

News from Nan

TRAVEL

COLORADO TO CALIFORNIA VIA CANADA 2009

JULY 31, 2009 | ANNA



Lake Louise

In June 2009 Dick and I left Lyons CO, where we had lived for two years, and moved back to the San Francisco Bay Area. This post chronicles our trek from Lyons to visit family in Rogers MN (in the Minneapolis area), from Rogers north to Winnipeg and then across Canada to the Rockies, south to the United States again and through Yellowstone and the Tetons, and finally west to our new/old home.

Lyons to Rogers, June 17-19

The movers arrived on June 17 at 8:15. By 2:00 the truck was gone, and we (driving our Roadtrek RV, Maggie II, and our Honda CRV, Bluebird, were on our way to California — the loong way via Minnesota, Winnipeg, the Canadian Rockies, Glacier National Park, Yellowstone, and the Tetons. The first night we made it only as far as Ogallala NE — a trip of only 215 miles. We “camped” (in an RV park) near Highway 80 — otherwise known this year as “tornado alley.” Sure enough, we woke up at about midnight to storm warnings just to the north of us. Fortunately for us we got only rain, but also scary lightning flashing every couple of seconds for about an hour.



Our Colorado garden

We tried to keep the loads light in our vehicles, but we HAD to bring along four of our beloved house plants that had been with us for years, and which had been purchased in California. We were a little worried: Would the Canadian border authorities take them away? Could we get them back into the U.S.? What would happen when we reached the California border? (California is one of the few states with a border patrol devoted almost exclusively to taking away fruit and plants!)

The first day or two we spent being excited to be on the road and on our way back to California and also thinking about the things we'd miss about Colorado, our community, our little town, and our home. That included our friends and neighbors, community social and musical events, and the fantastic opportunities for outdoor activities.

We'll also miss the backyard garden we designed ourselves and put in only last fall. It survived the winter in great shape and was filling in beautifully already this spring. At the time we left, some of the plants had bloomed already, but others were just in bud.



Our Colorado garden

One of the last photos I took in Lyons was of this sign at the local nursery. What IS a “four one lane bridge,” anyway?!



Sign in Lyons CO

We decided to take the route from Lyons to Minneapolis we think is shortest and most reliable: Highway 76 through Fort Morgan to Interstate 80, east to Omaha, and north on Interstate 35. For the most part that's what we did, but we took a little detour through Nebraska City NE, which we found to be a delightful town with lots of parks and historic sites, and LeMars IA, “ice cream capital of the U.S.”



Anna in LeMars IA

When we arrived in the Minneapolis area, we parked our RV in a campground along the Mississippi in Monticello, just northwest of Rogers.



Mississippi River near Monticello MN



Our "trek" vehicles: Maggie II and Bluebird

It's always a fun and exciting time at the Blomquist house, what with two busy parents, two lively little kids, and three pets (a dog and two cats). We jogged with Jill several times, visited the zoo, saw Mike's latest home remodeling project, and made many trips to the local and a couple of regional parks. We also enjoyed a visit and delicious dinner at the senior Blomquists' where we met Jerri's brother and his wife for the first time. Another favorite activity was the Rockin' Rogers parade, an annual town event.

Plant news: Our house plants spent most of the time in the Blomquists' basement; I took them out every 4-5 days for a drink and some sun.



Gillian and Archer



Helena



Mike and Dick

Canada, June 30 – July 13

We arrived in Winnipeg on June 30 just ahead of Canada Day (July 1). (We picked up a little Canadian flag at the border as a souvenir). We hiked at Birds Hill (a spectacular park just outside of Winnipeg) and then drove up to Gimli on Lake Winnipeg. Unfortunately the weekend before had been extremely rainy and the “national bird of Manitoba,” the mosquito, was everywhere! We had dinner at the Seagulls restaurant in Gimli where we realized for the first time ever that walleye and pickerel are the same fish. (In Michigan we always called it pickerel and we never connected it with walleye, our favorite fish when we visit Minnesota.) We also visited the University of Manitoba and the Forks gathering place and shopping center, where the Red and the Assiniboine rivers meet.



Winnipeg

On July 3 we started west across the Canadian prairies. In Regina we toured the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Heritage Center and then stayed overnight in Moose Jaw. Before we left there the next day we toured the famous Moose Jaw tunnels, originally built by the Chinese transcontinental railroad workers and used during U.S. Prohibition by Al Capone and other gangsters hiding liquor before moving it to cities like Minneapolis and Chicago.



