuck in a foot or two of mud. I figured that was expected, since, after all, their heavy engines are in the rear of the bus, and ours, of course being gas, was up front. I felt our chances for being engulfed in mud were slim to none; *sure!* By noon yesterday we were ready to begin our trek to Fort Meyers to have some fixes done to the coach. We moved all of six feet and found ourselves deep in the muck. Fast forward three hours and a big tow truck later we were finally freed from Wauchula. We arrived at Cracker Barrell in Fort Meyers, FL in the evening for our appointment at North Trail the next morning. We did very little at our stay here, just relaxed. Carla caught up on some reading and below I worked on the coach and freed it from the mud from Wauchula.



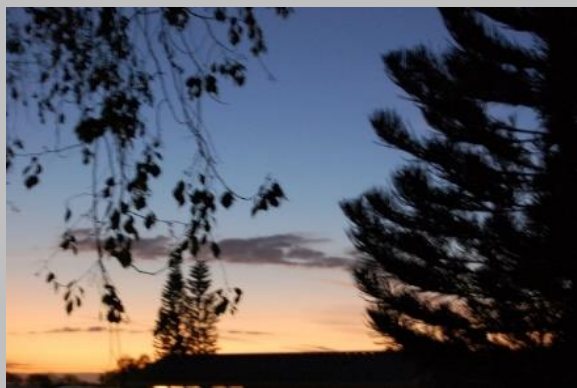
The temperatures are delightful which makes it nice to do some manual labor. The evenings were hard to forget. Most were

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much like this one. We are still hibernating and have not begun our second season of coaching, but April is just around the corner.



The roadways are as pristine as you could ask for and all the sites have cement pads. The campground is dotted with cabins as we have seen in so many other campgrounds, *must be money in cabins*. The Clubhouse has bingo and has a full calendar of activities for the entire winter.



Next is a full library of books and DVD's. This is their quiet room. Men gather here each day to play cards, women too. Internet is available here as well. From the Clubhouse balcony, overlooking the pool, you can see just how packed this campground gets in the cold season I have never come across

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this before; a small, but very diverse, work out room, just off the pool tables room, yes more than one table. I was told they are not pool tables, but rather billiard tables; *whatever!*



Just would not be a senior complex without Shuffleboard. We meant to try it but never got a chance, *not enough time, tough being retired!*



As I'd mentioned in the past, arriving at this campground, like all Thousand Trails facilities, is a no-brainer. Plenty of room to pull your rig in, check in and move on to your site. But it is that time again to return to our site and prepare for our trip to Clermont, FL where we'll be staying for three weeks, called Orlando RV Resort.

### **Orlando Thousand Trail**

Our location in the park is A-90 about a five-minute walk or a two-minute bike ride to the Clubhouse. As always with these



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Campground Blogs I will let the pictures do most of the talking, the park is so big it has several laundry rooms strategically located around the park for easy access. Another reason this is an Encore TT Campground. Over one-hundred acres and easy access everywhere



This is the Clubhouse, Quiet Room, with pool located out back. Tennis, and game room for the kids are here as well. New day and the temperature is 85 degrees on this 3<sup>rd</sup> of March. At the Clubhouse there is a flyer to drum up RVers for a trip to Alaska. Alaska is not possible for this year but we are optimistic for 2016. This will give us time to be more familiar with the coach and budgeting for this expense. This is in the clubhouse. We are sitting just about where that individual with the blue shirt is sitting. Just ordered some French fries and hopefully we will be in the pool by 1pm. Just picked them up, *won!* Wish I had the Nikon to take a picture of the size you can buy for \$1.50...*awesome!* Picture below is the Ballroom. Otherwise known as the Bingo Hall.



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Tonight, is bingo night. Just to reaffirm that we do have quite a few youngsters here.



This is a picture of just part of the game room for kids. There are a lot of kids here and today is noon Tuesday and not a vacation week. Home (RV) taught kids, once again everywhere and another look at the size of these buildings. Quiet room, but not very quiet. They provide books to read, VHS, DVDs to watch and movies available to rent at \$2/night. Also, in the quiet room, as at most campgrounds, you will find puzzle tables. Generally, just one, here we have 6 tables with puzzles started. It is just after noon. Guess it is time to return to the coach, relax a bit and get ready to go to the pool. This is one of those doing nothing days. Overcast and a bit chilly. Hard to believe two days ago we were in the pool. It was rewarding, however. The electrical connector from coach to dinghy was not working properly to the point that whenever we made a turn the signal was not being carried over to the HHR.

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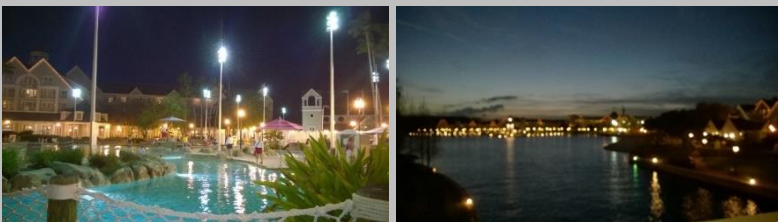
A simple purchase for a new power transfer cable corrected this problem. On another positive note I was able to reach a very good and old friend, Jim Ferguson. If all goes well, we should be getting together on the 11<sup>th</sup>. We are expecting Karen Rodgers to visit with us later this afternoon, the 8<sup>th</sup>. According to the weatherperson 30% chance of rain was expected, instead we have a beautiful sunny day in the mid 70's.

12<sup>th</sup>. What a week this has been. Last Sunday we were visited by Karen Rodgers. She is, our accountant. Turns out she's thinking of picking up a travel trailer soon. She visited with us most of the afternoon then picked up our paperwork and headed off back home. Wednesday Jim Ferguson joined us for the afternoon. It's always a pleasure spending time with him. We enjoyed BLT's and a lot of good conversation. He has four daughters, three graduated and one graduating this year. He's also mentoring a grandson, around twelve years old, on the intricacies of the Stock Market. Hope I'm still around when he's 21, a day-trader in the works. The week culminated with a visit to Amy O. She's an event coordinator with Met Life. We're planning on the 12<sup>th</sup> to take her to Walt Disney Broadway. It's hard to believe that our time here at TT Orlando will terminate this coming Sunday. It's jacks up Sunday morning as we head to Vero Beach, FL.

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This time Amy, the one on the left in the picture above, was working out of the Swan Hotel at Walt Disney World. It's always nice to have friends that hang out in Five-Star hotels. We arrived just after 6pm and Amy joined up shortly thereafter. Took an awesome walk on Disney's Boardwalk and headed to an Italian Restaurant, Trattoria Al Forno- The Bakery Café. I have no pictures of this restaurant but I'm sure it can be Googled online. Very nice to mingle with the upper Five Percenter's. Carla and I enjoyed Lasagna, an item we quickly identified on our Italian Menu. Amy had a very colorful plate, Chicken Parmesan. Our waitresses were extremely knowledgeable on all the items on the menu, the English names not to mention the wine list. We ate slowly and enjoyed every bite but knew we all needed to spend some time walking off this meal.



Disney never disappoints. We walked the Boardwalk enjoying cool breezes and 70 degrees. temps. Even at this late hour kids were everywhere.

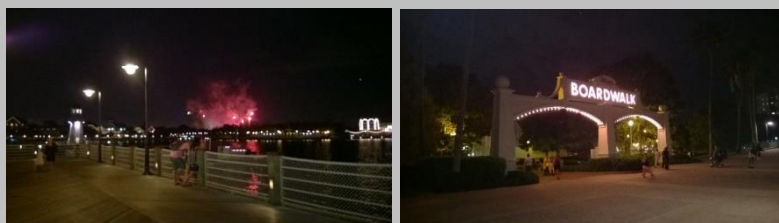
## PAUL GRENIER



The Boardwalk eventually leads to a cool destination. That's right, an ice cream outlet. As usual Chocolate Chip was not to be had, Strawberry will have to suffice. Forget what the girls had but the scoops were much too generous, more than we needed, *but oh so good!*



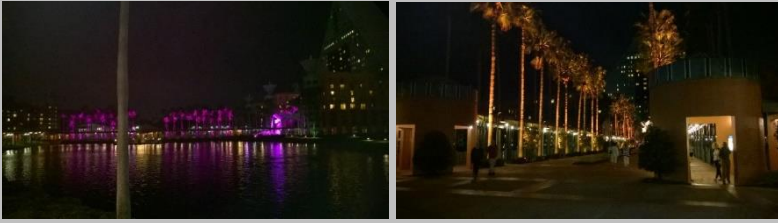
I guess it's Disney's way of telling everyone it's time to go home. Fireworks were, as always excellent, but not very easy to capture on film.



Boardwalks are like train tracks; you can only go one of two

## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

ways. Even I would have a hard time getting lost here.



Just a few of the beautiful sights Disney is so good at providing. Another beautiful sight. The scene changed colors every 15 seconds, so I tried to catch these trees when they turned red...*oops!* A selfie of a thankful old man and his bride and best friend for 25 years this year; *Priceless!* In the picture below are Abby's mom, Abby, and brother. Abby is our go-to person between us and the real world.



Abby collects some of our rents and mail should any of our mail go to the wrong address. For all we pay in mail service, I'd like to have her collect all our mail and pay her a bit more for the extra service; I'll have to remind myself about this later.

March 17<sup>th</sup>. and we arrive at the Sunshine Travel RV Park. What a great campground. An Encore Resort in Vero Beach, FL. Arrived here today the 17<sup>th</sup>, nice to be back.

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This morning we had to pick up a couple of items from Walmart, then we decided to lock in a site here for Jan, Feb and March of 2016. I've been trying to stay with the "free" stays but this is the only campground that's convenient for us as far as Boca and our Doctors in Titusville. Currently we're locked in at just \$13 a day but we're hoping to pick up a deal in the future that would bring us closer to \$10 per day. I know this sounds like I'm splitting hairs, but it's the mindset and goal of the majority of RVers to do this lifestyle as frugally as possible. Thank you, Nancy, for getting us such a great rate.



Two men in the pool were talking to one another and the first mentioned that he had just spent eight-thousand-dollars going to Hawaii. His friend replied that he would be spending the year



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here at Vero Beach for only six thousand dollars. He had no inclinations to travel that far for the same sun that can be found in South Florida. We must be very satisfied because we rarely see an RV worthy of selling the Itasca and moving up. We will not be buying a new coach; they have too many problems. The only brand we ever get a little excited about is Newmar, but that would require taking too much out of savings. We lose little sleep over things we either don't need or can't afford.



This weekend and, for the near future, LaMesa RV will be having a mini-RV show on the campgrounds in the triple overflow area by the office. Above right is the banquet hall, bingo hall and mail room, all in one.



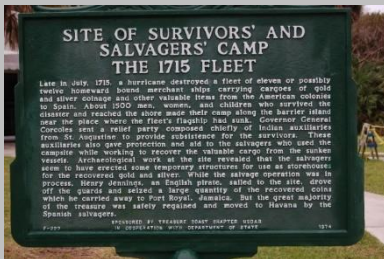
We travel to Boca today to, once again, celebrate Mom's birthday. Today, the 22<sup>nd</sup>, will be her 97<sup>th</sup>. We were all fearful that this might be her last birthday, and within the next three months, on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, HE would finally call her back to join HIM

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and my father who had passed fifty years earlier. Condolences were extended by so many of her friends, but down deep my brothers and I knew that, except for her last two weeks, she'd had an excellent, satisfying and happy ninety-seven years. We were all sad, but we knew she was ready to go and was in total peace with HIM. Yes, in the above old black and white picture, is mom and dad with, of course, me and my brothers. Mom and dad are finally, after a 50-year separation, back together again. It will take about twenty-five years, but I expect we'll have a grand family reunion then. A sixty-year-old picture, someone always gets elected to try to keep and organize the family history. That will end with my demise. My kids have no interest in family lineage, but that's their problem.

## McLarty Treasure Museum

23<sup>rd</sup>. Today is my dad's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death; it was a long day. *What a pleasant surprise he'll have in three months when mom comes a calling.* Finally, it's time to do what we have an RV for, and that's to see new venues. Today we will take in the McLarty Treasure Museum.



I don't know about you, but have you ever wondered why it's called the *Treasure Coast*? As it turns out the area of Sebastian



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has two museums on sunken treasures, this is one of them. In 1715 a fleet of merchant ships were caught up in a fierce hurricane and sank in various areas from St. Augustine south to Sebastian Inlet Florida. The entire fleet sank with, in today's values, would be valued in the hundreds of millions of dollars, in gold bars and gold relics and other artifacts.



This is a rendition of a typical vessel in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the ships were much larger than the Atocha but nonetheless they were all carrying millions of dollars in jewels, gold, diamonds, and artifacts from all over the then known world, including America. To make a long but very interesting story short a contractor, who had an Oceanside home on the outer reef barrier island used to take walks beach. Occasionally he would come across the small metal discs and he used them to skim across the water. One day he decided to take a closer look at these metal items. They were doubloons dated no later than 1715. He soon discovered that each one of these doubloons were worth around \$800 or more. He could only assume the doubloons were coming from a wreck and were being washed ashore. Then he learned about the hurricane of 1715 and the ships that were lost. Being an older person, he knew he was not trained enough to search for the treasure so he hired a diver from California, Mel Fisher. Mel sold everything he owned and

## PAUL GRENIER

moved his young family to Florida. The contract between the two men was simple. Fifty-fifty even split on everything Mel would find in this part of the ocean, after Florida receives its 25% tax on treasures found in the coastal waters. Since that partnership, back in 1964, they have split hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of treasure and most of the treasure is still in the ocean today.



Fifteen hundred men, women and children were fortunate enough to swim to shore during the storm. Above are some of the tools they used during that era. Below are some additional tools, dishes, and pottery.



This map shows the route the Spaniards traveled to collect these riches. As it turns out these ships were ordered to collect all they could to satisfy a dowry of the new queen of Spain. They used a Proton Manometer! It was designed not react to silver or

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gold but if it detected iron, like an anchor, sure enough treasure could be found. The Proton Manometer (PM)(seen above right picture) did its work in the water. Lines would be tied to it and it was dragged along the bottom. Wires were attached to it and they were attached to a meter. Once the PM hit an anchor a chemical reaction took place inside the PM and would send a current of electricity to the meter. Just like a lie detector it would go crazy when iron was found. Surprisingly most of the treasure is being found in just twenty feet of water or less, *amazing!* Next you would ask, after three hundred years, the treasure must be buried deep in the sand; *well, you're. Right!*



The picture above is a typical treasure hunting boat. Notice the stern of the boat just above the engines. This contraption would be placed in front of the props and the props would act like a reverse vacuum, gently blowing away the sand covering the treasure. Divers would only have to collect everything they found. Everything that remained had value. And Mel and his crew never left anything behind. The first year of searching came up with nothing. Since then, a four-hour dive sometimes brings in three-four million dollars of treasure. The treasure hunting goes on today and the bulk of the treasure, according to the Spanish manifests, has yet to be found. Located just up the street is the Mel Fisher Museum. It's Friday, the end of another

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week and just about the end of March. Today we will meander over to the Navy UDT Seal Museum, in Fort Pierce, Florida. We also viewed the Seal Commemoration wall. Visiting this museum is a very sobering experience. Other than that, all I can say is that you must visit it to fully appreciate the museum and the great sacrifices the few have made for the majority. Just one last picture to end this experience.



This museum incorporates everything, artifacts, stills video and original documentaries. Young children may find this venue a little to grown up. For teen and every adult, it's a must-see exhibit. The weather outside turned wet and cold so we spent most of our time indoors. I could easily go on with another twenty plus pictures on uniforms, actual guns used by Seal Teams and stories on many of their ops, but I'll leave that for another day. This episode wasn't even in the original blog when it came out. The caption above tells the story of the capsules at this museum. At the time we were there they were under a great deal of construction, so they extended to us free passes to be used after the construction was complete. We will be coming back here next year and I'll have an updated and more intense blog in the RV-n-America 2016 book. This, along with the other two museums would make for a full day of enjoyment for the entire family. All three of these locations are on US-1

## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

and/or just across the causeway for the Seals.

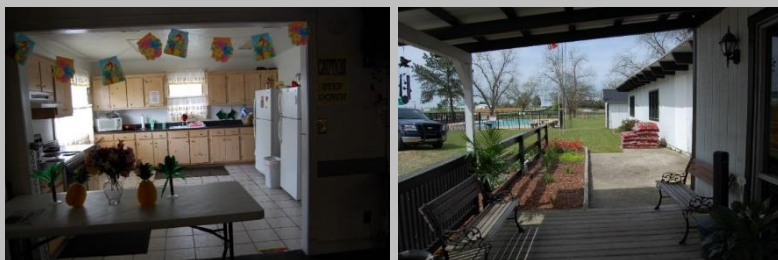
Hard to believe but this will be the first day of our second travel season, and we're heading out of Florida. We celebrated mom's birthday on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and remembered dad on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Today, the 29<sup>th</sup>, we left Vero Beach heading north to Mims Florida. It's was only a one-hundred-mile drive, but we wanted to meet up with our Abby to say good-byes with her. She visited with us for a couple of hours and then we left for Daytona to visit with Mary Ann, Carla's sister. As planned, we met Mary Ann at Cracker Barrel (CB) which looks like it is located at turns 3 and 4 of the Daytona International Speedway, just a stone's throw from where we were staying. We visited for a few minutes in the coach and then had lunch at 5-Guys Hamburger shop in Port-Orange, FL. After a great meal, which never disappoints, we joined Mary Ann at her home and visited for a while. In the morning enjoy a casual breakfast, then we were back on the road again. We were hoping to get started by 10am and, surprisingly, were only off by a few minutes. We arrived in Lake Park, GA about three hours later. To our surprise we found ourselves with a dead battery in the HHR, went to Sam's and got a new one. Interestingly the battery we replaced was the original battery when the car was built in 2006. We arrived back at CB we noticed the entire back RV parking lot roped off with yellow caution tape, almost looked like a crime scene. Turns out every year this CB does an Easter egg hunt for the neighborhood children and those kids eating there at the time if they wanted to participate. Campgrounds never forget younger kids. It's not an extensive play area, but it is private and secure. The campground provides a pool to cool off in, for both adults and

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children. For us, in April, it's too cold for the pool.



What a nice play area for kids, behind the pool. For us pool water must be around 88 degrees, so we don't expect to be in the water very soon. This picture is of the club house and office. This campground is very inviting from the point of its location and ease in reaching it from the highway. The porch areas are as inviting as we found in Wauchula, Peach River, awhile back. We're from New England, originally, and a big front porch with rockers, gliders or swings are the items that make for a great stay.



During our stay we spent time on the porch whenever it was not occupied. The campground is very nicely manicured. Just off this office area is a gathering area for bingo and at certain times of the day, it's very quiet. RPI, Resort Parks International, is part of the Equity Lifestyle Properties family of

## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

campgrounds. Rarely do we find ourselves without a "free" option to stay somewhere and that's where RPI comes in and fills in the gaps. Let's face it, anytime you can stay somewhere for \$10/night-grab it.



I know many of you have reserved motel and hotel room accommodations for over \$100/night and swore you'd never stay there again. This is a situation RVers never face.



As you can see, a large parking is available for your rig and dinghy, while you decide for your stay. Like many campgrounds, the managers told us we could choose our spot but only in a specific location, which was just fine with us. Most all the sites were pull-thru, utilities were very convenient. Not to mention, at \$10/night, thanks to Thousand Trails. This RPI campground's prices were great.



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Bingo was on a much smaller scale, but we were lucky and won about four times during our stay. As the pictures above show, the camp roads are composed of crushed stone.

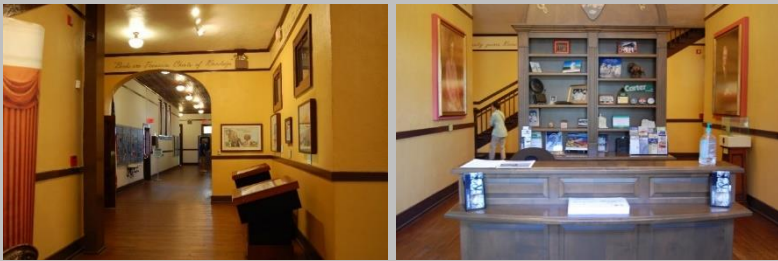


But, under no circumstance are they difficult to navigate. I hope this narration and pictures will assist you in deciding to spend some time at this venue.

**APRIL 2015**

**Jimmy Carter Museum.**

2<sup>nd</sup> Since we are in Georgia we might as well try to fit in a fieldtrip. We will take in the Jimmy Carter Museum in Atlanta, Georgia. It is truly awesome that we begin our second travel year in Plains, GA, home of President Carter.

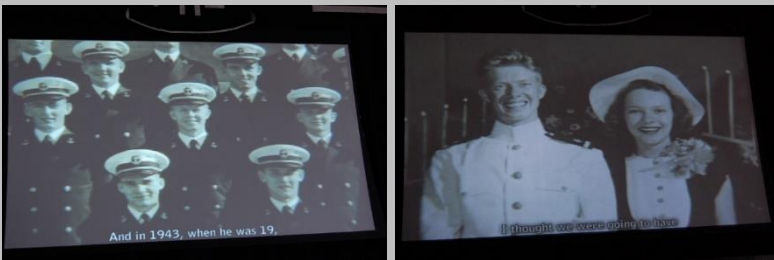


The school, I am sure, has been renovated and I am sure is looking better now than it did back then. Above we walk through a first level corridor. This building is thoroughly dedicated to Mr. Carter, family and friends. This is what you see when you enter the High School. For some reason I forgot to take a picture of the school. It goes without saying, I'm sure the information desk was not there during his stay.

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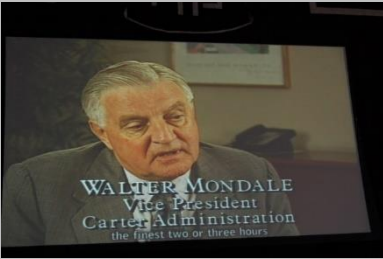
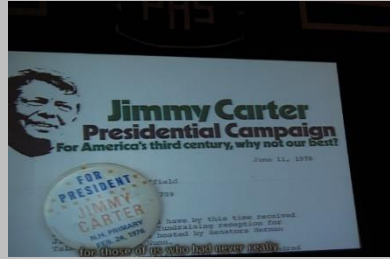


The school auditorium offered a 45-minute movie, a short documentary on the President's life. (*Image courtesy of the Carter Museum Jimmy Carter today.*)

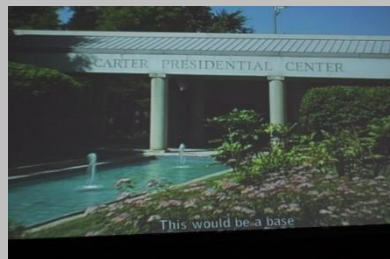


Above is a picture of Jimmy graduating for Naval Academy in 1943. Next would be a picture of Jimmy and Rosaline, the day they married. They began their married lives like most of us, a bit poor, with not the faintest of all ideas of how much he would accomplish during his lifetime. When he retired from the navy, he realized how much in need the Georgia school system needed some new leadership, so he ran for the School Board. He then realized he had a great deal to offer through politics, so he ran for Governor, and won.

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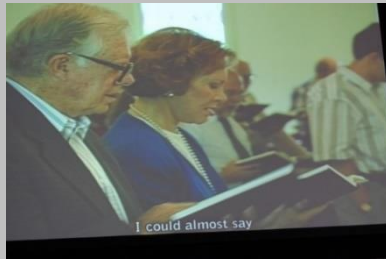


Having had a very successful term as Governor he felt he could do more for Georgia in the senate, so he ran, and he lost! He accepted the will of the people and waited two years and ran again, this time winning. As we all know from history eventually, he ran for the Presidency, and won. His Vice President would be Walter Mondale. His was a young presidency, like John Kennedy's. He and Rosalynn, in his Inaugural Parade, decided to exit their limousine and walk down Pennsylvania Ave. waving, greeting and thanking the crowds at the parade. Amy Carter was just a kid when she lived in the White House and enjoyed living and playing like any other child.

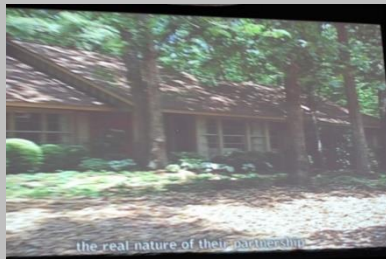


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The Jimmy Carter Library is in Atlanta, Georgia. The Carter's were and still are strong advocates for Habitat for Humanity. It has an office not far from his home in Plains. I remember someone describing Jimmy as being not that much of a religious person, so much as a person who thoroughly believed that every decision and action had to benefit everyone, not just a select few.



He felt obligated to teach a Sunday school class and I believe, we were told, he continues this obligation once a month.



Their church was never rich, so it relied on volunteers to do many of the janitorial duties required. Once again, the Carters would make themselves available whenever it was their turn to assist. The Carter Residence. They still reside there. More pictures of their home.

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Jimmy Carter here, in his office, with his daughter Amy. We close on the Carter family and prepare to head off to Andersonville, GA. Andersonville is a lot like Gettysburg. You must visit the area to get the real appreciation for the area and the events that took place here in history.

We're planning to purchase a B&W Laser printer. Bingo is on schedule for Saturday and we won for a change, *not enough for the washer/dryers*. It was back on the road again until we reach Buford, GA. We'll be staying at the Shoal Creek Campground on April 6 and 7, then on the go again. We arrived in Buford, GA at the Shoal Creek Campground, *Awesome!* Only planning to stay here two nights and then it's up and go again. This campground was basically a stay for us to experience Stone Mountain. Let me allow the pictures tell the story of this site.



We arrive today, the 6<sup>th</sup> at the Shoal Creek Campground which is another Equity Lifestyle Property an Enjoy America



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campground. This, for us, is a ten dollar a night stay, very hard to beat that when you see the surrounding grounds The Lake is called Lake Lanier in Buford, GA. Roads and most all the RV sites were paved as well. Basketball and swing sets are available for the kids. Here we are, thought I'd forgotten to take a picture of us on our site.



Bottom line, I could easily enjoy staying here a month or longer. The quiet, solitude and spacious sites; *Priceless!* Doesn't get much better than this, especially if you have a boat. Marina in the background.

### Stone Mountain, Atlanta, GA

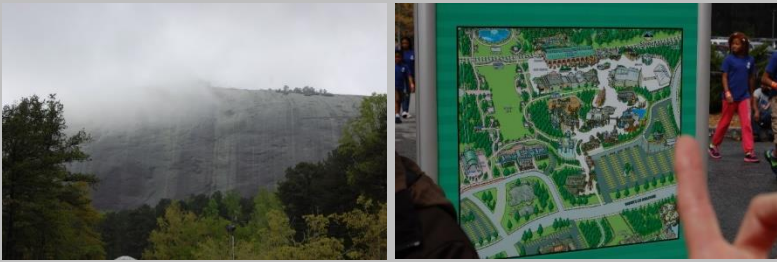


April 7<sup>th</sup>. As always, our stays do come to an end and it's time to hit the road again. This is such a nice park/campground to spend a few days with family and friends, however, we must



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leave. Purpose for the stop - experience Stone Mountain in Atlanta, GA. This seldom happens, others offering to take our picture. I keep offering and most are very thankful but that's it, except for this awesome family. Visit my Stone Mountain Blog for more on this wonderful experience. As we drove in great anticipation to viewing a mountain of stone, this is what we first saw. Must get better.



