

YOU ARE CONNECTED — TRAVEL REPORT 2 — March 15, 2018

It's been six days. An escape, right? Unplug from life. Sit in the sun. Nap. Soak in hot pools. No social activities. No cooking or cleaning. Disconnected. Wonderful.

Habit turns on the lap-top. I check for Wi fi. The first words I see are "***You are connected.***"

For instance, every day of this trip we have been tracking the last hours of a long-time beach neighbor. The expected news comes and we find ourselves using our "beach list" to share the word with other neighbors. Connected from 1,000 miles away.

My ear-plug dawn radio *connects* me. I knew that the President was visiting his dream wall on the Mexican border near San Diego and that streets were blocked in Bel Air where he was fund-raising for his 2020 campaign. I was interested because my cousin and wife live in Bel Air.

I was *connected* to news that high school students left class rooms to protest gun violence and challenge the NRA all across America. While elected officials are in virtual hostage.

Reports and pictures *connect* us with several great-grandchildren's birthdays. We do not wish to be disconnected from such special moments, for sure.

Jean receives detailed instructions and schedules about her pending cataract surgeries spanning the next two months. Her cell phone alarm alerts her to take pre-op meds on schedule. "You are *connected.*"

Stephen Hawking died this week. The only part of his body he could control was his brain. He *connected* galaxies — the universe. He was able to *connect* with other people in spite of his inability to speak or write. We saw and heard him once by some digital system. I read his "Brief History of Time." A genius with humor. *Connecting* scientifically-challenged people like me with the cosmos.

I *connected* with two of my e-mail group lists. Travel Report #1 I called it. I should have realized that people would be more interested in what kind of car I just bought than where we were going and why. Several simply asked about the car.

There is a lot more going on in our lives than another car. In truth there would not be any of our life as it is without the fact that 70 years ago I bought my first car. Paid \$100 from cashed in War Bonds (In WWII we all helped finance the war). It was a '36 Graham. It turned out to be important because Jean's friends didn't know any boys who owned cars. Short story. An-unknown-to-me-girl invited me to a dance. I was needed because I had a car for double dating. Several years later plus 66 years married to Jean I think that car was a bargain. Talk about *connecting!*

Most of my cars have been used with over 100,000 miles. I've kept many past 200,000 miles. The record was 340,000 miles. In recent years I bought 3-year-old cars with 30 or 40,000 miles. I could get nice BMW's used for the price of other brands of new cars. A broker found cars priced below wholesale. My most recent car was 11 years old and has gone about 150,000 miles. We still have it. We didn't need a new car.

But it lacks 2018 safety features. People my age probably shouldn't be allowed on the highway. I don't want to cause harm to anyone or ourselves if I can help it. If I wait three more years for the 2018 models to come on the used car market I may not be driving anyway. If I can extend my driving years safely I think the cost is worth it.

I researched features of the many excellent AWD 2018 SUV's. All gave me sticker shock. One kept coming to the top of the list. Consumer Reports listed it as #1 in that category. So we dipped into our descendant's inheritance and bought a 2018 BMW X3, our first new car in many years.

This all happened about the time the President put sanctions on foreign steel and aluminum. I looked up the specs on my car. The engine was built in Austria, the transmission was built in Germany. 25 % was built in U.S./Canada and 35% built in Germany. There is no accounting for the other 40%. It was, built in Spartansburg, South Carolina. That's in the USA! I checked. But it's called a German Car! I'm hurrying to get it documented. It's not safe to be undocumented in America these days.

Yes, "You are *connected.*" To everyone in the world. My computer tells me so. And to the universe. Stephen Hawking tells me so. And to God. The Bible tells me so. Amen.

— Art Morgan, March 15, 2018 Desert Hot Springs, CA