

mm Blue Sheet on Wheels — Fall Travel Report #2

FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER AS WE WOULD BE FORGIVEN...

I screwed up on the last email sending of the first travel report. Some of you on my list had no problem. Some thought the known world had come to an end. It all worked out, I think.

We last reported as we were arriving in Spokane to visit friends Clara Fern and Teddy Turner. They have recently transitioned from their long time comfortable home in Spokane to a Retirement Community. They have been moved in for about four months. We wondered. Up the elevator seven floors and down a long hall we rang the Turner bell. Not to worry. These folks have the best view in Spokane and are in a place better suited for their stage in life. Those who have made such a decision understand the trauma and work involved. It's hard to move on. It's nice when you can move up. Teddy led me to the special care unit where we ran into a Blue Sheet fan, Dr Jonathon Holloway, one of a group of Episcopalians Teddy has added to our list. He is recovering from a stroke and sharp enough to comment on Moment Ministries.

They hoped to entertain us with dinner in their dining hall, but the Board of Trustees took the place over. We had a better meal in their apartment. Turkey sandwiches, watching the sun go down on the city. Their daughter, Stephanie with husband Wong were visiting from the mid-west, spent an hour with us. Our goodnight was a goodbye for this visit as we returned to our motel.

Off at early dawn continuing eastward. We try to wait for daylight, but beat the sun a bit. Traffic thins as you drive eastward. An hour out we stopped for light breakfast as we often do. It's more pleasant driving east than it is driving north or south. The freeways are open. We like the open skies and longer views.

We wonder about what we are doing. We are not on this journey for the scenery or personal recreation. The folks in Spokane were on our agenda. Our next stop is to visit a friend in Pocatello as we have done on a yearly basis for a long time. Lots of miles for an hour of visiting. Does it matter?

A Chinese fortune cookie answer stabbed at answering that "matter" question:

"Your experiences this week will all make good sense within the year."

Maybe, maybe not. My "moment" idea is that more of what we do and say matters than we know. And we may never know what we do that "matters." I have said that it is easily possible that the "wonders" reported by people Jesus met were not known to him. I've urged people to take their most unremarkable interactions as important. Sometimes they are. Presence matters.

Across the Idaho panhandle into Montana. Big Sky Country, it's called...because it is. We think of friends Ron Greene and Ruth Fletcher in Great Falls, and Walt and Barbara Gulick in Billings. We're not going that far. We turn south at Butte where we spend a night.

We try not to drive too far into the day. We're not up to the marathon trips of past years. In fact we call our trips "nap-alongs". We've learned to pull off at rest stops, put the seats back, and cat-nap. Five minutes, maybe. We can go long distances more comfortably when awake. If you've ever totaled a car from falling asleep at the wheel you understand.

Butte to Pocatello, Idaho is pretty much straight, smooth, flat driving. It's a major basin dividing high mountain ridges. Cattle country and open land, often divided by rivers that seem begging for a fisherman's fly. It takes us five hours and four cat-naps. Jean calls ahead for a motel. She's good at getting a good rate. Our Garmin GPS guides us off the freeway onto unfamiliar streets right to the motel entrance. We have arrived. We are tired. I ask Jean what she expects at our age. We laugh and lug our luggage to our room. We need to rest for tomorrow.

We try to arrive in time to catch a pre-supper nap, catch up on email, talk over the day. We do a lot of that. Mostly it's a time to let our bodies catch up with the rest of us. We're not big TV people, but this is the season for baseball play-offs. The TV is watched a bit, but not much.

A restaurant is downstairs. We share a sandwich and salad. Half of each, divided. And a half glass of wine, divided. Jean does the ordering because, frankly, she hears better. I tell the server that she's done a good job for me for 61 years so I think she should keep doing it. Eating on the road is not easy. They want to over-feed you. They tempt us with things that are not up to our nutritional expectations. The server has trouble absorbing 61 years. She's been married 6 years and thinks that pretty long. I say to her, watch your diet. She laughs, we are served, and we are satisfied.

Early to bed, Mountain Time, because our 6 a.m. wake-up is 5:00 a.m. to our coastal bodies. We're scheduled for an 8:30 check-in at the Idaho Women's Correction Center. We can't be late. More next time.

— Art Morgan