The grounds are very well organized and the signs are easy enough for a child to read. Some of the grounds were as nicely groomed as Disney. Now, where exactly are we?



A dogwood Carla hasn't seen for a while. Just like Disney, the grounds are impeccable but, like Disney, there's always a line for tickets, thankfully, it was short.

# PAUL GRENIER



Oops! Thought we were going to be on our way in the last building, so we continue to walk.



Guess we've made it. Once we had our tickets it was a delightful walk to the next location. This is it; next step is up, up and away. Yup, this is now getting serious.



Now, it's time to get back in line. Yup, we're climbing!

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Great view coming up next. The rock striations seen in the picture are caused by the action of water wearing down gullies in the rock over hundreds of years.



A little history, (courtesy of the Stone Mountain Museum), on the creation of the mountain and continent. As I've said in the past, occasionally someone offers to take a picture of the old folks. This rock did not happen overnight! Sometimes it's just much easier photographing the graphics a venue provides then try to re-compose it altogether. Enjoy the views from the top of Stone Mountain.

## PAUL GRENIER



This is a family we met at the top and then again on the tram going down and at the bottom as well. Our sightseeing together is always a great experience, but back in the day when we travelled with Abby, it was even more sensational knowing that Abby had never seen much of what we were experiencing, it was always new to her. Not only did they just take our picture we had an opportunity to talk a bit as well. A young family from Louisianan. Sadly, I have no more information on them. I hope we hear from them when they get back from their vacation. You only have one go-around in life to be the best you can be

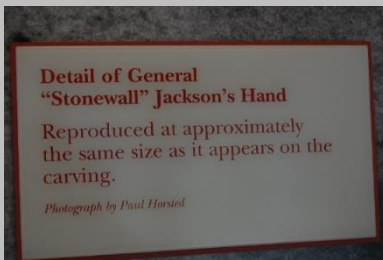


## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

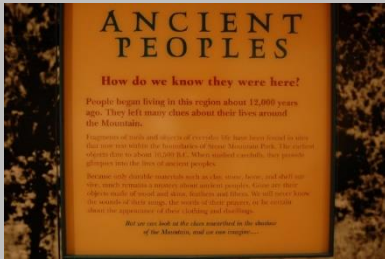
as parents; this couple is confident in the great job their doing as parents. Sometimes I think much of the entertainment comes from the comments you really don't expect from a child thirteen or younger.



A little envious of younger families we run into either at the campgrounds or on these escapades. The creation of the mural on the rock is as interesting as viewing the rock itself. Just a short history on this subject. This rock mural was supposed to be a memorial to three of the South's Civil War Heroes. To make a long story short, the third and last sculpture hired, ironically wasn't even a sculptor, but he knew, with additional technologies, how to get the job done. In the end it took over 75 years to complete this project.



# PAUL GRENIER



A 4000 – 1000BC Bowl found in the area of Stone Mountain. A plaque beside it said, “please touch.”

April 8<sup>th</sup> Left Shoal Creek early in order to get through Atlanta before the morning rush and made it. In Five hours and 250 miles later, we arrive at Hidden Cove Resort in Arley, AL another Thousand Trails (TT) campground.



Yes, it's well off the beaten track and as you drive up you might question our decision to camp here except for the price being so great but give it a couple of hours. Many of the sites are pull-thru, when did you hear that last. And most are 50-amp with excellent TV reception with just your antenna. What impressed me the most was Wi-Fi reception in your coach...*priceless!* Did I mention we're on the water, with boat docks, boat house on a 35-mile-long lake, Lewis Smith Lake, with a dam on the end. Yes, we settled in very comfortably on our small but very level

## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

site with picnic table (in very good shape), fire ring and cement pad to top it all.



You are right this is a rustic campground but remember this is what camping is all about. Those who disagree can stay at the Marriott for \$150 a night. Did I mention the Lake House is a cut-out in the floor for indoor fishing? Especially nice for kids on a rainy day. For that fact I can think of a couple of grown-ups that might take advantage of the enclosure, as well.



You can't help but see all the high six-figure homes are nestled across the lake. Family members and friends have asked me, in the past, what do you do in case of a tornado, well, this is it.



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It's buried just below the ground level and has a 10 feet diameter of internal space. Around here it's not if a tornado or hurricane should come but when! Did I forget to mention we also have a clubhouse here?



Yes, we still enjoy a game of pool if there's a pool table on the grounds we'll play. TT and Encore build these clubhouses to promote their vacation packages, which we belong to.



## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

**April 14<sup>th</sup>.** -We're still exploring this campground. Even though they have a lake, a pool is always a plus. That in a nutshell is Hidden Cove, and I wouldn't hesitate to stay here again. The campground has a couple of huge play structure, mini-golf, volleyball and horseshoes venues all free of charge. Before it begins to rain again, we take a walk and see another section of Hidden Cove. I could see the river behind us but did not think there was a way to get there, *wow!* Beautiful dirt and crushed stone roadway. This roadway is just to the back of us, and it has all the river views.



This is one of the campgrounds' rentals. Not much to look at, but I bet they hop in the summer months, especially with this view. This was not what I was expecting to see. A huge observation area with steps dropping to the water below. We're busy tomorrow but will be back here on Thursday with chairs and rods.



## PAUL GRENIER

This is the Lewis-Smith Lake, and here are some of its residences.



We met these fellow campers on our last day at the park, never got their names. She said they had seven years to go before they retire, in the meantime they rent a modular, here at the park annually, and enjoy the lake on their Seadoo.



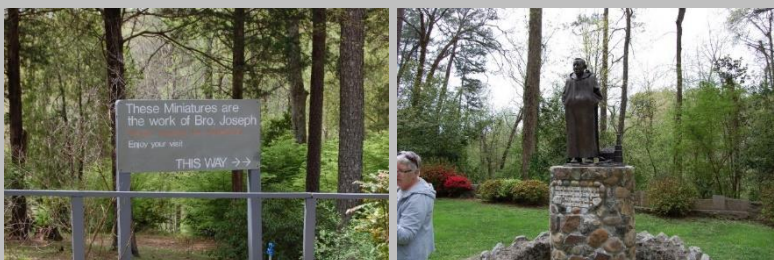
I don't have the luxury of his 600mm lens, but I can crop. It's late and time to trek on back to the coach. On our way to the coach, I had to look back; it doesn't get much better than this, anywhere.

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Our view from the coach. Yup! I could easily enjoy a summer and fall right here. I've spoken about the Equity Lifestyle vacation packages often. We have the "Elite" package. Buying into the Equity Lifestyle program, if it were only to enjoy this one awesome campground, would be worth the monetary investment. Only wish I had had this opportunity fifty years ago when I was a young dad. This campground is not that fancy but it's free and has Wi-Fi in the coach, *Awesome!* Enough on Hidden Cove.

April 12. If you haven't noticed we lean, as much as possible, to visit locations of our Faith whenever possible. After all, He makes it possible for us to enjoy this lifestyle. What an awesome place to quietly walk around and contemplate on some of the more important things in life. We began this experience in the gift shop and picked up a couple of items for family.





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The Ave Maria Grotto was the brainchild of Brother Joseph Zoetl, OSB (Order of St Benedict). He began this work of constructing "miniature replicas" of significant and religious buildings around the world. He initiated this endeavor around 1912 and it continued until his death in 1961. The Grotto was dedicated in 1934. This Grotto was assembled in a former quarry. Brother Joseph died in 1961. As always, I could write a book on this but will let the pictures convey the story. Now the tour.



You can see just how serene the area is. This project was begun by Brother Joseph. Everything was built by hand. He began this project around 1932. Eventually the grounds would be filled with tons of rocks from the nearby quarry Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus. The story told is that at times Brother Joseph would visit the local pub in town and offer to buy a round of drinks to those that would offer their help for the day. He never left empty handed. Another story, we were told, of a load of

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rocks, not in the right location for that day's work.



He needed just a bit of help so he asked a couple of local boys if they would help him. By the end of day, and for many days thereafter, especially in the summer vacation months, he had small hands helping whenever he needed help. Picture compliments of the Ave Maria Grotto Picture compliments of the Ave Maria Grotto St. Bernard College Building.



This depicts the Abbey and the prep school location on these 160 acres of property the actual prep school for boys and girls is located across the street, no picture, but it's awesomely beautiful.

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As with all experiences, we're on the final stretch, thank you for sticking it out.



This is a quick view of the Gift Shop from the walkway. There's always a Gift Shop.



As I mentioned in the beginning of this blog, these 160 acres were all part of a large quarry. As we have discussed in a previous blogs on granite queries, the picture above is showing a left-over piece of granite that was, most likely, carved out of this quarry. Notice the holes at the top of the rock every 3-4 inches



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that were drilled in order to set the explosive charges. In the distance you can see the chapel and burial site for Brother Joseph. Brothers from the Abbey who have died are buried here on either side of Brother Joseph's Chapel. Brother Joseph's Chapel and burial site. Did I mention that the Monks paid two dollars per acre to acquire the property?



*Inside the Chapel.* And so, ends this wonderful experience, as we say goodbye to the folks that run the gift shop. They were extremely helpful to both of us in our search for family items. We awoke today in Cullman, AL to temps of fifty outside, coach was comfy. We have nothing planned today except Mercy Sunday Eve Mass. Our nearest church is a one-hour drive. The Baptist on the other hand have a church about every country mile in every direction. The bishop should think smaller but more numerous churches; *whatever!* I had mentioned that this day would be quiet at best: not quite! Our day began a little rain but cleared by noon, so this Saturday April 11<sup>th</sup>, we decided to make the best of it and travel to Cullman, AL. Our church for later today, Sacred Heart Church in Cullman, AL. We arrived in Cullman around 2pm and now we will have over three hours to

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kill in this small town. We first visit Sacred Heart Church, *Awesome!*



Today's mass will be on the eve of Mercy Sunday, a day we and our entire family treasure as much as Christmas. A beautiful solemn High Mass with a great deal of discussion on Mercy Sunday; *Awesome!* The church was established in 1877. The wooden church was replaced with the current building in 1916. This area, a long time ago, was mostly German settlers. The L & N Railroad in 1877 donated the city block, now home of Sacred Heart Church (SHC), School and Parrish home and office. In the beginning SHC was just a small wooden building. The school, likewise, was a two-story edifice. The parish priests, we're German speaking, lived in an old pre-existing house on the property. The stone church was dedicated in 1916 and the stone school not until the 1940's. The church is an example of German Revival of the Romanesque style. The church faintly resembles the cruciform style in the fact that the eastern end of the church is slightly wider giving a somewhat crucifix-like look to the building. The Saturday night that we attended Mass the setting sun was brightly shining through the stain glass window

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up in the organ loft. The setting sun was dead center in the circular window.



It was also in direct line with the tabernacle of the altar, *priceless!* The church has a total 24 stain class windows surrounding the church. They were created by the Von Richter Ecclesiastic Studio of Columbus, Ohio. They were built in Munich, Germany in 1914. This was, as you might have guessed, the era of World War I. As each window was built and completed the window company would bury them in hopes of shipping them back to the USA once the war was over around 1920. In 1999 the church went through an extensive restoration project. The asbestos shingles were replaced with a fish scale pattern. The steeples, gutters and down-spouts required 23-tons of zinc and 600 pounds of solder to complete the job. There are over 4000 shingles on each steeple and the high roof. The original crosses on each of the steeples were replaced with gold crosses. The steeples and gold crosses are now a Cullman landmark. The school was established in 1878. By 1879 the enrollment was up to 100 students. The new stone school was dedicated in 1950 and currently enrolls 160 students' grades 3K thru 6<sup>th</sup>. In 1977 the first German Festival in the City of Cullman was begun commemorating the schools 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Cullman now celebrates Oktoberfest and has become an annual event thanks to the

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school. Please don't think we're a couple of holy holies. *En Contrere!* Carla and I are fully aware of just how fortunate we are to be experiencing such an awesome lifestyle. In response it's only fair to give Him a thought, now and then. We enjoy life and are fully aware that we owe Him a big thank you every day as well as my brother Dennis for watching over the home fires, as we travel. With still a great deal of time to kill we walk the streets of Cullman, even a furniture store; glad we no longer have a home to contend with. Across the street was the All-Steak Restaurant. And we enjoyed onion rings and drinks. In order to fulfill the Mercy Sunday obligations confession was next followed by the Saturday Vigil Mercy mass. Prior to mass we had a chance to talk with some parishioners. Turns out this day, April 11, marked the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of one of Alabama's worst tornadoes. Two tornadoes. They struck the town and leveled a good portion of it. All this leads up to a couple of very interesting stories. One parishioner had a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary in front a big oak tree. Their house was in the path of the tornado. When it was all over the tree had been uprooted from the ground, the statue, home and all the kids play items had not been dislodged not even an inch. Not a shingle was off the home, but all around the home; devastation! The storm destroyed many of the buildings in town except for the town's three Catholic Churches which were in the path of the storm. They experienced no damage at all; no tiles off the roof and no windows were broken. Alabama is only 3% Catholic. It's time for Mass. A beautiful solemn High Mass with a great deal of discussion on Mercy Sunday; *Awesome!*

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This picture, on the left, of the Merciful Heart of Jesus greets everyone as they enter the church. Mercy Sunday, the Sunday after Easter is very important to Carla and I. Thanks to Saint Faustina and the wisdom of Pope John II, for championing the Mercy Sunday cause, and bringing this to the Catholic populace. The celebration of Mercy Sunday service was priceless. Father Egan was the celebrant and did an awesome job of explaining the fine points needed to obtain the plenary indulgences available to those in attendance.

Rain s well as our monthly mail arrived today. Doesn't happen as often as we would like but Abby sent us a text, then another and another, for us to contact her. Yes, school was in session but the class had to watch a movie, so she decided to get in touch. It was great hearing from her but after two texts we stopped just so she would not catch a detention. Tuesday, as expected we had rain most of the evening, but sunny skies prevail right now, with heavy clouds intermingled. Before it begins to rain again Carla wanted to take a walk and see another section of Hidden Cove.

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## Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament

We spent a full day experiencing the Shrine of the Blessed Sacrament, an awesome venue. We began this day at the Castle of St. Michael. It was there that we were given the schedule for the day. We snuck in with a bus tour and hung out with them since they were nice enough to pay for a guided tour of this beautiful place. This building was built to reflect the architecture of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century.



Couple of pictures of this great hall, The Castle San Miguel. The inscription reads: *The Castle was built to complement the architecture of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Temple. We pray that the Great Hall will inspire you to imitate the valor, the chivalry, the honor and the courage of both the Saints and Knights. May you obtain from the Lord God as you leave this place, a new spirit of scourge and strength to define and defend the faith.*





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Upper Church. was the life's work of Sister Angelica. She is also the founder of EWTN, The Eternal World Television Network. Pictures are not permitted either at the upper church and lower church, but I had already taken some pictures of the lower alter before I was informed of that. This "Temple" was built for the perpetual adoration of Our Lord present in the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the Most Blessed Sacrament. In most churches the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament may occur during certain times of the year; Here the exposition all day long, every day of the year.



Mother Angela died Easter Sunday 2016 The story of interventions and visions to build this Temple is inspirational and spans almost 40-years. Mother Angelica was part of a cloistered group of nuns. Her pilgrimage began in 1962 when she founded a Monastery in Irondale, AL. In 1972, after viewing a Baptist Tele-evangelical Network a few years earlier, she knew she "wanted one of her own" networks. After many years of asking for donations, she finally established The Eternal World Televi-

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sion Network. This television network is televised in 140 nations throughout the world, but the creation of the "Temple" would take a little more time and a lot more money.

As the story goes the Christ Child with arms outstretched spoke to her, when she was visiting in Spain. There is a plaque at the bottom of the monument statue. Sister heard the statue talk to her in the voice of a young boy saying, " Build me a Temple and I will help those who help you." The nuns in her care were able to acquire the funding needed to purchase the 380-acres in Hanceville, AL., but building a Temple would require a great deal more money. *God provides when asked and through the generosity of five families, she would be gifted with Fifty Million Dollars to begin her building program.* Not confirmed, but story has it that the funds were provided from the Bob Hope families and foundation. There may have been other families involved but this is all I was told. Lower Church.



On December 19, 1999 after almost four years of construction the Temple of the Divine Child Jesus, Our Lady of the Angels Monastery and the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament were consecrated. Our Lady of the Angels Monastery is part of the upper and lower churches. This is a cloistered order, so they have a very secluded life. The monastery was built to house as

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many as forty nuns but currently they have around fifteen. The Order of Poor Clare's of Perpetual Adoration. Just a word or two about these nuns. Joining the order requires high school diploma or GED certificate; sounds simple enough! *What happens next is worth mentioning.* First a girl contemplating a life with this order will write a letter and ask if she could visit. If yes, and it usually is, she will appear on a designated time and date and knock on this door located on the same level as the Upper Church. This door cannot be opened from the outside, only from the inside and can only be opened welcome a scheduled guest. The girl is welcome to spend up to three months at the Monastery. She will participate in all the activities of the nuns. After three months she will be asked to leave and return home for a short period of time, I think three weeks, to contemplate whether she wants to follow through on becoming a nun. If she decides to continue her studies in the Monastery she will return to the Monastery with her parents. She will do all the hugs, kisses and goodbyes at the unopened door to the Monastery but once the door opens, she must walk directly into the Monastery and *must not look back.* This is just the first step for the novitiate to turn herself over to the order and a lifelong dedication to the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Nuns at the Monastery do have the privilege to visit with parents in the sanctioned room though a small window in a designated room. Arrangements can be made for parents and family members to visit for up to three days on the Temple grounds. The entire indoctrination period takes either seven or eight years (forgot which). The child can leave the Monastery and return to the secular life at any time during this period. The order may recommend not continuing with the candidate or possibly transferring her to another order

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or location if they feel she may be better suited for. After the indoctrination period the girl will enter Our Lady of the Angels Monastery. Life as a cloister is not what I recall from the past. They do get up and 5:30 in the morning (*that would kill it for me*) and go to Mass at 6am every day. They have studies, work duties and of course their participation in the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at some time of the day. The alter in the upper church sits up against a wall that stretches from one side of the church to the other. There's no entering the back side at all. This is where the nuns fulfill their dedication to the Adoration. The public, as we did, may hear the nuns praying and singing on the back side of the partition. At times during the day, they may communicate with one another, eat meals together and believe it or not, watch some TV on preselected channels, EWTN being one of them, of course. During the day they also have time allotted for play, if they want.



The Nativity Scene: Up until a couple of years ago the Nativity Chapel stood open to the outside. Thanks to donations and, possibly some cash left over from the building fund, the chapel was expanded. All the figures in the Nativity Chapel were made in Germany. It was in the Nativity Chapel that we were able to fill containers of Holy Water. The inscription on the outside of the Nativity Chapel reads; "*and the word was made flesh for you.*"

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The new venue looks like this from the outside and has a "cave-like" look in the inside.



The Crucifixion: To fully appreciate all aspects of the life of Christ we must consider the Crucifixion. The scourging of our Lord depicted above was replicated from the particulates and stains found on the Shroud of Turin.



The cross at the top of the Chapel. The cross came in damaged at the time of construction. Mother Angelica took it as a sign from Heaven and instructed the engineers not to fix the cross, but rather, leave it as the Lord, she felt, wanted it. As it turns out this type of cross, one without a top, is not new but has been around for centuries. As customary we leave the gift shop till last. It is huge, but it will be getting bigger in the next couple of years. As with every venue we visit there is always a time when we must leave. This is a venue for the entire family, and it will take most of the day to fully explore all that is here. This

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venue was well worth the stop, but now we are off to the Rockwood Caverns.

### Rockwood Caverns

Rockwood was about a one-hour drive from the campground in Arley, AL but well worth the ride.



16<sup>th</sup>. My pictures don't show the parking area for campers, but this is a state park and it does have excellent camping sites for campers in the RVs. Today, as always, the Winnebago remains at the campground and the Chevy does all the traveling. If you look closely, you'll even find picnic benches dotting the yard. Not sure what the park offers campers for utilities, like electric, water and sewer. It does have a very nice pool. Only negative is that the pool water comes from the cavern and the cavern water temperature is around 55-degrees; *says it for a swim.*



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As the sign on the water tank tells us, this used to be a mining operation many years ago. It's just a short walk, up a hill, to reach the cavern entrance. Then you proceed to walk down for a bit.



And our trek begins here. The little munchkin to the left belongs to Tim and his family. His family of six joined us and made the journey that much more interesting.



From the parking lot attendant to the staff in the office, everyone was under twenty; says it for making us feel older than we are. Our guide is extremely knowledgeable.

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This cavern was born about 600 million years ago. Back then it was in the molten stage, as was most of the planet. Then about 300-million years later to continents had solidified and as we discussed in the Stone Mountain blog, the continent of Africa was floating around and smashed into North America, forming Stone Mountain in Georgia which had a lot to do with the formation of this cavern. Under the crest of the earth, rock did not always fill in all the spaces.



In the photo above, once the state purchased the property from the mining company, men worked in the cavern installing lighting and clearing the walkways making it safer for tourist to experience this venue. A slew of rocks resulted so in this case they built a loosely stacked rock wall. Trying to find points of interests in a cavern could be challenging. Park officials want us to note this seemingly small chunk of granite (above) is doing its

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part in holding up the rock ceiling above us. None of us attempted to touch the rock.



This flat out-reaching rock you see in front of us is the "drum rock." We all took turns pounding away on it to validate its name. We were told this rock above was a rock representation of a gator. Everyone pondered that thought, but even the kids thought it was a stretch. Not often, but in times like this, it is nice to be short. On the ceiling you will find baby stalactites. Question- *How long does it take a stalactite to grow "ONE" inch?* Still traveling further into this labyrinth of stone.



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Time to go down a little deeper.



What else...time to go up now. At this point we are about 200 feet underground *and no you cannot receive a phone call underground!*



This is an example of a stalactites which over millions of years joined up with a stalagmite, which as we all remember, grows from the bottom up. Oh! About the growth answer. ONE HUNDRED YEARS to grow one inch; *priceless!* A young stalactite and stalagmites joining together. How old is it? I did not ask.





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Tim's family, below. *Oh, to be young again!* Many of us might do things differently. This was an idea gone bad. Originally it was going to be an elevator shaft, but after more thought, the park decided otherwise. We are now at the very bottom of the cavern. This was also once an ocean bed, *yes Ocean!*



Walking uphill, must be a good sign. Go figure, going down again.

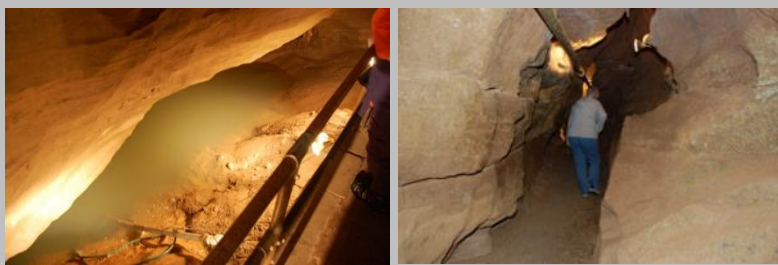


We have been told, we're almost there. It took 375-steps to reach the lowest level. This cavern has been designated as a fall-out shelter. It can support 1100 people for many months. This

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is a stream that runs through the cavern, and a definite source of water. Carla sees our way out. It's time to say goodbye to our guide.

April 22<sup>nd</sup>-It's hard to believe in just four days we'll be getting the coach ready to hit the road again, this time off to Middleton, TN, to experience another "Equity Properties" campground, called Cherokee Landing.



Equity LifeStyle Properties owns several large campgrounds; Thousand Trails, Encores, Resort Parks Intl and Enjoy America. We get huge discounts if we chose any of these parks to stay at. One of the pleasures of this lifestyle is meeting all those we camp with. Just met my next-door neighbor. His coach is so awesome. A diesel pusher, Tuscany, about 42 feet.



Like I said it's a diesel but what got my attention was the mini

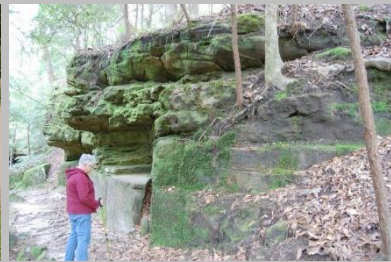
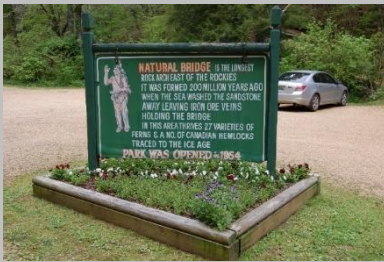


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compressor he was using to add air to his tires. Tires for coaches cost around \$700 apiece, so maintaining them is vital. He was using a "Viair" compressor, something, I think, we'll buy for the coach next Christmas. It's a little expensive, around \$350, so we'll see what the checkbook looks like at that time. He and his wife are planning to leave this Friday and we're leaving on Monday. He'll be camping next at a campground west of Memphis and we'll be staying at Cherokee Landing just east of Memphis. Hopefully we'll meet up with them again in the future.

### Natural Bridge-

23<sup>rd</sup> It's Thursday, and we thought it would be nice to squeeze in another venue before we leave this coming Monday. We assumed this would be just another quiet day at home, think again. We don't get much exercise so it's on the road to Natural Bridge, AL to see their Natural Bridge.



The Natural Bridge is not going to be on anyone's "must see" list, but it's here and we really could use the exercise. The pictures, as usual, will do most of the talking. What we'd like to do

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in this journal is to bring you along with us on a virtual walk to visit this unusual creation of nature. Watch your step here, we're almost there. You've got to admit it's awesome. And there it is, The Natural Bridge. It gets its name, naturally, because it is one huge rock formed like a bridge. This location is in a portion of the Appalachian Mountains. I can almost envision Indians and possibly earlier inhabitants calling this place home and a refuge from the elements. The population of Natural Bridge, AL is under one hundred. I can't even imagine living in a town that small. As we spoke of in the Stone Mountain journal, this too is a byproduct of the physical makeup of Mother Nature some two hundred million years ago.



The town itself was incorporated just before 1900 and has had several names from time to time. It was only one hundred million years ago this stone and the matter around it was in a molten stage and now, one-hundred-million years later nature is beginning to cool off and solidify in unique forms and thanks to Africa it is now above the ground.