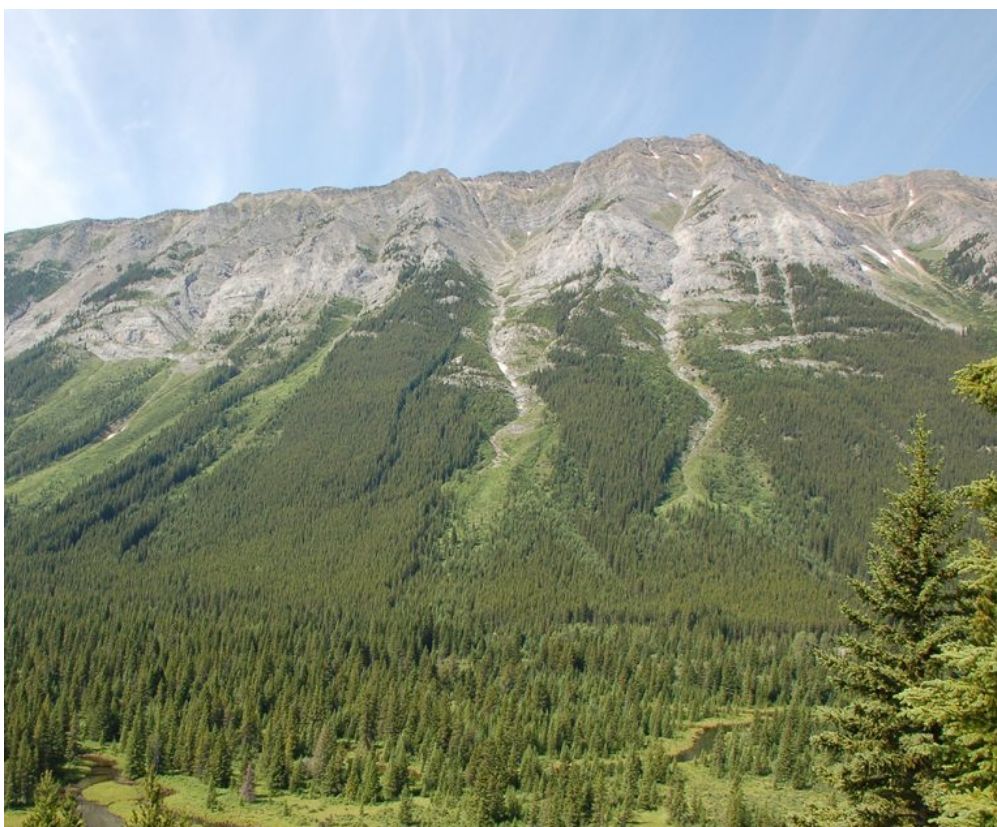
Anna at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Heritage Center

As we were leaving Winnipeg I came down with some sort of respiratory flu and was miserable until we had been in the Canadian Rockies for several days.

The scenery in the Rockies was spectacular, and we were glad we were in Canmore, one of the less-well-known mountain destinations, instead of the overcrowded and expensive Lake Louise or Banff. We made use of the wifi and workspace in the Canmore public library to put together a workshop we had promised to give early August. Canmore was a friendly place with some nice restaurants and lots of places to walk and jog. We also hiked in places like Kananaskis, popular with the Canadians, especially the locals from Calgary.



Miners' Day parade in Canmore



Kananaskis

On July 13 we started south toward the U.S. border, just north of which we ran into a horrendous thunderstorm. The sky was pea green, and visibility was practically zero! We were glad to reach the border, but were shocked when one of the officials told me I couldn't bring my plants into the U.S. I think he could see by the look on my face that I was VERY DISAPPOINTED, so he said he'd check with his boss,

who said OK. I was severely warned, though, that I should NEVER BRING HOUSEPLANTS INTO THE U.S. AGAIN! Don't worry . . .