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At the same time, remember, Africa slowly smashed into North America and the pressure it exerted forced boulders, rocks and everything else up from the depths of the earth to rise above the surface. This pressure was not just being felt in this small hamlet, but also in the Arizona desert, remember the Grand Canyon and is also responsible for the many hills and mountain ranges we have all over this country; thanks Africa! Now to get back to this location. Boulders all around here were forcefully pushed up from way down under and this Natural Bridge, once buried way down under in this "bridge form" has also been forced to the surface. At this point we will continue our hike and hopefully see additional creations of nature.



I will pipe in occasionally to make a comment or two, but it's a picture story The striations and pockets in these boulders are a function of the molten boulder forming around dirt and smaller rocks. Over time mother nature has cleaned the dirt and rocks that were imbedded in the boulder and what you get are these

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designs.



The moss, growing on this rock and everywhere else, is as a result of a very heavy canopy of trees and their leaves, not to mention the infusion of moisture from above ground streams falling off these rocks. This venue is considered a private park. The bridge is made up of sandstone and iron ore. It only looks like I'm getting wet, what concerns me more is the cliff I'm standing next to. This is another one of those locations, like the Flume Gorge we wrote about in our 2014 book. A great place to bring the family but in many spots navigating the terrain can be challenging, not to mention dangerous.



We were told that kids will often come here and climb the rocks and walk over the bridge area. Yup! Rocks abound here.



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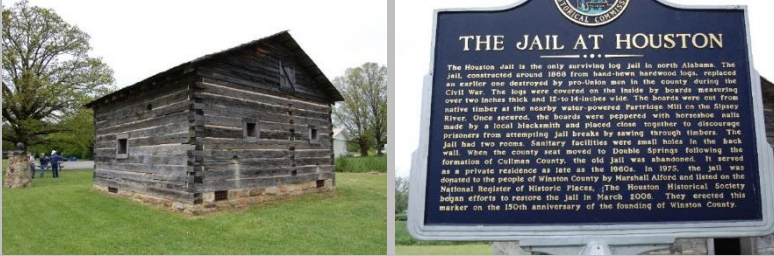
This tree, if you look closely at the very bottom, (about the south-east position) is mostly eaten away and if you look into the large hole in this tree, you'll also see a smaller hole inside. During heavy rains we've been told it's a very beautiful sight to see huge volumes of water wash over these rock formations. In the next picture the walkway is very steep, the picture does not do it justice. Dress properly to tackle this passage, especially climbing shoes. We hope you try to enjoy this venue in person sometime in the future, it will not disappoint.



### Houston Jail

23<sup>rd</sup>. Still energized, we are off to Houston; Houston, AL that is! Yes, there is something called the Houston Jail; bet you just cannot wait! Do not judge it until you finish reading. A plaque, courtesy of the Houston Historical Commission, stated that the county was created on Feb. 12, 1850.

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I took a picture to bring to your attention the system used in those days, over one-hundred-fifty years ago, to provide bathroom facility for the inmates inside. Those would be the “round” openings below the windows. Courtesy of the Houston Historical Commission. The jail was built in 1868 but a new one was built in 1884 so this one was closed. This story is about the original jail. These three dudes were important during those days. They were;



John Anthony Winston was Alabama's 15<sup>th</sup> Governor. On a more serious note, he was instrumental in establishing the Alabama Public School System in 1854 and then, typical of any politician, Hancock County was changed to Winston County in 1858. He was also a Colonel in the Confederate Army.



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I read it twice and not much there, Richard Elliott Payne was a Confederate Officer and then after the war he went into banking and began printing his own money on brown paper; *wonder how that went...* Willis Farris was Winston County's first Sheriff from 1850 to 1853, and then again 1859 to 1865. Later he was elected to the Alabama House of Representatives. Everyone in this picture is related to Willis Farris. The gal in the orange top is the great, great granddaughter to Willis. The lady in blue is his daughter and others are brothers and related folks. Willis was born in this county 201 years ago and these are his family; *priceless!* Pictures of the jail.



Ok! A rhetorical question! In the picture below. What, do you think, the purpose was for having an opening cut into the wall? Just thinking outside the box on this; it might also be used by an outside person passing a knife or even a gun to the prisoner inside the cell. But no! It's a potty hole. In the picture below, look closely and notice all the symmetrical marks on the walls and

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ceiling. Any ideas? Those are hundreds of nails for a very specific purpose; what?



Using nails in the walls and ceiling discouraged an outsider from trying to free a prisoner by sawing him out of jail. And this was way before high pressure nail guns.

23<sup>rd</sup>. We are expecting very heavy rains this evening. Just got back to the coach. Took a little walk down by the water again and met up with neighbors fishing. They originate from Arizona and will be visiting the Wisconsin Dells about the same time as us in a few weeks. Our neighbors in the Tuscany coach left early this morning heading West of Memphis, TN. Next day was wet again. What a horrific rain downpour we had last night. I was up with Scoots from 3am till after 4am, long night. Coach did well.

### Hidden Cove

23<sup>rd</sup> We arrived at Cherokee Landing, in Middleton, TN. We're in a location that's short on amenities like sewer, that will change on Wed or Thursday when we will move over by the pool side of the campground.

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It's really relaxing, but I can only imagine how this place hops during the season. As in most of our campgrounds, it's an Equity LifeStyle Property. And we all know what that means; security gates, good sites, great locations and with many camping plans for little to no camp fee expenses-*priceless!* This is our new resting place. Don't be alarmed we did not get handicapped , as the sign at the corner of our site says, on our trip up here. The site was available and we were told we could have it if we wanted it. We will be moving to a better site on Thursday! I can only imagine you're saying, there he goes again with the "FREE" talk, you're right! It's important, especially for those of us on fixed incomes. It's very similar to when your family were on vacation with your three kids. You can't tell me your heart begins to race when you read "kids sleep free." Even more so if you read " kids under eight EAT FREE." Bet you never read: "FAMILIES SLEEP FREE or almost free." Yes, that would have been nice. Just think about how much traveling you could have done if it weren't for all those motel fees. This is the option Equity LifeStyles Properties offers everyone. The opportunity to stay at some very nice campgrounds for free, almost free, half price and some at just ten dollars a night; and I'm talking hundreds of locations. Not all Encore campgrounds are alike, but something I've noticed...they do an awesome job of finding properties with great looking lakes or river views.

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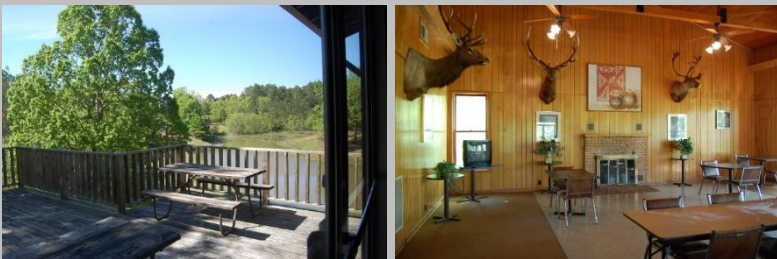
At the time of our arrival there were up to four campers in the park, including us. We woke up this morning to find the motorhome a few sites down from us pulling in his slides and getting ready to leave. Honestly, our TV was not that loud last night *whatever!* Two days later we learned what they had learned, there were sites that offered sewer on the other side of the lake... *priceless!* Not that this would have been a problem. By the way, our over-the-air TV reception is excellent here. That's us in the distance. ...Like with most RVers we would have survived nicely. It would, however, be very nice if the campground offered a honey wagon service, as we had in Wauchula. Either way it would not have been a deal breaker. Tomorrow we're going to see if we can use a canoe or rent one.



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This bridge was so inviting from a distance and it did not disappoint when we got closer. This bridge begins at the clubhouse and crosses a small retention-pond to an area of rental cabins. We'll be moving down the road from here on Thursday. Something that never disappoints is the staff at all these campgrounds; kind, considerate and very helpful. On the flip side, except for Hidden Cove Campground, WI-FI at most parks barely get a passing grade. At Hidden Cove, believe it or not, we had good, fast and service so extraordinary, in the comfort of our coach. To RVers WI-FI is so important. Having it in your motorhome at the breakfast table; *Awesome!* Plenty of table space and plenty of books and magazines to read. The WI-FI at Cherokee Landing is not available in your coach and is barely active in the clubhouse...



Disappointing! Why can't a campground be outfitted with Wi-Fi systems that have proven themselves in similar properties? Great area to picnic or just contemplate life for a few minutes.



## PAUL GRENIER

Inside the clubhouse. The lower level is called the Crow's Nest.



It's been a while since we've shot a game of pool; not that it would have made a difference in our performance. The camping bungalows on this side of the pond. The best part of staying at another campground is the friends we get to meet. Some will only be a memory, others will pop up from time to time at different parks, then there are those you meet and stay in touch with. We met and keep in touch with Sandy. A solo female RVer who this year had set a goal for herself to travel to every state in Continental America. We connected with her in early 2016 and she had accomplished her goal. Right now, I believe, she's hanging out on the West Coast for a few months.



30<sup>th</sup>- Before we had our last cup of coffee, we decided to pack up the coach and move it to the other side of the Campground where they have sewer options, and the campers have been



## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

coming in right and left. Early morning, we had three neighbors, the count is up to seven. Our new home, after moving from our original location in no-man's land. To our left is a 2013 Winnebago, Sandy's Motorhome. We spent most of the afternoon exchanging stories and then another couple owning a C-Class joined us as we shuffled over to see Sandy's coach. Then it was off to the town of Walnut, TN to find a neighborhood Walmart and their Redbox. Time for us to try to find our way back to the coach. This walk was Heavenly! Come and visit next time you're in the area. It's been a few days of resting but today we met up with Denis Van De Wield and his wife Andrea. They're Equity Lifestyles salespersons. Offering vacation plans has piqued my interest since we met the folks in Orlando. 95

PAUL GRENIER

MAY 2015

**Shiloh Nat'l Military Park, TN**

1<sup>st</sup>. Shiloh, what an awesome visit. Tremendous story about several battles to gain control of the railroad lines in Corinth, MS. In the end 3500 Union and Confederate soldiers never returned home again.



The story of Shiloh is a short but very interesting one. However, like all my blogs I will again let the pictures do most of the talking. But first we begin in the visitors' center for some background information. Picture of the Visitors Center



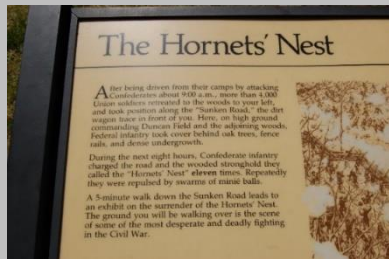
Gift shop inside

## RV-N-AMERICA 2015



Cemetery for the Northern/Union Soldiers only in the battle of Shiloh. I learned that Confederate Soldiers cannot be buried in National Cemeteries. In 1866, however, the United States Government established a cemetery for Union soldiers. A plaque nearby states that two-thirds of the soldiers buried here are unknown. Many of the tombstones either have a number or simply reads, "S. Soldier." Memorial to the Southerners who fought so bravely in Shiloh.

A couple significant items of the memorial. The person in charge of this cannon was called the Gunner. Couriers on horse-back and drummer boys were the primary modes of communication.



On April 6, 1862 at 3am the bell to "call to order" rang furiously. Grant would be the Command of the Union troops. He was a graduate of West Point. He served along with Lieutenant Colonel Buell who, as the battle unfolds, will save Grants butt

## PAUL GRENIER

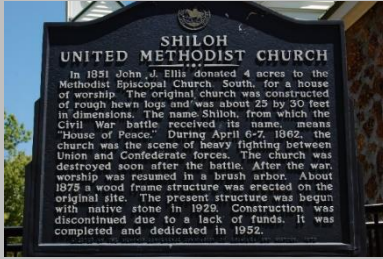
half-way into the battle



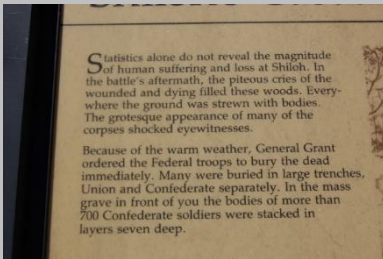
In those days the Union boys, Northerners, that is, were called Billy Yanks. The Southern fighters were referred to as Johnny Rebbs. The Southern Commanders were Johnston and Beauregard. Johnston was very highly thought of by his men; in fact, it was said that without Johnston the South would have no Commander.

Sunken Road: The Hornet's Nest Battle was fought on these grounds. After eight solid hours of fighting, the Confederate infantry, by end of day, they would surrender in one of the deadliest battles in the Civil War. Above a view of the battlefield called the Hornet's Nest. Sunken Road is the location of the surrender Fraley Field: The picture above is of Fraley Field grounds where the battle was fought on. The Confederates were commanded by Brigadier General Benjamin M Prentiss. The Confederates crushed the Hornets' Nest on the first day of fighting, but Gen. Grant, the next day, had a successful counter-attack

## RV-N-AMERICA 2015



This building was the Methodist Church on the Shiloh grounds where the battle was fought. It later served as a hospital and meeting house. This monument tells the story of this monument to the Confederate soldiers that died in this location. See below.



Many of the Southern soldiers escaped during the battle, but in the end over two-thousand perished. The battle was all about controlling the railroad lines coming in and going out of Corinth, TN. The North, ultimately, controlled the RR lines as a result of this battle. (Information provided from a plaque courtesy of the Shiloh National Military Park) This, in turn, hastened the end of the Civil War because the South, in time, was not able to feed its soldiers nor resupply them with ammunition.

What beautiful days we've been having. Right now, there's no sign of rain till next Friday. We woke up, as usual, with a good chill in the coach. Hopefully by end of month Winnebago will

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put that problem behind us. Thankfully RVs carry propane, so it barely takes longer than fifteen minutes to remedy that chill. Today, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, is usually our church day, but Mass isn't till 6pm, so we wouldn't get back to the coach till close to 8pm, too late for pizza, beer and movie; so, church will be on Sundays this month. We had breakfast and then about 11am decided to do Sudoku and finish coffee under the awning. For now, there's not a cloud in the sky, just blue skies. This afternoon the campground is supposed to be holding a hot-dog cookout. No idea on the time or place yet. Since we have no church obligations this evening, we decided to gather up some kindling in hopes of having either a cookout of our own or just a sit around the fire pit. As we were sitting, having coffee, Sandy came over to talk before she left to go shopping. As she was visiting Al Ingram, wife Mary (they have the Mountain Air that I mentioned earlier) came over as he was walking his dog, cute pup! They also belong to Family Motor Coach Association (FMCA) as we do. We began talking about Alaska, after Sandy left. He and Mary are going to do Alaska in June of 2016. They've signed up for the 48-day tour, and we're still giving it some thought.

What a super evening Carla and I just had. We enjoyed a campground sponsored hot-dog roast at one of the parks three campfire rings. We're the first to admit that we're not much on getting out and socializing but this evening thanks to the TT/Encore campgrounds and Jason's excellent company we enjoyed an evening to remember. On the 5<sup>th</sup> we'll be going to Graceland.



# RV-N-AMERICA 2015

## Graceland

5<sup>th</sup> Today we trekked to Graceland. The temps were perfect, right around 80, with no clouds in sight. Viewing Graceland was an all-day venture but worth every minute. Learned a great deal about Elvis. Did you know that Elvis had a twin brother, at birth? Did you know the he was deeply religious. And, lastly, did you know that he shunned alcoholic beverages? Just some of the many insights we discovered during our tour of Graceland.



The temps were perfect, with no clouds in sight. The crowds were minimum with no wait times and the venue itself was extremely well organized. You're right, Elvis had an identical twin at birth, but he died at birth. We were told that Elvis was a deep believer and into various religions during various times of his life. As far as liquor goes, he had bars throughout his home and planes for family and friends, he personally preferred juice drinks.

# PAUL GRENIER



Everyone is given a digital pad with earphones to expand the experience. Without a doubt it did make the experience more informative. The homestead, if I remember correctly, was built in 1939. Elvis bought it in the 50's. The home, except a few accent pieces could easily pass as a home belonging to a average rich person, let alone a multi-millionaire.



Dining Room



Living Room



Jungle Room

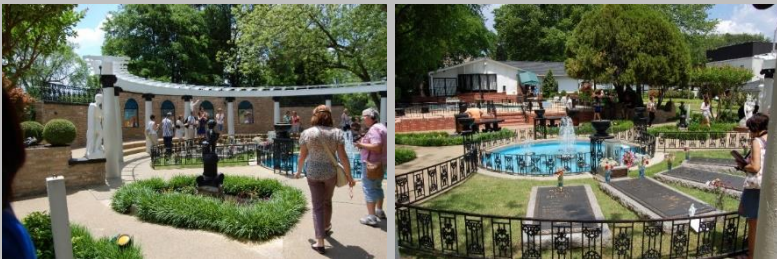


## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

By all respects, it was a typical sized, but this was a 24/7 kitchen. Elvis' home was always full of guests. The Jungle Room- This room was once used to record several songs. Elvis' home was always full of guests. The Jungle Room (see previous page)- This room was once used to record several songs. "Elvis' birthplace on January 8, 1935."It was now time for us to leave the main house and we were escorted to the Trophy Room. This room consisted of acknowledgements from so many charitable organizations it would take too long to count.



There are three more walls just like this one.



We're not done yet, believe it or not. Now it's off to the Racket Ball Court; This is in the Racquet Ball Courts building. In this room alone there are two more walls just like this. To make a long story short, there must be, at least, three more rooms, from floor to ceiling, filled with awards, and first kinds. An entire blog could be centered on just all the records he'd recorded





## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

Elvis' toys; The family plane, Lisa Marie, named after his daughter.



The jet was called Taking Care of Business in a Flash. This Cadillac was purchased by Elvis in 1956. He had the interior individualized and then had the original white car painted purple. The car is seen here after thirty-thousand dollars in restorations. Above is a 1975 Ferrari Dino.



This Mercedes was a gift from Elvis to Priscilla in 1970. She treasured it dearly. There was a slew of cars, too many to put in this journal, but were very interesting. After the ranch was sold, a group of college students from the Northwest Community College offered to restore it and it was returned to Graceland, once restored. In 1970 Elvis acquired a Midnight Blue Limousine. This vehicle was generally built and owned by dignitaries and royalty, of course. This was a Mercedes Benz 600 Gross Pullman model. I could fill an entire book with the remaining

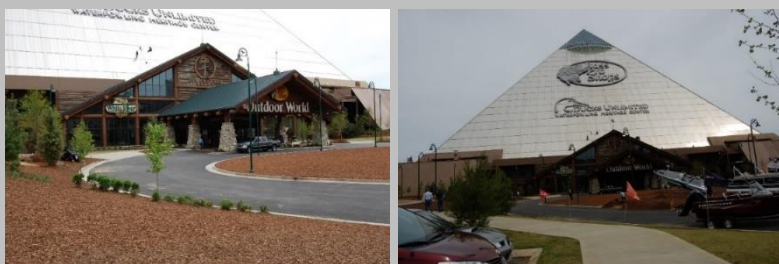
## PAUL GRENIER

300 pictures and information on Elvis, but that would spoil it for the readers. This is a destination every family should experience.

### Memphis Pyramid

12<sup>th</sup>. Just like everyone else, this was also a shopping day. Dark clouds are setting in for a rainy Friday. The next day would be wash-day. Then e must squeeze in haircuts and balancing check-book.

We did get excellent haircuts at "Cutting" just North out of Middleton on the road to Bolivar. Next we'll be experiencing the Memphis Pyramid, visible for miles on the ground and definitely the physical structure that identifies Memphis as a city of the future.



Construction is still in progress. Originally conceived in 1959 then shelved for so long that it was the son of the original contractor who resurrected the project and finally finished it. A typical Bass Pro Shop on Steroids More than an abundant amount of easy parking is available and the roads to Bass are not bad at all for a big city.



## RV-N-AMERICA 2015



The entrance to this business is so awesome. This is truly a



destination venue. The Bass Pro Shop have to do with the outdoors and hunting, every kind of hunting, you can find it here in spades. Hard to see in this picture but this is a live fishpond. Great for the smaller kids. As we walk through the floorspace you find these separate little shacks. Each of these is a different department, such as for shirts, jeans etc.



We are at shoes, sneakers, and boots department. *If it's not here, it's not worth selling. They have it all.*

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We are about to exert ourselves. In a few minutes we will climb the stairs to the upper level. The second level is specific for guns, duck everything, bows and arrows and camping equipment. We're now experiencing a relaxing intermission at the ice cream fountain with assorted sandwiches, for those who did not pack a lunch before they left their homes. No way does this look like any Bait and Tackle shop I've ever seen in the past, but then this is Bass Pro Shops. Fishing gear next, only makes sense. Of course, you'll see only the best clothes to wear when you go fishing.



## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

I believe this was a memorabilia shop. Yes! There's a huge aquarium teeming with fish.



Remember when I said it has everything? Here we have big toys for the big boys. Not just a couple, but a cluster to choose from. *Just in case you left home today to go hunting and you forgot your ATV.* Then, of course, if you left your boat at home, there's a bunch of them to choose from in all sizes.



This is a colorful elevator shaft, which goes straight up to just below the point of the pyramid. There's not even the slightest chance of going hungry here as you visit.

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Yes, this is the best way to get to the top of the pyramid. The elevator will zoom you almost three hundred feet.



Plenty of parking below for the attraction. Yes, this is a destination, not just a sports shop. Back to shopping.

### Branson, MO

18<sup>th</sup>. The Pyramid had everything. I wouldn't be surprised if they have a section on RV's or at least travel trailers someday. We had an awesome evening getting together with Rick and Wendy in their Redwood 5<sup>th</sup>.

Here we go again, the countdown. Hard to believe we've been here almost three weeks. In three days, we'll be packing up again. Rain is projected for these days, so we've wrapped up the mat out front in preparation for our next move. We had a very



## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

good experience here and met some great friends. It's nice to meet up with folks that say their good-byes with, we'll keep in touch and catch up with you in the future. Rick and Wendy left us this morning on their way to Arley, AL; where we had just come from last week. So, it is with the full-time RVer's life. Both retired from careers at FedEx. I'm certain we'll be running into them quite often in our travels.

My brother, on a positive note, is beginning to dissolve his real estate empire and cruise into retirement. Abby is on a count-down as well with high school ending in the next couple of weeks. She's our surrogate granddaughter and "international" traveler. We'll travel about 160 miles to Conway, AR and overnight at Cracker Barrel just off 265, never a hardship to find. Monday we'll finish the trip when we arrive in Branson, MO. Just a short stay, unfortunately, about six days, and we'll be camping at Branson Views Campground, a non-'T' property. It's a small park, about 45 sites but it will do just fine. We'll be here long enough to say we visited Branson. Carla has just finished baking some muffins for our mornings and some brownies to keep me fortified for the trip. Total miles for this trip should be around 360 miles.

On Tuesday, the 17<sup>th</sup>, it's back on the road by 9am, early for us. Our destination for today would be a Cracker Barrel in Conway, AR. About halfway in our journey the alarms went off in our Winnebago Itasca SunCruiser, indicating the jacks "were in a down" position. We stopped and discovered two of them were down just a tad but needed to be addressed. Traveling cautiously for the next thirty miles we arrived at Camping World in

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Galloway, AR. They extended us unbelievable service! The Service Manager personally came out to the coach and remedied the problem. Turns out the springs on the jacks are, of course, nine years old and should be attended to. Asked him if Camping World could do it and he said they had to be special ordered. We checked with Winnebago, since we would be there on the 27<sup>th</sup>, and they had them in stock. The service manager spent over an hour with us and our jacks and said no charge... *Priceless!* Right from the beginning he did not seem concerned. With rag in left hand and a can of silicon spray in the right hand, he got down on the ground and began diagnosing our problem. Within a few minutes he began activating the jacks, both as a group and individually. He proceeded to wipe down and clean the jacks, spraying each one of them. He then reassured us we only had a minor problem. He demonstrated how I could manually retract the individual jack if it was not doing so on its own. Just as we thought he was finished; he was back on the ground repeating what he had previously done. Said he wanted to be doubly sure each was as clean as possible. As a plus he brought me over to a section of the coach behind the drivers' side. He took the time to show me how to reset the jacks to better balance the coach... *priceless!* We left Camping World as very happy campers. His attention to detail in remedying our situation will always be remembered, not to mention the gratification in finding this Camping World open on a Sunday. Thank you, CW, for having such caring staff. Next stop is Branson View Campground in MO.



## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

### Branson View Campground,



I had a very restful sleep and got started first thing after a light breakfast at Cracker Barrel. We arrived in Branson, MO by early afternoon. Getting around here is not difficult, but campgrounds, like Branson, are very hilly. Like so many campgrounds, it also has a swimming pool. It's not that big, but it's very clean and nicely located on the grounds.



All the sites here are a little tight, but the location and the views from the edges of the campground are truly awesome. Just look at some of the RV sites here. Did I mention the views Thanks to Thousand Trails and Equity Lifestyle Properties we were fortunate enough to stay here for only \$10/night. *Great place to stay!* We're also going to take in the Ripley's Believe it or not.

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### Ripley's Believe It or Not.

18<sup>th</sup>-Not too much to say about this venue, as always it was very interesting. All the Ripley's are interesting. A great place to visit, especially on a rainy day.



Took a bunch of pictures, but honestly, decided to leave this blog with just one picture. This coming Tuesday we intend to take in Gilley's in Branson, MO.

### Mickey Gilley Theater

The next day we took in the Mickey Gilley Theater. So often, right after my divorce, many great Country Western singers, back in the '80s, on Sunday afternoons. I would close my Pharmacy, and travel to an Indian RV Park Campground in Webster,

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MA and enjoy live performances of country western music stars, like Willy Nelson, Johnny Cash and so many others, but never experienced Mickey Gilley. Guess who was starring, in person, at the Mickey Gilley Theater. You're right! A little older and, as a result of a very severe accident, resulting in his not playing the piano. So much to talk about concerning this awesome personality, but this is not the place.



Above is the lobby of his theater. What I did not know is that Mickey's cousins were Jerry Lee Lewis and Jimmy Swagger, the world-famous Evangelist. The entire evening was very intense. Forty-five minutes prior to his performance was a video-album of his life in show-business. Truly awesome sight to see him and his cousins with Johnny Cash and so many greats of past days. He sang virtually every song I could remember, and many more.



All three cousins struggled to get their careers in full gear. Jerry

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Lee Lewis was the first to achieve success but struggled off and on for the next twenty years. They struggled with family relationships as well. Yes, Gilley's in Branson, as in the picture below, went up a blaze, no casualties however; and later was rebuilt. A picture of all three cousins. The fourth person I'm not sure of, probably the host of the show they were on. Mickey was on the Letterman show several times.



On this occasion David was fascinated with the mechanical bronco at Mickey's; so, Mickey brought one to his show one night. Letterman did get on it but it ran at a slow pace.



The two-gals above have been with Mickey for years. The banter off one another is priceless. For a man in his mid-eighties, he gave us a show that lasted almost three hours. He's still recuperating from a very serious fall he incurred helping a friend move. It took several months before he would go back on stage again.

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As a result of this fall, he plays little piano. It's difficult for a person like Gilley to sit back and not play any longer especially since he was as proficient on the keyboard. He's a very humble individual, unlike cousin Jerry. Throughout his entire performance he did not cease to expound on just how lucky he had been to have received assistance from friends in the music industry. His book "Unconquered" by J D Davis, which I am currently reading it describes in detail the struggles each of the cousins endured. It's an excellent book especially for a teen that enjoys reading.

### Amazing Acrobats-

Sadly, like so many other theater greats who were fixtures in this city, Mickey will be going back on the road. Amazing Acrobats from China, we'll catch on the 21<sup>st</sup>. afterwards it will be jacks-up again.

We attended a seminar for a time-share this morning, and as expected, they're all the same. For enduring this two-hour seminar, we were rewarded with two tickets to the Amazing Acrobats from China. This group was so awesome, sadly we were supposed to go back to the coach, but didn't, so I did not have my camera, so no pictures. Only pictures could describe how great they were, *sorry!*

### Bunkhouse Dinner Theatre

22<sup>nd</sup>. For doing the seminar they also gave us tickets to the

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"Bunkhouse" dinner theater, which we enjoyed immensely. We have reservations for The Bunkhouse Dinner Theatre. This event turned out to be as good as the food was delicious. Just a word or two on a comedy sketch they performed that evening.

*Dolly and Queen Elizabeth ironically got to the pearly gates at the same time. St Peter answered the door but said he had room for only one of them. Dolly kind of shimmied a bit showing how well-endowed she was, while the Queen polished off a Perrier Water, went to the bathroom and flushed after she was finished. She then proceeded back to St Peter and St Peter said, "come on in to the Queen." Dolly was a put out and asked St Peter how come she got in first. St. Peter replied that "royal flush" always beats a pair.*

We met a Wisconsin farmer and his wife at the Dinner Theatre. It's so interesting to hear others describe where they live or what they do for a living



Like the "good ole' boys, the characters on the stage continuously poked fun at each other. Occasionally they even tried a joke or two. During the stage songs, skits large monitors, on the wall, continually displayed country scenes. At the end of the dinner and performance we took a short walk to the edge of the driveway and enjoyed an awesome view of this area.



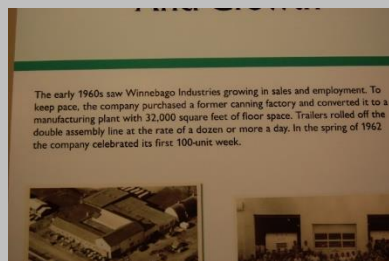
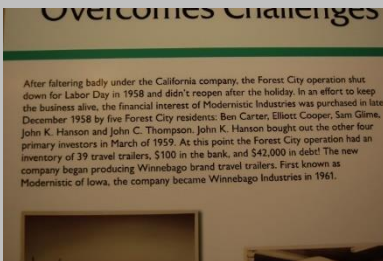
## RV-N-AMERICA 2015



We found the gift shop here very interesting as well. Very similar to a Cracker Barrel, but a much less congested driveway as you enter this venue. To say that it is a “must-see” probably not, but it was a very enjoyable evening, not to mention, an excellent family style meal.

### Winnebago in Forest City IA.

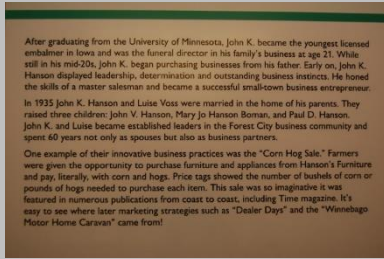
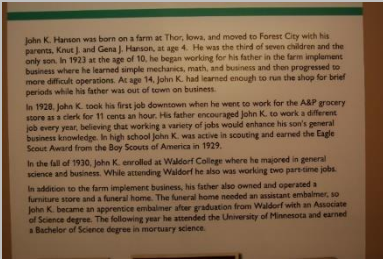
We got a great start this morning and reached Cracker Barrel just outside of Kansas City by 2:30. Showers are projected for this evening and thunderstorms for tomorrow, Sunday. It's got to get better. We traveled today, 24<sup>th</sup>, to Des Moines, IA, at a Cracker Barrel there. Only staying the night. Tomorrow, 25<sup>th</sup>, we're off to Winnebago in Forest City, IA to have a couple of items fixed on the coach.



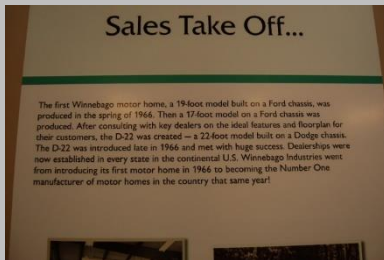
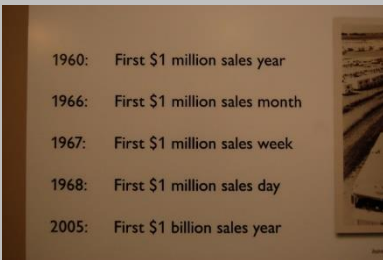
We finally arrived at Winnebago. We viewed and read the Info

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plaques on the walls, courtesies on Winnebago Ind. That would not last very long. By 1958 five Forest City residents bought the company.



Info plaques courtesies on Winnebago Ind.



If you look closely, in the lower left corner of the picture of the showcase, you'll see a Class-A Motorhome strapped to a Saturn Rocket, I think NASA passed on that idea. And another idea, in the next picture. Info plaques courtesies on Winnebago Ind.

## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

Even without NASA's help the numbers above confirm Winnebago's success. We've covered just over 700 miles the last 3 days rambling through some of Americas' nicest farmlands, *priceless!* Our purpose for this trip is to have Winnebago fix a couple of items and some minor glitches.

We did get to take in a field trip or two during our stay. On Thursday, the 28<sup>th</sup>, we trip off to the Grotto.

### Grotto of the Redemption



28<sup>th</sup>. Father Paul Duberstein (1872-1954) was the first pastor and wanted to give his church a significance in the area. His idea was to create a grotto on the church grounds. This began as a one-man project but as his venture grew, he had to seek some outside help from the parishioners. This church is truly awesome! In the background you can see the Christmas Chapel located on the far wall.

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The Christmas Chapel was built by Fr. Dobberstein in 1927. The chapel contains a Brazilian Amethyst stone weighing almost 300 pounds and valued at over \$5000, just one stone. The main altar of the Church won first prize at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. The grounds are adorned with statues of many saints.



Pictured above is Carla speaking to a volunteer who was supposed to walk us through this Grotto. We lost her to a bus load of schoolchildren. Our next guide did her best but we could not cope with a bus load of seniors; so, we picked up a paper brochure and did the tour ourselves; it can be done. This statue, of course, is that of St. Michael the Archangel, which is why he's first in line. (My son is named Michael), and he lives up to his name. Here Michael is representing good and evil is represented

## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

by the devil being crushed under his feet. Next would-be Moses, displaying the Ten Commandments. (below).



Fr. Dobberstein's depiction on the Stations of the Cross. The grotto portion was completed in 1956 and the statuarities arrived in early 1970's. The birth of Christ in Bethlehem. The manger scene makes use of 65 tons of petrified wood from Montana and the Dakotas.

### **St. James in Forest City, IA**

Today is Sunday, the 31<sup>st</sup>. Can't believe how fast the month went by. We're off to St. James in Forest City, IA for Mass. We prefer Saturday services, but in this lifestyle, you take what's being offered, and what a pleasant surprise.



On this beautiful Sunday morning we attend Mass at St. James' in beautiful Forest City, IA. It was such a breath of fresh air to experience this delightfully simple, friendly Catholic Church.

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The Mass service was light, personalized and the pastor's personality filled the church. We met him as we walked into the church, and he did not hesitate to introduce himself and make polite conversation on our being full- time RVers. Parishioners filled this church, almost to capacity. What an awesome mix of parishioners in attendance; from the very young to seniors., and a choir that sings on key. Something must be in this Iowa air and water; *Carla and I are getting hooked on whatever it is!* We've attended Mass in chapels and churches from as small as storefronts to 50-million-dollar cathedrals, and quite frankly, I feel the Church should invest more in home-town churches like St. James and spend less building multimillion dollar churches and embellishing their own Cathedrals; *but that's my own feeling.*



# RV-N-AMERICA 2015

## JUNE 2015

### Cedar Rapids, IA-

Squaw Creek RVP in Cedar Rapids, IA. We had a very unexciting trip from Branson. We arrived at Squaw Creek, about 1pm on Mon. the 1st. Squaw Creek is one of the nicest campgrounds we've ever stayed at.



Not sure if all the county campground Web Sites are the same as Squaw Creek, but this one was exceptional. When we were asked which site we wanted, we were able to view each site online to see which one we wanted... *awesome!* Every site, I mean every site, has this heavy-duty fire ring.



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This campground offers all the amenities including 30/50-amp power all over.



Only item missing is washer-dryer; not available, not a big deal. Laundromats are a short drive away.



This is one of the few parks we were paying to stay at, around \$30/day. The accommodations are well worth the price, not to mention the proximity to Don and Joyce. If this park is on your way, you will enjoy your stay. 71<sup>st</sup> birthday for me, *yuk!* Good old June 6. So many called, nice to be part of a bigger family. On the 29<sup>th</sup> our mail will arrive with Birthday card greetings from all the Ozdarski's; *priceless!* We're squared away on this beautiful site for another 7 days. Saturday, we attended Mass at St. Joseph's. *Awesome!* parishioner participation and great service. Next day I had a chance to partially wash the coach, then we enjoyed delightful evening with Don and Joyce. Experiencing the

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Anamosa Reformatory is scheduled for tomorrow the 8<sup>th</sup> (Mon).

### Anamosa Reformatory Prison



**This is the Anamosa Reformatory Prison.**

Today we visit the outside of this prison. We're not permitted to go inside. This is the Anamosa Reformatory Prison. In this picture you can see the Administration Building in the center and some of the prison cells on the left. This is the extreme left section of the prison.



Morning bell, at the prison, is at 6am. Everyone has a job at the prison. The prison pays between 30 to 50 cents an hour. What a prisoner *cannot buy* is cigarettes yet, every day, the cleaning crews find butts somewhere. Prisoner earnings go to pay such items as everyday needs, funds to be paid to victims and room and board. We were allowed to the visitor's room where we were

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shown a slide presentation which was not worth mentioning. Just a little background information on the center and prisoners. Yes! Prisoners pay to stay, no option on that. Rent is around \$10 per month. The kitchen employs the greatest number of prisoners. Weightlifting is the #1 pastime, who would have thought. The current warden of the prison.



In the picture above, left corner, you'll see an "arched" entranceway. Back in the construction days the state purchased a quarry to reduce the cost of construction. Stone, that was used for the walls of the prison, was railroaded into the prison through this arched opening. The tracks are no longer visible but if you look at the picture of the prison you can see the corridor the train traveled into and out of the prison. Above are just pictures about the construction on the prison in the late 1800's. In those days many prisoners convicted of lesser crimes, of course, assisted in the construction process.



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Smaller buildings, located inside the walls, are all used for work or education as purposes. Kirkwood Community College is responsible for all prisoners obtaining their GED diploma, if they do not have a High School diploma. Higher education courses, including culinary, may also be offered but may come with tuition expense to the prisoners. Inmates have baseball fields, numerous basketball courts, tennis, golf and many other sports, including horseshoes. We found that to be questionable, but we were told the prisoners know if they abuse or misuse an activity, it will be taken away, possibly to the displeasure of fellow inmates. One day the inmates are asked if there might be other sports or activities they'd like to have if the facility could work it into their budget. A running tract was requested, possibly around the outside perimeter of the prison! *Request denied!*



From the picture above you can see I am being detained. I was later released.

We have invited Don and Joyce MacDougall to a picnic. It's the 8<sup>th</sup> of July and a picnic is something we don't do very often. The first day of our arrival Don and Joyce introduced us to Noodles, we highly recommend this eatery. Fast counter service and your food at your table in about 2 minutes. Next afternoon Joyce and Don came to over to the campground to enjoy a cookout of hot



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dogs.



Seldom do we have a chance to enjoy an evening with old friends. One dog left over, Don and I decided to split the left over to save Carla from having to deal with it.



Enjoyed an excellent wine as well. The next day, the 9<sup>th</sup> Tuesday evening, we had a great chicken meal at Don, Joyce, Marion (Don's sister-in-law) and Al (a colleague of Don's living in England-*Little did we ever expect that within a year Al would no longer be with us.*).



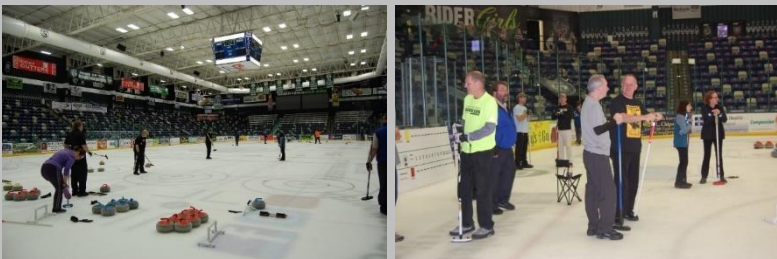
## RV-N-AMERICA 2015



The meal was great followed with pecan pie and ice cream. Then we enjoyed critiquing America's Got Talent... *Priceless!* Thursday we're scheduled for dinner with Joyce, Don and all the family at their home. Next day, Friday the 12<sup>th</sup>, we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for Don and Joyce with the MacDougall family. After a considerable amount of discussion, Noodles was chosen for the restaurant. Everyone was pleased and ate well; thank you Don and Joyce.

### Curling Club-

The celebration continues, this time, a couple of days later, the 13<sup>th</sup>, we celebrate Don's 73<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Pretty smart thinking, on Don's part, planning his birth around his wedding anniversary!



This party was in a neighboring campground. Awesome facility, as expected! Tuesday afternoon Joyce, Don and Al came to over to the campground and invited us to dinner that evening.

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Thursday we're scheduled for dinner with Joyce and Don and all the family at their home. What a surprise. Don and Joyce have planned to take us out to a Curling Club in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. We've been watching Curling on the Olympics for the past 12-years, finally had a chance to experience it personally. We both got to know the ice quite well.



Dan, the big guy in blue, created this Curling league. Above and below, he is explaining to us the rules that govern Curling. Teams have four persons. Each person will have two "rocks" to send down the ice-covered alley to position it, as close as possible to the rings called "home", center ring is called the bubble. Unlike bowling these rocks weigh in at 43- pounds each. You do not throw these rocks, just slide them gently to home, one hundred fifty feet away. Above each team has two sweepers and they use the brushes in this container. When you brush the ice vehemently enough it creates heat which facilitates the rock to move faster and even to vary its direction. *It's cold here.* OK, that sounds easy, just push the rock and watch it travel. Ladies first, so Don and I watch to see if she was listening the last twenty minutes.

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This can't be that hard, so Carla tries...! Oops! How hard can it be? You're even provided a slider for your left foot and a push-off item to get you moving.



I did not do that much better. It's a lot like bowling except for all this ice.



Not fair, I slipped! Have a bad knee! *OH whatever!* This is harder than it looks. Once again, the ice is really cold. Was really hoping Don would not show us up, after all, he's a Wisconsinite now. However, he met with the same results we had. Dan is

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demonstrating another option for all of us, since we're not negotiating the ice that well. A teammate suggested, if we are really interested, we might be better on a senior league. Let's do it again, OK guys! Like Dan is here every weekend, but we'll try doing it again. This time we're using an aid for this game. Didn't work for Carla, she got the same results.



I, on the other hand, used two different gadgets, (second not shown), embarrassing I ended up same as last time, I'll spare you the pictures. It was a fun time. Dan gave us almost three hours, much more than we were expecting, and in the end, we were all still talking and still friends. There's little more to say on this topic but I wanted all my subscribers to my website to see just how awesome this facility really is. Enjoy the remaining pictures I think we're all going to have a better appreciation for the Curling sport in the next Winter Olympics I want to thank Joyce, Don's wife, for taking all these pictures, even the embarrassing ones.

### **Arrowhead Resort Campground**

It's the middle of the month, Monday the 15<sup>th</sup>, and we're on the go again. Destination now is for Arrowhead Resort Campground. We arrived at Arrowhead Resort on Monday around 4pm. This is in Wisconsin Dells, WI. This is also a

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Thousand Trails campground. Tuesday we both slept in, that is 8am. Scoots only got up once last night and Carla took that shift. First full day after traveling is usually shopping, that is for food.



Yup, Carla wanted the night off from cooking, so outside we went. Got the shopping done and spent the next three hours in the pool. Met up with Ralph (Popcorn, don't ask) and wife Judy, a trucker-farmer from these parts. Spent Wednesday experiencing the Upper Dells.

### The Upper Dells

17<sup>th</sup> It's been a couple of days and today we're off to discover and enjoy the Upper Dells.



We not only enjoyed a great boat ride on the Wisconsin River, but awesome exploring as well. Beautiful day so we decided to



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spend the day on the water. Location, the Upper Dells. Upper Dells refers to that body of water before you reach the dam. Our vessel for this beautiful day trip on the water.



Prior to what you see here now, the dam's water level would have been twenty feet lower. Our guide for the day.



Rocks and boulders, you see here are actually sandstone. Sandstone is a calcified sand and not a product of the continents colliding millions of years ago, as we've seen in past blogs. Treacherous bend in the river. In days of old, barges and boats carrying wood, met with deadly outcomes here if they did not navigate this bend properly.



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This is not a creation millions of years in the making, but rather a byproduct of the ice age some 14,000 years ago.

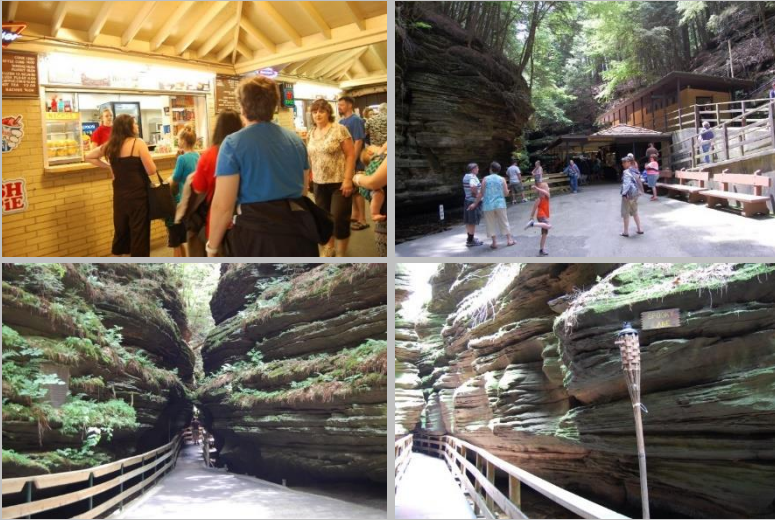


This is a soft stone and is much more sensitive to the elements than basic stone. Your basic rock came from below the ground, was cooked in the earth's inner core, and millions of years later was pushed to the earth's surface thanks to Africa. Moss on the walls everywhere.



Above is the Witches' Falls.

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At this stop we will climb almost three-hundred feet then back down again. Awesome sights! Natural rock formation, about 75 feet high.



On our trip we met Judy and Joe Wright from Clearwater, FL.

### Dells Drive-In Theater

20<sup>th</sup>. Something we don't do very often. I've been told there are only ninety-nine Drive-In movie Theaters in the country, more

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or less. The Dells has one of those Drive-In venues. It's Monday, and, once again, the month is coming to an end, again. Saturday, movie night. Thursday and Friday were quiet days, since I twisted my ankle exiting the coach. Saturday it's ice cream at the campground lodge then pizza in the afternoon and Mass and a drive-in movie to top the night off. Saturday is usually Movie night. Today would be Drive-in movie night, very enjoyable. *Who can stay up for the second feature, ending around 2am?*

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### Father's Day



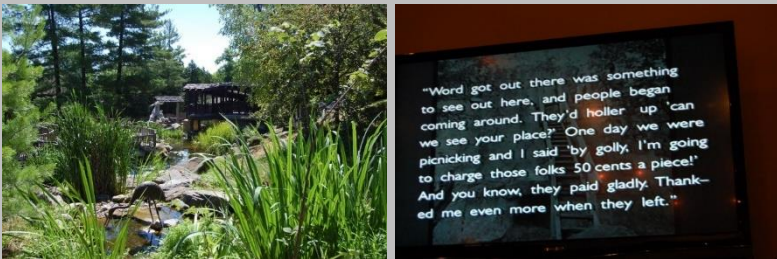
*21<sup>st</sup> Father's Day, unlike many other special days, always turns out to be a day of heavy reflection on my part. Unlike many fathers, my dad did not have the luxury of growing old. he missed out on watching us claw our way through college, so many marriages; and not to mention grandchildren. So, I guess he missed out on quite a bit. Worst of all he left our lives before I had a chance to really grow up. Christmas's, birthdays, and Father's days we usually lavish dads with so much stuff. It's mundane and inconsequential, if you're lucky enough to receive them. For the last twenty years or so, especially in my current lifestyle, this stuff is so over-rated. It took me so long to grow up. Right now, I would give anything for a mear chance to share a bear with him and just enjoy a nice talk; but the talk will have to wait a few years until we get together again. I wasn't the best of sons, not bad, just never appreciated all he went without and how hard he worked to give us all we had. What he did have, that I envied all my growing years, was the full life, surrounded by a family that loved him as much as he loved us. I mentioned once, many years ago, that I really longed for a family in my life. That was a selfish wish, and should have asked for what my father had, family that would love him back. Life at times comes full circle, not complaining, you reap what you sew. In hindsight I would have done things very differently.*

# RV-N-AMERICA 2015

## House on the Rock



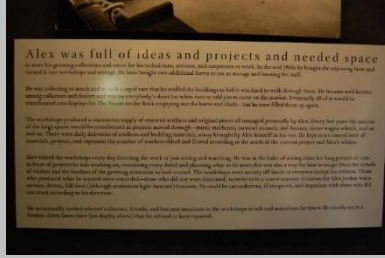
23<sup>rd</sup> This, of course is not the house, but it is the back yard. This is a unique story of a man with a dream to build his home in the area he used to picnic in, as a child. I've taken over four-hundred pictures of mostly stuff on display. This blog cannot do this house justice. I can only try to entice you, the reader, in hopes someday you will try to experience this House on the Rock for yourselves. Go early, wear comfortable shoes and allow at least four hours to see it all; awesome!



Does it get much more serene than this? After reading this it almost makes you want to build something and see if they will come. Original owner and the current owners. The picture below will give you a deeper insight in work ethic. From the previous and next pictures this was definitely a person with too much time on his hands.



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Many pictures of circuses to come, but *I'd never seen circuses built on barges or very big riverboats, have you?*



Circus pictures to follow. Picture of the below-level structure of the air-handlers for one or two of the seven cathedral-size organs Alex has displayed.





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Player pianos. Player piano rolls and how the music sheets are created. Pictures of his home and maybe some random pictures to finish off this post. This was just one of many gathering places.



Entry to the house. His music rooms. All these instruments, after you insert a coin, will play a musical rendition. All these different instruments were mechanized to play in harmony several songs on their own.



Dining room.... Another entry way into the house.



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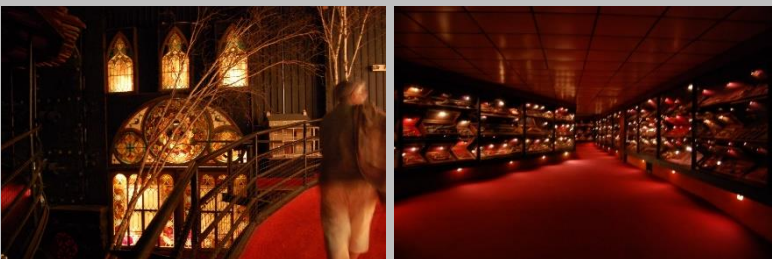
Another one of many fireplaces. The Infinity Room: Eatery prior to the walkway to another building, not that we haven't seen enough of his stuff already.



I guess you could call this building the Carousel House. Picture courtesy of House on the Rock. These are digitals of pictures. The carousel was beautiful, and I tried but failed to get a good picture of it.



Pictures of a four-level carousel A cathedral-like structure in the carousel venue.



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Once again cases and cases could be described as mechanical devices as he one next. Showcases of original guns on display, more showcases. I liked this one



Don't ask me! If it was unusual, big, and interesting he had to have it. A diesel engine and prop of a ship. The propeller to the engine was so big I had to wonder how they managed to get it into the building. This turned out to be an exceptional venue, never expected to be this surprised.



Be prepared to take many pictures and wear comfortable shoes and allow at least four hours to complete this tour. Older kids should truly enjoy this trip. We returned to the coach exhausted. We rested Wed. thru Friday enduring some rainy times and a cook-out each night. Hard to believe in three days it will be jacks-up once again. We travel next to Plymouth Rock Campground in Plymouth, WI.

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### **Plymouth Rock RVP**

30<sup>th</sup> Saturday noon and were still at the breakfast table. Nothing is planned except for our departure this coming Monday morning. The park is brimming over with weekend campers, priceless! We close our stay at Arrowhead, this Sunday evening, by watching Finding Neverland. Where oh where did the Johnny Depp, who played James Barrie, ever go to. I wonder if he has a copy of Finding Neverland as we do. I wish he would take it off the shelf and give it another viewing, and possibly look for acting parts that resemble more his character Barrie. Everyone needs this of type sincere acting. Before any trip we always check and double check our routes. Our confidence is boosted in the fact that our Rand McNally GPS travels along with us. But at less than two years old, after having been exceptionally well cared for, it had a stroke, and passed away. This was one of those fancy 7720 models, I think specific for RV and truck drivers. Think twice before spending that much money on this unit. Carla, my navigator whipped out her printouts and maps and got us here safely. We finally arrived at Plymouth Rock Campground around 1 PM and they graciously allowed us to enter a bit earlier than they were expecting us.

# RV-N-AMERICA 2015

## JULY 2015

### Anniversary- Applebee's

Well today is July 14<sup>th</sup>. 2015. As Carla was saying last night; it's so hard to believe that we've come so far so fast in just the last twenty-five years. Since our early days in Greenacres, FL, when we owned our first childcare center, Applebee's has always been a Saturday evening affair, right after Mass, and prior to a movie. Life was so hectic then, but this restaurant calmed us down and kept us from cracking up. Seems there's always been an Applebee's around to provide us with a perfect evening. This visit proved to be just what we needed to complete an otherwise simple anniversary celebration. As like all Applebee's, they all look the same, however.....



We were greeted by Jenn, the Applebee hostess for the evening. She showed us to our table and left us with our menus. Carla could not resist asking her about local points of interest, even though we were only going to be here seven days. She volunteered Chrysler, General Mills and a minor point that Belvedere was known as the Town or Murals, or something like that. As

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seniors we had to interject that that title belonged of a town in Florida called Lake Placid. She politely said "OH!" and said she'd be back for our orders. Not looking much older than 19, she quickly came back and inquired the name of the town in Florida once again and its location in Florida. She made this connection with us happen so nonchalantly...*Priceless!* Our conversation lasted quite a few minutes, until another hostess came on the scene to deliver our meals. Just before letting her go so, we could begin eating, we asked her to take our picture, to mark the occasion. It would have been easy for her to take the picture and give us back our camera, but she wanted to take another which turned out to be much better. Jenn was personally responsible for turning a quiet 25th anniversary celebration into an evening we will find hard to forget. As she was bidding us safe travels, we also learned that she had a five-year-old daughter.



The minutes she spent with us, we know, added a little more stress on her to care for her other customers, but given the opportunity to meet her and get to know her, even just a little bit, re-confirmed in our minds how responsibly Applebee's takes in



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hiring and training their employees. Applebee's will continue to be our number one choice for excellent dining with a staff equal to the dinners they serve. On July 15<sup>th</sup> I found myself looking back at all that has happened that will alter my life in so many ways, for the rest of my life. July 3<sup>rd</sup>, mom passed, and we travelled on the 4<sup>th</sup> to be with my brother Dennis. The seventh we celebrated her passing with a beautiful Mass ceremony at St. John's Catholic Church in Boca Raton, FL. We spent the next seven days with Dennis for the reading of the will then helping him sort mom's belongings. We flew home the following Monday getting up a 3am for a 5am flight back to Wisconsin, where both the coach and Scoots remained. An awesome young family agreed to watch over Scoots while we were away.



From this picture you can see just how distraught Scoots was during those ten days at home alone. Daily she studied her map trying to determine where we had gone and why we left her.

### **Pine Country RVP,**

The following day, 16<sup>th</sup>, we had to travel to Pine Country Campground some 150 miles south in Belvedere, IL.

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The following day, after a great night's sleep, we quietly celebrated our 25th Anniversary. Last night we both slept very well. We'll only be in Belvedere, IL a mere 7 days when, next Monday, it will be jacks up once again. Today was studying our trip on the computer and a very quick, short dip in the pool.

### **St. James Catholic Church.**

Only two days to go and, for this stay. Yesterday we had heavy rains all day. Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup>, once again, which means its Mass, Pizza Beer and movie night. In Belvedere we'll be going to the St. James Catholic Church.



I might be wrong, but I think this might be new construction. All the sidewalks and steps to the church are all newly poured

## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

concrete. Inside, the church is very simple but as beautiful as one would like it to be. Very humid today, even though the temp is only 81, far better than yesterday's 106 degrees. I've just finished washing the front of the coach and windshield and the bikes are, once again, secured to the Chevy. All that's left for tomorrow, Monday leaving day, is to disconnect water and electric and then store the jacks. Our trip will be around two-hundred miles and will take about four hours, we take a breather about halfway. See you next in Buchanan, MI.

### **Bear Cave Resort**

20<sup>th</sup> I would like to welcome everybody to Bear Cave RV Resort in Buchanan, MI. Unlike Pine Country, there aren't any resident mosquitoes living here. You have the option to take a walk, go to the pool or just sit under your awning with no fears of being eaten alive. This walkway will take you to the park office. Hard to believe you're only a few feet from the parking lot when you are going to the office.



This is the office and park store. Digital makes it look bright and sunny down here but at this point you are completely encompassed by trees...*awesome!* The system here is a little different the camp ranger called us earlier this morning to clue us in on

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the check in procedures.



You arrive at the campground, punch in your code and then drive to the top of the hill into this typically large parking area. Then look for the Bear Cave "office" sign, walk down to the office and sign in. As you can see the park roadways are very generous, with no overhanging tree limbs to welcome you here. In the distance you can see the coach, upper left-hand corner. There's a coach to our right and then you see some bungalows.



Dennis will be arriving in a couple of weeks and will be staying in the first cabin on the left. This is us, of course. This site, as with most of the sites here, is a back in. With all the space we have here, backing in was a breeze. This green is all grass. Great place for families and kids to play and not be in harm's way of the big rigs.

## RV-N-AMERICA 2015



Play area and game room for the kids. Inside the game room. Once again, everything here requires money. Some pictures of the rec hall.



Card tables with a fireplace in the back of the hall.



Pool table looks brand new. Possibly because it requires money to play. At this rate it will always be new. A juke box, the expensive kind...*awesome!*



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A closer look at the fireplace and the knotty -pine wall boards. I'm sure I mentioned this, but this is a Thousand Trails Campground all part of Equity Lifestyles Properties.



So many of these campgrounds are built around bodies of water. This is the pathway going down many feet to the river. Take the path, once again, and climb up the path, to eventually find the pool, pool house and another clubhouse for kids.





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On our way back to our site we will again walk past the office/store, from another direction. I could remain in this area for the rest of the afternoon just doing a little contemplation, *how about you?* That's about it. The dime tour on Bear Cave RV Resort.

### Red Bud racing

Today 26<sup>th</sup> July, we surprised ourselves with a pleasant afternoon at Red Bud MX racing in Buchanan.



Carla and I have no experience with this sport but that does not stop us from enjoying a beautiful afternoon watching the younger generation race and fly all day long.

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This course reaches forever, it seems.



The race begins in the back of the field and then, as you can see below, they race by us less than ten feet off the racetrack. Above, in the upper left-hand corner, is a little racetrack way to the front of this property, not connected at all to this track is the "WOBBLER TRACK" for three- to six-year-old youngsters. Don't know about you but that's a bit extreme, but this is where they learn this sport. I tried cropping it but with no success. Now we're looking at the front end of the track. This would be roughly where we were standing. Below is another race, one of eighteen, going by us well over our heads.

## RV-N-AMERICA 2015



Above is the far end of the track and approaching the finish line about four-hundred feet ahead. Below is the back end of the course just before reaching us. These kids know how to fly.



We don't know no anyone racing. This is the winner of one of the races, a twelve-year-old girl. I would have a hard time letting Cheryl, my daughter, race in one of these go carts.



Above is the finish line, and they're still in the air.

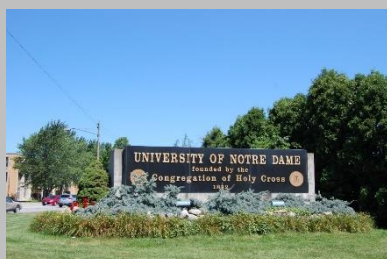
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If you don't like getting dirty, this is not your sport. These kids put their hearts and souls into each race, and this afternoon's race were for trophies only, no money. The pro's raced yesterday, but we thought we'd prefer seeing the amateurs best. Motorhomes, travel trailers and car carriers abound. This is not a sport for the average family. Moms and dads all over lending both moral and financial support to their kids, both boys and girls, young and older. We had the tail pipe to the coach fixed just down the street here in Buchanan. Then on Wed, the 29th, we traveled to Elkhart, IN to have the refrigerator fixed. Out of nowhere it just began a pinging sound and would not chill. The only place we could find to try to fix the situation was Total Value RV of Indiana.

### University of Notre Dame

30<sup>th</sup> Only a few days left before Dennis, my brother, will be flying up to spend a week with us savoring the camper lifestyle.



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This is basically a small enrollment university but has a very big physical presence. Even this day there is construction on three new buildings. Enrollment hovers around eighty-five hundred for undergraduates, both male and female and about three-thousand graduate students from fifty states and one-hundred countries around the world.



The campus supports one-hundred thirty buildings including one state of the art football stadium with a capacity of over sixty thousand. We begin our tour from the Eck Visitors' Center. We had an excellent tour guide.



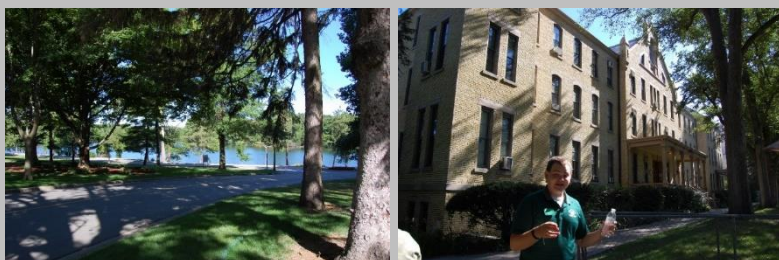
The buildings at the beginning of this tour are mostly dorms. Each hall has its own adult resident priest or lay person to watch over things. Most of the other priests live at Colby Hall. Faculty members number over one thousand.



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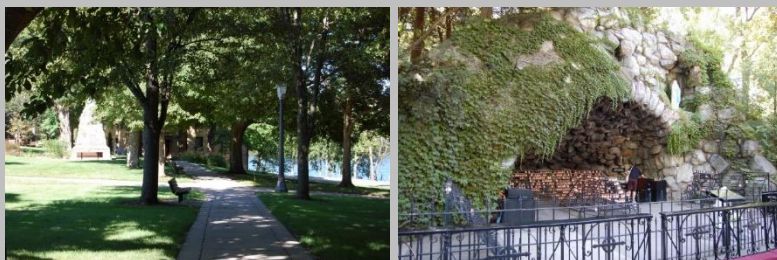
This building is basically administration. Unique to this building is this sphere, weighing thirteen-hundred pounds, which floats freely on this fountain of water. It only takes a gentle touch to send it revolving in another direction. The Coleman-Morse Center is very important for mostly freshmen students. This is where you go for scheduling and financial assistance if needed. Another look of the grounds and additional dorms. These are all single-sex dorm halls. Each hall, as they are called, has their own sport activities including their own mascots.



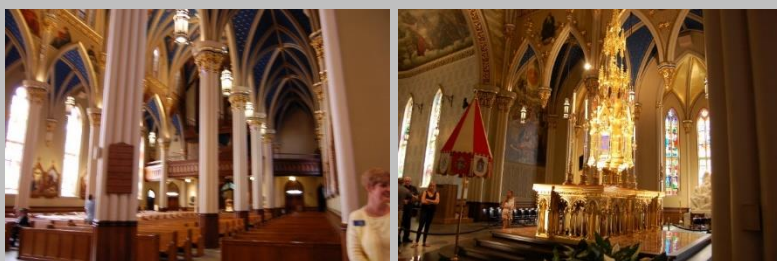
There's a story of Fr. Sorin concerning this lake. I believe in the beginning this was one big lake. Then, local zoning was changed and a lake this size would have to make accommodations for the public, including additional roads. So, all the priests and anyone else with time on their hand was asked to volunteer to help add additional soil and vegetation to turn this one big lake into two smaller ones which would bypass the new zoning.



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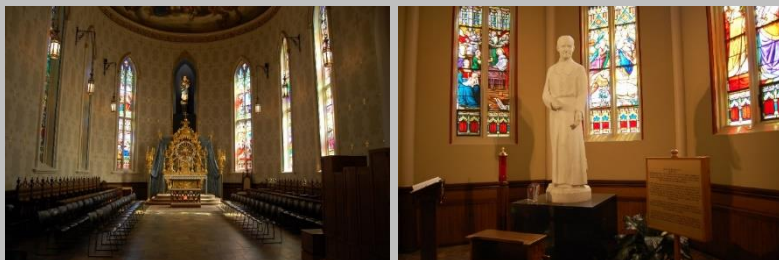
If you look closely to the center of the last picture you will notice a building. This small building was the college's first teaching building. The first priests to serve here would sleep in the attic area of this building. Notice also the yellowish brick used to build this building, it is the same brick used for the first three to four buildings. The first priests here had very little available for their expense and expansion plans. They made their own bricks in order to conserve the few dollars they had. A priest wanted to create a monument to the Blessed Virgin like Lourdes in the South of France. It did take time but eventually, thanks to a generous donation, a grotto one-seventh the size of the location in France, was created. This venue with its hundreds of votive candles, is heavily visited especially during exam weeks.



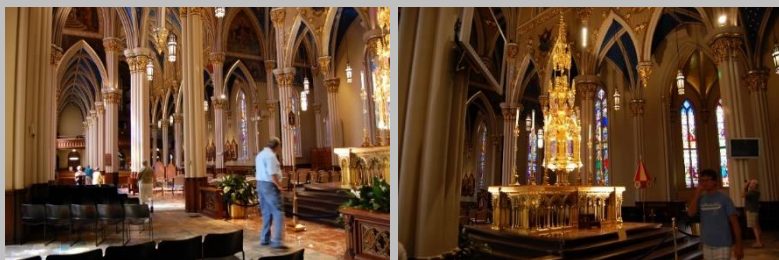
The Basilica of the Sacred Heart. This basilica replaced the first church built by missionaries many years before. It was very modest measuring ninety by thirty feet wide. Its replacement is substantially bigger. The new church was started in 1870 and

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the first Mass was celebrated in 1875. The current Basilica measures 275 by 114 and its tallest tower is 275 feet high.



Above is the Chapel of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. On the ceiling above is a depiction painted by the famous painter Luigi Gregori, who had also painted nearly everything else in this Basilica, as well as other buildings on campus. This Chapel was added in 1886. The tabernacle doors contain a fragment of wood believed to be from the table on which St. Peter celebrated Mass in Rome over 2000 years ago. This Minor Basilica was the brainchild of Fr Sorin.



This Church had been designated by the pope as a Minor Basilica. Minor Basilica's are churches reflecting their antiquity, dignity, historical importance as places of worship and devotion (as taken from the Self-Guided tour of the Basilica pamphlet) The

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building above is the "Main Building." The building construction began in 1864. It's over ninety feet tall. This would be the school's first major building.



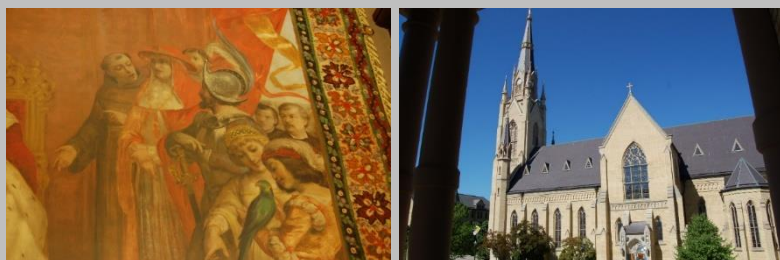
For this construction to be financially feasible the Brothers of the Holy Cross, CSC otherwise known as Congregation du Sacre Coeur, would, once again, be asked to make all the bricks needed for this building. Shortly after construction it succumbed to a devastating fire. Since it was the only teaching and dormitory building at the time, Fr. Sorin promised all the current students that the building would be completely restored by the next enrollment period, and it was. Contractors, volunteers and priests worked diligently to rebuild against all odds and were successful. Father Sorin was adamant that his new building has a golden dome and above the golden dome he expected to have a statue of Our Lady of the Lakes. The Board of Trustees felt otherwise. It was an expense they felt they could not afford. Over the next couple of years Fr. Sorin, as the story goes, got himself elected to the Board and eventually became President of the Board. As President he abstained from Board meetings thereby tying their hands to make any decisions, until they agreed to give him the statue of Mary he had been asking for. Even today, the statue stands tall amongst the buildings of

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Notre Dame and is probably the most televised and photographed venue on campus.



This is the rotunda found in the interior of the dome. This again was painted by Luigi Gregori. It is said that after Luigi had finished the interior dome and the very intricate sixty-foot scaffolding had been taken down, that a fellow priest noticed that one of the angels was missing an eyebrow. The Board of Trustees refused to pay any more money on this endeavor. Luigi, being as stubborn as Father Sorin, was seen early one morning on the fifth floor with a long fishing pole with a paint brush attached to the end of the pole touching up the eyebrow of that poor angel. Luigi Gregori also painted all the murals in the Main Building. The mural above was one of his best.



It wasn't till years later that someone noticed the he had painted himself in the painting above. Last picture is a close-up of that

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section. You will find him halfway up on the right side of the mural. The handsome dude with mustache and receding hair line. A far away shot of the Basilica from the Main Building. The edifice is so immense it is difficult to capture it in one frame. These are the infamous steps, below, of the Main Building. Back in the late eighteen hundreds the teaching Brothers would gather on the porch of the Main Building which was, back then, their only “all-purpose building.”



The story goes that an undergraduate positioned himself at the bottom of the steps hoping to overhear a conversation on those students who have done well or not so well in the last exam week. One of the Brothers noticed him laying at the bottom of the steps. He chewed him out, as we would say today, and then he swore that should another undergraduate be found on the steps of the Main Building again, he would block any chance of his graduating. Since that day NO undergraduate has ever stepped on those cursed steps. Even the student guide we had this day, excused himself, went back inside the Main Building and rejoined us at the bottom of the steps, using an inside stairway to rejoin our group on the main level. The statue of Our Lord faces the Main Building we just talked about. This wall mural below, is on the outside wall facing the football stadium. Students have no doubt that the scene of Our Lord, hands and



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arms raised, is symbolic of a referee denoting a touchdown for, of course, the home team.



There is no truth to that entire story, however, the almost perfect scoring history of the Notre Dame team would make one think otherwise. The Notre Dame Football Stadium-There is an entrance for each “Winning” Coach in the past.



# RV-N-AMERICA 2015

## AUGUST 2015

### Lake Michigan

3<sup>rd</sup>. Behind this great looking couple is a "lake" not an ocean beach. Lake Michigan is just that big; Awesome! We will stay here awhile longer and celebrate Carla's birthday at Clementine's on the opposite side of the island. We picked up my brother Dennis a couple of days ago, nice to have him visit. Tuesday, the fourth, resting up. Enjoyed watching an RV movie that evening. Following day, we all re-visited Notre Dame U. That evening we ate out at Clementine Restaurant in St. Joe. Delightful evening. This would be Carla's' birthday supper. After twenty-five years we keep it simple but very nice. We visited St. Joe in Michigan. A beautiful small town on the eastern tip of Lake Michigan.

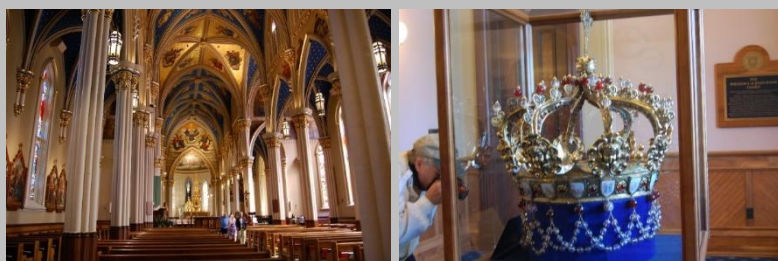


This is our second trip here to St. Joe. This time we came with Dennis, my brother. Activities in the St. Joe area favor both young and old. For all the simple attractions here most everyone could be found on the beach.

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### Re-visit Notre Dame w Dennis



This venue is just awesome one could spend an entire day writing about this beautiful and historical university. With the dozens of pictures, I took the first- and second-time visiting ND I only took one with Dennis in it. Here he is taking a picture of the crown that was supposed to be placed on the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary but, once again, the trustees decided to encase it instead. By looking at its size in relation to Dennis you can estimate the sheer size of the statue at the top of this building.

### Elkhart RV Show

Today, 6<sup>th</sup> was the much-anticipated Elkhart RV Show. Nice

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but nothing to brag about. A trip to North Trail RV or Lazy-days would have been much more exciting. The weekend to follow was typical except for Dennis' presence. He would be staying at one of the campground bungalow's, very nice inside.

### Buchanan concerts

We topped off the evening by attending a concert on the green in Buchanan. Each Thursday evening the town of Buchanan host an evening of entertainment. This evening, a 50's- 60's evening and our last visit, with my brother, was a jazz evening.

Sunday evening, the 9<sup>th</sup>, that weekend, was exceptional, as we spent it with our neighbors, the Krause's.



We're currently staying at the Bear Cave RV Park an excellent campground, but even without the company of this beautiful family we would have had a heavenly stay. We spent this evening with John and Svea with kids Charlotte and Hampton. These folks are an excellent example of a full-time family well before they turn seventy and home schooling their kids which rounds off each busy day. They do admit that some days are more challenging than others, but they never stop smiling and enjoying each other...*Priceless!* Did I mention their dog Zoey?

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Carla and I have been in Batesville, IN for three weeks now. As those that read my blog knows, we are full-time RVers. Everyone knows this is an awesome lifestyle. One small challenge we face is that, in order to keep our campground fees as close to zero as possible, we are faced with relocating to new campgrounds every two or three weeks. We look forward to this type of routine. We get to meet and know so many fellow RVers it's incredible. Our home is on for wheels and travels from state to state with ease. One small challenge is the quest for a Catholic Church in our next location. It's the primary reason we pick up and move on Mondays.



This gives us about four days to search out our neighborhood church before Saturday night services. There was one location, in Alabama, where we had to travel about forty minutes to find a church in a state with, were told, only 3% catholic followers.

### **Indian Lakes RVP**

## RV-N-AMERICA 2015



We arrived in Batesville, IN, on the 10<sup>th</sup> around 2 pm. As usual, it was a 200-mile uneventful passage. What made this trip so unique is that we had my brother Dennis this time. Often, we try to describe traveling in a coach, but it's an adventure that must be experienced personally. We were given the option, as usual with most Thousand Trail campgrounds, to choose the site we liked the most. We were advised by others that had visited here prior to giving Phase Four a serious look, and we agreed, this area was very nice.



Our site is very generous with a crushed stone pad, plenty of grass and an excellent picnic table, something we don't experience often.

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The above pictures are of the adult activity building, pool house and bingo room possibly. The very large pool is just outside with, believe it or not, a lifeguard. This campground is also a KOA facility and their rules mandate the presence of a lifeguard.



Got a picture of the lifeguard, not shown however, he did not seem overly taxed since no one was in the pool. No one under sixty-five was there either, or, the weekend is coming up. Kids in this area are back in school. Upper picture is another picture of this beautiful building. Next, Thousand Trails (TT), as well as, KOA, never forget the little people. This play module is awesome. Would have given anything to have been able to afford something like this at our childcare centers, at the time. Above is a commemorative stone with flags in recognition of fallen soldiers.



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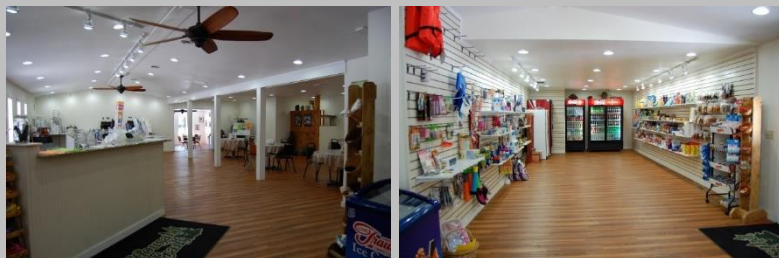


This, as you can see, is very simple in design, but it's so important to remember that their sacrifices made it possible for all of us to enjoy our individual lifestyles in peace.



This campground is like a small national park. At over five-hundred acres with over one thousand RV and camping sites, the biggest facility we've ever stayed at, and one of the nicest. As always, the staff are so accommodating and helpful. As always, TT campgrounds always provide incoming and outgoing RVers plenty of space to casually and safely park while they meet with the camp managers before proceeding to site. The pictures above and below are of the inside of the office. Did I mention they have awesome ice creams and serve an excellent breakfast at very reasonable prices?

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This is also the location where potential TT members meet to learn more about the many advantages of camping the TT way. Carla and I, as you already know are TT/Elite Members.



We are full-time campers, the coach is our only home, and thanks to Thousand Trails and Equity LifeStyle Properties, we've spent less than three-hundred dollars on campground fees since March of this year, six months and counting; only way to really enjoy camping. It's in a room like this that the camp manager will hold meetings and offer this experience to anyone who might be more interested in paying fees to enjoy what these camps offer for rather than paying camp fees to sleep at a campsite. I hope you've enjoyed this dime tour of this lovely campground. but now, as always if you like what you've seen in this post, book some time here and enjoy it with family if possible.

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### St. Anthony of Padua,

13<sup>th</sup>. Our current stay is in Batesville, IL. We have been fortunate this time to attend St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in Morris, IL and our chances of finding another church with a pastor as awesome as Fr. Sean Whittington are next to nil. Carla and I have been going to church together now for over twenty-five years and never have we seen a parish with so many faithful going to Mass as a family. This is something we've never seen in Florida, regardless of the Mass times Fr. Sean humbly says it's just the way the parish has always been, but everyone knows that family worship is probably at an all-time low.



Founded in the mid 1800's and the new church was built in the early 1900's this venue is just short of destination.

### Wounded Soldiers Tribute

The campground is doing a Tribute to Wounded Soldiers. It should be quite interesting, and I plan to take a few pictures of the ceremony. Welcome to the Wounded Warriors Celebration, 15<sup>th</sup>. This event is an annual event. At first, I thought it was a

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program that traveled from park to park, but no! In less than one day the two big cement display squares in the back-green acres were filled with tents, auctions, food and people from all over.



This campground sponsors this grand event. Normally I would say the park had about twenty golf carts both private and park owned.



Tonight, you couldn't count them all. Easily, I would say, they numbered over two hundred. This was one of their prizes, I wanted to get extra tickets, but we passed on it. Needless to say, the booze flowed from all over. Kids wandered alone, made me a little nervous, but I'm sure parents were around. Everything was affordable from food to chances for drawings. We were there for the beginning, ate and went back to the coach. We wandered back around midnight where the dancing was loud

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and exciting. The event had an excellent DJ who kept the music and dancing going till well after midnight. The event is so big that the campground just leaves the campground gates open all day. With so many people coming and going, I don't think they could have taken the strain of opening and closing so many times. Ultimately the event was a grand success. Late in the evening they had over one-hundred Chinese drawings on everything you could possibly think of, from a cart full of booze to a truck bed full of firewood. The event sponsors had numbers by the end of the evening. In 2014 they took in over fourteen-thousand dollars and this year it was well over eighteen thousand...Priceless! Tomorrow, Sunday the 16<sup>th</sup>. we will attend Bingo at St. Anthony's in Morris, IN. It's a huge event with many money prizes ranging from eighty to two-hundred dollars. We took it in and spent forty-five and won fifteen...*whatever*.

### Cheryl's birthday

My daughter Cheryl will be having another birthday on the 17<sup>th</sup>. *Yes, I remembered!* The rest of the week will be quiet until Friday when we will visit St. Peter in Chains Cathedral on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

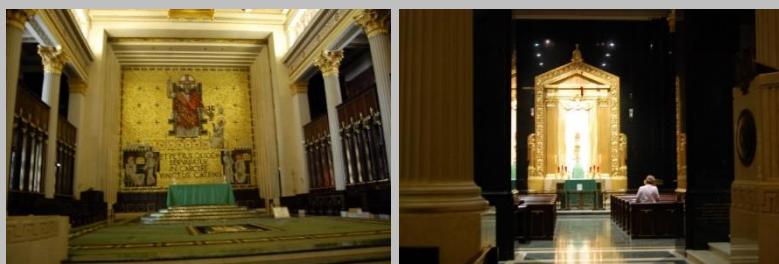
### St. Peter in Chains





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When we first pulled up to this building, I thought it was a bank or some other community building. The Synagogue across the street looked more like what I was looking for, but nevertheless, this was the right place. In the picture above is the vestibule as we enter the church. Once again, this is not your usual construction for a church. It was built in the classic Greek style. So impeccably well maintained it is hard to believe that this church was dedicated in December of 1845. Structures like this, so marvelous to look at, amaze me all the time. It is hard to believe that there were craftsmen so skilled that existed over one-hundred-fifty years ago. For years after its construction had been completed the church did quite well. Within the first hundred years both the church and the neighborhood surrounding the church began to show their age. As a result, the title of Cathedral was given to another church not that far away. In the 1950's urban renewal projects around.



the church had put the church in a new light. By 1957 a couple of additions were incorporated into the original structure and the church itself was totally renovated. St. Peter in Chains was a Cathedral, once again. As we entered the Cathedral, we were awed to discover that the left transept Chapel constitutes the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. It is dominated with gold leaf in the background. The bronze figures to the right and left of the alter

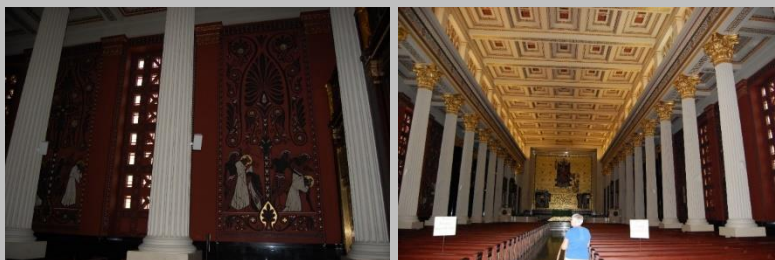


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are St. Thomas Aquinas and Saint Pius X, who were devoted to the Eucharist. This Chapel alter was having the exposition of the Holy Eucharist; which we were not expecting. As a result, we stayed a bit longer in prayer, but I wanted very much to take a picture of this alter.

My Nikon has always performed excellently even in very dimly lit areas and this area had minimal lighting and I was fearful that a picture of this chapel area would be challenging. Using a flash was not an option.

*Being as reverent as possible, going to the far back of the chapel, I took the first picture; The chapel alter was ablaze in light. It should have come out barely viewable due to the light available. I then took a second and third picture, minimizing the light intake to the lens, and once again, the chapel alter holding the Blessed Sacrament was saturated with light. This picture could be one of my finest pictures. I could only venture to guess, along spiritual lines, the reason for the extreme light...magnificent!*



In the picture above it is difficult to fully appreciate the Stations of the Cross, due to the limited amount of light available.. These murals begin from about three feet above the floor and rise stately to the ceiling, I would say at least sixty feet high. I cannot even imagine how beautiful these murals are in the daylight. Once again this was about all the light available in this church,

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makes one wonder how the Left Chapel area came out so magnificently. This is a better picture of the Cathedral in general. The ceiling is the object of interest right now. I would try to describe it, but I would come up lacking. This is one of those instances where it's best for the reader to spend a minute or two and admire such beauty.



Above are just a few of the cut-glass murals you see in the vestibule of this Cathedral. These also are awesomely tall and beautiful. There were six of these glass murals in the vestibule area. Insert in this mosaic, unable to be seen in this picture shows St. Peter imprisoned in Jerusalem and Rome, bound in chains. This mosaic is totally done in Venetian Glass. I give thanks to the diocese for its brochure on this magnificent church. Much of the information I've presented was available in this brochure.

### Metamora, IN

Do not feel bad if you have never heard of this town till now. Neither did I until our neighbors next door mentioned the two big attractions in this part of the world; Metamora, IN and the *you must be up at dawn* for the flea market in Brooksville, IN. 26<sup>th</sup> It may sound like this mandate to travel many miles to visit a town very few, if any, know about, in not normal. Not really, we chose to see Metamora, about 25-miles away, since we were not

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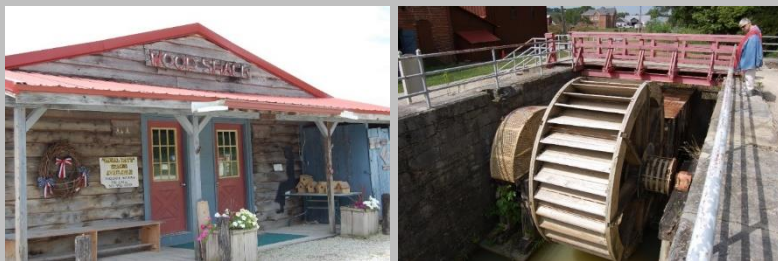
doing much at dawn anyway. Metamora was established in 1838 and to this date has not progressed much further, and it wants to stay that way. Picture below, railroad tracks, which would not only be the industry that would stymie its growth but also bankrupt IN, as well, in the late 1800's.



In 1836 the Indiana Improvement Act established the White-water Canal System. This system would be 83 miles long and have 56 locks. Purpose of the canal system was commerce. Indiana was ninety percent forest at that time. The costs of the locks and feeder dams exceeded four-million dollars. Seventy-five-foot-long boats were used to transport both logs and passengers for several years. The trip from beginning to end would take as long as five days. By the late 1860's the canal system was terminated but not forgotten in Metamora, IN. Long story short, in the 1870's the railroad expanded into Indiana and it was now able to cover the same amount of distance, eventually, in a fraction of the time. This would, ordinarily, be an ending to this saga but it continues. The State of Indiana was left holding bonds it had sold in order to raise the millions of dollars needed for the canal construction. Bond holders wanted their money back. The State could not pay and, as a result, declared bankruptcy. The story actually ends in Indiana rewriting its Constitution in such a way that it would never, ever have to go through

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that again and it became a “Pay as you Go” State. At the end of each fiscal year, even to the twenty-first century, its books must be balanced. The town, long ago, decided, except for a few modern conveniences like water and electricity, it would be a living memorial to the past. Some of the buildings here, are not indigenous to Metamora, but rather have been relocated to this town as opposed to, let’s say, Florida that tears down everything over fifty years old, so they can continue to be enjoyed for years to come. A few did experience fires and were rebuilt exactly as they had existed previously. What you don’t see are buildings recently built that “represent” the architecture of that time.



This is the “Wood Shack” building. A twelve-foot waterwheel provides the power to the grist mill. Prior to 1873 you would have seen a “lock” in place of the waterwheel. With the demise of the canal system the lock area was put to better use. Below is a picture of the insides of the grist mill. Whether paid or not, I’m not sure, but almost all the buildings have someone inside to explain in detail the purpose of the building. Many of these buildings are owned by individuals.

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This is the Cookie Jar building for lack of the real name of the building. So as not to make light of the fact that this town is so small, this company and its location were awarded the Guinness World Record Certificate for having 2653 types of cookie jars in stock. If you look closely at the architecture of the wall-fixtures, you'll see that they are very representative of turn-of-the-century pharmacy style. I mention this only because I had been a pharmacist and had seen firsthand fixtures like these in Littleton, NH where I first worked. What the picture below does not show are the huge ice cream cones we enjoyed at the Ice Cream Store while waiting for 2 pm to come so we could enjoy a "canal trip" before departing this town. Best of all, cost of this very generous cone was only \$2.00...Awesome!



Selfie, hard to do with a camera, my arm is too short. It's 2 pm and time to catch our ride on the Ben Franklin III canal boat. Below you see Indiana State workers removing the Belgium Draft Horses from their stables. At first, I thought they were



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Clydesdale horses, like in the Budweiser commercials, but no. You can see that the canal boat is being pulled by the horses, since the boat had no motor of its own. We met this gentleman earlier at the grist mill and he gave us quite a bit of his spiel back then. Turns out he would be our guide and host on our trip explaining the canal system, the eventual demise of it and the purpose for the new Constitution for the State of Indiana.



Here is a better look at the Horses pulling the canal boat. Not a bad job for the workers as well. It would take five State workers in total to provide us with this experience.



The horses, when not working, are kept in this covered stall. Several times during our wait we saw workers go to the stalls and keep the horses' company. For a time, I wasn't quite sure why the need for horses. Turns out the workers simply detach the rope leads on the boat and let the canal boat float gently at



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four miles per hour till they reattach the leads when the boat reappears on the other side of the bridge. The horses, four or five of them, will spend their off hours in this barn, also maintained by the Indiana workers. Below you can see the rope markings from as far back as 1838, *Priceless!* I saw this covered bridge coming up and did wonder about the horses. Our short trip has come to an end and now the horses are detached from the bow of the canal boat and reattached at the stern of the boat. In their heyday the canals were twenty-four feet wide in order to allow two canal boats to pass one another side by side. I believe over fifty canal boats were in use during that time period.



No, I'm not resting again. I just needed an odd picture to finish off the segment on the canal boat trip.



I've just about run out of material, so I'll be ending this visit by presenting just a couple of more original buildings and any plac-

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ards if they have them. To help you see the writing: “this building was built in 1837 by Patrick and Elizabeth O’Reilly in Dearborn, IN. Reconstructed here by Russell and Reba Winkler in 1974.”



This placard has nothing to do with anything, I just liked it. *This is the power of authoring your own posts.* Carla picked up a very nice purse here while we spoke to the store-keep. Leather shop. Even in the early 1800’s the upper five percent, in their own way, had to show their ability to build better and bigger.

So many more pictures to show you, but I don’t want to ware on your patience. If you ever find yourselves in the area, take time to travel back in time about 150 years and enjoy a touch of the past. Kids will enjoy the experience to, not to mention the ice cream. We’re now on our way to Oldenburg, IN. I hope you have a chance and the time to experience digitally Holy Family Church and the Sisters of St Francis retirement home.

### Oldenburg, IN

26<sup>th</sup> This little town is just a short six miles north of Batesville. We’ve just finished visiting Metamora, IN a town still set in the

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mid 1800's. The day is still young, and we just noticed that Oldenburg is on our way back to Batesville. We had noticed road signs for the Sisters of St. Francis along the highway but did not give it much attention. This is a town almost fully dominated by the Sisters and Priest devoted to St. Francis.



Next this church would not make the top ten of the churches we've visited in the last couple of years but you have to give credit to the many priests, with so few resources, who had the ambition and vision to establish such a simple but beautiful facility. This is the home that the Sisters of St. Francis go to at retirement time. It's a beautiful facility. We tried to enter the church in the picture above to the left of the home, but it was locked. Their home is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.



We gave it a little thought and decided it, most likely, was the Chapel for just the sisters. We were a little disappointed, since

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we drove here in particular to visit another Church if possible. It was only then that we noticed another church just across the street. I could not understand the reasoning for having two churches within a stone's throw, but nonetheless, there it was. The Holy Family Church. It was established by a Father Franz Joseph Rudolf. Originally this church was just a wooden structure. As the years progressed he was known as the "Founder of the City of Spires." In 1844 he was appointed pastor and in 1845 he built the stone church in 1866. In 1851, if he wasn't already busy enough, he founded the Convent for the Sisters of St. Francis. Sadly in 1866 he died and is buried below the church Sanctuary. But it's now time to say good-bye to this venue.

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### SEPTEMBER 2015

On Sunday, the 1<sup>st</sup>, we were under threat of heavy rain, and sure enough we got it Sunday evening. Monday was cloudy but that was all. In our zest to overachieve and better prepare us for our next move it was jacks up on Monday, attaching the dingy (HHR Chevy) to the coach the next morning,

After having a good but short breakfast, we began to complete the preparations to leave Indiana. It was time to bring in the slides. Carla pushed the button and I positioned myself outdoors to watch for any problems only to hear the motor start and stop. Carla tried once again, same results. Over I went to check the status of the batteries, coach batteries were great but engine battery was only registering 11 volts, just short the 12.4 needed to start the coach. We concluded that the car was pulling a small amount of current from the coach all night, *another lesson learned!* Now, we needed a jump start. We visited the camp office and she had someone come over and gave us the jump we needed. We were finally got on our way around 11am. We crossed the bridge spanning the Ohio River on our way to Park City, KY. The bridge did not look as old as we approached it. Cars are traveling above us in the other direction.

Diamond Caverns, in Park City, KY.



The 2<sup>nd</sup>. As always, this story begins at a Visitors' Center. Right now, we're the only one's here, that will change this weekend. You would think with so many traveling seniors' places like this would continue to have visitors even after this coming Labor Day, but no! Even Diamond Cavern Campground begins laying off workers after the holidays. The campground, however, is open year-round.



When explorers first entered Diamond Caverns, they were amazed at all the twinkling stones, none of them were diamonds, however, but that did not stop them from naming the cavern Diamond Cavern. Gemstones of so many types would be found in this cavern. Mining these stones would come next. Les will be our guide for a tour that should last about one hour.



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As you can see from the picture here and to come, this adventure will be one of a kind, but, as I've mentioned before, all the walkways and steps are safe but smaller children, and possibly even teenagers I've known, should be watched closely.



Unlike Mammoth Cave, this cavern is well lit. Mammoth cave could use a great deal more lighting. And while we're talking about caves and caverns, would you know what makes them different? *Answer is coming up.* It doesn't take a great deal of text to caution everyone that we are going very deep into this cavern. The tour is one-half mile in length. Catwalks and raised walkways are everywhere. Sudden foolishness could cause a serious accident. However, in our Mammoth Cave tour, we were told that if a tourist had an accident or health problem it could take at least a couple of hours to get medical assistance to get help to them.



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Without a doubt, before the caves and caverns were so heavily regulated, by the Parks Dept. and the owners, individuals could explore these venues on their own. Self-guided tours aren't coming back into vogue any time soon. In this picture you can get an appreciation of how deep we've gone, yet we're still very high above the cavern floor. The immensity of just how impressively big this cavern is, is emphasized by comparing Carla, at just over five feet, to the surrounding cavern walls, in the picture above. Below, from ceiling to floor is a giant Stalactite. That's the huge dark column in the center of the page. How long would it take for something like But Geologists say that a Stalactite that's one cubic inch, that's 1in x 1in x 1in takes about one-hundred years to grow one cubic inch.



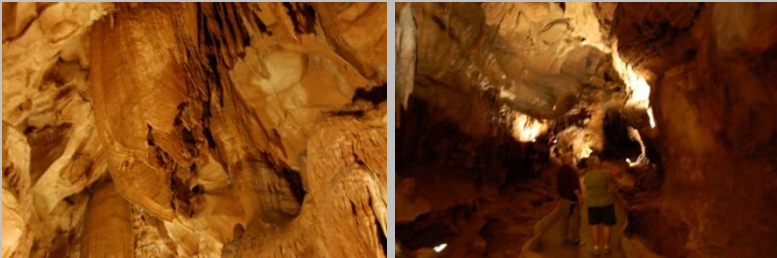
This is about twenty feet tall and six feet in diameter, *do the math*. Need I mention that we've been going down for some time now and, as you can see in the picture below, were not there yet. In one section there is, what looks like, a man made cave, but not so. Water from the shallow oceans that covered Kentucky millions of years ago, began to dry up. Sink holes developed and the ocean waters picked up calcium and other minerals that seeped through the earth. Seeping deep enough the waters and minerals began eating away at the limestone layer of earth, and as it ate away at the layers of limestone small tunnels and canals

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developed and after a couple of years (millions) passage ways like this and the ones you find in Mammoth Cave were born.

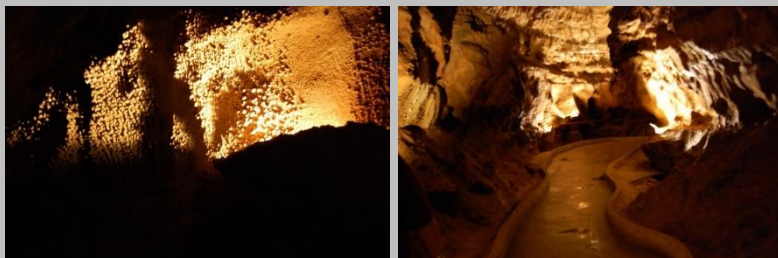


*Yes graffiti!* You see stuff like this in most caves from place to place. J.B. Sanders was nice enough to leave his mark way back in 1869. The remains of the graffiti are not very consoling; however, I really am awed when I come across something like this, done by an everyday guy, over one-hundred-fifty years ago...*Priceless in its own way!* Both pictures above bode the question from awhile back. Cave / Cavern, difference?

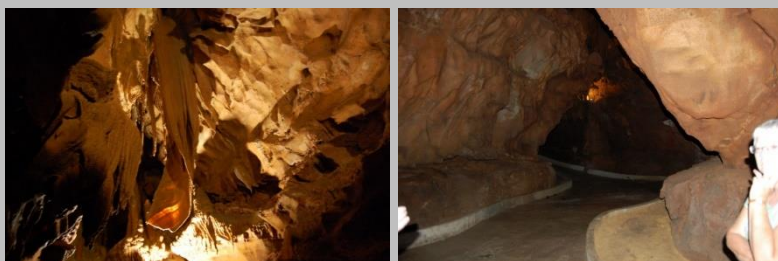


*Cave is simple, it's a dead area. Basically, just a rock with no growth of any type. A cavern, on the other hand, is alive. Generally, water is in the area and you find Stalactites and Stalagmites. Caverns are in a constant state of change, although it may take a million years to notice.*

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Courtesy of Mother Nature is pop-corn formations. I thought it was another man-made wall décor, but not so.



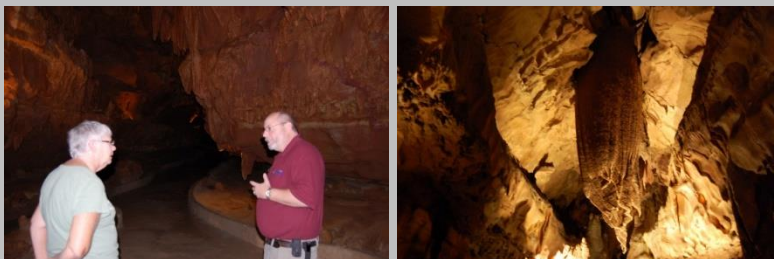
What can I say, Mother Nature doing so many creative designs on her own? Notice the delicately curved stalactite, bottom left in the picture above, and see how translucent this millions year old structure handles the light.



Finally, we've reached the stairway to nowhere. Many caves and caverns have a parallel passage that will take the tourist back a slightly different way from the passage they took to get here.

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Diamond is a small two-mile cavern and to exit the cavern you must revisit what you'd already seen, to enjoy once-again on your way out.



Les was exceedingly patient with us. Our tour was supposed to last just about 60 minutes and I'm pretty sure we pushed him to 90 minutes. As he mentioned, and I'm sure most tour guides would agree, that it's almost impossible to handle groups of 16 or more and give them all the attention they're looking for. At times, on the other hand, tour guides with smaller groups, have a chance to expand on their depth of knowledge. We saw this on the way up but this is a better picture of it. Just trying to imagine anything hanging from the ceiling and growing for the last several million years can't help but make anyone feel about as significant as a piece of dust on the floor. A cavern has a lifespan of millions of years and even then, someone will happen upon it and only try to imagine the thousands of tourists that have gazed upon it as we have. This cavern and this stalactite will be enchanting millions until the end of time. *Pretty close to immortal...Priceless!* Time to go home.



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In a day or two, around the 3<sup>rd</sup>, we'll be touring Mammoth Cave Historic Tour and hopefully in a week or so the Mammoth Cave Grand Avenue Tour, which is a four-hour tour.

### **Diamond Caverns RV Resort**

It's the 6<sup>th</sup> and we travelled 225 miles to arrive at Diamond Caverns around 3:30pm Central time; *love Central Time!* We're camped just down the road from Mammoth Cave Nat'l Park.



Today, as always, first day after arriving, it's off to Walmart for shopping. Can only receive two channels NBC and CBS, could be worse, but we picked up some additional videos to be on the safe side. WI-FI, very happy to report, is very good. One of



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those rare campgrounds that provides the Wi-Fi they advertise. The signal is strong enough, in your coach, to access emails and download pictures for blog work...*priceless!*



Now it's time to go to the pool and relax for a bit. About 3:30 Central Time, just got back from the pool. Once in, you were OK; not much warmer than low eighties. It goes without saying that the pool should have a heater, and I think it does, but not on the day we went it. Water temp around low 80's.

### **Labor Day:**



Well, we took in the Karaoke but did not participate. One of the first campers we met up with was Dave by the pool. He was getting his "Passport" camper ready for the big weekend. He's mostly into guitars but Cathy, his wife, is an avid singer and mighty good too. We enjoyed the music for a couple of hours and left around 9pm, *seniors go to bed early!* The next day on our

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walk we came upon, Larry, working outside on a model airplane, *the kind with an engine that fly and break on landing, eventually.* They've been full-timers for only a year and have a Tiffin, Allegro Motorhome.

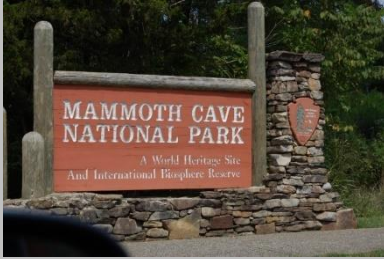


Allegro Bay Motorhome, diesel. Amazing how so many modify their homes so nicely, yet the manufacturers consistently outfit, even the more expensive coaches, with couches and recliners in their attempt to make them able to sleep six to eight people. Don't they know that there is something called inflatable beds? Ninety-nine percent of the time only two will occupy a coach, so why do coach manufacturers continue provide for so many sleep accommodations. Currently RV makers are positioning a drop-down sleeper over the cockpit area, which sleeps up to two safely, which would easily accommodate the grandchildren. So now makers should work on expanding the livability of the coach for the owners. Larry removed the couch that sits four *uncomfortably* with matching rockers and took out the bench-style dining table with a desk-table unit...*Awesome, beautiful and functional!* Larry used to be in the RV business so he's a little more confident about making renovations. Look at the windows in the coach. They had someone apply insulating heat reducing panels in most of the windows in the coach. From the inside you would never know the windows were covered. The panels

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also provide an extreme amount of privacy.

### **Mammoth Cave 2-hour tour.**



9<sup>th</sup>. When we call this a cave it is just that, a cave. A cavern, on the other hand, would be comprised of stalactites and stalagmites, growing from and to the ceiling. Visitor Center, *In the beginning MYA, millions of years ago*, Geologists theorize that there was only one massive land mass and they gave it a name, Pangea. If you could estimate Kentucky's place in Pangea you would also find the Equator just north of it, *yes!* Kentucky was very similar to South America. Pangea was covered by a shallow sea for millions of years. Over time the seas began to dry up and as a result of lime deposits in the water and sinkholes that developed, the torrents of water made its way down into the earth and ate away at the soft limestone layers of earth. This all happened only a few million years ago. Much of the water that created the "Mammoth Cave System" came from the Green River. Not so long ago, about 5000-years, the cave was to see its first human cave dwellers. That went on for about two-thousand years and then they left, ceased to live in the area. The cave was rediscovered again around 1800. It was alive once again. It was

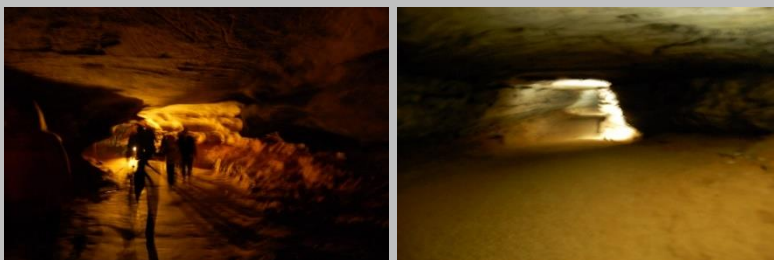
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mined mainly for its saltpeter, contained within its walls. Saltpeter was the principal ingredient in the manufacture of gun powder, which would be in high demand in a few years with the war of 1812. Sadly, enslaved persons did all the work. By the mid 1800's the Cave grew into a tourist attraction. It wasn't a Disney World, but people came from around the country and even Europe. I apologize for some of my photos.



Lighting in the cave is minimal and usually require a 3-4 second open shutter. In 1938, Steven Bishop and co-owners Matt and Nick Bransford and family members would be guides to the cave for the next one hundred years. People gladly came and paid for guided tours of the cave. The National Park Service would acquire the property finally and manage it thereafter. At the time that the Park Service acquired the Cave only about forty-miles had been discovered. Currently the Cave has around four hundred five miles of passageways, but Geologist estimate there it could eventually grow to another six-hundred miles.

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It's very difficult to catch a live action shot and keep the shutter open for several seconds. On top of that you must watch your back so that others, who like you, can barely see where they are going and run into to you. All in all, I hope you can appreciate as much as I was able to capture. The cave in many areas is just short of pitch black. Some passages are less than sixty inches in height, then there are those passages that are so narrow many healthy eating individuals would be severely stressed to get through. This is one area where the ceiling height hovers around five feet for about thirty feet. Once you've made it to the end it's not bad going. This section is aptly called "tall man's misery." The section known as "Fat-man's misery" was so dark I could barely keep my face from meeting with the limestone walls barely inches away. Needless to say, taking a picture was impossible.



At this point in this tour, we're three-hundred feet underground. Temperature is a constant fifty-five degrees. The cave does go

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deeper. In the picture below is a computer generated 3-dimensional depiction of the passages in this cave. Try to imagine, if you can, the hours on the face of a clock superimposed over this picture. We entered this cave at the 9 o'clock position and at the time this picture was taken we were in the 7 o'clock position. Only the major passageways are depicted here. The orange looking lines, layered like spaghetti on the map above is a very good representation of just how intertwined all these tunnels are. Our tour was to cover two of the four-hundred-five miles in a period of two hours. I believe someone mentioned that no one has seen, first-hand, all the passageways in person. Below, Mother Nature, has for the most part, done all that can be done and now the Parks Service will do the rest. In many of the locations you'll see the walls almost pressure blasted smooth, which would not be the case.



All this was done over the course of millions of years of high velocity water pressure. There are many areas still very jagged and rough looking, and will, most likely, stay that way. In the picture above you'll see how the tunnels intersect. Therefore, they do not have self-guided tours; who knows how many would get lost in this maze. So much more to write about and so many poor pictures to show, but it's time to end this text in hopes that many of you will make the effort to experience these



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caves and caverns personally.

*Just a few words of caution. Dress warmly, wear climbing or hiking boots or shoes. A small LED flashlight would be advisable. Be extremely conscientious of kids you bring with you; these caves are dangerous and could be very unforgiving.*

Later today, Friday, it will be Karaoke, Bingo and an Ice Cream social at the club house. Saturday is equally as busy with a member appreciation breakfast followed with an ice cream social then it's pizza, beer and a movie in the coach.

### **Mammoth Cave - 4 Hour Tour**

9<sup>th</sup>. Eric Elder is welcoming us to the Grand Avenue, four-hour tour.



This tour should not be taken lightly. They have given it a difficulty level of strenuous. Of the twenty-five individuals present, we were the oldest. To his credit when he was rattling off all the precautions, he was nice enough not to be looking directly at us. Below you see the candle-smoke etchings of Mr. Wallace. He was a Civil War Soldier and stayed at the original Mammoth Cave Hotel. Not much is known about him. *The hotel did keep a*

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*ledger on its visitors, and the only item on him was the title "Drunk." Eric does stop after about twenty minutes of touring to talk to us once he finds an unusual location. Here he wanted to make sure that all of us knew that above us, below us and all around us is limestone.*



Of the over one-hundred pictures I took on this tour only about one-third were worth showing and only about twenty were as perfect as should be. We were always in motion and even if I broke rank to take a picture, I needed a 2-3 second shutter for any picture at all. My Nikon does do an awesome job with little light, most times. The light in the cave is about the same as you would have at night trying to find your way around your coach with only a match for a light.



Above is an example of gypsum. This compound was heavily mined in the late 1800's. It takes forever to grow naturally, and

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humidity is detrimental to it. On this tour the cave is not as big as we'd seen on the Historical Tour and much of our walking was in caves about this size. This was our first stop and we all needed it. *Little did we know that the worse lay waiting ahead of us.*



The cave here did have a low ceiling but came with water and restrooms. Size wise it was almost as big as a football field. Below we're all still hanging out taking some pictures and most were visiting the bathrooms.



Over to the right side of the picture below, many of us were resting, thinking that we were tired at this point. *That is to change*

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*very soon!* You need light for algae, and there's no sun down here. However, not that many years ago the lighting used in caves was incandescent light which did emit a great amount of heat. Combine that with the moisture found in some places and you get algae. This problem, once everyone realized it would be corrected minimally with fluorescent lighting and now much of the lighting is LED, which is why the camera may pick up a bit more yellow than I wanted. Oh, did I forget to mention that even though some portions of Mammoth Cave might be two-hundred feet in width, some other sections, *quite a few actually*, are around 15 inches. Wide.



Again- what kind of rock? *LIMESTONE!* Ceiling here, as you can see, is a little more than five feet. *Being short here is a plus!* in

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the picture below we had just come down a steep walkway, *I'm getting a little behind, must catch up to Carla.*

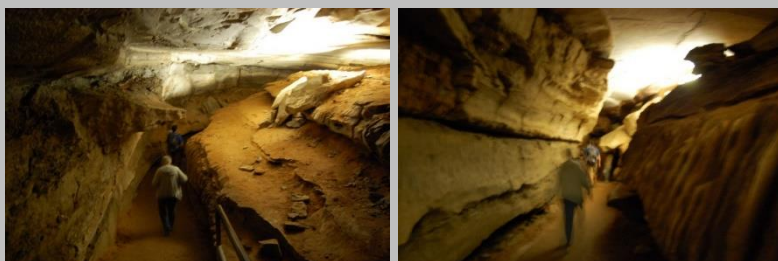


Stalactites can be seen here, left side of picture. Remember never to touch. Your skin contains oils and these oils will adhere to the stalactite and when additional water flows over the stalactite it will not adhere to it and, as a result, will cease to grow. As I mentioned in a previous post it takes almost one-hundred years of time for a stalactite to grow one cubic inch. A touch is not worth it. These have ceased to grow for lack of



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moisture. Next Eric is pointing out to us one of the side effects of the early prospectors. Old timers used kerosene to keep their lamps aglow. If kerosene wasn't available, they would use chicken fat or bacon fat. *They got all the light they needed but it came at a price.* The bright spot in the center of the picture is about eighty feet from us going down again. Below is more gypsum again. Below and above are another couple of walkways in the cave the Civil Conservation Corps built these pathways. Called the CCC it was comprised of young men 18-28 who diligently worked for years in 55-degree temps to provide us with these comfortable paths.



In these pictures we are going up, I mean way up, and just happened to meet another group taking the Frozen Niagara Falls



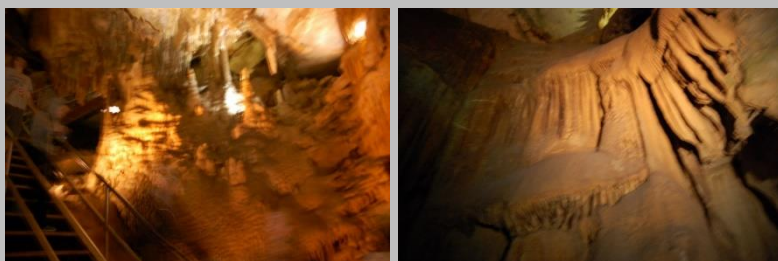
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Tour. In this tour we will be challenged with almost 700 steps, some going up and some coming down in very steep angles. Below is a second picture of the one above. What you don't see is how much more we had to climb before reaching the top. Our steps from above turned to a walkway so steep it was impossible to go forward without pulling yourself up using the arm rails. Going down was equally as steep using the rails to keep yourself from overstepping the person ahead of you. We all finally made it to the bottom, everywhere is the "thin" layers of limestone tend to break off until a thicker layer comes through. All this stone was once in the form of a watery substance until that substance dried and hardened to what we see today. For the most part very, little breaks off anymore, *although I do think about it whenever we walk under sections like this!*



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Above we continue to see algae which formed over a hundred years ago. It will eventually die off. Once again, we're faced with steps. We've been told in all we will be climbing at least 670 steps all together. *More steps, what else!* However, the reward more than compensates for our sore feet and aching knees. Below is an excellent example of a "Column." That's a Stalactite and stalagmite which, over the course of millions of years, have finally met in the middle.

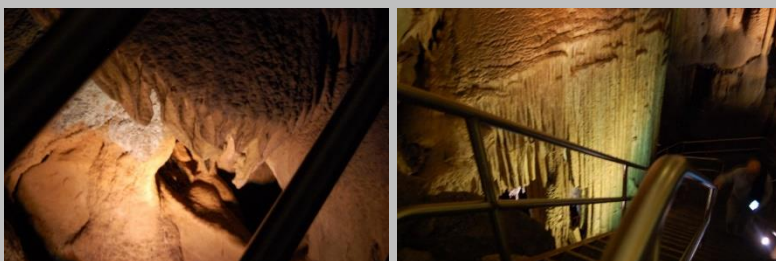


From here on the column would only continue to grow thicker, if moisture were present. Once again this is not a cavern but a "cave." For the most part water has ceased flowing into this cave from the surface. Occasionally, on this tour, we've come across "leaks" in the ceiling in which water is coming in, but not many and not that much. Now we're getting to the best part of the tour. What you see above is Stalactites from the ceiling turning into "*bacon*" which is in the lower center section of the picture above and center of picture below.

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More of the same except the pictures are getting more intense.



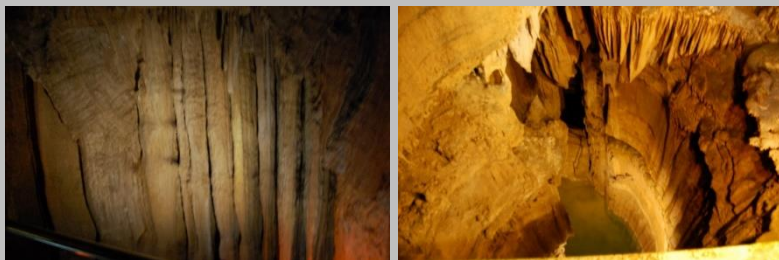
We are going down more stairs, *what else is new!* But from what we are seeing, this will be the best part of the entire tour. The cave continues to impress. As you can see the effects of some algae is still visible, green-like area. At this point I wish we could get off and just follow this cave structure just to see the cave without walkways and stairways.



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The grand finale of this tour is visiting "The Frozen Niagara." Viewing this would mean having to endure an additional forty-nine steps going down, and, of course, going back up again. But the side trip is well worth it. Below is a natural formed canyon about two-hundred feet deep with a small body of water at the bottom. Currently we're on the second of four levels in this cave. The water you see in the picture is the lowest level of the cave. Remember just a few million years ago the ground over the cave was a shallow ocean. As it began to dry up and flow underground, we were told the Michigan river flowed overhead. *So much trivia, I only wish I could remember all of it.*



Above, once again, are Stalactites many of them, millions of

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years old, whereas below you'll see a multitude of them possibly a few thousand years in age. Pictures of the "Frozen Niagara.



The lighting at the bottom was virtually non-existent. I did take 2-3 time-lapse shots, but they were too blurred to print. Above is the upper falls and the picture below being of the lower falls. *Best I could do, sorry!* Once again to Carla's right between her and the "column" formation, right off her elbow, is called a drape.



Depending on how the water flows from above and how it is forming over the millennia, Stalactites take on many interesting forms. There's always that final photo that says it's time for us to leave.



## PAUL GRENIER

### Corvette Museum, in Bowling Green, KY

Welcome to a destination I have been waiting for some time, the Corvette Plant in Bowling Green, KY.



15<sup>th</sup>. The picture above is all you're going to get. No picture taking is allowed in the plant itself. The pictures I will be using are from the Corvette Museum. First and foremost is the Corvette Stingray. This is the entry level corvette (next page bottom). It takes 3.5 hours to build each car and they produce 7/hour and 17 every day. Price range on the model is \$55,000 to \$60,000 for the convertible. I believe our tour person said they make three versions of this corvette. The difference would be in the engines in the different versions.

The Z06 model: They all take the same time to build, the price however, will set you back \$80,000 for the convertible. *It does get better, however!*

The Z07: This model for the performance person runs around \$130,000 for the convertible.

Unique to the Z06 and Z07, for the person buying one of these, the plant will allow them to sit in and watch their car get built.



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Additionally, the buyer can even build his own engine that will go in their car, under the supervision of a plant professional. This is an assembly plant. All the parts are made someplace else and shipped here then assembled here. What is built here are the engines. *All the engines for these cars are built from the ground up at this plant.* A little more about this GM Plant. Originally this was a Chrysler AC manufacturing plant. Then in 1979 GM purchased the plant and in 1981 began assembling Corvettes here. Bowling Green, KY is the only Corvette home. The first Corvettes built in Detroit cost around \$3500. They are now sixty years old with more than 1.5 million having been produced during those years. GM spent \$131 Million dollars a few years ago in order to begin producing the NEW Stingray. Currently they are expanding by creating a new building exclusively for a new paint shop. *My question is; if all the parts are made someplace else and come to the plant pre-painted, why do they need a new paint-shop? Whatever! Should have thought of that question when we were there.* The origin of the name "Corvette"



His name was Myron Scott. Corvette was a class of WWII fast attack Destroyers. GM also offers, which I never knew before, a body kit for the 2014 Vette. Don't know any more about this.

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### The Corvette Museum

The introduction of the Corvette had its growing pains. When it was first debuted at the New York Automotive Show, it won mass appeal. The car, however, was mostly show and did not have the power plant in it to win a serious race. Zora Arkus-Duntov- *Who? Yes, I said the same thing.* He wrote a letter to GM telling them that they had created a very pretty sports car. Then he proceeded to tell them all the other aspects that would be needed to transform the Corvette into the racing dream machine they were hoping to build. In 1953 he joined GM, on the Corvette team, and began to transform the Corvette and eventually making it the biggest selling sports car in the world. You would think that the fifties would be the end of any Corvette worries, not so. In the late fifties, the Corvette branch of GM was losing money, lots of money, like over one-thousand dollars per car. Currently, GM was thinking seriously of ending the line. As luck would have it, however, someone at GM suggested Bill Mitchell might help. His roll on the Corvette Team would be to put the Corvette back into the black. His first year at GM the Corvette broke even and in his second year it would be a money maker.



He was a real fiscal conservative, which is what GM needed to

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make this turn around happen. The rest is history. As a side note, even Mother Nature had a roll in the Corvette History. In February 12, 2012 at the Corvette Museum in Bowling Green, KY a sinkhole would develop in the museum itself.



In a matter of a few minutes, it would gobble up many of the museum's classic Corvettes. What many Corvette enthusiasts might not know is that the museum is non-profit, it relies on donations, admission fees and any profits from the Gift Center to pay its way. *Why this tidbit of information?* The museum does not own all the cars it has on display. Most of the cars have been donated and many are on loan to the museum.



One was the white 1992 Corvette, the “Millionth Corvette” manufactured. It was fully restored. In 2015 Rick Hendrick was inducted. This honor doesn't come lightly.

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As you can see from the picture above, from his Corvette Collection, he's a real enthusiast. He owns Hendrick Automotive Group which has dealerships in thirteen states and employs over ten-thousand people. He also owns Hendrick Motorsports and his cars race and win at NASCAR. *Personally, his most impressive, and very successful driver, was Mark Martin.* Dale Earnhardt Jr. (#8) also raced under the Hendrick Banner and, of course, raced GM cars. Dale Sr. (#3) raced GM cars also, but not in the Hendrick family of drivers.



I've been told being an enthusiast alone would merit induction, you must also to be a philanthropist, and do some good in the world, as well, which he has.

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He bid for and won the car above, I believe, at a Charity Auction. He paid over One-Million dollars for the car.

THE LINEUP: (not all the cars by far.)

1953, The original production year.

1954



Can you believe this car sold for \$3500 back in 1954



1955



1957



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*If there was any chance of acquiring a Corvette, this (the black Vette) is the model I'd love to have. Even at my age, I can still dream!*

1965

1967

1968- The Fifteenth Anniversary car 1974



1978-The Twenty-Fifth Ann... 1983-Corvette is 30 Years Old.



1992-The Millionth car, had a brush with Mother Nature.



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Corvette found in the sinkhole /what it looks like now.

Above/right is what the Corvette looks like today after being restored from the sinkhole incident. *You're right, just checking to see if you're paying attention!* It's a 50's model but could not find a actual date for it. I'm pretty sure it's 1953.

Today is the 18<sup>th</sup>, and we will be saying good-bye to Scott, Vanessa and Kora. They joined us as neighbors, about a week ago. We really did not get much of a chance to spend much time with them, but those few occasions were very enjoyable. The idea of having long-term neighbors, is a sticks and stones lifestyle. For better or worse we take pleasure in having met this beautiful family and hope we might cross paths with them possibly in Florida. We may not be seeing Dave and Cathy again, remember she loved karaoke singing, since the season is over,

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and the karaoke goes with the season. They're seasonal at this park, not travelers. Nancy and Larry left last week. Their home campground is in Louisiana, not Florida like us, chances are a little slim in crossing paths. Whether good or bad, the one constant about this way of life is that we are always either saying hello or good-bye. The next couple of days will be quiet especially in preparation for our departure this coming Monday morning. It will be jacks-up and on the road by 9 or 10 am. Whereas Scott and family will be traveling 280 miles to Pigeon Forge, TN, we'll be covering around 250 miles going south to Hohenwald, TN staying, of course at another Equity Lifestyle Properties, called Natchez Trace RV Resort.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> and time to go again. The trip this time, however, would be a little more intense. As we got into the HHR/Chevy to bring it behind the coach to be towed, we noticed the manual shift was very stiff. Reverse was just barely useable; last thing I wanted to deal with would be a new transmission. The trip to Natchez Trace in Hohenwald, TN would be about one-hundred fifty miles and take about four hours, that includes visiting the TN Visitor's Center and re-gassing the coach. By the time we reached Natchez Trace and unhooked the HHR, only to discover, we only had first gear that could be used with difficulty. Traveling in first gear we found our site and left the car parallel to the roadway and called the nearest GM dealership twenty-three miles away in Lawrenceburg, TN. He estimated worst case scenario would be \$2600 for a new transmission. We called Good Sam's for tow assistance and they offered four numbers to call. We called Mike and he was about halfway here already. He was able to drive the car onto the flatbed and had doubts

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that our transmission needed replacing. GM concurred. The extended warranty on the HHR covered half the repairs and most of the rental expense for a loaner car. Altogether out of pocket was \$300, the deductible we had on the HHR...*Priceless!* Unofficially we met our neighbors in the site next to us. He, Charlie, and his wife Miriam, had removed their HEAVY washer/dryer from its position at the back of their coach in hopes of tracking down a dripping sound he heard the night before.

### Natchez Trace RV Park

23<sup>rd</sup>. Welcome to Natchez Trace RV Park. It's a huge resort with well over 500 sites for trailers, coaches and even tenting.



We did take in the Lawrenceburg Fair, for what it was worth.



This campground is heavily populated with annual or seasonal

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campers. Some here have gone to great lengths to make themselves comfortable stay. When we find the campground, with the babbling brook we'll probably do the same.



This complex is a group of 3-4 buildings all joined together. The banquet hall below with game rooms, TV/Senior center and even a movie house. (First for this) The banquet hall also doubles for the Bingo Hall. The staff here works hard to provide as much as possible with limited budgets.



Yes, you guessed it, an in-ground pool. Looks like new construction. Closed for the season. Below is the A/V room. No DVDs, but a ton of VHS movies. *I said yuk also*, but then we found so many great titles it was awesome. As I've mentioned before, we rarely turn on the TV before 5 PM, mainly to get the national news.

## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

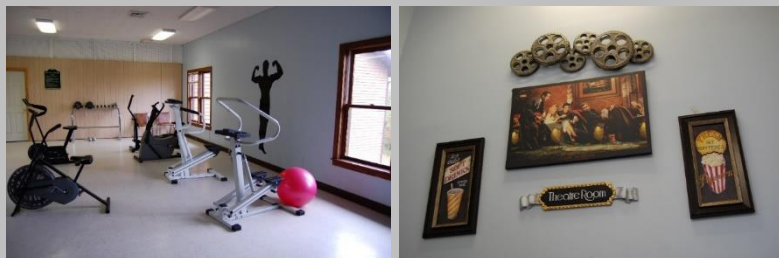


In this room you'll find, not only ping pong, but pool and air hockey. The pool table, unlike most you'll find at the Thousand Trails RV Park, looks a little worn and the air hockey table looks very much used, *but that's great*. It usually means they are free and because they are free people use them, unlike the other parks whose tables look brand new because they feel they have to charge for us to use them.



This, above, is the senior activity room. Rarely see more than one or two here at a time. But it is good they have such a room. Above is the air hockey table, ready for us to use. I forgot to mention, for the young aggressive campers, they offer a racket ball court. Don't recall seeing too many of these in our travels. Also, an exercise room, not that we'll ever have use for one of those.

## PAUL GRENIER



Getting to the end of our discussion on this park, but I wanted to re-mention the movie house. The doors were locked, only open when they are showing a movie. The park has much more to offer than I have mentioned. As you enter the park, there's a lake here as well. Mini-golf, valley ball and some other outdoor activity sports also. The weather's been dampish and cool to cold, so Carla and I have pretty much stayed in except for our jaunt to the fair. Yes, yesterday we enjoyed the Lawrenceburg, TN fair. The day began cool at 65 degrees. Projected was rain, only 10%, acceptable. Well, we enjoyed the senior meal, that was free, and then meandered around the fairgrounds till just around 7pm, in anticipation of the Trace Atkins show. Well by 2pm it was raining steadily, but we were involved with 4-H Dog shows; very enjoyable but getting chillier and dampish. Had a nice supper before the show and then it was off to the cheap seats in the grandstands. As it turned out they were the best seats in the house since it did nothing but pour for the rest of the evening. Trace Atkins was good but wouldn't go again, even for free. He's not nearly as entertaining a Mickey Gilley or Johnny Cash of old. Enough on the fair. If time permits, I'll try to get a blog on it, but not till later. Right now, Sunday, except for power, water and slides, we're ready to pull out.



## RV-N-AMERICA 2015



Miriam, our campground neighbor, came over the next day to introduce herself to Carla, I had met her yesterday. They both still work for a living, as they travel. Her husband Charlie was talking to his boss. Two very talented individuals. She's a medical translator and he's an IT with a start-up company and they both work out of their coach, a Winnebago Destination Diesel. They joined us for a small cookout that night, and they survived my cooking. As the evening grew later, he told us that he had graduated from West Point, *Awesome! I've never met a West Point graduate.* He had an exciting career in the Tank Corps and is now in the computer industry. Just like us, they also move from time to time but do not, yet, participate fully in the Thousand Trails member program. We got the HHR back two days later.

On the 25th we returned to Lawrenceburg to complete some paperwork for both the HHR and loaner. To our surprise we heard about the 2015 Middle Tennessee District Fair. It's sponsored by the Rotary Club and were told that once the fair opens Lawrenceburg closes all its shops so everyone can enjoy the fair. It's a must attend so we will take it in next Thursday, Senior's Day, and save \$2 on each ticket and enjoy free food, doesn't get much better than that. Rain is scheduled for the next 2 days.

## PAUL GRENIER

### Our Lady of the Caves CC

26<sup>th</sup>. Saturday and in two days we'll be, once again, heading out to a new campground. Next one will be Natchez Trace in Tennessee. What I haven't spoken about in the last three weeks is Church services in Kentucky.



Above, this is not a Cathedral or anything like that, as you can see. This little church is like stepping back in to the early 1900's. At full capacity possibly one hundred would fill all the pews. The altar alone measures possibly twenty by thirty feet. Another positive, but that might just be my personal experience. It's a small parish, I suppose, although services have almost full attendance, imagine a church being full. When was the last time we saw a full church except for Christmas and Easter? We did attend Our Lady of the Caves CC. The service was a HIGH Mass, which I haven't seen in decades with a strong emphasis on chanting everything, even the gospel. Attending here even once was plenty for me, even though it was considerably closer for us distance wise. Did I mention that most of the recitations of prayers are in Latin? It might be that that church is one of those few churches that follow the Church as it was in the sixties, prior to the second Vatican Council.

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It's old fashioned in the manner that the priest and deacon provide the service for the parishioners. We receive the Holy Eucharist kneeling at the altar rail, haven't done that in forty years. You may receive Holy Communion the old way but with a new twist. The Priest, deacon or Eucharistic Minister will dip the Eucharist in wine prior to placing the Host on your tongue. You also may receive the conventional way. In this church the Priest and Deacon deliver the host. Alter servers also participate, as I used to when I was a server, by placing a golden tray under your chin. The Deacon reads the Gospel, as is done in many churches, but every week the sermon is given only by the Priest. This was an item that always irked me back in Florida. The Deacon there was very knowledgeable, but the least the priest could do for the parishioners, who attend church that day to hear the word of God, is to personally give a sermon or homily by the boss of the Parrish, the priest. I'm not certain about the Sunday services as far as a choir participating. At the 5 pm Saturday evening service there is no choir, at least none that I could discern, since those attending could be heard for a change. We do sing possibly three hymns during the service but that's about it. Participation with the parishioners is much more noticeable. Another point of interest the small church does not need mikes and loudspeakers. There's not even a mike at the pulpit. At all times do you feel as "one" during this service. It's

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too bad that the Church feels the need to build such large expensive churches. From many of the BIG churches we've attended, I would say the return on investment on this homey Parrish facility should be awesome. Wouldn't you think more churches like this one, maybe a little bigger, but many more of them would serve the Church better. Just my opinion, but attending this service, regardless of how far you must travel, will be well worth your time. Once the service was over well left very satisfied.

## OCTOBER 2015

### Maggie Valley, NC

#### **The Cobbler's Cabin**

2<sup>nd</sup>. Well, here we are again, Friday, before our Monday travel day. In general, this has been a rather quiet week for us. Reviewing the travel route for our excursion into Maggie Valley, NC takes time and sometimes a little discussion before deciding on a proper route. The GPS also plays an important part in the decision making. Maggie Valley has a special meaning for us. Back in 2007, remember the year before the Great Recession, we owned a Log Cabin just outside of Maggie Valley, and we called it Cobbler's Cabin.



In the past I've owned several homes, but even though this was not a full-time residence, I still miss it quite a bit. This part of North Carolina does get snow, but much less than Conn. We enjoyed New Year's Eve on the weekend of this snowfall, back on Jan. 1, 2008. It was on this weekend that Abby first experienced snow. The night before, after we all brought in the New Year, it began to snow lightly, then a bit more. Within an hour the decks had three inches of light snow on them and Abby, in

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jammies, robe and slippers, was sliding up and down the 6-foot-wide decks and making tracks everywhere. As we all can see, the snow barely covered the ground but the next morning Abby had to try out sledding down the roadway out front.



The make-shift snow sled functioned as we hoped it would, and, at times, a little faster than we anticipated. On the right side of the roadway was and steep slope, and down the road a bit, was a sharp turn. The box-sled we built, had minimal navigational abilities. But that was in 2015 and in just a few days little Abby will be turning eighteen. But with all the good memories life is not always fair and the Recession brought an end to that part of our lives. We we're one of the few fortunate ones who were able to find a buyer for the cabin. The cabin, for all it was worth, was awesome. Our Broker was fortunate enough to find us a buyer who would be willing to pay cash for the cabin. Remember in those days, vacation home loans were but a fading thought. Only problem, we, like so many others during those days and the years to come, did take a bath when we sold. But the memories and pictures will always be with us, even though another Log will never be. Thanks to Him, He has always watched over us in all our endeavors, and we are still enjoying a life most could only hope to experience.



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When the weather permitted, we took a walk around the grounds and met Hiram and wife Linda. They have a Class-A Georgetown 37, like what we had but a tad big bigger. The weather continues to be inclement. We're excited today, Saturday, to revisit St. Margaret's of Scotland Catholic Church. I'll never forget how awed we were the first time we attended Mass at this church.

### Pride RV Park, Maggie Valley, NC



6<sup>th</sup> For a change we are camping at a private resort, called Pride. As you will see in a couple of pictures, it offers new arrivals with plenty of space to leave their rigs while they go inside to check in. We are getting a special rate of twenty dollars a night as opposed to the forty plus we would normally have to pay as a private cash customer thanks to a plan offered my TT, the Resorts Parks International. Most all their RV sites are pull throughs, even ours, but it was best for us to do a back in on

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account of the tree you see in the picture.



Even though it may not be a Thousand Trail Resort, it does participate in the Equity Lifestyle Properties. Equity buys privately owned campground which it offers to its members for free or if it's an Encore Park, a premium price. With a slew of other parks in the US it will negotiate special rates for Equity members.



The club house is to the left of the arrival parking area. This week was very special for us since we had my brother Dennis join us for almost a week. Pictures of Johnathan Creek River. It will cost you a tad bit more for a site by the river, so don't be a cheapo like me, pay the premium price and enjoy the sounds of the babbling brook. Over the course of our two-week stay, we saw six tent-campers pitched by the stream.

## RV-N-AMERICA 2015



It's not that difficult viewing this lifestyle from a distance, but if you're thinking of jumping into this experience, it's best for you to spend a week or so doing it for real just to assure yourself you're ready to go from a stick and stone home to living under four-hundred square feet, twenty-four-seven. Above is a distance shot of Johnathan Creek, the babbling brook I'd be looking for. Just trying it out for size. The campsite is open year-round. The last three days of our stay here gave us an idea of cooler temperatures we haven't seen in a while. In the morning we woke to the low thirties, I mean low thirties, with highs around sixty-five, not that bad. The coach did extremely well. With only the fireplace, temps inside hovered in the high sixties during the night.



Generally, I don't usually make it to the front of the camera, but I could not resist just sitting back for a few minutes and enjoying the splendor of this location. Once again, a wider view of

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this campground and the stream. We also chose this park because of its proximity to the Blue Ridge Parkway, after all, it is October and its leaf viewing time.



The views were as awesome as expected. We were also fortunate to experience some of the coldest temps in two years. This weekend we woke to 32 degrees but, from the inside of the coach, you'd never know it was that cold. The Fireplace did most of the work and occasionally the furnace kicked in, priceless! So many things happening, yet we're finding plenty of time to just relax and enjoy this beautiful campground. Today we plan to take a short trip along the Blue Ridge Parkway. Foliage is just beginning to turn, and it should be a very pleasant trip. We'll be repeating this trip when my brother Dennis arrives for a five-day stay with us. Next day we had rain and very overcast.

### **Blue Ridge Parkway- foliage time.**

14<sup>th</sup>. Just a short peak at the beautiful fall foliage. I could fill a book on just this side trip alone.



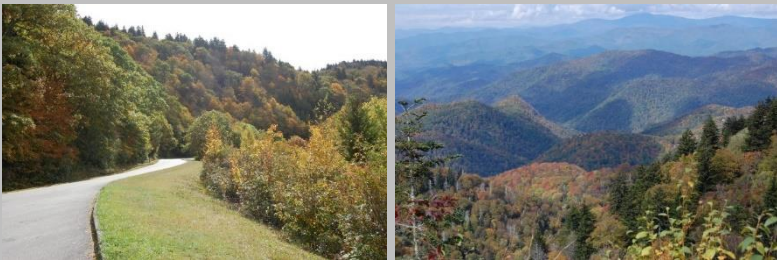
## RV-N-AMERICA 2015



There's not going to be much to say about a trip to view foliage. But here we are on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Below is the Fed Cove Overlook, elevation 4550.

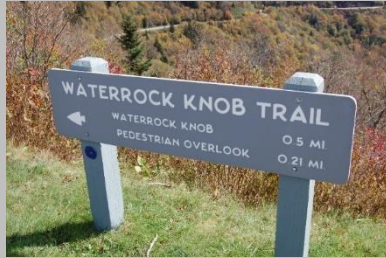


Next is Thunder Struck Ridge, elevation 4780. Below is Hornbuckle Valley, who came up with these names? Elevation 5105



Cranberry Ridge is getting a little hazy at 5475 feet. This is the end of the road as far as climbing higher, I hope, except for a small mountain path to the right.

## PAUL GRENIER



We reached the visitor's station, finally. Yes, we're going to try it. Below, wow this looks easy, not what I was expecting.



Great view, still going up. View of the Visitors Complex.



Thank you, Park Rangers, for thinking of us old folks. A selfie, yes with a camera. Really wish I had at least one longer arm, altitude here 6046 feet asl. Well, we climbed another fifty feet and now were at 6096 feet above sea level. I'm happy! However, as in all our field trips, there's comes a time we must head home.



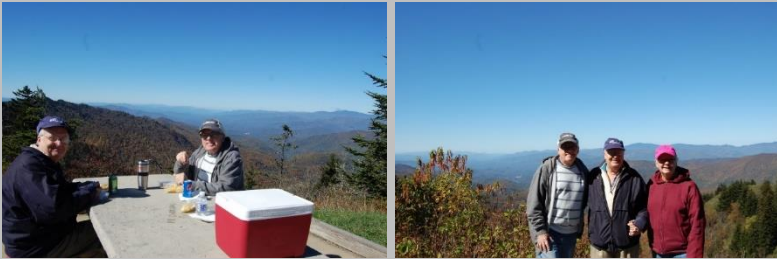
# RV-N-AMERICA 2015

## **Dennis comes in tomorrow**

Dennis comes in tomorrow, Monday the 12<sup>th</sup>. He was with us only a short while ago but this time he'll be experiencing living in a camper 24/7 which, I feel is important, if he's contemplating buying one for himself.

## **Blue Ridge Parkway, with Dennis**

Today, Wednesday the 14<sup>th</sup>, we experience, once again, the Blue Ridge Parkway, this time with Dennis. We gave Dennis a chance to relax and rest yesterday, but today, we do a field trip. Just a couple of pictures of the Blue Ridge Parkway again, this time we have Dennis with us.



Always thought I was a little taller than him. Thank goodness Abby wasn't here, she'd make us both look short. Yes. I think he's going to like this trip. Unlike the time we came before, this time Carla packed a lunch. So awfully nice when someone offers to take a picture of all of us. We do selfies when needed but you rarely see background very much. Dennis really enjoyed the trip immensely.

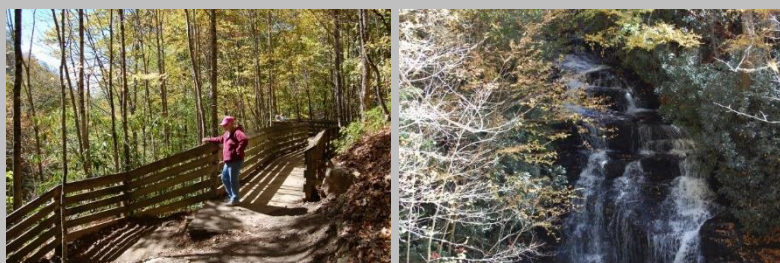
# PAUL GRENIER

## Soco Falls,

14<sup>th</sup>. Before we left, the Blue Ridge Parkway, a visitor had mentioned visiting Soco Falls, on the Soco road which is the way we will be returning to Pride.



We were told getting to the falls would not be easy, they were right. The path begins as a slight slope with a handrail, but that soon changes to a very rough, steep, roots and bolder ridden path, but we, like everyone else, make it. It took a little while for us to find it, but here we are. *Yes, climbing is needed.*



It's worth the climb to see the falls. The trail was treacherous in places. As you can see in the picture below it was well worth the path challenge. This would be the first time we'd ever seen Soco Falls. Now you've seen Soco Falls as well. Not sure if the sight was worth all the effort it took for us to find the falls, but the

## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

hike down to the falls was awesome. Like many of our other trips, *this is one of those you do NOT want to let children take off on their own.*



If one was adventurous enough you could drop down even lower to be a little closer to the falls, but I'm OK with where we are. Now, we must climb out of here. I'm tired and am anxious to get back to the coach. The trail back up, you might think would be less challenging than going down, but no! Rock and roots protrude in every direction.



Those with weak ankles should not try this venue. Dennis passed on the falls. Give him time, he'll get into all this sightseeing stuff.

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*I'm hungry ...Ice cream anyone?* What do you think of the burning bush shrubs on Johnathan Creek Rd in Maggie Valley! Long day, time to get back to Maggie Valley and the coach.

### FMCA Rally-West Virginia



14<sup>th</sup> You're right! It looks about the same as it did before; we had it waxed. However, at least now we are certain was to when it was last treated, and that's important. We arrived home in midafternoon a little exhausted, but very satisfied with the trip. Tomorrow, the 15<sup>th</sup>, we will do a first with Dennis; attend a FMCA Rally. FMCA is Family Motor Coach Association, a must to be a member for all full-timers, part-timers as well. To our surprise we discovered they would also have a big RV Show as well. Dennis was taken by this Forest River Sunseeker 2800QS. His hope is to acquire a Fleetwood Southwind soon,

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but should that fall through, this rig is a beauty. End of the week is coming, once again, but Friday we will visit the Biltmore Estate.

### Biltmore Estate,



16<sup>th</sup> This is never a dull tour. They've instituted a new system for those who chose the self-guided tour, the only way to go. For a mere \$10 each, you are exposed to so much information vital to the mansion. The tour lasted about three hours and we were back at Pride by late afternoon. The House and its gardens encompass about eight-thousand acres of the total land mass. It's next to impossible to capture a full picture of this building. We first visited this venue several years ago with Abby. This time we visit with my brother Dennis. Everything of this building is huge. This porch, overlooking the over 125,000 acres of grounds, is massive by itself.



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Carla and Dennis enjoying the views, like everyone else.



In a few minutes we will go back inside and continue our self-guided tour. In total the house has over two-hundred-fifty rooms. Maids and butlers' quarters were on the top floor, and of course, separate. This beautiful home was completed in 1895. This project was the brainchild of George Washington Vanderbilt. House rules mandated that I could not take any pictures of the inside of the house. Did not learn that until after I snapped a couple and was told no more.





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I had asked if the family visits the Biltmore at all; I was told yes. Many times, they close off certain sections of the house to allow family members their privacy. Nice back yard. This, I believe, was called a courtyard. Food and beverages can be had out here. Getting back to the family members. I was also told that they have a separate residence on the property itself. Understandably that is not available to the public to view. On our drive through the grounds on our way home, I spotted a very large home off up on a hill. It was much too big for a servant's home but not nearly as ostentatious as the Biltmore, but we'll never know.



Just inside from the courtyard we found several rooms for gifts and souvenirs. This area is attached to what was once one of their stables. I believe this was the Carriage House Shop, but not sure. I can't even imagine the kind of money this family enjoys. This entire building, not to mention the thousands of acres of land, is for only one family to enjoy.

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The gardens, even in October, are breathtaking. We will be finishing off this week by taking Dennis to Joey's, in Maggie Valley, for breakfast, Saturday morning, then we'll enjoy a craft show to be topped with Mass, pizza, beer and movie that evening. What we did not expect were temps in the morning at 32 degrees, the freezing point. The coach did well, and Dennis slept well on our new twin-bed-size inflatable mattress. The fireplace did its job most of the evening while the furnace kicked in 3-4 times to keep us at a comfortable 69 degrees all night. We awoke this Sunday morning again with outside temps in the very low 30's again; we can expect the same for Monday. We were all up early this morning as it was time to bring Dennis to the airport for him to go home. The rest of today and Monday will be quiet in preparation of our leaving in a couple of days. Tuesday was a brisk morning but not as cold as the last two days. We get on the road by just about 10am, a little later than usual. We were going to take this three-hundred-mile trek in two legs, but Carla has suggested doing it all in one day. Just two-hundred miles into the trip we lost our directional. If we were only in the HHR this would be inconsequential, but we're a fifty-foot train on

## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

wheels, and with no directional we also lose our side cameras, very important in trying to re-enter the right travel lane, but we drove cautiously and had no incidents. Of course, we got here safely right around 4 pm. A couple of days after arriving our neighbor Bob Howe (wife Donna), came over and checked out our three panels of fuse boxes. Took about thirty minutes and he found it. They are full-timers but their daughter lives here currently. I thought they'd be around a few more days, but next morning we woke to find them gone. Within a month we'll be catching up with them in Florida.

# PAUL GRENIER

## The Oaks, Point South



This was supposed to be a two-day three-hundred-mile trip to Yemassee, SC. I'm not happy with going more than two-hundred miles in a single leg, but it's always an option that we can always get off the road should I get tired. Above is the Club House. To the right is the registration office. We gave them a call, early on the 20<sup>th</sup>, to see if they could squeeze us in if we came in one day early; they were good with that. Next is the inside of the club house. The campground has very good Wi-Fi but only in the Club House. With so many privately-owned campgrounds offering good Wi-Fi in your coach it's a little disappointing. Thousand Trails, at least here, thinks the coach owners use their own hotspots. It's the lifestyle we've chosen, and we must accept what is offered, especially for the price we pay.

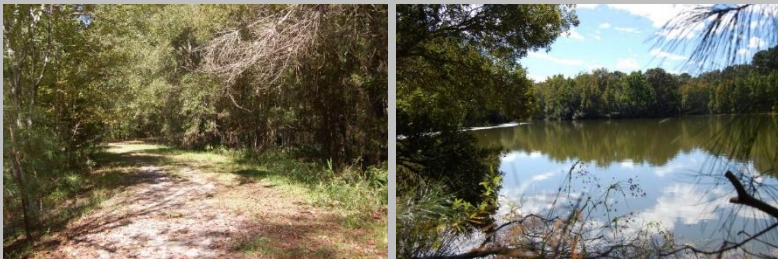


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Free pool is available, which is very nice, and we'll take advantage of it. Once again, the pool table looks well-worn; *awesome!* Well used means people are using it, so much better than those pool tables at some TT campgrounds that look brand new, and yet are several years old, but they are pay to play.



Today were taking a very nice walk around the park. The park navigates around a stream and river. I hope you enjoy the pictures to come. This is a very nice walk. The trail was easily navigable. Families would truly enjoy a one or two-week stay at this park.



The campground does warn everyone that gators are part of the makeup of the campground. This body of water, I believe, is not flowing. A little further in our walk we saw water that was laden with a blanket of algae. This is an enclosed picnic area.



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We've just arrived but I'm sure at some time we might spend some time in the enclosure. One of our neighbors here are a small concentration of mosquitoes. However, we've finally come to the end of the trail. This is an Equity Life Style Property, and is part of our Thousand Trails package.



Not all TT enrollees get to enjoy all TT campgrounds at no charge. Some Encore parks, like this one, thank goodness, is a freebee. The roadway into the campground, is mighty big enough for even the biggest rig. Even a newbie will have no problem navigating this park.



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At the end of every day, we can always count on Scoots to be standing watch over the comings and goings of people and rigs alike. *What a nice stay we've had. Scoots says good-bye as well.*

### **Mass at St. Anthony's**



25<sup>th</sup> This week we'll attend Mass at St. Anthony's in Ridgeland, SC. This was a very nice little church.

### **Savannah, GA**

25<sup>th</sup> We're going to take ourselves out to a Drive-In Movie, just outside of town to see *The Martian*. Tomorrow, Monday, is a field trip day to Savannah, Georgia. We hope to find and visit the St. John the Baptist Cathedral, more on this later. All in all, Sunday was uneventful as we prepared to take in our second Drive-in movie of 2015. We arrived at the drive-in around 7:30 and it was scheduled to start in fifteen minutes. Unlike the last time when we used the car radio and ran the battery dead, this time we're using a portable and we had no problems with the car. The theater presented an excellent promo for Drive-in theaters and how important public participation was in order to keep them in the black. According to the promo, this theater

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last year had a \$140,000 expense to upgrade its projectors to high-definition units. The movie we came to see was *The Martian*, and it did not disappoint. The movie could not have been better if we had seen it in an indoor theater, but then we would not have experienced the thrill of an outdoor presentation, *Priceless!* For the next three days we would be enjoying the inside of the coach as the area battles storms from the Atlantic as well as storms up from Texas at the same time.

### John the Baptist Cathedral



26<sup>th</sup> Our principal purpose to visit Savannah was this Cathedral. In the past I have mentioned that this lifestyle is His gift to us. The very least we can do to give thanks to Him and devote a small amount of time and space on the many beautiful churches and cathedrals around the country.



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The choir loft above the main floor. How about that awesome window dead center in the loft? Thank you for indulging me. Now for a small tour of this part of Savannah, GA. This beautiful water fountain is diagonally across the street from St. John's. Just a couple of pictures of how serene this park truly is.



I could hang out here the rest of the day. This is the former Chandler Hospital. This was Georgia's "first" hospital. It was founded in 1803 as the Seaman's hospital and Poor House. In 1931 this building was acquired by the local Methodist Church. The neighborhood here is turn-of-the-century. The properties are so well maintained they look brand new.



## PAUL GRENIER

Must take just one more look at this beautiful park. My last employer and his wife were both from Georgia, and now I know why they love this area so much.

Like it or not, it's the end of month and we finally see the sun, and it is a beautiful sunny day but the ground is drenched with water. Thursday and Friday were mundane, but Saturday we travelled to St. Helena's Island for church services. Beautiful, inexpensively built church. Excellent use of money. It took us forty minutes to go there but was well worth the time. We attended Holy Cross Church. , as well. The Saturday night movie was "Olympus Has Fallen." We had seen it years ago and was still an excellent movie.



## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

### NOVEMBER 2015

I do not know how we got to November this soon. Seems like just yesterday we were heading up to Iowa; guess we're having fun. We will be back in Florida by Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> Most of our journeys from one campground to another are uneventful, this time we would have a little excitement.

4<sup>th</sup> . We were about one-hour from our destination point, a Cracker Barrel in Wildwood, FL when a car passed us up tooting his horn and waving his hand, *so we waved back*; until the second car passed us by doing somewhat the same. US 10 going West is a very busy highway, and I really did not want to pull over in the break-down lane but decided to in order to check the coach and HHR out for anything unusual. It did not take long to discover that the HHR had experienced a blow-out in the front left side and all that remained of the tire were some rubber strips. Thank goodness for insurance. Placed a call to Good Sam's and they had a truck out to us in less than twenty minutes. There was a Walmart about sixteen miles down the road so that would be our destination for today for repairs. Decided to have two *new tires* put on the front of the HHR which left us with one good tire with no rim. In preparation for Alaska, we had planned to take along a grown-up spare tire for the dinghy, so not all was wasted. Amazingly we felt no pulling or vibration while we were driving the coach with a dinghy with only three good tires. Thank Him for keeping us safe through this and the public for bringing this situation to our attention. Friday, we rested from all this excitement and woke up Saturday to a scheduled yard-sale. With only a dozen items on our table

## PAUL GRENIER

of items we did not need, it was a quick setup. It wasn't a complete loss; we sold a DVD for fifty cents. Still Saturday and we've just completed a walk around our area, Section D. Carla just discovered that Orlando TT has 867 sites, with something here, to make everyone's stay here pleasant. As in the past with TT Campgrounds you have the option to pick your own site, so we're in 140D.



Just down the street from us is a collection of camp model homes. These are here to rent. Here and there you will find some for sale. Have no idea how much they would run for. This is a large lake. Like so many Equity Lifestyle Properties water is very important. Kayaks, canoes and row boats are available to all of us staying here.



The idea that you need a hundred-thousand-dollar coach in or-

## RV-N-AMERICA 2015

der to enjoy the amenities of these campgrounds and this lifestyle, is a fallacy. The Dolphin coach above, is probably 25-30 years old. The AC is up and running and it has all you need to vacation for a weekend or all summer long. Something like this might go for around twenty thousand with all systems working. We spent years vacationing on Seabird Island, FL mostly on weekends in a fifty-year-old Mobile Home Trailer; *and each weekend was heavenly.*

18<sup>th</sup> - In a few days we'll be packing it in, just as the Russell's had to leave yesterday, on their way to Miami. But it's also been a week of meeting more exciting individuals. Today we met, first time ever, a published author, W. R. Hill and wife Pat. Turns out he's a mystery writer and, of course, that's what Carla enjoys reading.



He's also done e-book publications. I have never promoted anything or anyone in any of my blogs, but this book deserves extra attention. As everyone knows, I am not a fast typist, and even slower reader, reading is not my best ability, but last week I was introduced to, not only this book, but the author as well. This is an Amazon Kindle book which means it's very inexpensive. I believe I paid \$3.99 for it to be downloaded to my Kindle. You can download it into your Kindle account or your tablet or PC.

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It was available in paperback so I also purchased the paper version from Amazon. It was a little more money, but sometimes I enjoy just holding a book instead of a reader. The paper version was under \$10.00, \$8.99 I think, *but don't hold me to it*. Once again, this book does not disappoint. A mystery novel that is in third gear before the end of the first chapter. If you have a chance let me know what you think of it. He was nice enough to review and critique something I've been working on. Dennis. my brother on the other hand, had an epiphany. He woke up this morning with every intention to sort out and simplify his life...Awesome! He's also looking into probably purchasing an RV in hopes of broadening his life experiences...*Priceless!*

On Sunday at 2 pm we're having someone come into price up installing new vinyl flooring. If it's not that expensive this would be the time to have it done before the new dinette gets installed. As you can see in the last couple of pictures, we have a mini shag which is what most coaches have, even many of the latest models. Replacing that with a wood vinyl looking floor will make the coach look much bigger and easier to keep clean. We'll see what happens. Monday we will be leaving Orlando TT for Three Flags TT Resort in Wildwood, FL, up by The Villages.

### Thanksgiving

**Three Flags TT Resort in Wildwood, FL**

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17<sup>th</sup> The next day we travel south, by car, to meet Dennis in Lakeland, FL as he looks over an RV, he's interested in. After that, it's that time of the year, once again. Wednesday we'll be spending Thanksgiving with Mary Ann, Carla's sister.



Dennis, of course, will be with us and will leave for home after dinner on Thursday. The Sunday after Thanksgiving we spend in Orlando with Abby and together, we'll take in, Handel's Messiah. I can only hope that everyone had as nice a Thanksgiving as we experienced. Mary Ann, Carla's sister, had us and my brother Dennis over to her home in Port Orange, FL for Turkey Day. Sunday after Thanksgiving is our annual first day of the Christmas Season.

On this day we also enjoy a production of Handel's Messiah, at the Carr Theater in Orlando, FL. This is an event we've enjoyed for the last sixteen years, this time with Abby and Michael.



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After the production was over, as always, it was out to eat, this time at Golden Coral. In the picture above you'll find the four of us. The handsome dude sitting at the edge of the table, no not me, the young guy, is Michael, Abby's beau. Abby, of course is beside him. Michael has a roadmap laid out for the years to come. Valencia for two years studying business then UCF to pursue a career as a Physician Assistant. Abby remains focused on Art at UCF. We have two more weeks remaining here at Three Flags RV Park in Wildwood, FL then it's back to Orlando, but the time remaining will be very busy for sure as you will read about.

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### DECEMBER 2015

We've waited for three months for this day. Today, the 7<sup>th</sup>. Shortly Eric and his crew from Re-carpet will be tearing up the tile and carpet we have and then will give our coach a rebirth with new carpet and vinyl wood flooring. It should be completed on Wed.



Above left is what we used to have, and to the right is the finished product, awesome! Just intime for us to attend mass at St Timothy's in Lady Lake, FL to celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.



There is no way to describe this church and the one below except extraordinary. In our travels this year we've attended Mass in churches with a max capacity of only one hundred to something like these churches...*Awesome!* Later it's off to attend St.

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Vincent de Paul. Nothing planned for Sunday. Left Three Flags early this Monday, 14<sup>th</sup>, morning for an appointment at Alliance RV for annual maintenance jobs. We arrived at 8am as scheduled and it's now 2:15pm and we're still waiting for our new 3pm appt. It's not that much of a hardship, the accommodations are comfortable, and the popcorn is fresh. We will be paying our bill here at Alliance then traveling back to Orlando, Thousand Trails, for two weeks and leaving New Year's Eve Day, celebrating New Years at Cracker Barrel in Titusville, wow! We left Alliance RV about 9:30 am and arrived back at Orlando TT about 10:30, in Clermont. We're back again in section D #73, only to find out there is no option for WI-FI in this area. Everything is a compromise. In the rest of the park, you will bake in the sun, but you could have WI-FI! So, I intend to spend time in the clubhouse

### Christmas with Dennis

25<sup>th</sup> We enjoyed Christmas with Dennis, and in a few days another Christmas on New Year's with Abby and family and lastly with Mary Ann in mid-January.



Yup, this is what a coach looks like at wrapping time. This was

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really my early Christmas present, the darker chair to the right.



It's a rocker, which will stop me from trying to make the swivel, non-rocking chairs, into a rocker. Awesomely comfortable! Back in the old day, those days of brick-and-mortar homes and lots of stuff, Christmas' used to be a tad bigger. Now we enjoy a much less expensive Christmas which will include very little stuff to box up. People ask us, do you have a Christmas tree, of course! Like everything in our lives, right now, it's in a more storable size, unlike the ten footers we'd had in the past.



Muffy and Scruffy, our Christmas stocking critters. They've been with us for almost twenty-five years and look no worse for wear and tear. Dennis, this year, would join us at Orlando TT Campground for Christmas. It's always been tradition for Carla and I to voyage to Boca and celebrate the Holliday with mom and Dennis, but this year mom and dad were with us in spirit.

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I never thought family pets would make out at Christmas, sure enough one of Scooty's best presents was Wobbly, and we recommend it for anyone with a cat. No, the Snickers bar is not all I got for presents, but it's what I really wanted. But at over 3 ounces, 220 calories and 24 carbohydrates, I'm keeping it in the freezer till I lose five pounds before I devour this awesome snack. It doesn't take much to make Dennis happy. As you can tell we give mostly joke gifts, some have some relevance, but not many. In his hands he's holding a box of Archway Oatmeal Cookies with raisins of course. It's not that I mind his eating up my stash of Archways, just thought I'd give him some for the road back home later today.

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Yes, this is Wobbly and Scooty at play. Wobbly can hold a small supply of cat-treats in his belly, and it's refillable. Wobbly comes with a hole on his backend, to enable the treats to fall to the floor for Scoots to eat. It did not take very long for Scoots to figure out this routine. This works out great at night, most nights.



Another dumb gift. We're hoping Dennis will adapt this lifestyle, if not full-time, maybe part-time. I'm certain once he gets his feet wet in the RV lifestyle, he'll go full-time; we're just trying to give him options once he gets into retirement. Oh, the gift he received was an Alliance catalog. What we really wanted to get him was an Exit Book a must for all serious RVers, but we could not find one in time. Yes, books here abound everywhere, but are important to our lifestyle. Carla is indispensable as far as her grasp of our navigation needs.



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It's been an exhausting morning, opening gifts, so it's time to enjoy a good steak dinner.

**HOPE TO SEE YOU**

**IN 2016!**

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## THE AUTHOR



I, like many my age, graduated high school and soon after graduated college and got married. Within a couple of years, I was blessed to have a beautiful family, son, and daughter. However, partially my fault, I failed parenting and should have tended more closely to the daily needs of my family more attentively. I pray regularly to Him and hope my kids, might forgive my fatherly failures someday.

I trudged along in my Pharmacy profession for 25-years and, in the eighties, even had my own pharmacy. My soul however, way down deep, had a yearning to spend less time indoors and more time outdoors. By the time I turned fifty I knew a change was needed, especially after enduring one of Connecticut's worst winters on record.

So, at age 50, Carla, my wife, and I went in search of a warmer climate and hoping to find a business opportunity before we ran out of money, and starved to death. As fate would have it He guided us faithfully and we eventually purchased our first Child Care Center in center in Greenacres, FL then a second in Titusville, FL. I also began a second career as a Commercial Realtor, brokering what else but, child care centers, of course. We did okay, but as my Broker would attest to, I did not set the world on fire, but with excellent commissions we kept our heads above water.

Within a few years the novelty of getting up early, wiping noses and lacing shoes was wearing thin and Carla was opting for retirement. I and Real Estate were getting along well until 2008, you remember; the Great Recession. We were heavily invested, at that time,

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in, what else of course, real estate, especially one very expensive log cabin in Maggie Valley, NC.

With many prayers to Him and St. Jude, they got us through that period in our lives decently. But even I, who could not fathom the possibility of retirement, was getting a little jealous of all the free time Carla was enjoying. This next phase of our lives would have to be our last and best, because of our age. We intended to free ourselves of the shackles of home ownership and job responsibilities by enjoying, at least, for a few years, the RV lifestyle. After almost ten-years of traveling I now, find myself, feverishly typing, and fully retired, writing about our travels as if James Patterson probably started out this way as well, many years ago.

Moral here is that HE hears all our prayers.

Paul

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### **OTHER PUBLICATIONS:**

Miracles of St Jude,  
RV-n America 2014,  
RV-n America 2015  
RV-n America 2016 / 2017  
RV-n America 2018  
RV-n America 2019  
RV-n America 2020 / 2021

All publications are Amazon eBooks and reasonably priced.

**All royalties go to benefit St. Jude Hospital**

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