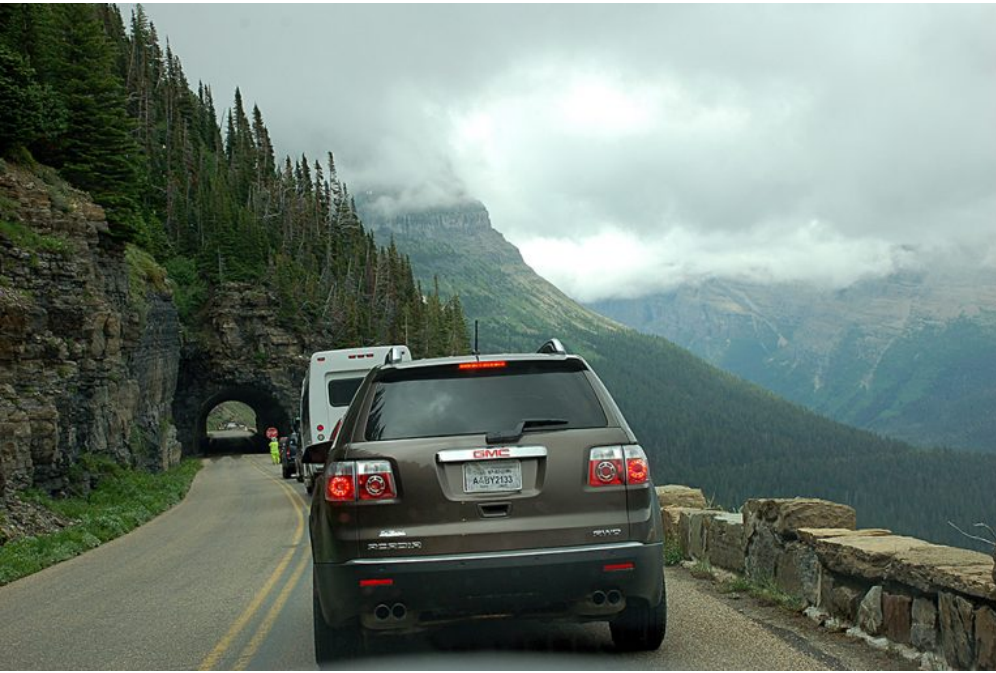


One of our "pet" houseplants in Nebraska City NE

Montana, July 13-22

Johnson's (!) RV Park in St. Mary was our first stop in Montana. St. Mary is on the west side of Glacier National Park, and it is situated in the middle of beautiful scenery, including several lakes. The weather was quite cool and windy. We had dinner at Johnson's Cafe, and we ate the special, meatloaf, family style.

The next day we drove to the visitor center at the top of Glacier National Park, but the dense fog, wind, and cold prevented us from dropping down into the west side of the park. With improved weather in the afternoon, we hiked at Lake Okotomi and missed a bear by only five minutes.



Glacier National Park



Glacier National Park



Glacier National Park

We needed to put in more time on our workshop, so on the 16th we headed for Missoula, where we worked for five days. Although the weather was hot and smoggy, we also enjoyed some sightseeing in the Missoula area: Missoula Carrousel, University of Montana, and Fort Missoula. We ate twice in a grocery with a soup and salad bar (our favorite dinner!) and a Famous Dave's, which always reminds us of good times in Minnesota. In the KOA RV park we met a couple from the UK who had bought a Roadtrek a couple of years ago and now drove it around the U.S. for just short of 3 months (the limit for a visitor visa), parked and stored it, flew back home for a couple of weeks, and then started again where they had left off in their U.S. odyssey. They had already seen much more of the country than most Americans.

Yellowstone, the Tetons, and home, July 22-30

The Livengoods had been spending part of Ellen and Rick's sabbatical touring the U.S. and Canada in a borrowed RV, and we, who had been more-or-less doing the same thing, met up at a campground in Yellowstone on June 22. They had just been in the Badlands and Black Hills of South Dakota, and we had been in Missoula, Montana. Looking around Yellowstone and the Tetons with family was a great way to end our six-week trip!



There was a lot to see and do: We boated on Yellowstone and Jenny lakes, toured historic buildings, hiked, and of course played an action-packed game of Scrabble, which has become a family tradition (and not for the Faint-of-Heart!). We drove with them as far as Winnemucca, NV, and then we headed back to unpack our household goods, while the Livengoods headed to Lake Tahoe, where they spent another couple of days boating and hiking.



Jenny Lake

◀ 2009 ◀ ALBERTA ◀ BLOMQUIST ◀ CALIFORNIA ◀ CANADA ◀ CANADIAN ROCKIES ◀ CANMORE ◀ COLORADO
 ◀ GLACIER NATIONAL PARK ◀ GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK ◀ HIKING ◀ JOHNSON ◀ KANANASKIS ◀ LAKE LOUISE
 ◀ LIVENGOOD ◀ LYONS ◀ MANITOBA ◀ MINNESOTA ◀ MISSOULA ◀ MONTANA ◀ MOOSE JAW ◀ REGINA

◀ ROGERS ◀ SAN JOSE ◀ SASKATCHEWAN ◀ VAN RAAPHORST ◀ WEATHER ◀ WINNIPEG ◀ WYOMING
◀ YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK