

OREGON

May 7: Ring...ring...ring, "hellow. Northwest Airlines, Sue."

"Hello, I'm wondering what kind of aircraft will fly from Escanaba to Minneapolis/St. Paul on May 11 at 5:40 PM, flight 2506."

"Uh...let's see, oh, a smaller prop plane, then you'll be going to Portland on a 757."

"Thanks, bye." A 757, wow - that's huge.

Later...ring...ring...ring, "hellow, Northwest Airlines, Eric."

"Yes, I'd like to know how big a 757 is."

"Okay a 757 seats 310 people, 176 in Section 1 and 140 in Section 2.

"Thanks, bye."

310 people, wow - a lot of people.

These calls I made to find out what kind of planes we'll be flying on and how big they are.

May 11: Today I flew from Escanaba to Portland. I saw the Rocky Mountains and many other things from the air. I am on the plane, about 40 minutes from Portland. I'm going to arrive at 11:52 (approx.) I'll see my uncle Jeff tonight at the airport. I had a medium size dinner that was O.K. The in flight movie was Back to the Future Part II. On our first plane we flew through a cloud, and I couldn't see the whole wing.

May 12: Today we saw Mt. St. Helens, sort of. I saw the visitor center. It was rained and cloudy most of the day. I also saw an A-frame plastered with mud.

The mud was called lahar, which forms when hot volcanic materials melt glaciers and the water picked up dirt and washed thru the valleys. I also saw Ape Cave, a lavatube from Mt. St. Helens. I found the very, very end of the cave. It formed when hot lava burned out then only partially, cooled and the hot lava flowed out, leaving an opening.

I saw a few clear cut sites. I looked awful. They left a telephone wire like log hauler. There were piles of ash all over the place.

There is a nuclear plant near Kelso, Wash.

May 13: Today I went to Fort Clatsop, which is where Lewis and Clark spent the winter of 1804-1805.

Some details about it are: it had seven rooms, 4 on 1 block and 3 on another. Their were rooms where Sacagawea (known as Sacajawea), her little baby, and her husband slept. I liked all the things they (the captains) had. I saw what the canoes were like, and I saw how they dried meat.

The original fort rotted, and then someone built a house there, and then they rebuilt the fort.

Their clothes you could try on. Most of them had army uniforms. They usually wore skins, though. I tried on a downsized army uniform. It looked neat, but was uncomfortable. I tried on a more comfortable skin.

I saw movies at the visitor center, and I learned a lot. I saw a few artifacts.

When they stayed there their were only 12 days when it didn't rain.

At one time a whale floated ashore and they used it all.

They shot 2 California Condors by accident.

I also saw the ocean. I went wading and I collected some broken shells.

May 14: Today we hiked to the end of Cape Lookout.

It was pretty long, 5 miles.

The trail was muddy but it didn't rain.

I saw a lot of huge trees on the trail.

There were a lot of neat flowers, birds, and bushes along the trail. I saw a bee and it almost stung me. I saw pretty flowers, and other pretty things.

We stayed at the end for 2 hours so my parents could watch birds.

There were several lookouts we stopped at and from there we saw birds and fishing boats.

I'm going to compare temperate rain-forest trees to trees in the U.P. Trees in the temperate rain-forests have leaves almost all year round, and there are few droughts.

Trees in the U.P. have leaves only half the year and it's often dry,

Trees in the temperate rain-forests grow larger because of the rain.

Trees in the U.P. don't grow as large because it isn't as wet.

I also saw some seals. They weren't very active but it was neat to see them. They were black, but some were white. I didn't see them very well because we were so far away.

May 15: Today I swam in the cold Pacific. I drank some salt water. Brrrrrr! It was cold.

I also saw Devils Punch Bowl. It is a bowl that is connected too the ocean.

I also went into a shop called Catch the Wind Kites, that was really neat. It had big and little kites, toys, windsocks, clothes, and kite accessories. We got 2 kites, 6 wind socks, (1 kite and the wind socks were only a \$1) I got a sweatshirt, and that's it. The kites were expensive. I was \$110.00 dollars.

For supper we ate at the original Mo's. The food was good.

If you don't know what Mo's is, it's a seafood restaurant famous worldwide.

I walked to a lighthouse at Yaquina Head.

I climbed on rocks in the ocean and found lots of sea creatures like sea anenomes, hermit crabs, and a lot of other things.

While by a dock in Newport we saw lobster and crab traps, a large fishing fleet, and shrimp sorters standing, and seperating the good and bad shrimp. That dock would be a boring, smelly place to work.

May 16: Today we flew the kites. One is steerable, so I can do loop-dy-loops, the other one has eight tails and is called an octopus kite.

I also went to a marine garden. It was cool. There we could go into the Devils Punch Bowl.

There were neat plants like sea and green anenomes, a stargish, various seaweeds, and hermit crabs.

The rocks were slippery and I fell down lots.

I touched a live starfish Mom found. It was hard, not slmiy, and tightly secured to the rock so hightide violence wouldn't move it around.

The sea anenomes were everywhere! They were underwater, high on rocks, in holes in the rocks, and even a few on seaweed.

I found a green anenome which closes on its food and put a bobber in the middle of it. It held the bobber tightly until I pulled it of, - man! It held very tightly.

Today we went inland to Corvallis to see my uncle again.

May 17: We didn't do much today because my sister is sick and had a doctors appointment near noon.

I played catch with a frisbee with my dad during Robins appointment.

Then we went shopping to buy stuff for lunch.

Then we drove for an hour to get to a trail.

The trail went to the top of Iron Mountain. There was a building the top that I don't know the use of.

Near the top there was about 4' 1/2" feet of snow covering about an acre of land.

I counted a trees groth rings and estimated 250 years old on the hike. At the time that tree was a seedling: no-one knew about anything west of the Mississippi River, George Washington was a boy, and the year was 1740.

I later saw a blowdown that was across the small gravel road we were on.

A blowdown is when wind blows down many trees in an area. This blowdown was about 600 yds long and the trees blown down were huge.

Then we met Jeff & a friend and drove three hours to get to Page Springs Campground, a place in the Malhuer (mal-hu-er) Refuge.

May 18: Today I slept in until 8:00 A.M., and in that time the others went on a hike.

When I got up we ate breakfast, and then went bird watching.

We bird watched wherever there were birds. We stopped the car, got out, and the bird flew is what happened a lot.

I saw birds such as: Trumpeter Swan, an American Coot, 2 Great Horned Owls and babies, 2 Western Grebes, and lots of Black Terns. I saw a new kind of hummingbird, Yellow Headed Blackbirds, Red Winged Blackbirds, and even an uncommon Mallard.

I really liked too see the 2 owls. I got a good view of them with binoculars.

I couldn't see the horns very well but they were neat anyway.
They babies were very small, and cute. One was sitting up and the other one was lying down.
My dad got a good picture of the babies with his hi-tech lens.
After that we bird watched our way back to the Frenchglen Mercantile, a neat store/gas station/post office.
They had neat furs hanging from the ceiling. They also had many different knives.
They had camping supplies, reading materials, food, beverages, ice, and frozen foods, a slot to put mail in (that is how I sent the postcard) and candy. They also had gas pumps.
After that we went home (back to camp) and Jeff made a wonderful dinner of enchiladas. Then we sat around the campfire and got warm and made samores. Man was it fun!
Then I went to bed.

May 19: Today we woke up at 6:45 A.M. approx. to go to the Malhuer Refuge headquarters to watch birds. The bird watching is excellent there, so we stayed for 4 hours.
While we were there I tried to get the kite up but the wind was too gusty.
Then we went to Pete French's unusual Round Barn.
He built it round so he could exercise his horses in the outside hallway.
I saw a Burrowing Owl there. It was unseen until Jeff nearly stepped on it. I'd tell you what it looks like if I knew. It was a quick flyer so I couldn't see very well and that is why I don't know.
Then we went home and Mr. Dinner (Jeff) made a wonderful supper of homemade chili. Lyn, Jeff's friend, had made sourdough bread and we ate that, too.
Today I saw an antelope. It was neat.
The terrain is a high elevation desert.

May 20: Today we drove 6 hours to get to Hood River, Ore. We left at about 7:15 and drove to our campground until 4:30.
We saw 542' high Multnomah Falls. They spray from it was everywhere and it sounded like a big thunderstorm. The lower falls are 69' high and are drowned out by the big one.
The legend of Multnomah Falls is: a disease was killing a local Indian tribe and a Medicine man told the chief that if a young maid threw herself over the falls, the disease would pass. The chief didn't want to ask any to do it. When a young maid heard that her loved one was sick she threw herself over the falls - she didn't know what the medicine man had told the chief, and the disease passed.
Supposedly you can see her face just below the top of the falls.
I tried to see her face but I couldn't.

May 21: Today we hiked to Punchbowl Falls by way of Metlako Falls.
Punchbowl Falls was like this: a stream ran into a basin by way of a 10' high drop.
Metlako Falls is a beautiful 100' tall falls.
The trail was an easy horizontal 4 miles.
I also walked inside the Oneanta Gorge. It was in the creek to the falls.
The falls are called Oneanta Falls and are about 200' tall.
We ate supper at Multnomah Falls Lodge. I had pesto. It was good.
After that mom & dad did most of the packing.

May 22: In the morning we finished packing and drove to Portland Int. Airport to get on our flight to Minneapolis/St. Paul. It was cloudy so I couldn't see.
We flew at 37,000 feet and we went 505 M.p.h.
When we landed we had a 2 hour 40 minute layover.
In that time I ate supper, looked at arcade games, and waited in a seat.
On the 2nd plane we couldn't see anything but lights. We arrived at the airport at 10:20 P.M. and at home at 11:00.

ASIA

May 1: Day 1. Got up at 5:30 A.M. Left our house at 6:05 A.M. We got on our plane, flew to Green Bay, waited for 30 minutes, and flew to Detroit. After a 2:30 layover, we got under way. The plane was a 747-400, 8 seater (in one row).

From the airport in Beijing, Dad hooked up with a private taxi. On the way to our hotel, a road got blocked and we experienced a Chinese Traffic Jam. Cars honking, buses crammed with people jamming it up more, policemen directing traffic, and, in the midst of all the rucus, people walking in the streets, biking in the streets, and peddling in the streets.

May 2: Day 2. Today we walked to Tianeman Square. This is the 3rd anniversary of the uprising. Lots of policemen were patrolling the park. Robin is a very popular person with the natives. Whenever we stop, a crowd forms. The inner-city is a mess. Buese, Bicycles, people, and shops fill the area to the brim. The square is a big paved area with a large tower in the middle. I bought two perfectly round stones at the friendship store today for 20 FEC (Federal Exchange Currency), or \$4 U.S. dollars. I bought the stones at the Friendship Store. We got there on a rickshaw, and on the way back we all rode a bus for 3¢ U.S. apiece.

Beijing is a big, poor city with lots of buses, European cars, bikes, and people. Coke and Sprite are the national soft drinks.

May 3: Day 3. Today we saw the Wall, China's great one, that is. We took a tour up to the wall. The tour also stopped at Ming Tombs. That is where the emperors of the Ming Dynasty are buried. After lunch I bought some candy to share with the class when I get home. It cost \$1 for 40 pieces. Now back to the Great Wall. We got there at 2:30 P.M., and right away got to climbing. My family took the more difficult left wing to climb. In one place it was at an almost straight up angle. We witnessed two simulated Mongol attacks. These simulations consisted of drum beating, canon firing, and smoke signaling. The smoke signaling was done at separate towers away from the wall, so as not to harm tourists, but the first two were done in the main towers, towers being an average of 2-300 meters apart. On the way home the tour stopped in a cloisonne (pronounced claw-zin-A) factory. Cloisonne is a form a copper art. A copper pot is made, then fitted with iron filings. The holes between the filings are then filled with powder. The powder is dampened, then dried to make pots.

May 4: Day 3. This morning we ate at the world's largest McDonald's. We saw 60 people working there. I had a Big Mac that cost \$1.60, fries, and Coke. All this cost a mere 3.00. Then we went to the Forbidden City, where all the emperors lived. The city itself is about 1 km long. It has many large gates with fancy names like Gate of Heavenly Peace. Lots of famous things happened inside the city's walls, but common people weren't allowed inside, and that was that. At the rear of the city there was an imperial garden. The garden was built on on a large hill. It has many large stones that came from the Yangtze River. At the top of the hill there is a large pagoda. From that pagoda I saw a view of all the building's roods. It was amazing to me how much space the emperors used. This evening we went to an acrobat show. One person flipped six bowls onto his head, opening up. They balanced. He did all this while unicycling. He flipped the bowls with his right foot.

May 5: Day 4. Today we went to the Summer Palace, or 'The Imperial Getaway.' This is where all the emperor's courtiers, wives, and servants spent the summer. The emperors summered there, too. The Palace was a much smaller complex than the Forbidden City, but more beautiful. Again, there was a pagoda at the rear. All the splendor of the Summer Palace was on a small lake with 3 islands. On 1 island was a huge bridge. For breakfast we ate with 9 inch forks at the Western Restaurant in our hotel, the Beijing Hotel. On the way to our destination, the Summer Palace, we had to ride an electric trolley-bus. The bus is connected to the wires by receptacles that stick up about 8 feet. Anyway, one area had a problem in the wires. When we got to that place, 2 buses' receptacles were off the wires. 4 ladies in dresses and high-heels were trying to fix these buses in the rain. Then our bus got de-wired. We didn't know what had happened, so it seemed like the bus had stopped at a stop and the driver had gotten off. After our bus wzs fixed the driver got a ticket. This evening we ordered some food, and we got: 16" chicken plate, 16" pork

plate, 14" vegy plate, 2 3"x6" soups, and soft drinks. We ate half. We also stopped in a music store and bought gongs.

May 6: Day 5. This morning we got up at 4:45 A.M. to get to the airport at 5:50 to go through customs. After a 1:30 wait we got onto the plane. Just before we landed 4 hours later, all 4 of us got our very own, handy-dandy, China Air shopping bags!

After picking up our luggage in Hong Kong, we went out to get a cab. A loaded luggage cart ran over my toe. Then we caught a wrong-side taxi. I call them wrong-side because they drive and steer on the opposite side of that in the U.S. After a good look at Hong Kong, we got to our hotel. It is called the Omni Prince. They treat you like a prince, too. When we got to our rooms, our luggage got there behing us, a boquet of flowers was brought up. It was from the travel agency in Escanaba! We then went to the Peak. We rode a tram, a boat, and a double-decker bus to get there. We ate italian on the way home. MMMM good! When we got back to the hotel fresh fruit and flowers were waiting. What a place! Hong Kong is the most modern city I have ever seen. All the buildings are shiny, tall, and modern. The harbor is a bit older, though. Some of the docks are falling apart. The poor condition of a few docks doesn't stop the ships, though. The Peak was a tropical mountain. It had woods, birds, and other wildlife. All the birds, bamboo trees, palm trees, insects, and weather elements made the Peak seems like a rainforest. It didn't rain, but it was hot and humid all the way up and all the way down. The views from some of the places on the wildlife loop were really good. You could get a feeling for vertical stacking in the city. Because of mountains, the city can't move away from it's area, so it goes up.

May 7: Day 6. Today we ate our fruit for breakfast and then went to a Mead Coated Board office, so dad could see what was happening at the Escanaba plant. For the hour while dad was working the rest of us went down to the harhour. We watched all kinds of boats doing all kinds of things, like a pollution control boat scooping up garbage in it's big flat scooper. During this time Robin bumped her shin on a park bench. She has a bruise, a welt, and a goose egg. After Dad was done, we (my family), Florence, and S.K. (his colleagues) rode the subway to a coated board factory. Mead owns just 20,000 ft² in a huge building, has just 1 machine, and that little factory buys it's raw material (rolls of coated board) from a plant in Alabama. But, despite having to rent everything except the machine, pay for raw materials, and pay it's workers, that plant makes #3 million US a year profit. After a tour, S.K. and Florence took us out to eat. We had dmi sum. That is where you order things and they bring them. For example, you might order egg rolls and get six, one for each person. My favorite things were the custardy-muffins, and b-b-qued pork buns. The buns are a necessity for dim sum. Dim sum without pork buns is like italian without noodles or pizza. We had shrimp dumplings, shrimp clusters, egg rolls, egg yoke buns, beef balls, and vegetables. It was really good. After lunch dad, Robin, and I went to Tom Lee's Music. There we found a brand new Vito tenor sax for HK \$5100. After a good supper of meats and vegetables, and a delicious Mango-pudding, dad and I went to some watch shops. I like a G-Shock Casio, but it costs \$380 Hong Kong. The way to change that into U.S. is +7.7 or *.13.

May 8: Day 7. Today we rode the hoverferry to Cheung Chau, one of the outlying islands. It was pouring rain and so we bought umbrellas. Then, wouldn't you know, it stopped raining. After a 20 minute look at the harbor, it started up again. We went for cover under a covered gym. It rained hard for about 40 min. or so. Then we had one of the most memorable lunches yet. We had some Singaporean noodles and rice. It was remarkably good. We also had some vegetables. The kitchen of the restaurant was just a pit with fire coming out. The fire was covered with cement that had holes the size of pots in it. After lunch we went out in the rain to look around the island. We went to the side opposite the ferry dock. The Beach over there had white sand and big waves. I couldn't go swimming because I had no swim trunks. The island is a fairly windy place and there were windsurfers all along the beach waiting to be used. In one house's courtyard 3 families were peeling and sorting shrimp. After mom bought 2 housekeeping items we caught the ferry home. While we were out on the water an angry squall broke out. The water looked like a silk piece of ice. The water was whipped around by such a wind that the motion looked evil. At one island the land met the clouds, resulting in what looked like two snarling cats. We almost ran into a ship. The waves the ship left sent our 50 foot hover craft into the air. What seemed like an unending voyage ended calmly in the harbor. The other bot ride was a very placed one, as no exciting things happened. When we got back, dad and I went to a watch store. Dad bargained and we got hima Citizen and me my Casio G-Shock

for U.S. #117. Then we came back to the Spaghetti House for pizza. After pizza we went out watch shopping AGAIN! This time mom got a watch with characters instead of numerals.

May 9: Day 8. Today we went to the Western District on Hong Kong Island. We had some pastries for breakfast. We saw a meat market with pigs and cattle being slaughtered and butchered. After a smelly walk through the market, my family went searching for a chop maker. A chop is a stone figure with characters on the bottom that say your name. We were not able to find a chop maker that could make 4 chops in 1 hour. So we went back into the hotel, a little hot, a little disappointed, but otherwise we were fine. Right away when we got back to the hotel we got all set up to go. Within 15 or 20 minutes of when we got back we left for good. On the way to the airport we got stuck in a traffic jam. After a 10 minute jam we got to the airport. We were 2 hours early (mandatory for international flights) and customs and checkin only took 30 min. In the hour and a half we had we ate, shopped and just plain waited around. Once we were on the plane our flight was delayed 20 minutes. Finally we took off. We watched a movie, ate some lunch, and slept for the duration of our 3 hour 40 minute flight. When we landed in Singapore our cousins were waving outside the airport baggage area. After what seemed like an hour of baggage claim we got to say our hellos, then we headed off to Ehlert's apartment. After some soup and a swim we hit the sack.

May 10: Day 9. On the morning of our first whole day in Singapore everyone was up early trying to get fully reacquainted. The 8 of us had some cereal and coffee cake we all set out to a bird-a-tory and a wet market. The bird place was just a small plot of land with a big rack over it. Hanging from the rack were probably 60 bird cages, each cage with a young bird inside. Supposedly, the birds learn to sing at this place. After we were done listening and watching the birds we headed over to a wet market. This market is called a wet market because it is watered down daily. I didn't go inside because it smelled to strongly of durian. It is banned in many places because of its stench. Anyway, the adults all went in, Kevin went too, and came out with some pork that looked like seaweed but tasted like bacon. Then we went back to Ehlert's apartment (I'll call it 10-02). We ate some tabuli and fruit for lunch. Right after lunch we all went swimming in the pool. Following our 2 hour swim we drove off to a nature reserve. I rode in the Beemer (BMW). The nature reserve was basically a tropical hill. In 25% of the trees there were small, furry monkeys. We climbed for about 45 minutes in the 88 degree heat. After that climb we were at the peak. The peak had an excellent view of the only eagles nest in Singapore. The eagle(s) inside the nest were white-bellied sea eagles. After a seemingly short hike down the hill, we all got in the cars, and we went back to 10-02. We changed into good clothes for dinner. Then we got back into cars and went to a seafood restaurant. We ordered right away and had our first food in minutes. It was fish and I didn't try it. Finally the pepper crab came. I didn't like it. After all the kids were done we went to the beach and chased each other. Then we watched squid get caught by fisherman. After a long day we all got roght to bed when we arrived at 10-02.

May 11: Day 10. Today all 4 of the Ehlerts were gone before 10:00. Then my family went to the shopping center, Holland Village. I bought a tacraw ball. It is a reed ball esued in tacraw, a game like volleyball except you use your feet. We also spent 1 1/2 hours getting chops ordered. They will be done on Monday. After all that we left ot have lunch. We ate at an Indian restaurant. My meal was marinated potatoes with vegetables. It was just a baked, sliced, scooped out potatoe with fried vegetables inside. It was really good. We went back to 10-02 to meet the boys. When Kevin and Scott were home we played games until Kevin went to pre-game baseball practice and the rest of us ate. We had tacos. Tacos have never that good to me! MMM..MM!! Right after supper we went to Kevin's baseball game. They lost 6-3 because they allowed 5 runs in the first inning. Kevin scored, at least. After the game we went home for brownies and ice cream. Following dessert we went to bed.

May 12: Day 11. Today Sandy took us to the zoo. We saw 2 tigers swimming in the first cage. They looked hot. After the tigers we saw pygmy hippos. The pygmys looked dead but the birds on their backs didn't. We were short on time so we breezed by the zebras, giraffes, and primates. We saw a monkey show, though. A highlight of the trip was the komodo dragons. They are the world's largest living lizard. They were three feet long, and had deadly-looking teeth. We stopped at a fast food place for a brief lunch of noodles. After lunch we saw the lions. They were neat, but the big cats were neater, as I have always loved cats.

We went on the Marie Maersk. It is a container ship docked in Singapore harbor. We went right to the bridge where the captain offered us drinks. We accepted and began our tour. The wheelhouse had lots of gadgets like radar, GPS, ballast control, etc, etc. The wheel itself was the size of the steering wheel in a car. Then the captain then took us to the smoking lounge. That is where the crew entertains themselves while they're not working. We also looked in the gymnasium where the crew plays ping pong, carroms, and darts. After looking at how the crew plays we saw how they eat. The kitchen was like a restaurant kitchen. They had everything! The dining hall had two well set tables and the exact number of chairs they need. Then we went to the engine room. It had a large control room that monitored all the power related stuff. All the refrigerated containers need electricity, and they use 3 megawatt/hrs. We went into the engine area. I was amazed that such a long, big, heavy boat could run on a 12-cylinder engine. You probably think I am joking. No, I'm not, the cylinders were 10 feet tall! We also saw the propeller shaft. It was about 3' thick. After that we went to the radio room. It had several different communication devices, including fax. After that we expressed our appreciation to the organizers of the trip, including Mark, and left. A little hot, a little hungry, and very astonished.

Following the tour we went to supper at the West Lake Eating House. We had a turn-table meal. That is where you get things and put them on a turntable. After supper we went straight to bed, because tomorrow is a big day.

May 13: Day 12. This morning I woke up at 7:00 A.M. to go to school w/ Kevin. His school is huge! I followed him around all day. He ran the mile in 8:02. Right after P.E. we had break. You can get all kinds of stuff for cheap. Kevin's band is really good. After break Kevin had AIDS ed, which I couldn't attend. So, for 45 minutes I played computer games. I ate a burger, a roast beef sandwich, a yogurt cup, an ice cream sandwich, and grape juice for lunch which cost just U.S. \$2.80. After lunch we went to a Same Old Song + Dance program put on by the school chorus and dance clubs. After school Kevin and I went to Holland Village. I bought 1 more tacraw and some candy. We were going to have a slurpee, but the machine was broken. Now I will tell you more about Kevin's school. It has 3 floors, 5 communities each (with the 3rd floor being the exception with only 4), 2 cafeterias, 2 gyms, and an auditorium. A community is like a grade level, except all the classrooms make a big circle. In Kevin's reading class we got the Smith-Robinson-Jones Classic, a word puzzle. After Holland Village we went home to pack for Tioman. It had started of being the plan but then the catamaran got broken, so it seemed we were going on Friday. Then that run got canceled so it looked like we weren't going. But, Sandy scrambled and got us on a bus to Mersing, Malaysia to catch a ferry to Tioman. After packing all our things we hit the sack, because the bus left at 6:45.

May 14: Day 13 This morning I was up at 6:00 to do all the final getting ready. We got a cab to the bus stop and got aboard the bus with 5 minutes to spare. After 20 minutes we got out for customs, but we were soon back on the bus, headed for Mersing. After a while Mark pointed out some rubber trees. They looked like a cross between palm and poplar. They had scars all over them where people had cut the bark to get the sap out. The sap is then made into rubber. None of the trees we saw were being sapper, though. Around 9:00 or so we stopped to stretch, go souvenir shopping, use the bathroom, buy some grub, etc, etc. In 16 minutes our bus was again plowing down the road for Mersing. Just before we got to Mersing the driver bought gas for .40¢/liter. At 11:15 the bus stopped in Mersing. We got our luggage and checked in. Then a small van took us to the dock. Once we were at the dock we got right aboard the Open Sea X-Press. After a seemingly endless 2 hours our craft was at Tioman, where 'Tales of the South Pacific' was filmed. We hurriedly checked in at Samudra Swiss Cottages. The rush was to go swimming, because it was a hot day. When we finally were ready, the whole group plunged into the warm South China Sea. Right away we were seeing sea urchins and coral. The most common fish was about 3" long with yellow stripes on black. We saw literally hundreds of fish ranging from 1-8" in length with every color imaginable. Some fish had a colorful pastel camouflage, some had gray to match the ocean floor, and some weren't disguised at all, but extremely fast. After 3 hours of snorkeling we went to the nearby restaurant for supper. Even though I was the hungriest, my fried chicken came last. It was good, but filling. After supper I played Carrom's for 3 hours. Right following Carrom's I climbed into my sandy bed for a crummy night's sleep.

May 15: Day 14. This morning I ate breakfast with the other kids. It was a delicious meal. Following breakfast we went to Pulau Rengas to do some heavy-duty snorkeling. After going around the island once with the group, dad and I started around the island. We saw lots of small fish being chased by gar pike. It

was a repeat of the first trip, but.....Dad pointed and I saw 2 large fish racing out of the depths! They circled and appeared to be gone. Dad dove to find them. While he was under I think I saw an eel. In 30 seconds dad was back. He pointed at a now distinct shark and a large fish. After watching for awhile, we swam on. In 2 minutes we saw 2 more huge sharks! Dad again dove to get a better look and he saw a turtle! We were getting ready to move on when the biggest, 3-foot long started chasing us! He looked like this. [Illustration] We think it was a black-tipped shark. About an hour after we saw the shark, we went back to Tioman to eat lunch. I had a delicious plate of spaghetti bolognese. After lunch we just relaxed, played Carrom's, Oh! Shucks, and ate banana cake until supper. We went to Tioman Island Resort. We all had the buffet. We listened to a band play songs like 'The First Time,' 'Because I love you,' 'Everything I Do,' and 'Winds of Change,' requested by: yours truly, ME! The buffet had Alphalfa to watermelon, bananas to turkey and just about everything in between. After 4 trips We went home to our sandy beds.

May 16: Day 15. This morning I slept in until 7:30. I ate vanilla crackers for breakfast. I also met Andy the waiter in the restaurant. He is a fun-loving 21 year old who could whip the socks off us at Carrom's. For 4 hours we played Carrom's. Then the kids ate lunch. It was O.K., but Andy served to make things better. After lunch we went snorkeling some more. Dad wore shirts around his legs to prevent sunburn. It looked funny as heck, but it worked. Dad was looking for sting rays, but he didn't see any. I saw an 8' in diameter coral ball. It looked like the Epcott Center. Today I also picked up a sea cucumber that was 1' long! I went in around 3:30 to dry off. I played Frisbee® for a while but then went in to play chess. Around 4:00 a rip-snortin', fire-breathing, people-scaring, lizard-eating storm blew in. One big crack, a flash and POOF! no power. We headed to dinner at Liza's, about 5 minutes away. When we got there I ordered Calay (clay) Pot Noodles. Just as the pot arrived, the lights went out. I couldn't see the things I was eating. I spat out so many things that I hoped there would be some left to eat. The meal really wasn't that bad, it was just a little different. After supper I played chess until 9:10, when the power went out and we couldn't see the figures. I stayed up until 11:00 talking to Kevin though.

May 17: Day 16. Today we got up early to catch the Seagull Express at the Resort. Once on board we watched Kareoake (dad wouldn't let me sing) until the movie 'Eternal Fist' came on. It was a dust, bust, just kill somehow movie. When the movie started up to the captains room. When I got there I was surprised I could go in. It was the best seat in the house. I could watch the gauges, the compass, listen to the VHF and Marine Band radio, and look out the window all at the same time. After an hour and a half we got to Mersing, where we had burger for lunch. Right after lunch we got on the bus. The 4 kids had the whole back row. About 200 yards out of town we hit a bump and went flying. We (the kids) started calling things fitting names like: Kluna Bunk, Cautious, Oil Spill, Axtra Canvas, etc., etc. Our bus was the RIGHTOUESMOBILE! We went through customs at Johor Bahru, and went home to 10-02. We had a tasty meal of white clam sauce on fetticini noodles, tabuli, Jicima, and fruit. After supper the 8 of us got together and played Oh! Shucks. The Robin-Sandy team (with 49) lost to Kevin (with 51) on a 9 point last hand from the latter. I could have given the Robin-Sandy team a win by letting Kevin have an extra trick, but I didn't and was solo for 4th.

May 18: Day 17. Today I slept in. When I got up I started to pack to go to Malaysia the next day. At 10:30 I went to Scott's baseball game. They got beaten 9-15, but played well. After the game we went home for lunch. We had leftovers, and they weren't bad. After lunch everyone except Kevin went on the first leg of the Singapore Historical Trail. The trail was someone's eagle scout project. It takes approximately 9 hours to do the whole trail. We only did the 3 hour first leg, though. We rode the Mass Rapid Transit to the start. The first point of interest was the Chinese Methodist Church. It was made a national monument in 1989. The 2nd stop was an Muslim mosque. We skipped the next 2 stops because of time and came out at the Merlion. The Merlion is a mermaid body on a lion's head. It is what the harbour supposedly looked like in 1819 to Sir Thomas Raffles, the founder of modern Singapore. After looking at the time capsule we went home. When we got home we went right to the American Club. We went swimming and ate supper. I had some very good spaghetti with garlic bread. After supper we went home. About 45 minutes after we got home we went to the train to Malaysia. I was tired and went to sleep in my bunk right away. My bunk was a piece of metal with a mattress attached to it. It folded down and a ladder hooked to it so I could climb in. Oh, one more thing. The American Club is a hangout for Americans in Singapore. It has a pool, bowling alley, restaurants, etc., etc.

May 19: Day 18. Today a man came at 6:40 to knock on our door. He simply knocked once, said 'Kuala Lumpur' in a rushed voice, and went on to the next door. After I was ready to get off, I looked out the window. My first impression: a sprawling, but crowded area, and fairly poor. When we got to the station, we got out and started looking for a taxi. When we finally found one we all got in and started off. Right away I could tell it was going to be a long trip. Our driver was a total madman! He was weaving in and out of traffic, nearly getting pasternamed every time. Our driver was passing with other cars just a few hundred feet away. More than once I could have touched other cars that were going 100 Km. More than 120 Km/h were becoming commonplace, before dad told the driver to just go easy. Finally we got to Taman Alam Kuala Selangor, or Nature Park Kuala Selangor. Before the visitors center we saw monkeys, several different birds, and a squirrel. At 9:00 o'clock the center opened. We got our building rented and got situated. It was a small chalet. Two beds and a bathroom was all the space we had. After getting our bags set down we went out to look for birds. We saw several fancy looking king-fishers. They had many different shades of one color. We also saw 3 different types of herons. One of these types had a 50 cm wingspan (or so the book said). We had lunch at a restaurant in town. I had some noodles. They were O.k. After lunch we had a siesta. It lasted for 4 and 1/2 hours. I wrote, read, and napped. At around 5:30 we got up and started the 15 minute walk to town. It took about 20 minutes because we stopped to look at 50 monkeys. We had murtabak for supper. Murtabak is like a dough pancake. It has eggs or something inside the skin to add flavor. After supper we went home. I stayed out in the air to read, but at 10:00 I turned in.

May 20: Day 19. This morning we had short, yellow bananas for breakfast. At 8:10 we met the park ranger. He was going to be our guide for the day. His name was Razak. If there was something to know about the park, Razak knew it. He was really neat because he spoke broken English yet could get his ideas across. He pointed out a 3 1/2' long monitor lizard. This particular was 10' up in a tree, though! We saw lots more birds and several new animals. When we were almost back, Razak saw two monitors thrashing around in the water. They had been caught in an illegal net. Anyway, dad gave Razak his Swiss Army Knife. Then Razak waded into the swamp and cut the lizards free. Razak had wet pants up to his knees, and his shoes were dripping so we headed back. We ate lunch at the Restaurant Hamzah again. I had fried noodles this time. Again after lunch we had a 4 hour siesta. I wrote in my journal, read, and slept. My book, 'The Count of Monte Cristo,' is about a man's rise and fall and rise to glory. It is quite good. When I woke up we went into town to watch a soccer match. It was good, solid, competition. At first the yellow team went ahead 1-0, then a penalty shot and a quick goal got the red team ahead 2-1, and it ended up 3-3. We only watched the first half. In that time I bought bananas at a stand. We ate at Hamzah again. This time we all had murtabak. It was delicious. At 8:30 Razak's uncle came to take us to the kelip-kelip, or fireflies. When we got there Razak took us out in a sampan to see the blinking-in-unison fireflies. They were amazing! In every bush hundreds of fireflies blinked simultaneously, causing it to look like the whole bush was blinking. After learning that the males blink 3 times per second and the females blink once every 3 seconds we went back to Taman Alam. I went right to sleep because tomorrow was another big day.

May 21: Day 20. Today Razak was our guide again. Today we went out to the ocean the birds were fabulous on the way. When we got to the ocean, a long boardwalk led through a marsh out to an observation house. About halfway down the 100 yard boardwalk a very loud popping noise started going. Razak said it was caused by some minerals under the mud exploding, and that the explosion blew up through the muck, causing a loud POP! We also saw so many crabs from the boardwalk. Some were purple with two claws, some were red with one claw, and some were red with two claws. When they saw us coming they would scurry into their holes, so we never got very good looks at one. We also saw many, many mud skippers. Mud skippers are like tadpoles except they are 2-6 inches in length. They were playing around in the mud. When we got to the shore, many things were happening. The tide had just gone out, and all the mud skippers were following it. Razak spotted a crab and got his spotting scope on it. The thing looked like something out of 'Arachnophobia' through the scope. We saw lots of big ships, including a K-Line container ship. Towards one o'clock we arrived back at the visitors center. Razak asked us to sign his book, so we took it and said we would. Then we went to lunch, and again we all had murtabak. After lunch mom and dad went back to the ocean to record the popping with her recorder. While they were gone I slept and wrote. When they got back, we went to the Restaurant Hamzah for the last time. We each had some boodles, except for Robin who had murtabak. After supper mom and I went out looking

for civet cats. Our search was fruitless, but we did see several types of other wildlife. At around 11:00 we went back because we were tired.

May 22: Day 21. This morning we caught a bus to Kuala Lumpur at 10:00. When we got to KL at 12:30, we ate lunch at the Omar Khayam. We shared several dishes. The breads especially were good. We walked around the city awhile then caught a 3 o'clock train. The scenery was very monotonous, as were the movies. (They were rated R) I finished the Count Of Monte Cristo. It ended in an unusual way. YOU! should read it. We ate a meal on the train, too. We all had noodles with chicken. The noodles were good, but, well...let's not go in to detail about the chicken. We got to see a comedy that was funny after supper though. At about 10:00 we arrived in Singapore. We went right to Ehlert's apartment. When we got there we went right to sleep so we would have energy for the last day in Singapore.

May 23: Day 22. This morning I hung around until 11:40. I ate some breakfast, and started to pack in that time. At 11:40 Kevin got home from baseball practice. Right away we went to Holland Village. We (Robin and I) had \$ 30 together. We looked at TinTins in the WordShop. I want two, The Explorers on the Moon and Destination Moon. They cost \$8.90 apiece. After WordShop, we went to CostPlus, the electronic supermarket. I bought 2 tapes to record some of Ehlert's music. Then we went to 7-Eleven to get a Slurpee®. We all got giant Tutti Frutties. We slurped over to Times Bookstore, the renowned TinTin capital of Holland Village. I went in by myself to look. They were the same price as WordShop, and WordShop was closer to 10-02, which would mean less lugging. So, we slurped on into the Oriental Emporium, to buy school supplies. I bought two awesome erasers and some lead. Robin bought a Pilot pen (very expensive) and a 10-color pen. Then I bought some big graph paper. Then at around 2:00 we went home. I recorded Ehlert's two Michael Bolton albums and wrote down songs for the other tape. At 3:30 Mom and Sandy got back. When they arrived I was at H-V buying TinTins. Anyway, When I got back I found carpets, jackets, all kinds of things being displayed on the floor. We just goofed off until 6:30, when the Smiths arrived. In 15 minutes the whole crew - Wendy, Corey, Robin, Mark, Sandy, Kevin, Scott, John, Jan, Jeff, and last but not least, Jack was headed to East Coast. We had many delicious dishes. I even liked the pepper crab! Again after supper we chased each other. We ran around for 45 minutes. When we finally left, we looked like Michael Jordan after a triple-OT basketball game. We went back to 10-02 for a swim. At 10:00 or so, the Smith's went home. Then, by 12:30 I was in bed. After telling Kevin to buy some stuff for me, I fell asleep.

May 24: Day 23. This morning I was up at 5:30 to get our taxi to the airport at 6:00. We caught our plane in plenty of time. At 9:05 We were headed for Bangkok, Thailand. All the way I couldn't help but think that next to Croatia, Thailand is the most dangerous place we could be going. But, we landed safely in Bangkok just the same. A man from P.N.P Travel whose name was Jack met us at the airport. We got in a van and went to the Grand Palace. That is where all the Kings lived until 1600 A.D. The Grand Palace also holds the Temple of the Emerald Buddha. We first walked around the king's temple. Then we took off our shoes and went in to see the Emerald Buddha. It is about 1 meter tall and made of jade. Thai people call diamonds, jade, sapphires, rubies, and emeralds emeralds, so now you understand why the Emerald Buddha is made of Jade. It is considered ghastly to let your feet point at the Buddha, so now I know that meditation isn't done crosslegged. After we left the temple we saw a mural that told Thailand's story. When we were done at the Grand Palace We went to a teak factory where teak lumber was being made into benches, tables, and figurines. All the teak had beautiful designs carved in it. My favorite piece was an intricately carved 2 dollar bill, ordered by a man in San Francisco. One 8'x5'x4' piece took two master craftsmen 9 months to build. It had elephants, birds, huts, people, and best of all trees and plants. After a good tour we went to get some bananas. We ended up strolling through a large market. It had all the main foods of Thailand lying around waiting to be sold. After the market Jack took us to the Well Known Lapidary. We saw rings being made from Thai stones. Some of gold they used was in chunks the size of my thumb. After that we went to the airport to catch our flight to Chiang Mai. When we arrived we went straight to the Mea Ping Hotel. We checked in, went for a quick swim, and hit the sack.

May 25: Day 24. This morning was spent looking for a good tailor. At 11:40 we meandered into Neramit. Right away dad was choosing fabric. By 12:30 we were on our way in a took-took to lunch. A took-took is a taxi that has only 3 wheels and is open, except on the top, so you can see out. We ate lunch (it was fair) and got a took-took to wat Chedi Luang. It is where the Emerald Buddha was found. The building that

held the Emerald Buddha is in ruin, but reconstruction has begun. The ruin is approximately 26 meters tall and 15 meters to a side at the base. Robin bought some birds in a basket to release. Releasing the birds will bring good luck, or so they say. We released the birds, and everyone but me went to the temple. After we were done at the wat we got a took-took to the Northern Thailand Tribal Arts and Crafts store on Bumrungrat Road. (How's that for a name?) We saw lots of Indian things like a Lahu flute, Karen and Acca clothes, etc. We shopped for 30 minutes. In that time mom ordered two jackets, one for her and one for Sandy. Following the Tribal store we went back to the Hotel. From there we went to the Whole Earth, a world cuisine restaurant. We had Indian bread, Thai noodles, and Chinese meat. Dad had some baked, then fried, then curried potatoes. They were really good. I had a fruit salad for dessert. After supper we went to the night market. I bought a TinTin shirt and a Fido Dido T-shirt. I also bought a buddha statue. After spending all my cash I went home to bed.

May 26: Day 25. This morning we ate a large buffet-style breakfast. It was heavenly. At eight o'clock we got in the back of a covered pick-up. We had to pick up a Danish couple then we would start off to the start of our trek. After we had driven for 50 minutes we had a 20 minute break at a market. I didn't go in, I just stretched in the truck. In 20 minutes we were back underway. About an hour later we pit-stopped for 5 minutes. We were all back in and driving up the mountain, when, all of a sudden 'BLAGH!' I looked over and saw dad out the window dropping at the mouth with vomit. I have never seen dad so sick before. After two hours of watching dad's failing health we arrived at Tha-ton on the Kook (cook) River. We ate a quick lunch and boarded a 30' sampon with a small car engine on the back. The driver started the motor, put the 10' long propeller shaft in the water and the boat was chugging steadily downstream. At the halfway point we stopped for a drink and a switch of boats. After this point the river got very rocky. Our boat drove right over a rock and sprung a leak. Soon an inch of water was in the bottom. I set to bailing. I bailed for about an hour, or until we were at the Karen village where we would spend the night. When we arrived Awu (pronounced avu) took us swimming. We had to get out right away because the water was too dirty. Following swimming we had tea. The tea was too hot, so we went for a walk. We saw lots of kids who would smile then run away. Dad carried one girl's water. It was cute because they didn't speak the same language. After our walk we had tea. We hadn't been drinking for 15 minutes when WALA! Awu appeared with a wonderful meal. We ate like kings on foods like sautéed vegetables, shish kebabs, chicken, and fried beef. All this was served with rice. It was one of the best meals we've had so far. After supper Awu told us the Karen tribe's story. While he was telling us about how many of the tribes came from hundreds of miles away, there was a loud THUMP! Awu right away told us that a coconut had fallen from a nearby tree. We took a flashlight and found it. Then we cut it open with a machete. The juice (mil) was sweet and good. Never will I spend 49¢ on a coconut again, because fresh is better. After Awu was done we went to bed.

May 27: Day 26. This morning Awu made toast and eggs for breakfast. Then we started shooting down premature mangoes with slingshots. I didn't hit one, but Awu got 4. At 8:45, a HUGE elephant came into the courtyard. He was about 8'6" tall, was about 10' long, and had a 5' trunk. At 9:15 another elephant, slightly smaller, came into the yard. We got on, dad and I on the smaller one, and we headed out of the village. There was a mucky river a few yards outside the village. Our elephant sunk in about 2 feet. His muscular body just plowed through, though. Mom and Robin's elephant was behind ours and started running, and our got on a 6" wide footpath and started running too. After about an hour and a half on the elephants we got off to visit a Lahu village. Awu played a flute and I had a Sprite. Then we got back on the elephants for 20 minutes and rode to the lunch hut. Awu made ramen-vegetables soup for lunch. We all took a nap for 45 minutes. Then we started the 3-hour walk to an acca village. It was a very hot day and I was sweating in 10 minutes. The wind picked up and cooled things off, though. At 2:54, minutes after we left, we arrived at the village. We went out past the gate to the soccer field and tacraw court. There wasn't much to see, so Robin and I went back to the hut. We scared chickens with a slingshot. The slingshots belong to Awu. When our parents got back we had a Awu Delight omelette, and soup for supper. After supper we got a wonderful massage. I went right to sleep after the massage.

May 28: Day 27. Today we hiked down the mountain. We had a Fanta at the bottom. We looked back up and saw mist rolling off where we had just been. About 20 minutes later we arrived at a 10 meter waterfall. We waded in. It was very cold! We watched Awu swim for awhile, we couldn't go because it was too dirty. After the waterfall went into Chieng Rai. We ate a noodle lunch. I bought a fan for Robin. Then we

caught a V.I.P. bus to Chiang Mai. Right when we got back at 5:30 Dad went to Neramit for fittings. When he got home we went for a swim. Then we went to the Whole Earth again. I had sweet and sour vegetarian. It was good. Later that night mom and I went to night market. Mom got a nice vest and I got sunglasses. We went back to the hotel with our purchases and went to bed, tired.

May 29: Day 28, We went to several temples today. The first one had a big tower covered with gold leaf that had a relic of Buddha inside. We just walked around and left. Then we went to one on a mountain. It had 300 steps leading up to it and was called Doi SuThep. Supposedly, a monk had half of the Buddha's body and wanted to know where to put a temple to hold it. So, he put the relic on an elephant, and wherever the elephant stopped, he would build a temple. From Doi SuThep there was a great view of Chiang Mai. We walked around the newly refurbished temple for an hour or so seeing the sights. After Doi SuThep we went to yet another temple. It was 98° and I just stayed in the car. Then we went to lunch. I had spaghetti with sweet spaghetti sauce. No comment. Then I went to the hotel. I spent all afternoon writing. Robin and Mom picked up the vests at Tribal. She didn't like one, so I went to the store with her to return it. Then we ate at the Hard Rock Café, Cheing Mai. Again we went to the night market. This time we bought mainly gifts. At 10:30 we went back to the hotel. Dad's suits arrived. He thinks they are pretty good. We packed up and went to sleep after that.

May 30: Day 29. This morning we flew to Bangkok. Jack took us right to the Baiyoke (Buy-ok) Suites. It is the tallest building in Bangkok, 43 floors. Mom called Lynn Arnault, Jeff's friend from Oregon. She came to the hotel, and we got a cab to Wat Po. When we arrived we went right in to see the Reclining Buddha. It was about 100 feet long, and 30 feet tall at the head. It was covered front and back with gold leaf, with the exception of his feet. They were marble with mother of pearl inlays that made pictures. We then headed out of the temple. We had just gotten out when some monks asked us to talk to them so they could get better at their English. After talking to them for 15 minutes, the one who was in charge took us into a temple that the regular public can't get into. We climbed three flights of stairs and came out with a wonderful view of Wat Po. Then it started to rain. We got a took-took to a restaurant called My Fathers House. I had fried beef on pork noodles. It was delicious! For dessert we had sticky rice and mangoes. It was just that, sticky rice and mangoes. It was one of the best desserts we've had. Then we said good-bye to Lynn and returned to our luxurious 14 floor rooms. We went up to the Sky Lounge for a drink to life. I had coke. I sipped and looked down at Bangkok, Thailand. Wow! When Dad had paid we went to bed.

May 31: Day 30. This morning at 3:20 we got up to fly to Tokyo. We got another jet in Tokyo. It was delayed 40 minutes because of a late connecting plane. Finally we took off. 11 hours 32 minutes later we were at Detroit Metro. Our Green Bay Flight got delayed so we got one to Marquette. When we landed Surprise! all our bags were there. We got a cab back to our house. We had no key so....

June 1: Day 31. We cut a screen on a window that we had asked a neighbor to open. We got in and went to bed. It had been a 32 hour Sunday.

THE AMERICAN WEST

June 13th: Sunny.

We left at 7:40 this morning with the Ehler's house as our first destination. It rains until Menominee. On the way we have pizellé, fig cakes, and orange juice for breakfast. By Green Bay, I have become engrossed in my first book, "Terminal," by Robin Cook. It is a sci-fi action book dealing with cancerous brain tumors.

We lunched in the car with pre-prepared sandwiches after a fuel stop south of Milwaukee. We have lots of candy to chow on, due to the large bag we've been hoarding.

At 1:15, we arrived at 80 West Paddock. Sandy had gone shopping, but the boys greeted us enthusiastically. We went up the driveway to play basketball on their 8.5' hoop. Their house is being sanded, so we can't go in. In 15 minutes, Sandy arrives in their new Astro. It is a whole new round of hellos.

We hang around, rollerblade, and bike for 40 minutes, then head to the Crystal Lake beach. The water is dirty, and the bottom is mucky, but the result of the swim is very refreshing. We swim to a diving raft, where the water is about 9 ft. deep. Then we slowly swim back to shore. Once there, I down a pizza, over light conversation about Asian experiences.

After another quick dip and a change of clothes, we head to the house to wait for Mark. When Mark arrives, the boys head for the Apartment, while the girls pick up Subway's. On the way, the conversation shifts to Ryne Sandberg's sudden retirement, and the Cubs losing streak. We get to the apartment and really devour the subs. Then we watch the Sox 1-0 victory over Oakland, and the MTV movie awards. At about 10:00 we have Scott's birthday with ice cream. Mark fiddles with the newly-purchases answering machine. At almost 11:00 we sack out.

June 14th: Sunny, HOT.

Today we got up at 7:45 to meet the Prestons, Mark's roommates' family. They are farmers in the very south of Michigan. We were introduced to Glen, Susie, Adam, and Elizabeth. The first thing we did was eat breakfast. Glen is a dairy farmer, and had antics about how "2% would boost the economy." After breakfast, I paid Kevin for two TinTin's, and we were off. In two hours, we were Dubuque, Iowa, where we got lunchables, and saw a Viper RT/10. We looked all over for a park, but couldn't find one, so we ate under a tree at the Loras College baseball arena. It is 96°, the hottest day of my life. At 4 or so we arrived at Adelbert's. He wasn't there, but the neighbors' kittens were. When Bert arrived, we went for a bike ride on the nearby Cedar Valley Nature Trail. He borrowed the bikes. The trail is an old railway. It goes over the Cedar River on a multiple-arch bridge. We even saw a turtle. When we got back we had dinner, which was salad, spaghetti, and yogurt. Then his landlords, Mary Kay and Joe came over, and even brought rice crispies treats with chocolate on top. Then we rode our bikes on the trail to the old rail station. It has been converted into a sandwich shop. Then we returned to Adelbert's to shower and go to sleep, but first we petted the kittens, that are 8 weeks old. Then we showered and got into bed.

On the western border of Illinois, the terrain is very hilly, and the vegetation is lush. The road winds through the valleys and up the hills. Cuts are lined with stone walls, and the views are spectacular. This lasts only 30 miles, then it gets flat.

June 15: Cloudy/Warm

We got up at 6:45 to go to North Platte. We ate Breakfast at Adelbert's, and he sent the rice krispy bars for lunch. We took a few pictures, and said goodbye, but were later than expected on the road. We drove across Iowa, then stopped in Neola, 18 miles from the border, to buy lunch stuff. We ate in the Van as we drove through Council Bluffs and Omaha. The man at the grocery store commented that Nebraska "is the boin'est state to drive through in the daytime." Great.

In Gothenburg, we stopped at an original Pony Express station. Here we learned many interesting things, including that just 1 rider was killed by Indians on duty. I thought that was incredible. We also saw a very simple sod house, with cactus growing on the roof.

About 30 minutes later we were setting up camp at Ft. McPherson Valley View and Stables. We got everything out for supper, and were soon eating our beans and tortillas.

After supper, Mom went hiking and I did football exercises. Robin and Katja did some drawing and journal work. When I was done I showered and went into the tent to finish a boat design. When mom returned we went to sleep.

During the night, there was a terrific windstorm. The wind whipped the porch, and roared through the tent screens. The rainflap flapped violently, and the trees were pulled to the edge of their envelope.

June 16: Cloudy then Clearing. 79° ave

Today we started slowly. We weren't out of the tent until 8:30. We had ramen noodles for breakfast, and cleaned up hastily so we could go horseback riding.

Les Ross, the owner of the campground, was to be our guide. He chose 5 horses; Midnight, Dan, Joker, Lucky Lady, and Slate. Poor Slate wasn't chosen, but the horses were ridden by Robin, Corey, Katja, and Mom respectively. We mounted up and walked out to the highest point we could find. Dan, though stubborn, appears to be the best horse. Lucky Lady is somewhat anemic, but Mom doesn't care. The views are amazing, and we really like riding. After the ride, we lunched and went to North Platte.

On the way we stopped at a veterans cemetery. We noticed that not a single Indian was buried there.

Then we went to the Buffalo Bill Ranch. There were lots of interesting people in the pictures, but he wasn't a great guy.

We left the ranch to go shopping. I just browsed through several stores.

Then we went to a pharmacy for dramamine.

It was almost 5:00, and we were hungry. We stopped at the Beer Garden for supper. I had a kebab with sauerkraut and potato salad, with lime Squirt. To top it off, I had two soft pretzels.

After we were done, we went out into the Sandhills to enjoy the scenery. We found an old cemetery, and stopped there to look. We jumped a fence and sat in the grass for 15 minutes just watching the yucca and some horses. We left after awhile to go to the rodeo.

There was a fair going on outside, but we went to our seats right away.

The rodeo started at 8:00 with a flag ceremony. Then the bareback riding commenced. The horse jumped and ran, twisted and leaned, but the riders usually lasted the 8.00 seconds. The winning score was a 72. Then the "Roman Ride Supreme," featuring Vickie Tyler riding two horses. Then came the calf roping, followed by steer wrestling, capped with the women's barrel race. Then came the bull riding. One had never been tamed before, but a North Platte native tamed it and got the winning 79.

Then the bull fighters came out. They were a laugh, but were also very good at avoiding those bulls.

After the rodeo there was a traffic jam, so we got gyros and onion rings. They tasted good.

Then we raced home to bed.

June 17: cloudy, cool then clearing hot

We got up at 6:45 this morning and were on the road for Rocky Mountain National Park (ROMO) by 7:30. We had sandwiches in the car. At around 9:15 we entered Colorado. At 11:30, we passed a huge feed yard. It was a mile long.

We stopped for groceries in Loveland. We are going to be feasting for awhile. We also got milk, apples, and cheese for lunch.

On the way up to Estes Park, mom saw lifer no. 308, a Lewis woodpecker. We also stopped to climb on the rocks, as Katja is a little motion sick.

Estes Park is a tourist city, there is no doubt. Hundreds of boutiques line the streets, but we drove by, on our way to the Romo visitors center.

There we hung out for 1 hour or so, watched a movie, and browsed the book store.

Then we headed to Moraine Park #36 to set up camp. We got set up, and Mom went for a hike while the kids stayed home, to do journal work.

At about 5:30, we started to cut meat and potatoes for hobo pies. We had a heck of a time getting wood, but I started a fire. Soon we had the pies broiling in aluminum foil.

When mom got back, they were almost done, so we got out condiments and soon were feasting.

After the dishes were done we went to an interesting program about taking pictures in RMHP. The program was informative, but we left right away because we wanted to sack out.

June 18: clear, hot, then rain, rain

We got up after mom went on a bird walk, and had cinammon bread for breakfast.

Mom returned, and we packed crackers and gorp for lunch. Then we drove to Bear Lake Trailhead (elev. 9501) to hike 3.6 miles to Emerald Lake. We passed Nymph Lake, just before encountering our first snow. Then we passed Dream Lake. Another .2 miles down, er..up the trail we got to Emerald Lake (elev. 10450).

I saw some trees around a waterfall at the opposite end of the lake and I knew I was going to walk over there. I patiently decided my route and set off, with mom behind me.

We made good time and covered the rocky half mile in 20 minutes. I dunked my head in the cold mountain stream, just for the heck of it. Then we returned to the other side where Robin and Katja were. When I got there I was very hot, so went swimming in my compression shorts. Robin also swam. We dove a 1 foot high ledge into the snowmelt lake.

It was getting late, so we hiked back to Bear Lake, breezed the .6 miles around its perimeter, then returned to the car for the 3,000' descent to camp.

As soon as we pulled in, it started to pour. The rain continued for hours as we huddled in the tent. After awhile, we noticed that our sleeping bags were getting wet. We huddled together on my bag, the only dry one.

When the rain stopped we hung up the bags, and started supper, which consisted of hot dogs. They were good.

After we went to a small animals program, which was very informative. When it was over we got the bags down we got to sleep.

June 19: Hot, then raining

This morning we rose slowly, and got pancakes ready for breakfast. They tasted great, but we couldn't eat all of them. Then we loaded the car to head for Lumpy Ridge. When we found it, there were many cars, but few people. We quickly packed water and headed down the trail. On the way we noticed several climbers on the nearby cliffs.

Some climbers passed us on the trail, and we posed a few questions. They told us that they use ropes only as a safeguard against falling, and that they're rubber shoes help them "friction" up the mountain.

We watched the climbers on the mountain awhile and these facts proved true.

After about 20 minutes of watching, we headed back. On the way mom heard a potential lifer. She chased it down, and it was a lifer. Meanwhile, the kids had gone back to the van, where we snacked on leftover pancakes.

When mom got back, we drove into Estes Park to find shirts, and to eat lunch. We made couscous in the park, and it tasted good. Then we set of in the rain to find shirts. Donned in raincoats, we had a difficult time finding even moderately inexpensive shirts. A stitched "Colorado, We Be Jammin'" design that I like was \$26.95. Oh well.

We eventually all found shirts that we liked, however.

Katja bought an Indian painting, as well as a jawbreaker. Mom got us a cone, as well.

Then we headed off to buy a new jug, a canteen, a funnel, and milk, plus put in a call to dad.

After several stops to get those, we stopped to buy gas before going back to camp.

At camp, we re-erected the porch, which had fallen over in the rain. Then we had a tortilla supper, with banana pudding for dessert.

We then went to a presentation about geology. The program was long, and so we hit it immediately afterwards.

June 20: Warm, then raining

This morning we packed up and headed out on Trail Ridge Road, after a bagel breakfast. TRR is the longest paved the treeline in the U.S. of A. At the 12 mile point, we got out and hiked up the Ute trail for 2 miles. It was amazing to see the birds, marmots, and flowers doing so well at 11,000 ft. Robin got within 3 feet of a marmot.

We hiked down and went to the Alpine Visitor Center. Katja and Robin shopped for Indian relics, but got postcards instead.

Then we went down to Timber Creek Campground to camp for two days. We chose a site right on the Timber Creek, in perfect moose habitat. We set up camp, and made tracks fort he Never Summer Ranch Historic Area.

When we arrived, we went up to the ranch, which was a guest ranch on Never Summer Mountain in the 1920's. The ranch was very fun, because all the things were original. There were also clothes to dress up in and do the "laundry." Well, Robin and Katja got dressed up, and I, not to be outdone, did as well. There was, however, a shortage of men's clothes, so I put on a dress. When I stepped out of the dressing room, the crowd outside got quite a chuckle. After the laundry, we headed to the visitor's center. On the way back to the car, we saw an elk in a field near the path.

Then we went to the visitor center to watch "Colorado, Secrets of the Source." It was a very good film about life at the river's headwaters, just 15 miles away. It showed moose and squirrel, elk and bighorn sheep, deer and mountain lion. And the end of the 55 minutes, we got "Rockies Rookie Rangers" handbooks and hit the road.

When we got back to camp it was raining, but we got spaghetti made for supper, and we ate like kings, with s'mores for dessert. After washing the dishes, we retired to the tent.

June 21: Cool, Cloudy, then Raining

This morning we made ramen noodles for breakfast. Mom was birding. When she returned we packed a lunch and drove to the Colorado River Trailhead for the days hike. We had couscous and spices packed for lunch.

The hike started hard, but then it leveled off. We walked for 2.1 miles to a run-down old homestead called Shepley's cabins. There we camped out under the trees and cooked lunch. We had lots of couscous, so we ate our fill.

A few hundred yards up the trail we came to Crater Creek, where we stopped. It is the first major tributary of the Colorado. Robin immediately started to block up a small meander of the creek. Soon three of us were piling rocks to dam up the flow. It was slow going, but we eventually got it pretty well stopped off. An hour later, we had perfected the dam, and we were making our way back. The return trip seemed very short, and in what seemed no time, we were back at camp.

We had a little trouble with the fire, but eventually got potatoes and onions cooked. Boy they were good. Once again we retreated to the tent.

June 22: Rain then clearing, rain

The three kids got up and packed, while mom was birding. We also put a breakfast together for ourselves.

When mom got back we quickly packed and were on our way to Steamboat Springs.

We passed many interesting places and beautiful things on the way, in the rain. In 2 hours, we were in Steamboat Springs.

Once there, we found a laundromat to clean the dirties. Near the laundromat was a good bookstore. I browsed the giant magazine rack for an hour, before getting lunch at Subway. After we finished lunch, we went to fold clothes.

After the clothes were done, we went grocery shopping. We got hobo pie fixin's, s'mores stuff, zucchini, onions, noodles, a bag of candy, and the list continues. I also got the Motor Trend '94 Tests magazine.

Then we went to the USFS headquarters to get a map. We chose Hahn's Peak Lake, and went to get a site. Twenty eight miles later, we chose a well-located, forested site, #26. We set up quickly and got in, because we felt scout drops. It didn't rain for long, so we got out and worked on hobo pies. Once again, they were great. We had melon and vanilla yogurt for dessert. After the dishes, we walked around the campground, and down to the lake. There was a beaver swimming around, and two or three men fishing on shore. After following the beaver, we light the lantern and read before sleep.

June 23: Warm thunderstorm

We got up today and had bagels for breakfast. Once again we packed a lunch and went on a hike, this time to 10,893' Hahn's Peak.

We had a little trouble finding the trailhead, but we asked directions and found out where to park. We started off on a steep road, up to where the trail started.

The trail was steep with many cutbacks, and mosquito's where everywhere. There were, however, many birds, trees, and other sights to look at. The top 500' was all stone, and tricky to walk.

When we reached the top, we cooked lunch in the living quarters of a deserted fire watch tower. We had too much couscous, but we ate most of it anyway. In the middle of the meal, Robin got something

in her eye, and we had to get that out. When it was out, we were finished eating, so we sat and looked out over Steamboat Lake and Steamboat Ski Resort. Then we made our way down. It is much easier this way.

After we got back to camp, we got swimsuits and went to swim in Steamboat Lake. It was, however, thundering and lightning, so we went to Clark to get supplies. While we were in this cool little store, I read up on the "Juice" and the situation there. We also got cones (root beer!) from Mom.

Then we went back to the lake to swim. It seemed cold, but we all went in anyway. After we went to dry off on the shore, I ran over to check out the marina & marina store. They had no private boats, but 11 to rent. They were all cheapo's anyway. After hangin' out for 30 minutes, we went back to camp for supper. We had zucchini & onions on noodles.

After supper, we made cinammon bears. They are biscuits wrapped around a stick and cooked on the fire. They proved difficult to perfect, but we covered them with cinammon and sugar, so they were still good. After the dishes were done, we retired to the tent.

At around 9:00 the kids decided to go for a beaver hike. We walked to a place where we saw a lodge earlier, with a flashlight. When we got to the lodge, the moon had just cleared a nearby ridge, illuminating two beavers on the bank.

The two adult beavers were on a very shallow sandbar, and they were wip[ing off grime with their paws. Then, as we stood in awe, they began to work on their new lodge, the Hahn's Creek Marriott. It appears to be nearly twice as large as the existing lodge, but I didn't see a legitimate entrance point. As they swam back and forth in front of us, ferrying sticks and grass to the construction site, we became aware of their strength and ability in the water. When they landed however, we noticed that they are akward and cumbersome on land, as they waddled about.

When we eventually tired of watching the beavers. We walked back to camp to sleep.

June 24: Warm, No Rain!!

This morning we got up late (9:00). We made a fire and got ready for pancakes right away. I had the first eight. Then I worked to boost the fire. While I was huffing and puffing, I noticed I was hot. Standing up to take off my sweatshirt, I felt lightheaded. Thinking it would pass with a few deep breaths, I continued to remove my sweatshirt. Next I knew, I was on the picnic bench with mom cleaning multiple cuts to my face and shoulder. I had fainted, and with my arms caught in my sweatshirt, I was unable to stop my fall, and therefore landed on the left side of my face. I didn't feel a thing, and the cuts should heal quickly. After all my cuts were washed, I laid down on a foam pad to recuperate from my injuries. My time was spent listening to a tape a Katja's walkman.

At about 1:00 I was recovered enough to avoid shock, and so I took a steaming sunshower®. It felt good to be clean for the first time in 6 days.

All afternoon I read about cars and Calvin and Hobbes. Around 6:15 I sat down to a meal of felafel. It is hard to eat because my bottom lip is swollen way out of proportion. We had s'mores for dessert.

Once again, after supper we went on a beaver walk. This time however, the moon wasn't up yet, and the adults weren't around. There was a baby out swimming, though. From head to tail it was about 1' long, and 100% cute. Its little teeth were almost too small for practical use. It just swam around for a few minutes, then went into the lodge. We were cold and tired, so we returned to our cozy tent.

June 25: Hot No Rain!!

This morning we packed up our stuff, and headed for Dinosaur National Monument, in Utah, state #16. We drove for 2 hours and got to the visitor center. It had a few neat displays, which we looked and went on our way. There were two people that were apparently autistic, and we watched their behavior for a few minutes.

Just 20 minutes down the road, we stopped in tiny Jensen for gas and a few groceries. Across the street was a 1 day raft trip company, and their rates were \$55/person/day, over 12. We won't go on a raft trip any time soon, I think. Then we drove into the monument. We went to Green River Campground and set up right away.

Then we went to the quarry, where a man saw six apatosaurus (brontosaurus) vertebrate exposed in the rock, in the 1909. Since then, many bones were sent to the Smithsonian Institute, a National Monument was established to preserve the whole are, and a large, modern, glass and brick building was erected to preserve and display the few remaining bones. The bones are in a tilted rock 55 feet by 130 feet,

and well visible. We looked through the bookstore, then rode the shuttle back to the main parking lot. On the way back to our site, we started an auto tour.

The first stop was swelter shelter, where there were some petroglyphs, from the Fremont tribe. They were well preserved, and showed several figures.

Then came a few "here you may see..." stops, but we didn't see it.

Stop number 6 was right on the Green River. A quick dip was irresistible. So, we waded in, and felt the strong pull on our bodies. After 5-10 minutes, though, a ranger informed us that swimming wasn't recommended (read: get out). So, we walked around until dry enough to continue. The last stop before camp was on overlooking Chew ranch, an island of private property. Then we went into camp to fix our macaroni and cheese supper. It tasted very good, with banana pudding for dessert. We hurried the dishes, and moved to continue the tour.

We made several stops, including another petroglyph rock, on our way to Josie Morris' cabin, for a ranger led walk.

The walk turned out to be a sensory tour. At the end, we sat for fifteen minutes and observed. A deer came very close, and I got a nosebleed. The ranger focused on the unimportance of facts, as well. Then we went home to sleep.

June 26: Hot

Mom went birding this morning, while we had bagels. Then we went on a hike called "Sounds of Silence."

On the hike, nature and wildlife abounded. It was an interpretive trail, so there was a booklet and posts to guide you. We saw many lizards and rabbits, and countless small ground squirrels. We hiked up an amphracosity, which is the gully between foothills. When we got to a juniper and sage scrub, we found some rocks, we sat and listened for 15 minutes. It was much less rewarding than the prior night. Then we hiked up on a slick-rock hill. The view was fantastic, and so we looked around for a while. Then we hiked back to the car to drive to a place called Rainbow Park. It is 18 miles away, mainly on gravel roads.

When we got there, we found a lagoon perfect for swimming. We ate lunch, then took a quick dip. Once again it was very refreshing. We walked around to dry off, then drove to Jones' Hole Fish Hatchery. We stopped on the way to take in some beautiful cliffs. Then we went to the hatchery.

At the hatchery, we noticed that the employee housing was on location. Then we went to look at the brown trout, which were in several tanks. They ranged in size from fingerlings to 8 inches long. We tried to see how close we could scare them into going together. They were very social, and their schools almost never split up. We walked up to the visitor center, but it was closed. We debated making supper there, but decided against it. So, we had Gatorade and drove back. On the way back we tried to buy eggs, but nobody was home.

So we went to camp and made tortillas and beans for supper. We had liquid chocolate bars for dessert. Then we did dishes.

Then we went into the tent to do reading before getting our z's.

June 27: Hot

This morning I got up early to do sprints, etc. Then I got breakfast ready in time for the girls to eat. Then we quickly packed and wrote in our journals. When mom got there, we loaded up the car and headed for Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area, just 48 miles away.

First, however, we stopped in Vernal, UT, for Groceries and gas. Then we went to a lookout overlooking Swett Ranch for lunch.

After Ritz, cheese, crackers, pretzels, and dried apples, we drove on up to the visitors center at Red Canyon. There we saw two movies about the reservoir. We also had a commanding view of two miles of water at the canyon floor (we were 1,294 feet up). Then we browsed a small store.

On a recommendation from the ranger at the center, we drove to Mustang Ridge. There we pitched our tent and went to the beach, just 100 feet away. We quickly jumped in, and the water was refreshing. After an hour or so of basking on the beach, we swam to some medium cliffs. They only got about 3 meters high.

I found two suitable for diving and splashed in. It was quite a rush. After about 20 minutes of diving and jumping, we retired to camp to fix hobo pies for supper. The people before us left some wood, so we didn't have to forage very much. After we had devoured our hobo pies, we had s'mores for dessert. Then we went into the tent and mom read a story about the wagon trains before we fell asleep.

June 28: Warming

We got up slowly, and got a fire ready, for a pancake breakfast. The pancakes were good, but it is a slow process to cook them. After breakfast we cleaned up the dishes and car.

Our first item of business was to stop at a store with T-shirts. We easily found a place and set to choosing a design. I got a cool brown one that says "UTAH," with a graphic.

After mom paid for the shirts, we went to Flaming Gorge Dam. There we shopped in the bookstore.

Soon we headed out on a tour of the dam. It is 502 ft high from the bottom to the top, and 151 feet thick at the base. We toured the 3-generator powerhouse, and saw the spillway. At the bottom was a large school of large rainbow and brown trout.

When we returned to the car, we headed for Katja's last state, Wyoming, her 11th. It is just 12 miles from the dam, but only 7 from the campground. In Wyoming we drove on a dirt road up to the reservoir, where we discovered a cove. We were going to go swimming, but the flies were very bad. So, we drove back to Dutch John, past the dam, up to Flaming Gorge Lodge to inquire about raft rental.

The rafts are \$40 per day for a six man, plus a shuttle fee if you need transportation.

After that we returned to camp to start our supper, which consisted of hot dogs. After supper we waited a bit for doing the dishes. Then we went diving again, but first I did sprints.

When we finished swimming, we went into the tent, and fell asleep.

June 29: Warm, but drizzly

This morning we got up and had breakfast, then headed to a trail that we discovered near the dam, We have packed couscous for lunch in our backpacks.

The trail starts off a little steep, but flattens out near the riverbed. The banks are crowded by flyfisherman, in search if a fun time, and the river is dotted by fiberglass dories, from which a serious fisherman hunts the trophy.

Many fish lie in the rocks near the bank, and we try to speculate why the people in the boats don't cast closer to shore. They don't catch much, but still appear to know where to and what is biting.

About 2 miles downstream, a small beach becomes visible, and Robin and I are in the mood to brave it's waters.

After a swift but refreshing dip, we continued on the trail a half a mile, during which time we saw a snake in a poison ivy patch. It was the largest snake I'd ever seen, at almost 4 feet long.

A few hundred yards farther along, we found a nice spot to lunch. We got stuff out, and Robin and Katja are cooking. I walked down to a spot where there were many skipping stones. For 15 minutes I skipped stones across a small lagoon. When lunch was ready I went up and ate, once again doing "cleanup." Shortly after lunch, the snake slid by, and we got a good look at it.

On the return trip, we noticed that many novice-looking groups were braving the river in rafts. We critiqued all the groups we saw, and decided that if the price of the schuttle was good, we would stay an extra day and raft.

With that thought in our heads, we drove to the rental place and inquired. The whole day, with shuttle and equipment, would be \$120. We decided that for 9 1/2 hours, 16 miles, and many nice views, it was worth the money. We said we'd be ready at 8:00.

So, we returned to camp to have our stir-fry supper. On our way, we stopped in Dutch John for milk. Mom treated us to a candy bar, so we know she is happy about our rafting trip.

We had supper, with cinammon bears for dessert. They were very good.

Then we jumped off the highest rock (3 meters), before sacking out.

June 30: Warm, Sunny

We got up at 7:00 this morning to get ready to raft. We got our water jug full, and packed lunch. We also got out bagels and cinammon bears for breakfast in the car.

Upon arrival at the lodge, we got fitted out, and an old native drove us down to the launch, near the old diversion tunnel outlet. At 8:30, we were on our way down the Green River.

There were a few short rapids at the start, which proved that canoeing experience eased our passage. At one point, we went over a 4' falls. It was a quick trip over the edge, but a thrill nevertheless. We stopped at the swimming beach again, this time for trail mix. The sun was high overhead, providing plenty of warmth for awhile, it was too cold to even think of swimming.

For 3 hours, we drifted through high, red, canyons, and we raced over swift and shallow rapids. We saw countless fishermen, and were again surprised at the very low success rate. The terrain was beautiful, and we saw many fish in the water.

At 11:30, we arrived at Little Hole, UT. It wasn't even a town, just a raft landing. It was 7/16 of the way, and had shaded picnic tables perfect for a lunch. So, we got out our cheese, crackers, bologna, trail mix, and apples to eat lunch. The food and water was a welcome thing after the heat of the mid-day sun.

It took an hour and a half to eat and use the bathrooms, but when we got back on the river, the hard part was ahead. There were several large standing waves just outside the little lagoon/grove we pulled up in. Then some long, shallow rapids got in our way. We went swimming in a calm stretch before the Red Creek Rapids, the most difficult on our trip, at a rating of Class III. We also noticed that few people pushed farther than Little Hole. The next possible land is at Indian Crossing, 9 miles away.

When we got to Red Creek, we beached our \$2,000.00 craft to look at the rapids. As we planned, a dory went by, with an able helmsman.

When we were ready, we paddled to midstream, and headed in. We had chosen the right course, because we didn't crash or anything. A little water in the raft was the only ill-effect of the 51 seconds it took to travel through the rapids.

After that, we floated lazily downstream. It was so calm, PFD's weren't even required. We stopped near an island, and floated in the current the meander had created. It was cold, but worth it. We paddled little and ate lots, for 3 1/2 miles after the island. Occasionally, a challenge would arise, such as a brief rapids or shallow stretch, and we would man the paddles to guide our 10' inflatable boat through. Most of the time, though, we rode on the gun'ls.

At Indian Crossing, we passed a beaver, who was making his rounds. He got within 5 feet of us, but slapped his tail and was off. Just 1/2 mile downstream, we passed the John J. Jarvie Historic Site. As we floated by, we could see a waterwheel that would work at high water time.

Around 5 minutes past the Jarvie reach, we reached Taylor Flats, our take out point. It was 5:30. At :20 to, our shuttle arrived, a bit early. We all climbed in the Suburban® for the 1 hour ride to Flaming Gorge Lodge.

The driver, a contractor in the state government as a fisheries biologist, proved to be an interesting man to talk to. He provided us a brief summary on the state of game in Utah.

When we got in the van, we realized how tired we were, and how good spaghetti sounded to us.

Back at the campsite, the kids fixed supper, with pistachio puddin'.

After the dishes were done, I did football stuff, then went for a quick dip, my last in Flaming Gorge Lake.

Then I went up to the tent to hear a story about prospector in the old west.

July 1: Warm

This morning we roused at 7:20 to pack up and head for the High Uinta's Wilderness area. We had Bagels in the car as we drove back to Vernal. When we got there, the girls went grocery shopping while I caught up on our expenses list.

Then I slept in the car for 1 hour while we drove to Moon Lake Campground.

When we arrived, however, we noticed a lack of vacant sites, even in the overflow campground. We pondered the situation over lunch, eaten at a nearby trailhead.

After a lunch of cheese, crackers, and leftover spaghetti, we found Mary, the ranger-in-charge, and she said we could camp by the dam, which we did. First, however, we got water.

At the dam, an earth-banked structure, we set up our tent. The spot, in a poplar grove, is scenic, but with no table or utilities for 1/2 a mile, it is hardly a long-term spot.

The day had been trying and hot so far, so we walked to Moon Lake for a dip. A crowd stretched on the shore, fishing. We had to walk a long way in the deep sand to find a spot. Soon a nice spot was nearby, so we squished through the mud into the lake. It was cold. Even Robin and I were just 1 dip and then out. The water did its job, though. We were refreshed.

Robin had noticed some horses nearby earlier, so she and mom hiked down to find the small herd. They were gone a long time while Katja read and I napped. When I awoke, the horses were down at the water's edge drinking. I got up and walked over to them. Mom and Robin were following them. The herd was actually a mule-horse mix. One old mule, a big one, followed us, and would have climbed in the car with us and gone home if a cowboy hadn't driven up in his pickup and returned them to their corral.

Then we went back to camp for a beans & tortilla supper, complete with honey-dew melon in yogurt for dessert.

After the dishes were done, Mom and Robin walked to the bathroom, while I did football stuff and Katja read.

When they returned, we headed for bed.

July 2: warm, threatening rain all day

We were really lazy this morning. We weren't up until 9:30. Our breakfast was P.B & J.

Then we headed over to the campground to bathroom and water.

When our duties were done, we went to the lakeshore to find a hiking trail. Mom was in the mood for walking, so she set out an hour earlier than us. We would meet her when she turned around.

While she was gone, we read or did journal work. Just before we headed out, a young man (15 or so), was finishing a scout hike. Our van's side windows open just an inch or so, and are all tinted, and this guy walks up on Robin's side and feels the stubble of a beard. Then he moaned "Ohhh! Man" as his attention moves to his sideburns. After 30 seconds or so, a friend walked up, and, looking through Robin's opened window, noticed us.

"Hey! There's some kids in there," the other guy says.

Then the bearded guy mumbled "Oh!" and got into his car, which was next to ours. We got a chuckle out of that.

We were running a tad late, but were soon on the trail with the couscous lunch Robin packed.

The trail was a scenic one, taking us over a wild, rocky creek. Then we were on a ridge that reminded me of the U.P. There were big pines, and similar undergrowth. The trail led us along stream for most of the way, but higher than the stream.

We passed two scout groups and a mother with a 4 & 6 Y.O. pair of girls. We also hiked over or around large deposits of evidence of horses.

Mom met us at 1:20 or so, after she had turned around. A small moment of panic ensued when someone wondered about matches. They were found, and we cooked the couscous. While we were preparing to feast, however, we noticed a lack of silverware. Necessity is the mother of invention, so we fashioned chopsticks out of sticks, and ate our meal.

The trip back didn't reveal any new wonders, and at 2:45 we were back at the car.

Back at camp, we bummed around, and did journal work. The girls went swimming, and warned of an ominous storm, where we played cards. The storm never really hit us.

For supper we had Aunt Inga's casserole, and chocolate pudding.

After supper, The girls went to the bathrooms, while I did running and exercise. While I was out I discovered two hollow jet valves, running full. I don't know their source.

When the girls returned, we read awhile, but eventually turned in.

July 3: Nice

We packed in :20 minutes, a course record, this morning. Then we went to wash up before heading to Timpanogas National Park.

On our way, we stopped in Heber City for July 4th festive foods. We also ate our lunch there, in a park.

We crossed our fingers, because we knew of the reservation system's faults. When we arrived at Little Mill, however, our fears were calmed. Our site, number 54, was still empty. We moved in, and noticed how close our neighbors were.

The nearest people, eight feet away in #53, were very friendly. They are the Aalder's, Adrian, Anna, and Chris. Chris' friend Randy was also there. Adrian, the man, is a partly Dutchman, but Anna is German.

After camp is set up, the boys and I are instantly engaged in a water war with some kids from the mid 60's, farther up the street. For two hours, we threw water balloons and fired water pistols.

Then Adrian and Randy go for some Super Soakers to give us an edge. Randy, who thinks "Is all good" and is related to everybody by virtue of his "Thanks cous" saying, has yellow hair, and smokes.

When they returned, we all brandished water bazooka's, and scared the other kids away, so we sprayed each other for awhile, then played video games in their van.

After I scarfed down supper (mac & cheese with melon salad), we played darts.

Around 10:00, they offered small Swiss steaks. I eagerly grilled it over the roaring fire. I doused it in a home-made Le Aparon sauce and ate it. Mmm! Mmm! Mmm!
We also jammed to Ace of Base until 10:25, when I turned in.

July 4th: Warm

This morning we had ramen noodles for breakfast, then raced to Provo for a parade. When we got there at 10:00, it was almost half over, and we thought it should just be starting. It was a true parade, with self-propelled floats, and no giant logging equipment. The bands were excellent. One used a simpler method of cornering than others. All the local beauty queens, plus Ms. Teen USA. Also, there was a lack of candy throwing.

Immediately afterwards, Katja went to look at a Jim Morrison drawing she had seen. It was at once of many booths on the city hall lawn. She went and got her purse, and Mom and I went to browse. She found a booth called "Backwoods Art," that had Native wood cut reproduced prints. She was interested, and needed to get her plastic. So, she went to the car while Katja payed for her poster. When Mom got back, she bought the print (framed) and some similar birthday-type cards.

Then we headed back to camp. The Aalders were playing horseshoes on a portable court. Randy was playing darts, on a new dartboard.

We had potato salad, chips, and salsa for lunch. After lunch we sprayed ourselves silly, and logged enough dart miles for an intercontinental frequent-flyer ticket.

Around 4:15, they made there august departure. It was nice to be uncrowded again. We hung out then had burgers and corn for supper. Burgers! What a novelty. We had chips & salsa, and pickles. For dessert there were "cherry bearies." Biscuits (cinammon bears) with cherry pie filling on top.

After the dishes were done, Mom went to call dad, while I ran and the girls wrote. Then I went to bed, but the women stayed up and made wooden "sparklers."
Soon, we were all asleep, ready for a Mount Timpanogas Cave tour, at 8:45, which we had gotten reservations for on the way home from the parade.

July 5: Warm, threatening

We were a bit lazy this morning, and ended up racing to get our tickets, eating bagels in the car. When we arrived, we got our tickets and headed up the steep, but paved, 1 1/2 mile cave trail. I ran up for exercise, in 16:09.

Our tour started at 10:15, with a guide named Jay Allen. He briefed us about the discovery by Martin Hanson. Then we went in.

We walked through a lighted tunnel to the Great Heart of Timpanogas. It is supposedly the heart of a maiden that is lying atop the mountain. Jay had red lights turned on, and it looked like a real heart. At the end, we got to touch some stalagmites, about 4 inches tall. They were worn smooth, and very shiny when light was focused on them. The rubbing on water, cold from the springs, gave them an icy feel.

Soon our tour was complete, and thanked Jay and headed back down. Katja & Mom browsed the gift & book shops, and I just waited.

Then we returned to #54 for lunch, which was cheese, crackers, chips, and salsa. After lunch we had a major rest period, about 4 hours. We read and wrote, mostly.
Around 5:30, I made a fire for potatoes. A strong wind helped Katja to quickly fry the spuds, and at 6:00 we were quickly devouring our creation.
After supper, with some spare time, we drove around an auto tour. We saw countless flowers, but little wildlife. We also stopped at 602' Bridal Veil falls. The weather was very dark, so we headed for bed.

July 6: Hot

We packed quickly this morning and headed for Salt Lake City. Breakfast was sandwiches in the car.

At 11:20, we found the Airport Inn. Check-in time wasn't until 3:00, so we found a laundromat. When our laundry was done, we got a few groceries and found a park to eat our hodg-podge lunch. Then we went to the Temple Square, the HQ of LDS (Mormon) operations worldwide. We went into the visitor center to learn a bit, then went on a tour.

The tour guide was a 18-month student intern from Japan. She told us about everything, from the 100 daily marriages in the temple, to the tabernacle & organ, to the seagull monument, to the statue of the Christus. All along the way she tried to push Christian beliefs (not a bad thing) and specific LDS beliefs (an un-desirable thing) on our group.

After the tour, we went to an organ recital. The organ and its accompanying hall were fantastic. Many rich tones across the whole spectrum came from the 11,000 odd pipes.

When the half-hour recital was over, we went to the Crossroad's Mall, across the street, for some shopping. I got a Jim Morrison poster for Katja, and browsed a lot.

When I was done, I met the girls, and we went to the Chuck-a-Rama Buffet for supper. We gorged ourselves, then went to the hotel.

I quickly left to lift weights, and swim, as did Robin and Katja.

Back at the room, we watched Jay Leno and the O.J. Simpson trial until we were ready for bed.

July 7: Warm

This morning, we had planned to go the Great Salt Lake, and see more sights.

After breakfast, however, Mom discovered her painting wasn't in the trunk, so we had to drive back to Timpanogas.

When we arrived at #54, there was no painting, but the sherriff and campground host happened to go by, so we flagged them down, and they helped. After a few quick questions, we ascertained that some people had taken it to their nearby home.

So, we called their house, confirmed they had it, and went to pick it up. Then we drove to the airport to mail Katja's package.

After her package was gone, we headed for the GSL. We drove to it, and got gas. At the station we inquired about swimming. The attendant guided us to the Saltair, a 100-year-old convention center on the shores of the smelly Salt Lake.

Mom left to bird, while we browsed the touristy shops. When she returned we got SLC shirts. Next we tried to go swimming, but mud, a 2 mile walk to the water over salt-flats, and the smell caused a major reconsideration. So, we went to the hotel.

We showered and watched O.J. while choosing a fine dining establishment. We found some "Greek Shishkabob" place, and headed out. It was fast food, as was the Grecian Garden. Our next choice was the Ristoranté Delta Fontana, a Medditerranean & Italian place, in an old church.

After choosing our entrée, the 1st course arrived. It was an excellent Minestrone soup with bread. The next course was pineapple, followed by an excellent salad. Then the sherbet came to cleanse the pallet for the entrée, which was, in my case, a fine cantelloni with spaghetti and tortellini, the latter provided by Robin. Dessert was apples with cheese on crackers. The whole meal was about \$11.00 per person.

Then we returned to the hotel to swim & lift weights.

Soon we retired to the room, where we watched Primetime, until bed.

We sat in the dark and retraced our whole year.

Then we got our Z's.

July 8: Warm.

We roused early this morning, and drove to the airport. As Katja stood in line, mom parked. Then Katja checked in, and we went through customs. Her recently-purchased windchimes caused a scare at the X-ray, but things worked out.

The we went to BK for a decent breakfast.

After that we waited quietly in chairs, or watched the planes.

Before long, it was boarding time. Tears and hugs ensued, then she was gone. We watched the take-off, and left.

We drove quickly northeast, and stopped in Ogden for groceries, and a roadside stand for plums, cherries, and apricots.

Then we drove to Montpelier, ID, for lunch in a park. After lunch we drove to the Teton Range, near Jackson, Wyoming.

We quickly pitched our tent at Atherton Creek, then made Aunt Inga's Casserole for supper. Then we went swimming, I did running, etc, and then Robin and I tried to dam Atherton Creek, which is hardly more than a trickle.

When we were tired, we turned in.

July 9: Hot

This morning we weren't up until 9:00, when we had cereal for breakfast.

Right after breakfast we drove the 20 miles to Jackson to go to an art show. We were excited to compare this to U.P. art shows.

At this show, we browsed the 150! Booths, and decided that this put art shows we'd seen to shame. Our favorite booths were the drum and instrument booths, the juniper furniture, and the oversized, well-built, and expensive redwood furniture.

During a sack lunch, we decided what we were most interested in. With a starting price of at least \$15, I wasn't in the market to buy anything. Mom, however, decided that these were worth-while shops, and awarded us \$15, not in cash.

I looked around, but didn't see anything, so I hung around a booth called World Drums, where I got acquainted with Paul Namkung, who explained to me the art of making a hand-held hoop drum. He had to go see another drum-maker, and even left me in charge for awhile.

When mom was done shopping, she came by to choose a drum. We chose a nearly transparent, 20" diameter hoop drum and a mallet. Paul told us about care and hanging of the \$195 drum while we paid for it.

Then we walked to Jackson to look for T-shirts. We looked all over, and mom found earrings like the ones she lost down the hotel drain. Robin and I eventually both found Jackson Hole shirts, suitable for school.

Being hungry, we raced home for tortilla's. Mmm! Mm!

After supper, we dammed, and I did football stuff.

At about 10:00, we turned in.

July 10: Warm

Today we had cereal again, then headed to Jenny Lake.

On the way we stopped at Moose Visitor's Center. There, I spent my \$15 from the previous day on a hardcover book called "Earth Facts." It is great. Mom got a discount card here that even with it's \$25 cost, would've saved about \$50 so far on books. No-one had told her of it before.

Then we continued to Jenny Lake, where the mountains are reflected in the water. (The Teton publicity shot.) It was a bit choppy, so we saw no reflection.

We did, however, hike 3.1 miles to Inspiration Point, by way of Hidden Falls (an un-falls, see Fig. 1). We walked just beyond to a spot on a stream and ate lunch. Swimming was planned, but the water was frigid. So we hiked back to the car.

On the way, though, there was a bear cub across a small pond from the trail. It had, evidently, gone for a swim, and it was hungry so it poked around for food, as we watched. This was quite a memorable sight.

Our next item of business was to drive to Colter Bay Museum, where some Indian things were on display.

After looking through the gallery, we went to Colter Bay Marina, which turned out to be private, but mom got frozen treats for us, which was nice.

Then we returned to camp, but I noticed a cow moose in a river near the road. We stopped and watched the giant animal drink for about 5 minutes, then drove back to camp, where we did pancakes for supper.

After supper, I worked on the dam for awhile, then ran. About 9:45 we turned in.

July 11: Nice

This morning we got up early to drive to Yellowstone National Park.

We had breakfast in the car during the two-hour drive. On the way we saw 3 elk.

Our first stop was Old Faithful, and the nearby Morning Glory pool. We just missed an eruption, so we had some time.

We walked a short loop of pools and streams, where we first experienced the resident sulphur odor, and the constant egg smell that resulted.

Then we returned to Old Faithful to watch the 12:08 eruption. It started as just a bubbling, five foot, mushroom shaped eruption. Soon, however, it had risen to about 100 feet high, and it was at full intensity. It was boiling and then spewing water and sulfur for about 2 minutes, then it became dormant for the next hour or so.

So, we walked around and watched Castle and Giant Geysers, the latter being the tallest predictable one on earth, at 200 feet. We also saw Grand, which erupted only a few times since '59.

Next we hiked to Morning Glory Pool, which has been turned orange by loss of heat. This cooling is caused by garbage in the valve at the bottom. Then we went back to the car.

We had a sandwich lunch near a pool at a nearby trailhead, before trying to drive to Mammoth Hot Springs.

An hour or so along the way, we realized it would take forever to MHS at the current 30 m.p.h., which was traffic jam induced. So, we drove around Yellowstone Lake.

At about 6:15, we stopped to have supper, chili on spaghetti. I went to a nearby marine, but it, too, turned out to be private. So, we had supper. It was good. Then we drove back to camp, where I broke the dam and then turned in.

July 12: Warm

This morning we raced to the Bitterroots, near Salmon. We had bagels and O.J. in the car.

In Salmon, we went to a tiny café for lunch, where I had a chiliberger, and half of Robin's chiliberger. After getting a few groceries, we went to the Ranger Station, where they told us about warm springs.

Then we went up to camp, 5 miles up a twisty logging road. It was at a campground called Cougar Point that we finally pitched camp.

All afternoon, we read and wrote, until about 5:00, when we started to work on hobo pies and lemon pudding. We waited 'til 6:05 to eat our meal, which was good.

After supper, I did football exercises and read, while Mom and Robin went for a walk.

We heard mom read a western story, then hit the sack.

July 13: Nice

This morning we had grits, then packed our towels to go a hot spring.

It was a strenuous 2-mile hike, and we were pleased to find the pools of warm water, but we needed a dip in a cool one first.

For 2 hours we moved from pool to pool, and soon discovered the three main pools. Each had a different temperature, the lower pool being cool and the top being hot. I spent most of my time in the bottom two.

At about noon, we fixed ramen noodles and crackers for lunch. It tasted so good.

After lunch we lounged in the pools, worked on the dams, and just plain were lazy. We stood under and sat in waterfalls, splashed in and out of pools, and explored around for more pools.

We played in the water until 4:00, when we headed back to the car. With about 1/4 mile to go, we heard a bullet over our heads. The trail had just entered BLM land, with BLM permission to cross it. Anyway, we got down and crawled back to the car. Then we drove back to camp.

Back at camp, we had macaroni and cheese for supper, with fruit salad and yogurt for dessert.

When the dishes were done, we read, and I sprinted.

In the tent, later on, we speculated that the people who were shooting don't really want people up at the Warm Springs.

July 14: Nice

This morning we got up about 8:00, and had bagels for breakfast.

We headed out to the trail to the hot springs right away, but as soon as we were on the trail, shots rang out. So, we packed up and headed for Challis, where we looked for something to do for 4 hours.

At about 11:30, we stumbled into the Land of Yankee Fork Visitor Center. There, we learned about the Idaho Gold Rush, and of an old ghost town about 50 miles down an old carriage road.

So, we headed down an old two-rut road for about 6 miles, when we stopped for lunch at a tiny stream to have cheese and crackers. Then we drove to Custer, a ghost town, and an Idaho State Park.

When we arrived, we looked at some mining equipment right away. We were amazed at how sturdy things were. Then we walked to some nearby buildings to see how business was carried on in the 1900's.

Next we went into the General Store, which is a store for local artisans now. On a table they had two Sears catalogs, circa 1906 & 1907. Most items were \$.49-\$40, but there were house kits for as much as \$2995 for plumbing indoors and electricity.

After looking through the remaining buildings, we drove on, towards Boise and supper. We had cous-cous at a park at the base of the Lucky Peak Reservoir.

Then we went to the Boise Air Terminal to meet dad at 9:35.

When we met dad, and then looked for a hotel. We finally got to sleep at 10:30 in the Boisean.

July 15: Warm

This morning we got up and showered, then went out to eat.

For breakfast, I had the buffet, as did dad. Mom had eggs and toast and Robin had French Toast. We all enjoyed it.

After breakfast, we went to the motel to do laundry, sprints, and swimming. While the parents did laundry, we went swimming.

About 11:30, we left to go grocery shopping and pick up Ehlerts at 12:03. The grocery shopping took about 20 minutes, so we were in a bind for time.

Dad dropped off mom at the terminal, then we went to park.

When we arrived at the gate, mom and Ehlerts (minus Mark, who was in Germany with his brothers) were saying hello's.

As soon as they got their baggage and their Olds Achieva S rental car, we headed for Riggins, to get USFS information.

The led us along some very exciting rivers, and into a quick lube shop, so we stopped to do the van. For 20 minutes, we looked at magazines in a sporting goods store across the street. When the van was done, the mechanic let us look at his 22' jet boat. It had a 500 or so horsepower engine, and a top speed of 75 MPH.

Then we went to Riggins, and learned of Seven Devils C.G. We got water at the station, then drove up the rough 17 miles to 7 Devils.

At our site, we set up, then went down to the lake. There, we went swimming among the jumping fish.

Before supper, Kevin and I went for a run, about 2 miles.

For supper, we fixed hot dogs. Then we went swimming again.

About 9:10, we turned in, and it felt good to sleep.

July 16: Nice

This morning we slept in, then had bagels and bread.

The first item of business was to go up to a nearby fire lookout station. It was just a 350-yard hike, from the 2-mile away trailhead.

When we arrived, we first looked at all the breathtaking scenery. We could see parts of Oregon, Washington, Montana, and Idaho. The Seven Devils dominated the landscape, but our campground was nowhere to be seen.

The ranger was very interesting to talk too, because of his remote, isolated workplace. He also showed us the little equipment he had to find the location of a fire.

For almost two hours, we petted Arrow, his white kitten, and wondered what he would do up there for his 10-days on, 4-days off schedule. We thought about food, water, clothes, diversions, the possibility of someone not being able to mentally withstand 10 days of seclusion, even with 50+ visitors a day.

But, we wanted to swim, eat, and play, so we left for camp. After a simple, tasty cheese and crackers lunch, we went for a lengthy swim (all except dad, who slept). Then I felt tired, so I, too, went for a nap.

I slept until it was time to get up and make Aunt Inga's Casserole.

Then I ate Aunt Inga's Casserole, and waited for baked potatoes to be done.

The potatoes were done, er...burned, we ate them anyway, and had s'mores for dessert.

Then we retired to the tent for our Z's.

July 17: Warm

Today we got up and had melon and yogurt for breakfast, at around 10:00.

When the dishes were done, we packed lunch, lots of water, and swimming suits into our backpacks, and chose Cannon Lake as our destination. This is a 4 mile one-way hike, our longest to date.

Then we started hiking. We passed two vacant horse stables, and then were in woods very similar to our dense pines in the U.P. For two hours we hiked, then took a nearly hidden fork. Soon however, we learned that Robin & Scott, who were way out in front, missed the fork. Mom and Dad raced down the trail to try to catch them.

Meanwhile, up at Cannon, Kevin, Sandy, and I were debating when to start lunch. In the middle of the conversation, Kevin said he felt a bit queasy. Two minutes later he threw-up.

Dad had caught up to Robin & Scott, and soon they were up to Cannon Lake to join us.

When all of us were there, we took a dip in cool Cannon Lake. It was refreshing after the hot hike.

Then we had couscous for lunch, with Oreos and apples for dessert. We took our time repacking, then hit the trail.

The return trip was disty, and we ran a bit low on water.

After 3 hours, we were back to camp. It was 4:45.

At 5:15 or so, after a swim 7 Devils, we had beans and tortillas. The tomatoes tasted very good. Then we had cinammon bears for dessert.

All of us went swimming, and dad went off the "high dive" rocks. The rest of us just splashed around.

When we were tired, we returned to the tent. Then we went to sleep, and were ready for the 18th.

July 18: Hot

This morning we moved camp to Spring Bar, on the Salmon River. For breakfast we had an assortment of foods.

Then we drove to Riggins to find campground info. When we had the decision made, we drove 8 miles along the Salmon to Spring Bar.

Once there, the parents set up camp, while the kids picked apricots from the three loaded trees.

When the tents were up, we talked about the possibility of a 1/2 day raft trip.

So, we piled into the car and drove to Riggins to check on raft trips. They were \$35/person for 3+ hours, with amenities like pop. That is a good deal, so we decided to do it.

Our route continued north from Riggins, on a Nex Perce Historical Auto Tour. We crossed the Pacific Time Zone line, drove up White Bird Hill (7 miles, 10% grade, 4900+ ft) and raced down the backside into Grangeville, where we had ramen noodles for lunch and mom dislocated her knee, but dad popped it back in.

Then we looked at several historic battlefields, and at a map of the whole route. We decided we should just go to the visitor center to shorten our distance.

When we got to the center, we caught a guided tour of the best 400 or so specimens in the 4,800-piece collection. The tour was informative and interesting, and the hall contained everything from bows to a replica sweat lodge. We also watched a movie about the Nez Perce, and browsed the tiny bookstore.

At 5:00, we drove through Lapwai, HQ of the Nez Perce Nation. Then we drove home, with a few quick stops on the way.

Around 9, we pulled into camp, and at 10:00 we were finishing a spaghetti supper, complete with pudding.

Given the time, bed was our next stop.

July 19: Nice

This mornign we grabbed our breakfast (a gritts, apricot soup dad whipped up) and raced to Riggins to make our 10:00 departure time.

When we got to the offices of Discovery Rafting, Inc., a secretary gave us insurance release forms to read and sign, and we used the restroom.

Our next step was being fitted with lifejackets. Each had a name on the back, mine was Whitetail. Then came the safety chalk talk, the equivalent of the airline oxygen mask emergency demonstration.

Then we drove to our launch site, a 1/4 mile away.

As we shoved off, our Nez Perce guide, James, gave us seating assignments. I was given the high stern spot, and that suited me fine. James told us about many things, and he was equipped with a good sense of humor.

Our first rapids was Time Zone, right on the time zone line, then Tight Squeeze, a Class IV, which James said he ran on a 9 on a 1-10 scale. Then we took a quick dip before Ladder and the rock house. Ladder was a long one, and we were ready to take the walk up to the tepee ring and miner's rock house. James & Jed (Jed was in the other boat) told us all there was to know about the small house and surrounding area.

Then we climbed back aboard and swam, rowed, and drifted the last 1/2 mile. I learned that rowing is very hard.

We clambered out, rode in a van to the cars, where Sandy, Kevin, Robin, and I got groceries.

Then we went back to pick apricots and have hobo pies with apricot cobbler. It was all good, and we invited the neighbors from the apricot site (they were on our raft trip) over for dessert.

Finally, we went swimming at our section of the Salmon before bed.

July 20: Warm

This morning we were very lazy, and took all morning until 10:30 getting up.

By 11:00, we had had breakfast, and were lounging around, reading and journaling. We also ate apricots for lunch all day.

In the morning, the women went for a long exercise walk, and when they returned, we headed down to the beach to spend the afternoon.

We had apricot, peanut butter, and bread sandwiches for our "official" lunch. Then we hit the beach.

The abrupt drop of the bottom, was perfect for running and jumping. The kids especially did this constantly.

Burying people in the sand was our next fever. Both Scott and I got buried, but easily broke out.

Sand sculptures followed, but only Robin, Scott, and I were involved. We made tombs, faces, planes, cars, flowers, and a boat.

Then we drew a start and finish line and ran sprints, middle, and endurance races. I established myself as King of the Beach, losing just one race (a sprint, dad beat me).

In between all these things, we swam, leaving quite a runway on the sand leading into the water. We also played 'lemmings,' marching into the water until it was over our heads.

Then swimming across the river ensued, and struggling and floating in the swift current.

But, like all things, it had to come to an end, 'cause we was hungry! We went up, but found we had only a few scrapings of leftovers, a sad state of affairs. So, we made some mac & cheese to supplement our leftovers, and chowed down.

Then we went swimming again, and decided to sleep out on the beach. Besides it was the night of the Jupiter/comment collision, and we didn't want to miss anything.

So, we carried our bags down, and sacked out, in a circle with our heads inside. Sandy found her keys, inside her car. (Locked out!)

For half an hour, we talked, watched the sky, and waited for the moon. None of us saw it rise (sleeping) but several saw it during the night.

July 21: HOT

This morning, Dad and Sandy drove to Riggins to get a locksmith, after a quick wake-up dip in the Salmon.

While they were gone, we got everything ready to go, then Dad & Sandy return.

Rocky, the village locksmith, would be out to open it up in ten more minutes, after he said bye to some departing houseguests.

When we got there, he got out the tools necessary. He set out going under the window, but the tool didn't reach the lock. Next he tried to slim-jim the back doors, and succeeded.

It looked like we were on our way, but he couldn't get his first tool out of the door. He tried everything, but eventually he decided to take off the door panel. Once it was off, it was easy to get the tool. Then he replaced the doorpanel. The whole two-hour process cost Sandy \$20.

Soon we had hit the road, destination: Enterprise. For 3 hours we drove towards Enterprise, we stopped for crackers, cheese and milk to drive and eat. After lunch, we found ourselves in Hell's Canyon, temp 105°.

We drove by dams and skiers, and braved the heat to go to the bathroom.

Our route led out of the canyon, through 62 miles of curvy woods road, out onto the Joseph zumwalt.

At 5:30, we rolled into the Outbound Inn, Jeff and Michele's B&B. Only Jeff was home, but we said hello and took the tour of the Kiwi, Zumwalt, and unfinished Mali rooms, plus the downstairs.

We motioned, after much goofing around and oohing and aahing, to go to Molly McGillicuddy's Mexican Eatery for supper. As Michele was not yet back from her bike ride, we walked the two blocks to the restaurant.

I had enchiladas and wet burrito special, and I liked it. When my platter (and Sandy & Kevin's leftovers) were gone, we were ready to go.

When we were back at Outbound, we said hello to Michele, picked up our laundry, and went to Wallowa Lake State Park, where we set up and sacked out.

July 22: warm

This morning we had raisin bread and bagels.

Then we packed up, and went to the Hurricane Creek Trailhead for a 3-mile hike up to Slick Rock Creek.

All of us started out together, but Tim, Kevin, and I decided to "hoof it," and got out in front. We left cookies from Tim's bag on the trail for Anna and Jesse, and we found a wrong-way fork.

When we got back from the dead-end fork, everyone but Nancy, Chris, and Anna had caught up to us. We continued for 1/2 mile past a fairly deep (100') gorge, a good swimming hole, and a mule team, in no particular order.

Before we knew it, we were there. The creek had about 10 pools, each with a waterfall of some sort. They were the perfect size for one person to sit in. The water was cold, at best, but bearable. All of the small pools culminated in one large waterfall, which people could stand under 3 at a time.

As time goes, it was a very short 3 hours before Tim and a carload of people had to go down for the 3:00 rehearsal, but it was fun nevertheless. So, down the trail charged four cousins, Tim, mom, and grandpa.

We got to the car, had some water, and drove to the Joseph Lake Lodge. On the way, we discussed how much buffalo steak we needed. With all our figuring and re-figuring, we came up with 8 lbs.

After dropping everyone off where they needed to be, Robin, Scott, and Mom went for steak while Kevin and I showered and headed for the pavilion, site of the B-B-Q.

On the way, I met Adelbert (my Dutch uncle), who was driving into the campground. I climbed in, and we headed to the picnic area. No-one was there when we arrived, so we went to the lodge to verify the venue. Jeff said it was at the picnic area, and they would be right over. Sure enough, everyone arrived about 10 minutes later.

We met Kim and Earl, Michele's sitster and brother-in-law, and Bill Stack, a friend, plus countless others. Being a strapping boy, I spent awhile moving tables, carrying coolers, and other odd jobs.

When mom arrived, we slapped our beef (buffalo was \$10.16 for 8/10 #) steaks on the grill.

While we were waiting for our steaks, Kevin and I took the arms and legs of the toddlers, and swung them back and forth. They were incredibly gullible, and thought we might actually let go. It was in this manner that we met Lewis (Lou), Mr. Three-Year Old Universe. He was fast, strong, and tough. We were thinking of letting him drop.

Then our steaks were done. I ate mine, a 12-oz, two 3-oz chicken legs, and a salad, and eight more ounces of steak.

Volleyball was taken up right after supper, then a very good game of Ultimate Frisbee. Liz, no. 2 in the northwest in females, was on my team. We were down 1-5, then Earl (a Marine) joined, and brought his son Lou! Then, with Lou charging out in front, we caught up and tied the score 5-5, but lost in sudden death.

Then we said goodnight, and turned in.

July 23: Nice, but slight drizzle

This morning we were up at 8:00, to have breakfast.

Just as we were starting, Joe, a friend of Jeff's, brought a big fruit salad and muffins that he had made with Lisa (his wife).

We thanked him profusely, and chowed down.

Then we picked up G&G, Chandlers, and Flo Alling to go to Joseph to do some artsy browsing in bronze shops.

Our first store was the Valley Bronze, where we saw a video about the molding process. We looked at their works, ranging from \$1,100 - \$85,000. We didn't buy anything.

We walked through the stores, and I went to a bookstore and read football magazines. They 49ers are favored to win it all this year.

Then I mooched an ice cream cone from dad, and soon the seniors followed suit and had one too.

Some ironing had to be done, so I went back to run with Kevin. We went for 30 minutes, 4 miles. I carried the football, which slowed me.

Then we raced to the shower, and our wedding clothes, and finally to the wedding, at the lodge.

When we arrived, I helped carry food, and mix punch.

Then the ceremony started, after an intense photo op. The family was on the inner circle of the ring, then friends behind. It was outside. Michele walked in, and they read their vows. Then they passed a candle around both circles, and lit one with the two. Next I knew, I heard - "Jeff, you may kiss your bride!" Twelve minutes, and it was over.

Next came the champagne toast, a fine poem by Bill Stack was the toast. Hors d'ouvres followed, vegetables, fruit, and chocolate-dripped strawberries.

When hors d'ouvres filled us, we were invited to eat dinner. I did, with lasagna, spanikopita, potatoes, and lots of fruit. A fine wedding cake followed.

Frenchy and the Swamp Rats arrived during the feast, and the dance began. The music was cajun, and fun to dance to. I played duck-duck-goose, and skipped stones across the river.

At 10:00, the party was over, and we went back to camp.

July 24: Hot

This morning we went to the lodge for breakfast.

Kevin and I played chess, then terrace before going out to order on the porch.

I had eggs and sausage, but most of the 20 or so there had the Lodge omelet.

Then we feasted on the delicious food. I talked with Earl about his occupation. What a job, but he's retiring in October.

After breakfast, we played catch with the football, but soon we had to go. I said goodbye to everyone, from Lou to Mr. Chandler.

We hit the road, for Enterprise to see the Outbound and say bye to Jeff.

Our last stop in Oregon was a Pow-wow at Wallowa. When we got to the pow-wow, it was 102°, but we watched anyway. During one James, the raft guide from Riggins.

Some shouting got his attention, and we all said hi. We asked him about purchasing a tee-pee, and he told us that he made them. We walked over and saw a canvas, 12' model. It was nice. We got his card, and said goodbye.

Being hot, we got shave ice, pina colada was my choice. While we ate it, a boy that was dancing dropped an eagle feather. The pow-wow was stopped, and a special dance was conducted to pick up the feather. A collection was taken for the boy, and his grandfather told a story.

When the eagle feather ceremony was over, we said goodbye to everyone and headed for Spokane. For an hour and a half, I slept as we rumbled over a gravel road.

The route led along the Grand Ronde River, then through a curvy stretch, through Lewiston, and across grain country to Spokane, WA.

We went to the Airport Holiday Inn, where Chandlers were staying.

As quickly as possible, we climbed into our beds.

July 25: This morning we got a wake-up call at 6:00.

We took turns showering then drove to the airport to drop off dad. We didn't even go in, just said 'bye' and left.

As soon as we could, we got on I-90 to go to Glacier National Park. In 10 minutes we were on our way.

The road led across Idaho, and into Montana. For 6 hours we drove, then pulled into Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park.

After paying the entry fee, we went to find a site at Fish Creek. At first, the situation looked grim, but we got the 6th-to-last site.

When camp was set up, we went to Apgar Visitor Center to find out how to maximize our short time there.

We decided to hike 2 miles to Avalanche Lake that afternoon. So, we piled in car and drove to Avalanche Trailhead.

The hike led us right past a deep clear pool fed by a roaring creek. It was impossible to swim in, but looked very inviting.

During the hike, we talked about the 1400 mile return trip.

When the lake appeared, so did giant waterfalls leading into it.

Robin and I wanted to go swimming, so we waded into the chilly water. In the end I was the only one to go under, and get the numbing side effects of bragging rights.

We hiked back down, when I was dry. On the way, mom heard a lifer, but couldn't see it.

Then we ate supper, which was Aunt Inga's Casserole, at a picnic area near the trail.

After supper we went to a ranger program about the bears in the park, and their future. We also learned about bear safety.

When the program was over, we went back to camp to read a western story.

After the story, I was asleep in a snap.

July 26: Nice, drizzle in evening

This morning we had melon and yoghurt for breakfast.

Then we drove up Going-To-the-Sun Road for the days hike.

When we arrived, we parked and hiked up the Hidden Lake trail to the overlook, where we saw scenic Hidden Lake. We drank some water, and then someone spotted a grizzly taking a drink in the lake.

For 15 minutes, we watched it run, walk, eat, drink, and sit, then he disappeared over a ridge.

So, Robin and I headed down, leaving mom to look for ptarmigans. On the way down, we met a ranger who confirmed that it was a grizzly. We also saw two mountain goats, and a dozen bighorn sheep, the latter just for fleeting moments.

Back at the car, we wrote in our journals until mom came. She reported she had seen a ptarmigan.

Many Glacier, our next stop, was too far away to have lunch, so we stopped at a trailhead to have cheese, crackers, and bread. Then we drove to St. Mary, where we looked for T-shirts. Finding none, we went to Many Glacier.

Our plan was to ride a boat to the Grenell Glacier, but it cost \$19.00, and we had just 1 hour to look around, and it is a mile walk up. So, we rented a small rowboat and paddled around the small lake, and mom saw two ducks. Before we knew, our hour was over.

We went over to St. Mary again, for huckleberry ice cream. One worker, Lislie, was going to Lawrence U., and knew Karen Mohler. The cones were good, too.

Finally, we drove to Apgar Picnic Area for our hotdog supper. They were good, as were the s'mores we had for dessert.

Back at fish creek, we were going to go to a Ranger Program, but it was drizzle, so mom read a story, then we snoozed.

July 27: Warm - 687 miles

This morning we rose at 5:30 to drive home. At 6:05, we pulled out.

Our route followed U.S. II all day, when we had bread and jam for breakfast, cheese and crackers for lunch, and when we pulled off in Minot, North Dakota.

We drove across wheat fields all day. In Williston, ND, we got shakes. I had peach and Robin had Butterfinger®. Mom had tea.

In Minot, we stayed at a KOA, right on the highway. We had beans & tortillas for supper, with Lemon pudding. Then I read Popular Science in the store before my shower.

After the shower, we journaled, and then tried to sleep.

July 28: Nice - 640 miles

This morning mom didn't sleep because of the highway. So, we got up and drove to Minnesota, where mom was too tired to continue, so she took a nap for an hour while we got groceries.

Then we drove across Minnesota and Wisconsin, into Michigan!!

At 6:30, we pulled into Imp Lake, where we pitched camp and had ramen noodles for supper.

After supper, we went swimming. As it turned out, we stopped there on the way home from the Porkies when mom hurt her back.

When mom read half a story, we re-capped the trip, then slept very soundly.

July 29: Nice

This morning we slept until 8:15! We had leftover ramens for breakfast.

Then we drove to Iron Mountain to visit Grandma in the hospital, and to drive up to the farm.

After the Dickinson County stops, we drove home, with a stop for grocery goods in Esky.

It felt so good to be back.

EUROPE

Day 1: 17 July Balmy

All trips have to start somehow, and this one did at 5:30 on a cool Monday at our brick house overlooking Exeter. We quickly got dressed, said goodbye to Dad, and piled into the car...destination Paris.

The trip to France on our outward leg involved driving to London - some three hours to the east - then south to Folkstone and the Channel Tunnel Terminus there. The drive was relaxed: good tunes and the open road make for an easy time. Crossing the channel on a train well below the waves was hardly exciting, and we were rarely aware of any motion at all.

When the train stopped 35 minutes later and the attendant waved us forward, I pulled the car off the car, up the platform and onto the French motorway at Calais. The terrain was hilly, but long grass and stands of trees masked that fact. Rolling down the highway with a backwards car afforded great views of the rivers and valleys that we traversed enroute to the capital.

About 20 km outside of Paris, the quiet, divided motorway abruptly transformed into a noisy suburban street, and we got our first taste of France and its people. As we crept along through traffic, it became apparent that there wouldn't be much English here. At around 5 km out, we turned onto the perimeter loop road, a busy, 5-lane affair that could only be described by a driver new to the city as 'exciting.' We got off the periphery after just a few miles and began the true adventure of the day: driving to our Youth Hostel. It took relatively little time and only minor "detours" to get to Le d'Artagnan. We checked in, hauled luggage up to our sixth floor room, and, amazingly, found free parking 200 feet up the street. The whole trip had taken just 8 hours.

Since the night was young, we walked down Rue d'Avron to the Seine. It was a long walk through some less-than appealing neighborhoods that wore us out and left us wanting to take the Metro back. Before we did, though, we wandered to Place de La Bastille for a drink at a café, complete with sidewalk table and long straws. At the bottom of our glasses was a ride back to the hostel, where we quickly found dinner: tortillas with black beans in the room.

Then, it was time to lay out tomorrow's clothes and hit the hay.

Day 2: 18 July Sunny

Just one day into the trip, we awoke this fine morning and prepared for a slight change from the norm. Following shower and shave, there was time for a simple breakfast and the hostel (cereal, yogurt, OJ, fruit) before returning to the Metro and Place de La Bastille to rendezvous with another Webbie, Kyle Beattie, who is in my class and is spending his summer in Paris at the Specs Photography School.

The meeting, arranged solely via email, was easy and by 9:15 Robin, Kyle and I had split from Mom and headed to the Centre Pompidou. However, the Centre Pompidou is closed on Tuesdays, which meant that we were in need of a plan B. The three of us wandered Les Halles and its sculpture garden before deciding to check out Musée Rodin.

Rare in that it shows only the work of one artist, this museum is actually housed at Rodin's mansion. Included in the galleries are most of Rodin's sculptures, as well as some of his paintings and even some of his tools and work tables. Even though nearly every famous sculpture by the man is presented at the museum in some form or another - sketch, study, or final sculpture - the highlight of the visit on this beautiful day was walking through the sculpture garden behind the mansion. Well-kept and beautifully planted, the sizable area provided a great setting for sculptures like "The Gates of Hell" and "The Thinker."

From Musée Rodin, we strolled past Invalides, where Napoleon is entombed under a great golden dome, towards Les Jardins Luxembourg - the Luxembourg Gardens. Unfortunately, we found a terrific grocery store, where we bought picnic stuff. Now fully laden, Kyle suggested taking the subway for the balance of the trip.

Upon our arrival at the gardens, Robin and I were rapidly amazed at the ornate setting, complete with palm trees and a large central fountain. Our attention faded, though as Kyle opened biscottes, cheese, and prosciutto to begin the feast called lunch. For over an hour we ate and watched people walk by our seats on the edge of the fountain. We had good laughs over Robin and Kyle's Yop drinks and the incredibly low quality of the water in the fountain.

After lunch, we left the gardens by way of a side exit, which lead us past a rather run-down fountain that had one of the most dramatic sculptures I've seen - a god peering down on a couple. Then there was a display of photos from around the world on the fence on our way out that was worth half an hour of time before we walked up a side street to the Pantheon.

Built in the 19th century as a church, the Pantheon is now the temple of the nation; a place where great Frenchman are honored in death. The large main hall is marked by the pendulum in the center, which is suspended from the top of the building's dome.

Below the main hall are the crypts, where the likes of Victor Hugo, the Curies, and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry are buried. This labyrinth of rooms was full of names that have shaped the world and was neat to wander through. At the rear was a large exhibit dedicated to the Little Prince and Saint-Exupéry that seemed out of place but was worthwhile.

Our next item of business was going with Kyle to Speos so that he could get some prints out of the darkroom. The school was very small and pretty low-key, but the photos lying all over were really good. Our stay was limited to looking at new prints of Kyle's and a quick check of the e-mail before we had to fly back to Musée d'Orsay to meet Mom.

Despite the kids being almost 20 minutes late, we met Mom as planned and crossed the Seine to sit in the gardens at Touleries and compare notes about the day. Next, we rode the Metro to Little Athens and the Notre Dome area. Our dinner turned out to be a little disappointing - flavorless gyros sandwiches, but we made up for it by getting crepes on Ile de Ste Louis.

The last item on the agenda was a trip to Sacré Coeur, the church that looks out over the whole city from a tall hill in the north. The whole area was choked with people who wanted to see the city or just hang out in a great spot, but the views were still great.

When we left Sacré Coeur it was time to bid Kyle a fond adieu and head for Le d'Artagnan, tired and very much ready to sleep, which came quickly.

Day 3: 19 July Sunny

Once again we rose early, got cleaned, and made our way downstairs for breakfast. As we had the day before, we walked the 5 minutes south to the Metro, where we got on the train and rode to the Louvre.

From the platform at the Louvre stop, we walked through a subterranean mall into the lobby under IM Pei's pyramid. Though a crowd was beginning to form, getting tickets and entering the museum went quickly.

The first order of business was to see the Mona Lisa - surrounded by a throng just 15 minutes after the museum opened. While this isn't my favorite painting, seeing such an important work was still a bit exciting. From the Mona Lisa we walked down a long hall of romantic paintings, which were dwarfed by the magnitude and beauty of the room in which they were displayed. Then, we paid a visit to the sculpture galleries, highlighted (for me) by Winged Adonis and the statues of Roman warriors. From there it was on to the apartments of Napoleon III, some very well preserved and very ornate rooms where Napoleon III and his family actually lived. Our visit concluded with the Ruben gallery - a giant room filled by just a few giant paintings. By this time we'd spent five hours in the museum and were in need of new subjects to look at - Romantic paintings were getting old.

Once again we bought picnic stuff (baguettes, boursin cheese and 7-UP) and ate at the Tuleries, on public picnic chairs in a grove of trees. When the bread and cheese had been inhaled, we plotted our afternoon plan of attack.

First up was a train ride to the park under the Eiffel Tower. Climbing or riding up on the tower wasn't high on anyone's list after the visit to Sacré Couer, so we crashed in the park on the grass. It didn't take too long for the hot afternoon sun to chase us away, though, and we landed at the Arc de Triomphe.

Maybe the most impressive thing about the arch is the traffic around it; the Lonely Planet insisted that this was the busiest round about in the world, and there was no arguing that 12 avenues meeting in one place made a big snarl. Luckily, there was a pedestrian underpass, which we utilized. When we emerged from the crowded tunnel, we were standing under the massive arch and looking from La Defense in the west to the Louvre in the east down Avenue des Champs Elyses. Although the monument is very formidable, it was the view across the city from atop the gentle rise that struck me. Standing under the arch, looking out between the huge stone legs, it felt like the whole city converged on the symbol of France's greatness.

When we had gawked for long enough to become part of the sculpture, it was time to shift gears into shopping mode along Champs Elyses. Although we purchased only groceries, I made several stops looking for a surf hat and other stores of interest.

By this time we had to rush to beat rush hour on the Metro, which we did, and get back to the Hostel in time to rest and journal. Along the way I stopped at a patisserie and got tarts for dessert.

Dinner was sandwiches and salad in the room, with Robin and I splitting a citron and a strawberry between ourselves. Then there was time for journaling and chatting before sleep.

Day 4: 20 July Sunny

This morning we rose extra early and executed the morning routine at L'Artagnan for the last time before loading the car and setting out through traffic to Versailles.

It took an hour to cover the 10 miles or so to Versailles, but we still beat the morning rush. This proved a moot point, however, as we opted not to buy tickets to go inside but rather to visit the gardens for free.

Even before we had fully rounded the corner of the palace to see the Grand Canal, it was apparent that the magnitude of this place was unparalleled. Looking out from the patio, everything in site was formal: trees trimmed, hedges clipped, flowers carefully laid out and grass closely mowed. Dotting the tremendous flora were fountains of different sizes, shapes and sculptural themes, none of which were on - a treat only available for Sunday visitors. Under an already scorching sun we walked through the front gardens and down to the Grand Canal. There, we walked along the edge until a heron fishing from the ledge interrupted our progress. We paused while Robin sketched the bird, then continued to the Grand Triannonn - Louis XIV's getaway house. We were pleased to find that this much smaller display of grandeur was open to tourists, and, after touring the gardens outside, we went in.

As had been the case at the Napoleon III apartments, no expense had been spared in making this as lavish a dwelling as possible. Each room was meticulously maintained, and it was readily apparent that the place would have been a popular spot for summer parties with its black-and-white-tiled peristyle.

By this time it was early afternoon, so we wandered back to the car for another meat, cheese & biscotte sandwich lunch. After Robin and I had grazed for a good long time it was on to the motorway again, hurtling madly across the fields of grain toward Chartres to see its cathedral.

The town had barely even appeared on road signs when two spires - one greek and one romanesque - appeared on the horizon. Even as close as 10 km, no indication of the town had yet broken into view, but the spires were now joined by an immense green roof and about a dozen flying buttresses. When we finally did get into Chartres, small details of the cathedral were readily visible - rose windows, arched entrances, and the like could be made out easily.

Parking was in an inverted (subterranean) parking garage that had a nice feel and an even nicer plaza at ground level. From there it was just a short walk to the building, which we toured at length. Robin sat in the transept to sketch a rose window, so Mom and I did some window shopping before meeting Robin outside the cathedral and returning to the car.

Our final destination for the evening was the vicinity of the Lascaux caves, so we began heading south, purchasing and consuming sandwiches along the way. Though the village of Montignac was the ideal stopping point, a hotel with discount rooms near an airport 20 minutes away was our actual place of rest for the evening.

Once checked in, it took just a few minutes to move our bags upstairs and get ready for bed. Sleep came quickly after a long day in the sun.

Day 5: 21 July Sunny

Our earliest start yet got us on the road by 7:25, headed towards Montignac and the ticket office for the Lascaux caves.

Once there, it became apparent that the ticket office didn't open at 8:00AM as suggested by the guidebook but rather an hour later. So, Mom waited in the brisk morning air as Robin and I lingered in the car, having bread & honey for breakfast. When the bread was gone we darted across the busy rush-hour street to a patisserie to get a croissant and a chokolatine, which served as "breakfast supplement" and "special treat" equally.

When the ticket window opened, we got three tickets for a 10 AM tour, leaving us time for more window shopping before driving the 2 km to the caves.

As our group queued, one thing stood out - crying babies. Sadly, this would be the strongest memory of the caves. Regardless, the tour started and our guide (with his outrageous French accent) talked about the great paintings on the sides and roof this cave, which was actually an excellent duplicate of the original, which was closed in the '60s to protect it. The drawings were exceptional: vibrant reds and dark blacks made up very complex animal shapes that were also matched to the relief of the limestone walls.

The tour was short, as only one big room or art had been copied. When it had concluded we went to La Thot, some 5 km distant, to redeem the second half of our ticket, see a film with English subtitles, and eat lunch. Fortune smiled, though, and there was a visitor center with a few cool exhibits and a tiny zoo with animals like those on the walls at Lascaux. The film was a short bit about the making of the new cave, and it really helped clarify the process used.

Lunch followed the visitor center and zoo visits - baguettes, meat, cheese, pickles, and tomato eaten on a rock in the parking lot.

The day's final point of interest was a small, walled village 30 km to the south called Montpanzier. Our stop there was totally non-cultural: we split up for shopping, a café stop and journaling. In the early afternoon heat we (Robin and I) found a cool sporting goods shop where I got a great deal on a small picnic knife. Then, as early moved on to late, we found a table under a wood and canvas umbrella and sipped coke, licked lollies, took pictures, and sketched until Mom found us around 5:30.

We got some groceries and then followed the road south for a short time until we found a campground. There, we sat around in the shade, reading, until the sun had nearly slipped behind a distant hill, at which point we cooked tortellini for supper and put up one of the tents.

After dinner, Mom and I walked through the back streets of the tiny town we'd stopped in. Lots of family gatherings on back patios filled the quiet streets with laughter - a very neat and very French feeling.

To our dismay, a loud dance party had begun at the campground while we were out, and our impending sleep was put on hold as a DJ bellowed into the microphone between dance tracks. We tried to sleep, eventually drifting off somewhere between the DJ and his echo from across the valley.

Day 6: 22 July Overcast, windy

Up and at 'em early again this morning on a long driving day. We were showered, fed, and packed before anyone at the campground had stirred.

The drive south took us through some picturesque back roads before meeting up with the major north/south autoroute at Cahors. From there we headed south by west, across Provence towards La Seyne-sur-Mer, near Toulon.

Highlights of the trip included seeing the Mediterranean, passing a walled, midevil village that seemed almost too stereotypical to be real, the beauty of the landscape, and our late afternoon swing to Pont du Gard.

Bridging a narrow spot on the Gard River near Nimes, Pont du Gard is the most famous aqueduct in the world. The three-tiered structure was built by the Romans, and most of it remains today. Our stop there wasn't long, but it was memorable. Foremost, of course, was seeing the bridge and hopefully getting some good photos, but a second objective emerged from the heat waves in the parking lot: swimming.

The bridge was just a short walk from the visitor's center, so getting there and getting good pictures was easy. When we had satisfied our wonderment at the size of the arches, Robin and I made our way down to the river for some cliff-diving. We both went off some low rocks and some high rocks, enjoying every bit of the experience.

Time was short, though, and several more hours of French roads lay between us and the campground, so we got changed and back on the road.

After a grocery stop in Aix-en-Provence, we drove the rest of the way and arrived at Camping Les Mimosas in time for sunlight during dinner. Then we put up tents and hit the hay.

Day 7: 23 July Sunny → rain

A rare luxury took place to start the day: ~~we~~ I slept in until after 9 o'clock. When sleeping in was getting dull, I got showered and ready for a day at the beach. Bread and honey made a nice breakfast and then we were off.

The campground hostess recommended a beach just 3 km up the road, so we took the suggestion and maximized our relaxing time. When we got there, we found a spot in the sand and did the beach thing for almost three hours. The azure water of the Med was somewhat chilly, though, so we each braved just one dip in the sea.

By 1:00 PM, our skin was crispy from sun, salt, and wind-whipped sand, so we rose, walked back to the car, and ate our lunch of beans & tortillas. (with tomato, onion, cheese & salsa!)

Much of the afternoon was spent wandering through a street fair and the side streets of the beach village, even though most of the shops were closed. In the end, we only got olives.

Fully drained from a day doing almost nothing, in the sun, we returned to the campground, where Robin and I moved to the café - she to study and me to journal. Mom headed off on a quest to get food for the next few days, but she returned empty handed. As it was getting on towards evening, we decided to cook supper, shrugging off the light drizzle that occasionally pierced the clouded sky.

After dinner, we returned to the café and its pleasant tables in the open air for ice cream. Unfortunately, the unpredictable drizzle prevented journaling or studying...and shortly it started to rain, precluding any outdoor activity at all. So, we retreated to the relative dry of the tents, where sleep overcame any other endeavours (reading) that we had had.

Day 8: 24 July Sunny

No hurry to get up this morning either, although we all did in reasonable time. After showers and breakfast, we packed up for a day trip to St. Tropez.

Initially, we'd planned on stopping in Toulon for some shopping, after winding through the crowded morning streets without any hint of a commercial district, we bagged that plan and headed on to St. Tropez.

Along the way we were distracted by a flock of flamingos and a carwash (simultaneously) for about half an hour, then by a nature trail upon which Mom and I walked...she got a bunch of lifers, which was pretty cool.

From the parking lot of the trail, we continued down the road to St. Tropez, chugging up and down hills on a very windie road. Then, out of nowhere, there was a traffic jam, and we sat for nearly an hour, inching toward a parking spot on the side of the road just out of town.

Just as we topped a hill near the village, a spectacular blue harbor came into sight, dotted by a half-dozen big yachts. When we'd parked and loaded lunch into my backpack, we walked into town, stopping at a park along the way for a meat and boirsin lunch, along with some serious boat watching.

Largely due to my need for more time to examine all the boats, Robin and I split apart from Mom and combed the harbor, checking out all the Magnums, baias, Cigarettes, and Sunseekers. Then, we moved to the yacht basin, where about a dozen megayachts were tied. These ranged from a Mangusta 105 all the way up to Oceanfast's 'Octopussy.' Sadly, our hour of boatwatching was up, so we rendezvoused with Mom and persuaded her to walk out on the pier with us. As we did, 'Queen M' pulled up, and we got a first-hand look at a megayacht's crew in action.

Now that the serious boat nerd portion of the day was over, we walked to a pottery store so that Mom could buy some dishes she'd seen earlier. It's interesting to note that while Robin and I sat in the courtyard waiting for Mom to complete her transaction, a famous French footballer from the Euro2000 team walked into the restaurant across the street.

From there we did more window shopping and sightseeing in the small town before racing the hordes back to the car. Once there, we got in and I executed a quick U-turn so that we could sit in the outbound queue for half an hour. Along the way, we did manage to get in a much needed grocery stop, and I was able to find a hat in a store in the mall with the grocery store.

When Mom and Robin had finished fighting the crowds in the grocery store, we headed back out to fight traffic once again. This took some time, and we didn't arrive at the campsite until well after dark.

Darkness did not prevent Mom from making couscous with hamburger and vegetables (that really hit the spot) and a tortellini pasta salad for lunch the following day. Just as we were sitting down to dinner, some music started - another campground dance party. So, we ate dinner with background music.

After dinner and clean-up, Rob convinced me to head up to the party, which I reluctantly did. Once we were on the dance floor, though, it was pretty fun, and the two of us tore up every song for the next three hours, disco-ing until 1:00 AM. By that time, our legs were pooped and the end of the music was somewhat of a relief. In minutes we were back in our sleeping bags, the lights dancing off the backs of our eyelids.

Day 9: 25 July Sunny

The crack of dawn was, once again, our wake up time, and we were able to shower, break camp, and check out of the campground by 8:00. Then we hit the road, zooming out of France to Italy, and Florence to be exact.

Robin served brioche from the backseat once we were on the road, and it was hardly into our second CD when Monaco appeared on the exit signs.

Once of the most exciting parts of Monaco is the access road: a 2 KM tunnel, a steep, winding road, and then even steeper, windier city streets. We once again found ourselves in heavy resort traffic, but, with the help of very well-marked streets, we got to a parking garage and into pedestrian mode pretty quickly.

As we emerged from the parking ramp, the sidewalk hung out over the ocean, and the Grand Princess was just a mile, or fraction thereof, out to sea, tugging at her anchor chain in the morning swell. All of this was well and good, but time was limited, so we hoofed it over to the marine area, where 10 megayachts were Med-moored along the pier. We gawked at these and looked around at the very ritzy town that seemed to come cascading down the mountain to the sea. For a total of almost an hour, according to the parking machine that waived our fee for such a short stay, we tried to see as much as we could in a relaxed manner.

The drive out of the city was less exciting, but the roads that snaked up and out afforded non-driving members of the tour very good views of the municipality and the sea.

Suddenly, we were back on the highway, and shortly we found ourselves in Italy. There, the road got really wild, covering hills and valleys with a two-and-a-half hour sequence of bridges and tunnels. We ate our pasta salad lunch at a service station, admiring a Ferrari 355 that pulled up.

A final side trip to Pisa rounded out the day's travels. (Of interest to boat people was the Azimut Challenger lying, in bad shape, on a wharf outside of town.) Following signs to the Leaning Tower yielded parking and then we walked a bit to the tower itself, which was under heavy construction.

Pisa's tower was interesting, but the leaning factor and the operation to keep it from leaning more were really the amazing parts. Massive cables (four) wrapped around the tower and hung overhead, stayed on the opposite side of a building, out of sight. Large drilling machines surrounded the tower, and heavy equipment abounded.

Having satisfied the need to be tourist sightseers, it was back to the car and on to Firenze. We hit town at early rush hour, which gave me my first experience with real Italian drivers. We had a bit of a time finding the hostel, but eventually made it. Checking in also took some time, so Mom got meal tickets, and we enjoyed a very satisfying meal of pasta and salad and a liter each of cold milk.

Ranking as one of the nicest hostels around, this one had a nice cinema, which gave Robs and I the chance to take in "The Princess Bride" before heading off to bed, which was in male and female dormitories. In a way, the dorm feel was comfortable to me, and I easily dozed off listening to people coming and going outside my window.

Day 10: 26 July Sunny

Yet again we got an early start, with showers and a hostel breakfast of hot chocolate and a hard roll. Luckily, two guys at Robin and my table had been given some pastries the night before, which they generously shared.

The day's first challenge was effecting passage to the city center via bus, which didn't turn out as difficult as we'd been expecting.

From our bus stop near the Duomo, we speed-walked to the Uffizi Gallery. Unfortunately, the line there wound out the door and around two corners - easily a three hour wait which would've consumed the whole morning. So, we chose an alternate selection: Palazzo Vecchio.

This palace had ranged in uses from palace to official building, so its interior was mixed in décor. Most striking was the 500 person hall, with its impossibly tall ceiling and multitude of sculptures and large paintings of battles. The tour continued through many rooms of lesser magnitude but similar decoration. Painted ceilings with great marble floors were the norm, and I think that every square inch of the place had been decorated in some form. Highlights here included the map room, with its primitive but very detailed maps of the world as it was known then, and the walkway around the parapet of the oldest section, which had a great view of the city.

When we'd finished in Palazzo Vecchio, we admired the myriad of sculptures in the square (including "Rape of the Sabine Women") and then ate a simple lunch on a bench there. Mom and I had our first taste of gelati as dessert, eaten while we walked and shopped towards the Duomo.

At the Duomo we joined the shorter line to get into the church and not climb the 436 steps to the cuppola of the dome. This saved a ton of time, and we were inside the great cathedral in about fifteen minutes. Even at the threshold, the first thing that caught my eye was the terrificly colorful marble floor, whose many designs seemed only limited by the available space. Then there was the spectacular dome, rich in color and very much an awesome work of art. We sat and stared for a long time before walking out, squinting in the sun.

With plenty of time left for another museum, we headed to the Academie, where Michelangelo's "David" towers over visitors. The line there wasn't short, so I picked up a paper to read up on all the news fit to print... basically the Concorde crash. Then we were inside, being diligent about seeing everything but hoping to find David in the next room.

That final corner finally came, and at the end of a long hall was David, tall and confident, towering over awestruck tourists like the greatest statue in the world should. Most striking was the size of the sculpture but, like the dinosaurs in Jurassic Park, I had to remind myself that this was a 500 year-old hunk of marble and not really real. Robin lingered to sketch the statue, so I stayed to try and help her as best I could.

Eventually we'd seen enough, so we left the Academie in search of some relaxing shopping and dinner. We walked to Pont du Vecchio, but that famous bridge turned out to be all jewelry shops. So, we turned our attention to the straw market just up the street, but it was folding up and being pushed away, cart by cart, in front of our eyes. Our options exhausted, we found dinner at a pizzeria and pasta shop. Good Italian food tasted good, and each of us devoured our food in record time.

From dinner we walked to a nearby gelateria for some frozen dessert, then bumped into Mom and Robin's roommates from the hostel, with whom we chatted briefly. Then we split up for about an hour, Rob and I going to shop in another District and Mom lingering near the Duomo.

At the appointed time, we met, caught the 17 bus back to the hostel, and set a breakfast time for morning. Then I ducked into an internet shop to check mail and news before walking up the long driveway to the hostel and my bed.

Day 11: 27 July Sunny

This morning found us at breakfast bright and early, eating (or masticating, if you want the details) another roll and then enjoying the mug of hot chocolate. Uffizi was opening soon, and we didn't want to have to fight the lines.

Fortunately, when we arrived in town, the lines for the gallery were much shorter, and we got inside in not more than half an hour. Once we'd purchased tickets, there was a long trek up three tall flights of stairs before we entered a long marble-floored room, shaped in an 'n,' with the legs flanker by exhibit rooms. Our attack plan covered the main corridor first, then doubled back to see famous works in the outer galleries. On the whole, the amount of art in this building was truly overwhelming. Ceilings were all painted with scenes from the Bible or myth, walls either covered with paintings or lined with sculpture. Our visit lasted three hours, but by the end we had seen so many paintings of the Virgin Mary of the Crucifixion that it was hard to discern one room from the next.

Upon our exit, Mom stopped at the gift shop, so Robin and I found a bench and tried not to picture naked people in fields of blue. Then I walked over to a street vendor and purchased a really cool calendar of old travel posters for 2001.

When Mom emerged, lunch became the main objective, so we looked for a restaurant but finding the market instead. Mom found a leather purse and a bead necklace while Robin and I perused the carts looking for stuff that was free... and found none.

By this time we were very hungry, so we ducked into the first acceptable restaurant, getting pasta and pop in a deli-style place that could have easily been on 35th and 5th, New York. Regardless, the food was good and filling.

In an effort to keep our art-sensing glands from going into overload, we agreed to visit just one venue in the afternoon. Following some debate we selected the Bargello. Built as a police station with a courtyard for torturing prisoners, the massive building has since been converted into a museum of objects: armor, medallions, jewelry, and sculpture. It had a nice collection that varied in terms of subject, material, and size. A big draw was Donatello's "David," which Mom and I looked for but could not find. Just as we were getting to the end of our look at the last items, a factory siren rang, signalling that the museum would be closing. It, like many (if not most) businesses, was going on siesta during the hottest part of the day.

Having fulfilled our museum quota, we turned our attention to shopping. First, Robin and I returned to a shop we'd visited the previous evening so that she could buy a wallet for Graham. On our way back to meet Mom, I found an excellent pocket watch but passed on buying it for the moment. However, by the time we'd reached Mom, I'd decided to buy it. We set off in a circle, though, stopping first to get a wall clock for my dorm & apartment. I settled on a large, simple design with three other time zones set inside the main hands, reminiscent of a dive watch. Then, Mom surprised me by buying it as a Christmas present. Next up was a big street fair to browse, then back to the watch store for me to choose a chain and buy the watch.

All shopped out and ready to head back, we got on the bus. When we arrived, Mom and Robin hit the Internet, largely so that Mom could type and send in her Daily Press article. I headed to my room to journal.

When they were done, we made a pasta supper on a bench and had 2 Magnums each for dessert since they were only a buck each.

Afterwards, I took Robin's internet card and went to use up her remaining time before heading off to bed.

Day 12: 28 July Sunny

We rose and met moderately early for breakfast this morning, then ate and boarded the bus for a final morning of site seeing in Florence.

Our destination was the Basilica where many of the Medici were buried. The chapel where these family members were entombed was a very tall, domed octagon with the most intricate use of a variety of marble colors that we'd seen. The room wasn't that big in terms of floor space, though, and was being cleaned, which restricted the experience even more. In the next room, also a small chapel, were Michelangelo's sculptures of the Day, Night, Dusk, and Dawn - each a very large pair of people on one of four walls. Next up was a tiny chamber in the basement with white plaster walls where Michelangelo had sketched some figures on the wall. Those rough figures really captured the genius of the artist - in a few penstrokes he'd created a perfect pair of muscular male legs, a beautiful woman's face, or a God staring down from a cloud.

After we'd left the sketch chamber, we walked around the building to enter the cathedral. This rather simple church wasn't huge, especially in comparison to the Duomo. It was, however, striking in its simplicity: white ceilings and star patterns on the trusses, large geometric marble patterns on the floor, and nice decorations.

By the time we'd finished our visit it was nearly noon, so we went back to the hostel, had a biscottes and gardiniere lunch, and packed the car for the short drive over and down to Rome. It took some doing, but we found our hotel and got situated. Then, there was time for music and journaling on the couches in each floor's patio area before dinner. For dinner we cooked spaghetti and pesto, purchased from a nearby grocery, on the campstove on our hotel's roof.

Robin and I shared dishwashing and watching for dad out the window duties until he arrived by taxi. When he got upstairs and settled in, we turned around and walked to a nearby square to get gelato and watch the evening crowd.

When our ice cream was gone we went back to Albergo del Sole and climbed into bed.

Day 13: 29 July Sunny

For some reason, nobody really got going this morning, so it was mid-morning by the time we got underway.

While we'd been sleeping, a large market filled with food had been set up in the square, so we did some grocery shopping for the weekend in the many stalls of noodles, fruit, vegetables, meats, cheeses, and miscellaneous stuff, including straw hats - which Dad got.

Loaded down with groceries, a hotel stop was necessary before setting off again to the Roman Forum. On the way we saw some Roman ruins that had been uncovered in a city park and left standing, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and the Altar of the Fatherland. The latter was referred to by the guidebook as a 'large typewriter,' and is apparently rather unpopular.

Directly behind the typewriter was the remains of the forum, which was once the center of Rome and its empire but is now just a lot of remnants of columns and marble. With Mom and Dad meticulously cross-checking two books about the forum, we were able to identify which columns would have gone with what great building. Most prominent among the ruins were the temple that was Rome's treasury and the

Senate hall, which had been restored to some degree. For over an hour we darted from shade to shade, trying to see the ruins and avoid the sun simultaneously.

At the far end of the Forum, across a short plaza, was the Coliseum. Half collapsed and in various states of disrepair, this great stadium still evoked scenes of the days of Gladiators and 80000 roaring fans. Walking around the second tier of what had been bleachers, it was hard to imagine how far ahead of their time the Romans had been.

All too soon, though, the sun got the best of us and we went back to the street, seeking shade and walking towards the Pantheon. Along the way we passed the sunken ditch that had been the 200000-seat Circo Massimo two millenia earlier. We also stopped to have a VERY expensive cold drink and a VERY late lunch. Then, near the Pantheon, there was a gelateria with a brioche and gelate sandwich so we just had to stop. While we ate, Mom briefed us on the history of this dome. Prepared for the experience and now without food in our paws, we headed in. Immediately, before noticing anything else, the beam of light shining down from the open cupola grabbed our attention. Next came wondering about what happens when it rains, followed closely by the discovery of drain holes in the marble floor. We found Rapheal's tomb - hidden at floor level in a corner of the round building - and the tombs of two Popes.

Next up was a nearby church, but we got lost in the maze of unmarked streets that make up Rome and went into a spectacular, flat-roofed cathedral by mistake. Inside, we drooled over the spectacularness all around us. Then we corrected our mistake and found the original cathedral and went in, finding a Michelangelo sculpture of Christ and a recessed prayer chapel with an oversized statue of a Pope in prayer.

Worn out from a day on our feet, we mozied back to the hotel. Once we got there, Robin and I turned around and headed back out for an hour of shopping in the district near the hotel...mostly browsing but looking seriously for a briefcase.

When we got back, it was time to start dinner on the stove on the roof. Mom masterminded a terrific tomato sauce that we had over noodles. For dessert we walked over to the gelateria. After devouring our cones it was time for bed.

Day 14: 30 July

A hot sun greeted us this morning, shining brightly into the room. We had pastries for breakfast on the roof before setting off to the catacombs.

It took a bus, then a short subway ride, then another bus, and a few kilometers of walking down the Appia Antica, but we finally reached the catacombs. Unfortunately, we arrived at siesta time, so we had to wait for a couple hours for the place to open up again. Dad, Robin, and I walked to a little store nearby to purchase some lunch food in the interim. As 2:30 approached we moved out into the sweltering midday sun to stand in line before meeting our guide and starting the tour.

Down inside the catacombs it was a pleasant 64°, but we were mostly focused on the earthen walls. Filled with roughly human size rectangular holes - the graves of about 500,000 Christians. In addition to graves in holes, there were rooms where whole families were buried and other rooms that had been chapels or meeting places. We wandered through the maze of walkways for awhile, separated from the English tour and trying to decipher the German on the German tour.

When we were done in the catacombs we walked up a long stairway back into the sunlight. We opted for an express bus back to the center of town, but Mom wanted to stop at a church along the way that had nice mosaics.

The cathedral was fairly elaborately decorated, and the large mosaics lived up to billing. Once whole dome was a huge mosaic, made using centimeter square tiles of different colors. From the far end of the church it was hard to even tell it wasn't a painting.

By this time it was getting on towards the dinner hour, so we got a bus back to the hotel, where Mom once again created a pasta dish that we ate on the roof. After a very filling supper we were all too full for dessert, so we lounged around the hotel until bedtime.

Day 15: 31 July

This morning we got up early, had a quick pastry breakfast and then found a bus to the Vatican City.

Once we arrived it was a matter of following the herd to join the line for the Vatican Museum. When the museum opened we shuffled inside, got tickets, and started browsing the galleries. First up was pottery, dishes and vases showing different scenes or people. Next was a long passageway lined by sculpture, then maps, and finally some gigantic tapestries. A left turn took us into a series of rooms that

held paintings of religious significance and some gifts to Popes over the centuries. Then we saw a neat collection of modern religious art, after which we climbed some stairs and shuffled into the very crowded Sistine Chapel. The whole rectangular room was artistic, but Michelangelo's frescoes were by far the most beautiful works in the place. Unfortunately, the crowds made a long stay difficult and sitting down impossible, so we left and went in search of lunch, which we found in the museum cafeteria.

After lunch we walked out of the museum, around to the plaza and Basilica St. Pietro. Our first item of business was to find the focal point of each crescent of columns, where the 4 rows are hidden. It was cool to see 284 columns disappear into two sets of 31.

Then we went into St. Peter's Cathedral. From the instant we set foot inside, the size of this church held our interest. Its multicolored marble floor seemed to stretch for miles, and the simple painted ceiling seemed impossibly high. The whole interior was wrapped, just below the tops of the walls, in a gold and black mosaic bearing Italian phrases. In the center of the transept a huge altar rose toward the dome, covered in copper from the Pantheon. On the left transept entrance there was a huge marble and bronze sculpture which we pondered for some time. We walked everywhere in the church, examining each marvelous sculpture.

When we'd seen it all we headed back to the hotel area. Mom and Robin went back to the hotel while Dad and I hopped on a different bus to go shop for a briefcase. There was a pretty good selection, but I didn't wind up getting anything, so we returned to the hotel empty handed.

For dinner we chose a restaurant in the plaza near the hotel. The food was good, and we did the multi-course Italian meal thing - pasta as a first plate and a meat dish for a second plate.

When the meal was over we walked around the square, shopping in a bookshop and people-watching. Then we got gelati for dessert. When that was gone we headed back to Albergo del Sole and climbed into bed.

Day 16: 01 August Sunny

This morning started with a frantic rush on my part to return to a shop Dad and I had visited to get a briefcase. So, while the rest of the family headed down to breakfast I ran to catch a bus and then bought my bag and rode the bus back. All of this went smoothly but still took as long as the other's breakfast, so when I got back we were all into packing our bags and loading the car.

When we had extricated the Vectra from the bowels of the parking garage, Dad drove us out of Rome, south along the coast towards Naples.

About an hour out of the city we stopped at a Mediterranean beach to swim, have lunch, and look for birds. Sadly, all of the birds were on siesta when we arrived, so we had lunch on the hot hot sand and swam in the mild water.

Pretty soon the scorching sun and burning sand chased us from the beach, at which time we got out onto the autostrade and made tracks for Napoli. Our destination was the peninsula south of Naples, where we got off the highway onto a very hilly secondary road.

With a little luck, we found a campground in a quiet little hamlet on the sea, just across the road from a small harbor. This all seemed pretty good, so we pitched our tents in the shade of some lemon trees and fixed a meal of beans and tortillas.

After dinner we took a walk along the beach - checking out the harbor, the boats, and the neighboring resorts. Robin stopped at the last beach to go for a dip in the sea, and then we mozied back to the campground. There, Robin and I got a table and a bottle of Coke and sketched and journalled while Mom and Dad headed out to some café for a drink. It was getting quite late when they returned, so we all headed off to bed.

Day 17: 02 August Sunny

Our best intentions of a crack-of-dawn start this morning were thwarted by sleep, and we didn't get underway until almost 9.

The day's destination was the Isle Capri, but to catch the ferry to Capri, we first had to drive to (and through) the town of Sorrento, further up the coast. From there we caught the Caremar fast ferry out to Capri. Robin and I asked the mate if we might ride on the bridge, and he said yes, so we spent 20 minutes watching the crossing on radar and observing the crew's actions.

We arrived at Marina Grande and disembarked. Dad got a nice guidebook and decided that we ought to ride over the saddle of the mountain to Marina Piccola. Passage to the opposite shore was by

funiculare (cable car) and by short city bus down an impossibly narrow, steep, curvy and all-around impassible road.

Dad wanted to rent a small boat so that we could snorkel in the grottos along the coast, so he went in search of such a service while Mom, Robin, and I found a spot on the tiny rocky beach and got lunch stuff out. Dad got back with a reservation for a 12' dinghy, so we quickly consumed the hodge-podge of leftovers that was lunch. Then we changed into our bathing suits, lathered on some SPF 45, and headed out in our 15 HP rigid inflatable.

Our first stop was near the Rock of the Syrens, two huge rocks sticking straight up out of the water. We anchored the boat and donned masks and snorkels, then jumped into the crystal clear water. A natural arch provided some cool terrain to swim through and there were plenty of fish to see. For about half an hour we stayed in that spot, then pulled the anchor and motored another cove a few minutes away, where we anchored again and swam some more.

Having gotten a bit chilly during all of that swimming, we opted to drive the boat to the east end of the island, just a few hundred yards away. There, the rocks towered over the flat water, seeming to jutt upwards forever. We took a picture and headed back to the western portion where the more famous grottoes were.

Of the Green and Red Grottos, the Red was the first one we came to, tucked into a corner of a crowded bay. Once again we anchored and jumped into the water. The grotto was a cave that extended over 100 feet into the cliffs, but the roof of the cave was high enough to allow swimmers to get all the way to the end. This we did, but I found it very enclosed and had to leave quickly. It was, nonetheless, a very cool experience.

From the Red Grotto we motored west past the Green Grotto, around the rocky Western point of the island and into a tiny little cove, which was crowded with four boats. We anchored here and admired the scenery in the shade of the huge rock walls.

Before long it was time to hurry back to return our dinghy, but not before some serious boat-watching in the bays and coves along the way. We disembarked, bought postcards using a L1000 bill that I'd gotten off the bottom of the Red Grotto, got a gelati snack, and made plans to get back. During the bus ride up the hill I began to feel ill, and by the time we'd reached the ferry dock I was sick as a dog.

As luck would have it, we'd missed our ferry, so Dad got tickets for another one. This one departed in 85 minutes, so I spent over an hour napping on a bench while the rest of the gang watched the sun set on the mountains. Then we boarded our hydrofoil, which turned out to be broken. So, the trip back to Sorrento took an hour. Next, the parking garage was closed so Dad got chewed out by the attendant who'd stayed late to let us out.

The rest of the drive back went smoothly and I got straight into bed from the car...and Robin brought me a barf bucket and some water. After that I tossed and turned in a sick stupor while they went to dinner at the campground. At some point, I fell asleep, but I don't know when.

Day 18: 03 August Mostly sunny

I got up early this morning of my own accord, desperately thirsty and wanting a hot shower. So, I downed most of a water bottle and stumbled to the shower building, only to find that hot showers required tokens. Dad convinced me to go buy one, which I did, and I did feel much better once the hot hot water had worked its magic.

Robin basically packed my stuff, so we loaded the car and headed around the Sorrentine peninsula to a town called Amalfi. The road to Amalfi was incredible - often hanging out over cliffs that dropped thousands of feet to the sea. Along the way there were several pull-outs which we used to look out over the edge. One lay-by had a vegetable stand where Mom got a big bag of cherry tomatoes that we snacked on all day.

The town of Amalfi itself was quite small, situated on the rocks at the base of the cliff, with a snug artificial harbor and just one main street. The reason for our visit lay in dishes...Mom wanted to buy some of the town's famous pottery. While the parents shopped for dishes Robs and I sat in a shaded café overlooking the harbor and had a Coke, writing in journals and studying all the while.

At about noon we met up again at the car and dug out stuff for lunch. No shady benches were free, so we ate on the big stone wall along the sidewalk. When our sandwiches were gone we got back into the car, where Robin and I fell asleep almost immediately.

Our slumber ended as we pulled into the parking lot at Pompeii. Dad bought a guidebook to the ancient city and entrance tickets, and we started our tour. It was, at best, a largely disorganized walk

through the city, but each new building revealed an amazement that we'd not seen before. We spent almost two hours wandering the streets and cross-referencing guidebooks, and after that time we agreed that these ruins were more interesting than Rome. Real highlights were the theater and the house of the Lyre Player. Gone from the time of Dad's first visit (1970's) were most of the human casts, though.

From Pompeii we got onto the Autostrade and whizzed north. Dinner was at a McDonald's along the way, which actually tasted very good. We crossed into the central mountains, over some long (5 km) bridges and through one really long (10 km) tunnel before emerging on the coast of the Adriatic Sea.

It was almost 10:00 by the time we pulled off the highway into a roadside hotel for some much-needed sleep.

Day 19: 04 August Cloudy → Rain

This morning we woke up, had showers and breakfast and piled back into the car for the rest of the drive to Venezia.

The trip started off smoothly, but we wanted a more personal look at the coastline, so Dad turned onto a secondary coast road. Although the views were much improved, the trade-off in terms of speed was immense as traffic going to the beach mounted. But, we saw lots of birds and boats en route. At lunchtime we pulled into a small town and ate sandwiches at the mouth of a river where some fishermen were using big nets to pluck lots of seafood from the stream.

Due to traffic it was mid-afternoon before we got across the viaduct and into the parking garage in Venice. Getting to the hotel required riding the vaporetto, or water bus, and then walking the rest of the way to our hotel. To ease the latter portion of the journey we tried to lighten our packs somewhat and then set out, in the rain, to find Casa Petrarca. By mistake we took the vaporetto in the wrong direction and got quite a nice tour of the lagoon and the southern section of the Grand Canal. From where we got off it took just a few minutes to walk to the hotel, which was situated on a back canal.

Robin and I moved into our room, and then Mom requested that we venture out and find a place for dinner. Despite a light rain we obliged, surveying the neighborhood around the hotel for dinner places and also interesting shops. We chose a nice place with a good menu that turned out to be pretty fancy for the price. After dinner we walked to the Piazza San Marco, the most famous square in the city. There were bands playing at several restaurants along the perimeter, so we walked around and listened to each one. Adjacent to the square was a shopping district that was still largely open, so we window-shopped for awhile and bought a modest dessert.

By this time Robin and I were ready for bed, so we left Mom and Dad and returned to the hotel. As we fell asleep a gondola went by with an opera singer who was filling the night with music.

Day 20: 05 August Mostly cloudy → Stormy

Waking up wasn't early this morning, and it was one of our latest. Mom finally got us going around 10:00, at which time we left the hotel and walked to a beautiful snack bar nearby where we had cake and latté at a marble bar trimmed with mahogany.

Venice's main tourist attraction is the Basilica San Marco, in the San Marco, so that is where we headed. The square was much different, though: it was filled with tourists and pigeons. It was also filled with a very long line into the Basilica, so we learned about the outside from Mom and heard about other items in the square as well. Among them were the bell tower that is the tallest structure in Venice, the Ducal residence, and the two columns which are the symbolic gates to the city.

As we walked out to the columns, which are right on the edge of the lagoon, I noticed a long blue yacht along the wall to the east. Sure enough, *Limitless* had arrived overnight. Since we didn't have other concrete plans and this was my Graceland, we walked down to where she was docked. There, we kicked the docklines and admired the yacht.

On our way to see *Limitless* we'd noticed the Venetian Naval History Museum, so we stopped in to have a look. The museum closed early on Saturdays, so our stay was very short, but it was an outstanding museum. The main element of the displays were excellent models of ships that had played a role in Venice's history, many of which were over 10 feet long. Years of work were on display in each model, but I was forced to race through the collection in just 40 minutes. This super-abbreviated visit didn't allow time to visit the top floor of the five-story museum and forced us to do little more than walk through the galleries of modern warships. However, it gave me a good reason to return to Venice some day.

Given all the exercise we'd gotten in the museum it was time for lunch. Dad wanted pizza calzones, so we walked the back streets until we found an acceptable place.

After lunch we split up for a little while. Robin and I did a tiny bit of shopping (I got a Ferrari model) and then caught up on e-mail.

We met under the big tower at San Marco and joined the now much shorter queue for the Basilica.

Built as a home for the stolen body of St Mark, this cathedral had mosaics on every inch of the ceiling. They were of high enough quality that from ground level the tiles became indiscernible and it appeared as though all was painted. The floor, quite hilly from sagging in the soft ground, was a mosaic of sorts, too. Thousands of multi-colored marble tiles were arranged in hundreds of patterns, creating an incredible visual from above. We were able to look down from a mezzanine at the rear of the church. This vantage point also yielded, from between four huge bronze horses, a great view of the square.

Early in the trip we'd decided to have one very fancy meal on the last night before Dad left. That time had arrived and some of us needed to shower and get ready. To that end we split up; Robin and I bought some paper and went to get ready while Mom and Dad bought a mask and a nice leather backpack. At 6:00 we were all ready to go, so we walked to the place we'd chosen - just 50 yards from the hotel - only to find that they didn't open for dinner until 7:15.

In the interim we battled the ever-worsening rain and visited Rialto Bridge. The most famous bridge over the Grand Canal, Rialto is lined, like Pont du Vecchio in Firenze, with (largely) jewelry shops. One exception to this was a tie shop offering silk ties for less than \$5, so Dad and I went in and got 3 for me to use with my new suit. Our next tactic for killing time and avoiding the rain was shopping for luggage, which we were able to do quite slowly.

Before we knew it, the restaurant was open, and we sat down and began. First up was an aperitif - white wine and peach smoothie for us. Then we ordered our meals, shortly after which our salads arrived, dressed with a masterful vinaigrette. When those were gone, the waiter appeared with our entrées, each in a dish. He carefully mixed the pasta and sauce in the dish before transferring the meal to our beautiful dinner plates. I had pesto, which was extraordinary. Robin had also ordered pesto, and she couldn't finish hers so we threw manners to the wind momentarily, and I finished hers. The waiter cleared our table and offered a dessert menu. Dad and I ordered a soufflé and Mom gelati and Robin fruit salad. The soufflé was extra slow, but it finally arrived, magnificent and piping hot, and was eaten quickly.

Full and very content with our meals, Robin and I excused ourselves and returned to the hotel. We made half an effort to pack our bags for the morning but wound up going almost straight to bed.

Day 21: 06 August Overcast

Today our early departure was necessitated by Dad's flight home. We had pastries in the hotel before heading out, then hoisted our bags and walked to the vaperetto station. Robin bought tickets, and we boarded for the short ride up the Grand Canal to the parking garage where the Vauxhall sat awaiting our return.

The ride went smoothly, as did recovery of the car from the garage. We drove almost straight to Venice Marco Polo airport, where we said goodbye to Dad and lift him on the curb with his bags and straw hat.

The post-Dad section of our trip led us quickly away from the sea, North into the Dolomite mountains. To our amazement, just half an hour north of Venice the freeway turned into a crowded mountain that took us through villages that looked like Austrian ski towns. In Cortina, touted by the book as Italy's most chic ski town, we got groceries.

Just a few kilometers up the valley from Cortina we pulled into Camping Olympia. Much to our displeasure, the whole place was on siesta. As it was lunchtime and we were all behind in our journals, we made some soup and lingered in the parking lot until the office opened.

When it did, Mom found out that we were supposed to have a specific site in mind, so we raced through the whole place on foot and then went back to the office. Luckily, our first choice (#114) was available, and we moved in. Along with pitching tents, Robin and I did two much-needed loads of laundry and sat in the bar's patio to work some more.

Finally, the last load was dry, and we could leave the bar to fix dinner. Mom used some of the groceries to make Aunt Inga's casserole (with couscous in lieu of rice) that really tasted great.

Clean-up and trip organization followed dinner. With those tasks accomplished, Mom convinced us to go on a short walk before climbing into bed.

Day 22: 07 August Mostly sunny

We got going at a medium time this morning, with showers and Nutella on flat bread for breakfast. The day's main activity was a hike around Drie Zinner, three mountain peaks in close formation. To get there we had to drive high up a mountain pass, then along the pass, and finally up a steep alpine toll road to a parking lot at the base of the peaks.

When we stepped out of the car our reactions were the same: "It's cold!" Wearing all of the warm clothes that had taken up space until this point we set out on the crowded trail. The path wrapped around the mountain altitude so the walk was fairly easy. Along the way we paused to watch mountain-climbers, stopped for lunch, and sought out birds in the rocky meadows below the trail. During one such birding stop Robin and I gathered enough stones to make a yin-yang in the grass. Making letters in the valleys was quite popular, but our 6-foot diameter symbol stood out from above much better.

Another highlight of the walk, especially for Mom, was the sight and sound of cows wearing cowbells. We deduced that only the milkcows wore bells, but the noise was substantial nonetheless.

Secondary on the list of objectives for the day were studying and mailing postcards. So, we parked in a mountain village where Robin could learn about psychology and I could learn about the Italian postal system. I finished my job sooner and spent the balance of the time journaling.

By this time we were getting tired and hungry, so we headed back towards camp. First, though, was an exploratory visit to Cortina to check on tram rides. We found information but concluded that the views didn't merit the cost. With that settled we returned to Camping Olympia.

Dinner was spaghetti sauce over gnocchi, which filled us up. Just for good measure we had ice cream bars for dessert from the camp market. Then, feeling tired and cold, we snuggled into our bags for a good night's sleep.

Day 23: 08 August Sunny → Cloudy (rain)

We rose, broke camp, and had Nutella on flatbread this morning in preparation for our last day in Italy.

Mom had chosen a walk the night before, so we drove to a town called Sand in Touffers, about an hour away. There, we parked and got underway on foot, walking along a roaring river to a path that would lead us up to three waterfalls.

The waterfalls were not spectacular, but the gorges they created were steep and deep, one spanned by a 30 foot bridge at the top. This portion of the hike was easy and pretty rewarding. From higher up on the trail, another waterfall was visible - a wisp of water slipping over the edge of a cliff across the valley. At the apex of the trail was a restaurant that looked down on the green valley. It was full, though, so we paused on a bench and ate breadsticks instead.

From this point there was a long, poorly-chosen path that took us through the woods to an ancient castle. Refurbished and in very good condition, this three-story stone building really seemed like it belonged in a movie. The quiet courtyard hid the terrain and woodlands outside, but we were easily reminded when we peered out of windows in the entrance-way.

A path from the castle led us down into the village, and we returned to the car to have lunch. Robin and I made a simple noodle soup while Mom sketched some fences. Mom returned, and we ate the soup. Then, Robin and I set off in search of white gas, water, and a sheath for my knife from Montpanzier. Sadly, no white gas was available and our cash supply only allowed the purchase of a knife pouch.

Having done our errands, it was time to say 'ciao!' to Italy. We drove north on the autostrade, out of Italy, onto the Austrian autobahn, and into Innsbruck. We found our hostel - a fancy building on the outskirts of town - and got situated. Mom and I got groceries, intending to cook outside, but rain started so we went out to eat.

We wanted to find German food, and we did. I had goulash (meat stew, no noodles) and dumplings, which were terrific. After dinner we had gelato for dessert and drove back to the hostel, where I made my bed and crawled in.

Day 24: 09 August Sunny → Rain → Sunny

The hostel's limited breakfast hours forced our hand this morning, but the meal was worth it. We were given two rolls, cream cheese, jam, and liver spread, along with hot chocolate. The rolls were great and the spreads left us very satisfied.

We elected to drive into the city center and park, which was a pretty painless undertaking. From the garage we walked to the information center and collected some brochures.

Based on our discoveries, we chose to visit a bell-foundry that was a bit out of town. The walk took some time, but the foundry's museum was well worth it. Included in the displays were commentary on the bells of this foundry, of Austria, and of the world over time. Unfortunately, the foundry itself wasn't working, but the collection of bells in the museum kept us interested.

The town's tower was our next point of interest, but on the walk back to town we did some window shopping.

Rising 31 meters from the main square in old town, the tower had an observation platform near the top that provides the best views of the city. We climbed up and admired the mountains, the rivers, the Olympic ski jump, and the town from this excellent vantage point.

When we climbed back down it was lunch time, so we found an Italian place and had good pizza in their courtyard.

A folk museum was the last place that we'd come up with at the tourist info office, and touring its large halls took up the early afternoon hours. On display here was furniture, artifacts, and whole rooms from Austrian people of yesteryear. It was interesting to observe how some facets of folk life are preserved while others are almost completely forgotten.

Our list of sights was gone, so we split up for the rest of the afternoon. I got gelato, but I had just taken my first bite when a heavy rain started. To avoid being soaked, I spent the length of the deluge in a record store. When the rain let up I wandered the streets until it was time to rendezvous.

Satisfied that we'd seen Innsbruck, we returned to the hostel. There, Robin and I worked for awhile before we made a pasta and arrabiatta dinner using ingredients that Mom and I had gotten the night before.

After dinner, Robin and I did some heavy-duty dishwashing before we retired to our separate rooms. I had big plans to journal and do some sketching, but I went to sleep instead.

Day 25: 10 August Sunny

We got up again this morning to have hostel breakfast. Then, Robin loaded the car, and a long day day on the road began.

The first leg of the trip led through the mountains on secondary roads, over a mountain pass. On the other side of the mountains and at the end of a long tunnel was Germany. At the border the land changed into pretty flat farmland, and the road wound through farm town after farm town. Here, our progress was impeded by tractors in the road and lots of caravans.

Finally, the two lane road opened up into the autobahn. We quickly picked up speed and raced north. Despite the slow start, travel proceeded ahead of schedule.

Along the way we passed within a few miles of Rothenburg, a famous scenic city. Not wanting to miss anything and having time to spare, we exited the autobahn and found parking. We had a quick lunch in the parking lot before heading into the old city.

Once we found the city, we were met by thousands of tourists and cobbled streets lined with multi-colored buildings in pristine condition, despite their age. The town was scenic, but most of the stores had been converted to tourist shops, and the whole place had a tourist-trap feel. We strolled around for awhile, bought a dough ball (the only time we ever saw them) and then headed out.

After two hours (and a bad rainstorm) up the autobahn we exited in Göttingen and found our way to Katja's apartment. When we buzzed, Ulf came down to meet us. He showed us their new apartment and relayed the info that Katja was working.

So as not to interrupt Ulf's studies, Robin and I played frisbee in the yard. After some time Ulf came down to play, and then Katja appeared on her bike and frisbee time was over. We went upstairs and talked about "stuff" while preparing dinner. The night was beautiful, so we ate on the balcony.

After dinner, the four kids took a walk around campus before turning in.

Day 26: 11 August Mostly sunny

All of us except Katja had a lazy start this morning. When we finally got going, there was breakfast at Katja's before driving to Ulf's room so that Mom could type and send her article to the daily press. Then, I sent email before the three of us left Ulf to learn about genetics.

We walked a few hundred yards into the 'pedestrian zone,' Göttingen's main shopping and social district. Almost immediately we split up. Mom went in search of new pants and Robin and I headed off to find a birthday gift for Katja.

In the course of our three hours of wandering, Robin and I bought pommes-frites for lunch and looked in every store that remotely interested us. This included furniture and lighting stores, shops selling kitchenware, clothing stores, and hobby shops. All of our looking yielded nothing, though, and we went back to the Gonsesl, our meeting point, emptyhanded. Within minutes Mom, Ulf, and Katja arrived.

Exhausted from a long week of working, Katja wanted coffee, so we found a café and sat for a nice long time. During this time we formulated a plan for the evening, which involved Ulf and I going to get pizza.

We took the food to Katja's, where she and Mom put together a cucumber salad to supplement the pizza. We ate our fill on the balcony again, reveling in the warm weather.

Following dinner, Katja's roommate Meike joined us for a couple of games of bowling. The bowling wasn't great on anyone's behalf, although Mom and Ulf both skirted greatness at times. It was still a fun evening: nice to be with familiar faces and wonderful to see Katja again after six years.

When the bowling was over we went back to the apartment. We'd hoped for some meteor-shower watching, but a layer of clouds prevented any watching of meteors. Instead, we all sat in the kitchen and talked and laughed. This continued into the night, and it was after 11 when we finally crawled into bed.

Day 27: 12 August Sunny

This morning started early, especially for a Saturday. We had showers all around and a quick breakfast before piling into the Vectra for the drive to Hannover.

A quick stop at a supermarket for lunch food was the only delay, and the autobahn was moving well. At the Expo, parking went smoothly and in no time at all we were inside.

Our first stop was the health and medicine pavillion - a must for Katja and Ulf. We entered and were surprised to find a very large hall with 15 or so teeth-shaped balloons with descriptions of health-care efforts around the world. Adjacent to this was a big room with about 70 molar-shaped chairs that faced a wall of mirrors, with a half-moon pool in between. On the opposite wall were several big projection screens, whose picture was reflected in the mirrors. There was a brief multimedia show during which the lights were dimmed and our chairs reclined and rocked. Then it was over and we exited.

Next up was the 'Future of Work' exhibit that Dad had recommended. The centerpiece of this display was a dance routine that took place in an oval theatre - the actors and dancers on a scaffolding along the perimeter and the audience in the middle. The troupe took turns dancing in front of four blue screens while their images were superimposed onto other scenes on adjacent screens. All in all it was just too much information.

Also in the "Future of Work" hall was a "Future of Science" area. Once again we were bombarded with video and text information about genetic - and molecular - level biological and medical research. Then, we went down a flight of stairs to a big room filled with egg-like robots equipped with infrared sensors and motors. An attendant told us (in German) to "interact with the friendly robots," but I think people mostly tried to trap and trick the machines, maybe proving that humans are smarter.

By this time we were all confused about the Expo, so we tried to clear our minds by eating lunch. We ate near a fountain, consuming sandwiches and pretzel bread and apples in rapid fashion.

In order to maximize each individual's enjoyment of the show, we split up after lunch. I headed off along, visiting the Far East Pavillion, Iceland's all blue vinyl building with water cascading down the outside, Singapore, Thailand, and Sri Lanka's Pavillions, and a teen area called Scape. Iceland's was a really cool corkscrew walkway that spiraled around a fountain onto which images from the countryside were projected. Every few minutes a geyser erupted to the ceiling, causing the crowd to "ooh!" and "aah!"

We met at one of the 11 McDonalds on the grounds and set off for the European area. Along the way we happened upon the Portugese delegates' parade, which included a small brass band and was centered around a 20 foot tall wooden tricycle float thing powered by a folk artist and a fork lift.

Moving right along towards the European countries, we split up again, although the four kids ended up travelling together. Our first point of interest was the Monaco Pavillion where three Sunseekers (a 75 Predator, 56 Manhattan, and X2000) filled a pond. We sat on the dock while Katja grilled me on the specifics of the big express.

Ulf and Katja lingered on the dock while Robin and I ducked into a Ferrari Pit Stop that highlighted Michael Shumacher's Formula 1 victory in the Grand Prix. Then we walked over to Yemen,

whose pavillion seemed the most authentic of any representing a country's architecture. The building created a village-like feel in the courtyard and displayed a typical house's furnishing inside. It also had one feature that we didn't see elsewhere: a military propaganda film.

In honor of our partial British citizenship, we next toured the UK pavillion. This was the best, most interactive display of a countries accomplishments, and a very neat arrangement of scientific, political, and cultural feats.

By then it was time to meet Mom, which we did, and find some dinner. The Chinese Pavillion also had a Chinese restaurant, whose food appeared to be about the best deal going. Most of us had sweet and sour pork, which really tasted good.

The final pavillion on the list was Germany's, but we stopped for awhile at the Swiss structure, a large maze made of timber. At the center, a trio of musicians played for the visitors. Then it was to Deutschland, whose display was in three sections. The first was a room filled with the plaster busts of famous Germans. This gave way to a three-tiered room where a cool film was shown on five huge screens with some other props. From there we herded into a room that had a ring of screens around the top and a mobile of TVs in the center, orbiting over some artifacts from German society.

Finished with our pavillions, it was time to sit down at the theater and watch the re-release of the 1923 film "Der Schatz." It was in German, an old black and white about a man who finds treasure. During the movie we saw several shooting stars.

After the film concluded, we left the Expo and zoomed south on the autobahn, arriving at Katja's shortly after 1:00 AM. We were so tired that in a dazed state I think bed found us.

Day 27: 13 August Sunny

Exhausted from our long day at Expo, everyone but Ulf got off to a slow start. When we finally did get underway, we went to a favorite café of Ulf and Katja's for brunch. The place was college-cool and the food was simple and good. We lingered for a nice long time, talking and eating and laughing.

Following brunch the five of us walked to Katja's, where Ulf sat down to learn about some facet of medicine. To keep the apartment quiet, the rest of the group piled into Katja's car and started down the road to Dish Town.

Also known as Friedelsloh, Dish town is a community where, over the generations, many ceramic artists have settled. As a result, there is a high concentration of low-cost, high-quality ceramic stuff available in a small area. It some doing, ubt we found that small area and commenced shopping. There were only five shops, but I have never seen such an array of plates, cups, saucers, bowls, pitchers, and pots in my life. Each store had a little different style, and our preference could be seen from the size of box that we emerged with. Robin bought some cups and saucers, Katja a teapot and two bowls, and Mom two large boxes of various items.

After returning to the car to deposit the purchases we found a café where Robin, Katja and I had ice cream and Mom some sort of fruit tea drink. Then we pushed on to some other craft shops, browsing through bin after bin of wooden kitchen tools.

It was getting late, so we drove back to Göttingen, dropped off Mom and had a brief tour of the clinic where Katja works. It was an amazing place, a combination hospital and university that was big in every aspect.

For dinner we visited a restaurant in the pedestrian zone that specialised in food from southern Spain. We each ordered (and got to eat) a wonderful meal, served piping hot in terracotta pans. At the conclusion of the meal the waiter brought a round of anis schnapps which, at Katja and Ulf's direction to 'not talk, tilt your head', we downed.

Feeling a little full, we walked to a theater to see "Luna Papa," a film about a girl in Kazakstahn who gets pregnant.

After the film we walked back to Ulf's, then drove to Katja's. I think we were all still pretty tired, and we all headed to bed.

Day 28: 14 August Sunny

Katja had to head off to the world of work early this morning, so we all got up to say goodbye. After she was out the door we showered, packed, said goodbye to Ulf, and drove on.

Breakfast and lunch food was in short supply so we stopped at the nearest grocery store to stock up. Then, we got back onto the autobahn and ate breakfast on our way north to the town of Belsen, home of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

Situated adjacent to a NATO training area in a stand of pine trees, the remnants of the camp and its new interpretive center served as reminders of the atrocities that occurred there just 55 years earlier. Though the British torched the buildings to stop the spread of disease in the days after liberation, the pictures and accounts of the camp were more than enough to turn my stomach. Our visit ended with a video, which included some footage from the infamous movie shot by the British Army upon liberation - scenes that would make people physically sick.

We left the camp and drove farther north, to Hamburg, in a slight daze, unable to comprehend or forget what we'd seen. In Hamburg, though, we were snapped back to life by our need to find a hotel. This went pretty smoothly and took almost no time.

Robin wanted to rest and so some work, so Mom and I left in search of the Speicherstadt, an old warehouse district that came highly recommended from Ulf. We walked along the old buildings, though, and found only one person rug wholesalers - neat, but not what we'd hoped for. Our next destination was the main shopping street, which was supposed to have lots of neat buildings. We weren't impressed. Finally we stopped in the train station, which felt pretty average.

Tired of walking and unenthused about what we might find if we looked for other sights, the two of us went back to the hotel. There, we crashed in the room for two hours before cooking a nice pasta dinner in the hotel's courtyard.

After dinner I journaled and sketched until Robs and Mom were ready for lights out. Then we all fell asleep in the comfy beds under some very nice duvairs.

Day 29: 15 August Sunny

No particular rush to get going this morning. Mom went down to the lobby to have tea while Robin and I got everything ready for our departure. Then we met Mom for breakfast. I had cereal, which tasted pretty good.

Mom checked out of the hotel, and we drove to the Reeperbahn. This street, which more or less bisects the Red Light district, housed the town's ropemakers years ago and is supposed to be a cool place to walk around today. At shortly after 9:30 AM, though, it was dead and looked a little uninviting.

I made a motion to leave Hamburg, which Mom and Robin quickly seconded. Mom examined the map and found a suitable second choice: a scenic drive along the North Sea in Holland. Even on the autobahn it took some time to get there, but we had snack food in the car and stopped at a rest area for lunch. As we approached the German/Netherlands border, huge modern windmills came into view. A quick count got to 50 in just a matter of minutes, each tower facing the breeze with its three-bladed propeller whirling in time with all of the others.

Just past the windmills we left the highway and joined a secondary road that led us up and around the extreme northern peninsula of Holland. Along the way we stopped to see the sea and to watch birds...Mom got two lifers. The land was very flat and the road was constantly crossing canals and lift bridges.

The secondary road opened up into interstate again after about two hours, and in no time at all was out into the sea along an 18-mile long dike which held back the sea and created a fresh-water lake. About 3/4 of the way across we stopped at a rest area to have a look at the whole thing. Once we got underway again a lift bridge held us up as sailboat after sailboat went through.

Our route toward Calais then led into Belgium, where we stopped in Brecht for a nice (but slooow) dinner - our last of the trip. From there we plowed on into France, our fourth country of the day, and began searching for a hotel. We found none in Dunkirk and had to drive all the way to Calais before finally finding a place with vacancy.

We ended up with two rooms, a single and a double. I got the single and was asleep almost before I went to bed.

Day 30: 16 August Sunny

A knock on my door signalled the start of our last day. I got packed and ready for the last time while "Cool Runnings" played on TV, in French. Mom and Robin were in the restaurant having coffee, so I brought the car around. Mom had spotted a restaurant nearby where we went for breakfast that was, time-wise, brunch. Rob and I both had English breakfasts while Mom had the Continental offering.

After our meals we drove in circles for a few minutes looking for the ferry docks. Finally, with Robin's good spotting we found and drove up to the P&O Stena dock and on to the "Dover." We parked and walked up to the passenger decks. I'd never really been on a cruise ship before and was most

impressed with the mall-like atmosphere. Once more, Robin asked about a bridge tour and was happy to be invited up after we'd gotten underway.

We watched the maneuvering from the aft lounge and then headed up to the bridge. The ship was a modern one, built in 1987 with cutting-edge technology. She had three 6500 HP MSDs turning CP props, three SSDGs, two 1500 HP electric bow thrusters, and stabilizer fins. Additionally, her electronics were top-notch. The mate on watch gave us a great tour and was happy to let us stand on the port bridge wing and look out to the white cliffs of Dover across the Channel. He even came out to explain some navigational rules for Mom and Robin.

As we crossed the second traffic lane, our feeling was that we ought to go below, so we thanked the crew and headed to the forward lounge. Mom spent some of her last francs on drinks for us all, and we sat in chairs and watched the cliffs grow bigger.

Docking was quick and so was customs. Soon we were back on the motorways, sitting in traffic as we detoured around a wreck and then heading west. The last hours seemed to last forever, but finally Sainsbury's appeared. We stopped for groceries and then drove the familiar roads home, back up the steep hill, down the lane and into the driveway of our brick house in Exeter.

LONDON

Day -1: July 22 hot, humid

On ship they called it 'taking departures' – the official logbook entry that says "we've left." For me it was not recorded in the log, but I left MPYD at 2:30 and set off northward to Tampa International.

Once I cleared security, it felt like time to celebrate so I (I'm not making this up) broke my CD player. This turned into a dual-purpose exercise as I got to enjoy the breaking (not really) and then spending a good portion of the rest of my wait in the departure lounge fixing it (really) with my keys and pseudo-Vise-Grip® fingers.

Flights went smoothly, my connections quickly, and soon I was fast asleep over the north Atlantic jetting eastward.

Day 1: July 23 warm, sunny

Awoke this day over the ocean just west of Ireland. As breakfast was served the window shades went up on, for the UK, a top-notch summer day. The cloudless day let us look down on northern Ireland, northern England, central England, and (on our final turn) out over the Channel to France.

The transfer from plane to train at Gatwick went smoothly, as did the one from light rail to underground at Victoria. Five stops later, the subway pulled into the northbound Victoria Line platform at King's Cross, where Jenelle was waiting on a bench in a yellow shirt and khaki capris.

From the platform we headed up the escalator onto the hustle & bustle of Euston Road, crowded with construction barriers and a Friday-lunch throng. We walked west for a few blocks before turning onto a side street and arriving at 12-18 Cartwright Gardens.

Up six flights was #505 – a city-sized single dormitory room and home for Jenelle during her stay. We paused there, drinking some juice and pondering a city map for awhile before striking off on the tube for Blackfriars, St. Paul's, Millennium Bridge, and Tate Modern.

The day's main event, in terms of timing, was a 6:00 ticket for a gallery tour of Tate's Hopper exhibit. That left us time for a stroll along the Thames, a walk up to St. Paul's, a stop for a sandwich for Jenelle and Magnum bars all around, and a picture-filled meander across the jittery, glass and steel portal of death known as Millennium Bridge. In point of fact, the bridge has been dampened and re-tread, so it was actually a safe and pleasant walk over the river on a perfectly sunny day.

We arrived at Tate with enough time to spare to see an entire floor of the museum's fixed displays – modern art's sculptures and paintings – before riding the escalator up to the 4th floor exhibit halls where many of Edward Hopper's best works had been assembled for the first time.

We followed the guidebook provided through the rooms, moving counterclockwise through a building and chronologically through a man's life works. Although neither of his famous sailing pieces were present, the walls did hold virtually every recognizable painting of his – "Nighthawks," "Captain Upton's House," and all of his women gazing out of windows.

After the 11 gallery rooms had been browsed, we decided to head out, as the hour was getting late and I was feeling tired. So, we headed back over the bridge, back along the Thames to Blackfriars, back around the Circle line (anti-clockwise this time) to King's X station, Marchmont Street, #505, and bed.

Day 2: 24 July Perfect?...warm, mostly sunny

An early start to this Saturday morning then down to the street and back to King's Cross – St. Pancras. This time, though, we stopped for a coffee and then boarded the 9:15 express train to Cambridge. As 45 minutes worth of English countryside sped by outside our window we marveled at the train, the day, and just how many times our ears popped in each tunnel.

Exactly on time at 10:03 we stepped off the train into a wonderful, if slightly cool, Cambridge morning. We found a cab at the station's taxi stand and soon were rolling through town on our way to the American military cemetery at Madingley. Along the way our driver pointed out the landmarks, gave us a few historical perspectives, and even offered tips for finding a less expensive way back to town.

The cemetery itself was situated on a gently sloping hill that pitched slowly down from the entry gate. Our driver had said that this site was chosen because pilots' & aircrews' wives and lovers would watch the squadrons return from the Continent to local bases, eager to catch a glimpse of their man's plane and know that he was alive, and from the vantage point at the top of the hill much of the surrounding plain was in clear sight.

We walked down the hill, nearly bisecting the wedge-shaped grounds, taking in the immaculately-kept simple reverence shown in each white-marble monument. Some 3,800 servicemen are honored here, although most of their bodies have been returned to the United States.

Perpendicular to the slope at the top of the hill was a reflecting pool that stretched between an imposing but small chapel and the flag that formed the point of the plot. The chapel's interior was filled with maps showing the routes flown, sailed, and marched by the US servicemen who began their tours in England. At the base of the wall with the main pictorial were schematics showing the status of the Allies' fronts throughout the wars in Europe and the Pacific. Outside, on the 'back' wall of the building, was a map of the UK, dotted with incredible frequency with colored symbols marking the bases of US sailors, fliers, and infantry. Along the uphill side of the reflecting pool was a memorial wall engraved with the names of the men buried there – quite a long list, punctuated by one gold-leafed name, that of a Medal of Honor winner.

Back at the flagpole and entrance we took a few more pictures and waited for the double-decker Cambridge sightseer bus to make its appearance. When it did we boarded (and even offered to pay but were rejected) and were ferried back to the pedestrian zone in the center of the village. There we reconnoitered using the pocket-map Jenelle had bought for the trip when she got tickets, and struck out towards the colleges that line the Cam.

Not far down the road, though, an appealing 'side trip' presented itself when a door in a wooden wall was opened and the people walking out failed to latch it behind them. So, we poked into an unknown college and walked along its small campus toward the Backs. Without the picture-taking, map-checking tourists like ourselves it seemed very much a cloister where thought was advanced. The far end of the cloister was bound by a just-too-wide-to-try-it stream and a hedgerow that was the coniferous equivalent of the Iron Curtain. So, we doubled back and found our way to King's College Chapel.

Once we'd cleared the line and were inside, we sat to rest our legs and gawk at the magnitude and complexity of the stained glass window walls. We both also remarked at the harsh interruption of the space by a large organ screen at floor level in the chapel's center. Then we stood and walked the length of the church, passing through the wooden screen, through the choir, and towards the East window, where Reuben's "Adoration of the Magi" is framed in a giant, closeable console. From there we walked back to the West End exit by way of several side rooms housing exhibits about the building's history and structure.

Outside, we took a few pictures and decided rather quickly that lunch was in order. Luckily, the venue had been chosen, so we found the Eagle Pub.

This ordinary British pub has been lifted to the realm of extraordinary over the years by two groups: Watson & Krick, who announced their research there, and by the Air Force pilots and aircrews of WWII, who wrote their names on the ceiling. We didn't contribute much to its legacy but did have lunch...quiche for Jenelle and steak and ale pie with ginger beer for me.

After lunch we wandered the other colleges, including the "Chariots of Fire" quadrangle of Trinity, and explored the Backs. I had envisioned punting, but from the bridges we watched as mayhem broke out on the river time and time again. From Mathematical Bridge – once held together by gravity and angles, held by bolts since 2001 when it couldn't be figured out after a disassembly for cleaning – we saw a punt turn sideways in the narrow river and choke traffic while its pole-man inadvertently jostled with everybody in range.

Having found the sights we were shooting for and feeling like we'd seen the city, we began the walk back to the station, stopping in shops to browse and buy water and Magnums. We paused in a summer-Saturday park scene to sit and rest and eat Magnums before pushing on to Cambridge Station.

The trip back, aboard the 6:15 express, was even faster as I dozed off for much of it. At King's Cross we bought pasties and returned to #505 for a light dinner.

Afterwards, feeling much more energized, we spent a few hours walking through the neighborhood around University of London. I saw where Jenelle's classes are, the British Museum, Tottenham Court Road, and Russell Square. We also noted some stops for later. Along the way there was a stop for Magnums, though, and with dessert in our stomachs it was time to head home to bed.

Day 3: 25 July Nice, partly cloudy

Since it was Sunday we took our time getting underway this day. We had breakfast in the room from Jenelle's snack supply and spent the morning talking about where to go in the afternoon. We decided on a walking tour of sorts and headed out.

Our first destination was Covent Garden Market. From Cartwright Gardens we went south and slightly west to reach this indoor/outdoor market full of shops and stalls. En route we found a panini to split at Café Nero and that was lunch.

The market was neat and big, but we didn't find much of interest and thus continued on our way to Hyde Park. Our path skirted crowded Trafalgar Square, ran along a quiet Leicester Square, and took us right through Piccadilly Circus, where we hit a Starbucks before trekking on. Past Piccadilly, through a stretch of Mayfair and in the cooling afternoon air we found the edge of what would prove to be a tour of London's natural spaces – Green Park. There it was (again) Magnum time; we had a double and shared as we strolled. Jenelle had read that the park is called Green Park because it is devoid of flowers – all had been torn up to prevent a King from giving them to his 18 mistresses some years ago upon orders from a queen. Another interesting feature was found at the far end, where war memorials from Australia and the sub-Asian, African, and Caribbean allies of Britain were located.

Continuing west we had only to cross one busy street to get to Hyde Park. There, flowers abounded and were in full bloom. A bench in one especially nice garden was too tempting and so we stopped to rest and have some water.

On our way again, we walked past the Long Lake or Serpentine, depending on the source, to the new Diana Princess of Wales fountain, which was fenced off and closed due to a rash of 'slippage incidents' in it. Shortly after the fountain we decided to call it 'half way' and turned north to begin the trek home.

We exited the park at Speakers' Corner, where a rather large throng of primarily young men was split into a number of smaller groups, intently arguing about stuff. While our curiosities were piqued, it didn't seem a place where two young Americans belonged, so we proceeded east on Oxford Street.

Within a few blocks the din and bustle of this busy (even on a Sunday afternoon) shopping avenue didn't fit our day, so we jogged two streets to the north and walked all the way home through several residential neighborhoods – window shopping and scouting for a place to eat along the way. It was a nice walk, but no restaurants appealed until we got to the Café Valencia, just outside Jenelle's building. There, we ordered burgers and chips and sat and talked until the staff started stacking the chairs around us. We took the hint and headed back to the street, swinging into a market for juice, Robinson's barley water, Hit crackers, and a bar of dark chocolate that served as after-dinner mints and dessert.

Back upstairs we faded fast and were soon struggling to stay awake.

Day 4: 26 July nice – partly cloudy

Tops on the list for this day was a visit to St. Paul's Cathedral, so we rose somewhat early and worked our way through Monday-morning rush hour in that direction.

Much of the church is being renovated, so our arrival and entry were understated due to the tarps and scaffolding covering much of the building. Inside, half was tented for cleaning, but the exposed parts were shining and looking new. We sat in the transept for a few minutes before starting the climb up the dome.

About 1/3 of the way up is the Whispering Gallery, which is the perimeter of the base of the dome. Looking down from here we had the best view of the benefits of cleaning. We also both felt like it seemed higher looking down than it had from the transept looking up.

Continuing the climb, up a tightly-wound circular staircase, we found ourselves at the top of dome, looking out over the city as a quick rain cooled the air and marred the picture-taking. Nonetheless, we both took advantage of the view to take a few and get a better sense of the geography of the city.

When we'd seen enough and felt it was time to share the space with the steady stream coming up from below, we headed down to explore the cleaned part of the cathedral and then further down to the crypt. We made sure to see it all, but didn't spend any excess time reveling over the tombs or reading the list of the contents of each vault. As such, we were soon back out in the street headed for the British Museum.

Along the way we got some very tasty grilled sandwiches and were even given (imagine that!) a pretty tasty apple each. We stopped outside the museum's peripheral crowd and ate before heading in.

There were no definite objectives for the visit, so we just browsed the myriad antiquities and found a few select exhibits to explore in depth – a traveling collection of prints and drawings and the museum's extensive collection of money.

The prints and drawings were all fairly modern in composition and many focused on geometric patterns and variations...very much my style, although enjoyable for both I think. Our tour of the history

of currency was cut short by the rather abrupt closing of the museum, but the bits we saw were very fascinating. It was of special interest to me which civilizations actually turned value over to citizens (e.g. Roman gold coins) and which created trinkets that represented government wealth (e.g. Chinese coins).

From the courtyard of the museum we headed towards the string of furniture shops that crowd the north end of Tottenham Court Road – with a trip to Starbucks first.

Unfortunately, our timing was off and all but one of them was closed. So, after testing out a few chairs we found a bench and checked out a map for Plan B. After a quick scan we decided to check out Harrod's, just a quick tube ride away.

When we climbed up from Kensington Station, though, a crowd was streaming out the doors of London's most famous store. More bad news: Harrod's closes at 7 on Monday.

With Plan B scratched, we took a walk towards South Kensington. Along the way we stumbled across a patisserie – not British but on our list. We stepped in and found a perfect fruit tart to share, something we'd talked about all weekend.

From the patisserie we headed for the tube, rode back to Russell Square and found the Goose Pub for dinner. With a hearty English meal in our stomachs it didn't take long for the day to end.

Day 5: July 27 Nice.

Up with the warmth of the day this morning, just in time to pack and head up to the Valencia Café for the English breakfast I'd been craving. We sat outside and just enjoyed the last moments of the trip before it was time to head out.

From Valencia we headed for King's Cross, rode the tube to Victoria and boarded Gatwick Express. The countryside streamed by all too fast and soon we were at the security gate, the end of an awesome trip and the start of a long ride home.

NEW YEAR'S 2005 – EAST COAST

Day 1: 28 Dec sunny, cool

We did our best to get a jump on the trip this morning, but we'd been in the car for 6 hours the day before and it took awhile to get back in that mode.

Our itinerary for the day was pretty bleak – a stop at Huron Towers for unpacking and repacking, then driving through Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey to a Day's Inn in Parsippany. Along the way we listened to some good music, talked, laughed, and enjoyed a sunshiny winter day in four states. Also, Jenelle worked for several hours on a scarf that had been an autumn birthday/Christmas present for me and handled copilot duties.

I had hoped that the hills and bluffs west of the city would get us to a high enough vantage point to see the skyline, but all we could make out was the yellow-ish glow just over the horizon.

Day 2: 29 Dec mostly cloudy, deceptively cold

Our hotel was intentionally on the outer band of NYC-influenced pricing, so it took about an hour to get across the balance of New Jersey, pay the GWB toll, and get headed south on Manhattan's West Side highway. We cut across town in the 50's, found a garage near the Waldorf, grabbed hats, gloves, and cameras, and set out on foot down Park Avenue past the Waldorf-Astoria and south toward the Henley and Grand Central.

At Grand Central Terminus we made our way directly to the Departures Hall, admiring the enormity of the space and the bustle all around us.

From GCT, it was west and south to the main branch of the library, its museum, and the Rose Reading Room – all closed, as luck would have it. So, we quickly changed plans and found a Southbound (9) to take us to Battery Park and views of the Statue of Liberty.

When we walked out of the subway station at the tip of Manhattan we were greeted by a biting cold wind. We battened down hatches and forged ahead, but the cold that came charging off the harbor limited our stay to a few pictures and a few moments of gazing before we headed for the shelter of the financial district.

Along the way we got some (very salty) pretzels to eat as we wandered north, past the bull, to Wall Street, the NYSE, Trinity Church, and a sidewalk engraved with the names of ticker-tape parade honorees. Then we continued north past the church at Ground Zero, found a subway and headed uptown to SoHo and the Village.

Due partly to my mis-guidance and partly to not having a map, our tour of lower Midtown wasn't very noteworthy. Inexplicably we wound up East of the major sights, but opted to move the day North rather than doubling back. Once again we found a station and boarded a subway...this time bound for the Upper East Side, Museum Mile, and the park.

Lunch was the first priority when we popped up out of the earth at 77th & Lexington. It didn't take long to find a pizza joint with places to sit, so we got two slices and took a break from being on our feet while we ate and discussed the rest of the day.

After demolishing those poor pieces of pizza, we set out again, looking for the Whitney Museum of American Art. For some reason I'd never made it to the Whitney during life at Webb, so I was hoping to make up for lost time. What we found outside the museum, though, was a line that was going to take too much time, so we bailed and jogged west to the park, got an ice cream bar (for old times' sake) and dove in.

We'd barely unwrapped the snack and gotten away from the noise of 5th Avenue when Central Park revealed a jewel in the form of an osprey (Pale Male we'd later find out) sitting in a tree about 20 feet from the path. He wasn't up to much, though, so we moved along in fairly short order.

Stops in the park included Belvedere Castle, to look out over the park, Bow Bridge, to look back at the city and the osprey's nest next to Paula Zahn's window, Conservatory Water, to have hot drinks, and Tavern on the Green, to, well, do what you need to after having hot drinks.

The day was fading and we hoped for skating at Rockefeller Center, so we made a beeline to the south-east corner of Central Park via the poet's walk and Wellinton Rink. Once we left the quiet of the green park, we were confronted with huge crowds. It was literally shoulder-to-shoulder shuffling all the way down to the holiday capitol of the city. Under the huge tree and above the rink it took about 1/10th of a second to realize that skating was going to be an all-night wait. Instead, we chose to visit the Empire State Building.

Freshly bundled after a stop at the car, we joined the queue at ESB, which was around the corner and growing when we hopped on. It took some time, but we got inside and aboard an elevator. At the 87th floor observatory we headed outside to look down over the city. It was a dark if not totally clear night, but we could still see all of the landmark buildings and bridges.

When the 87th floor wind had taken its toll, we rode down and returned to GCT and its basement food court – starving and badly in need of a place to sit. Mexican sounded good to us both, so we got burritos and enchiladas and found a table.

With food in our stomachs and sore muscles in our legs, we decided to get the car and drive through Times Square rather than adding another 15 blocks to our weary feet.

Thankfully traffic was thick and we got a great, slow-motion drivethru tour of the dazzling center of pop culture. The ball atop 1 Times Square was lit up and ready to drop in a few days' time.

From Times Square we drove south, past Macy's and Madison Square Garden before turning left, finding the Queens Midtown Tunnel and zooming east on the LIE with the city lights shining in the back window.

We turned off the expressway at Glen Cove Road, headed north into Glen Cove, and found our way to Harrison House on Dosoris Lane. Once we got checked in we made our way through the labyrinth to our room and were asleep almost immediately.

Day 3: Nice, mostly sunny.

Tired doesn't even begin to describe how we felt when the alarm buzzed at 8, so we hit snooze and pushed back our day by a couple of hours.

Highlight for the day was up first – a tour of Webb; Jenelle's first visit to the institute. The sun was out and the wind near calm, so it was perfect for a walk around campus.

We started by peering in the windows of Alumni Gym and looking down the hill to Thorpe Field and the Grad Dorm. From there, Cuneo Courtyard and into Stevenson Taylor Hall. Inside we scouted just about every portion of a Webbie's life – bat cave to reading room. As I'd hoped, doors were open and we say 'my table' in the library, the room Constable and I lived in senior year, the senior classroom, the dining room, and the Brocket Arms.

With the inside tour over, we drove down to the beach – winch, yacht club, and jetty. Through the haze we could just see the top of the Empire State... a flashback to the previous afternoon.

Almost before it started, the morning at Webb was over and we were fighting traffic getting to Throgg's Neck. Along the way we coordinated meeting times with Nick and Dave and Merritt.

Over the bridge, we sped toward New Haven, where we were meeting Nick for lunch. Jenelle knit and I tried to find good radio, but we got to New Haven before much success on either front.

The three of us found a diner in the shadows of Yale's walled campus. Service was slow, so the talking while we waited was just about all the time we had. When food came we ate, when the bill followed we paid and got back on I-95 and covered the ground to Boston as quickly as possible.

An initial round of introductions was the first order of business at Karyn & Rob's. We chatted for a few minutes before heading out again, into the city to meet Dave & Merritt. We found a bar, ordered drinks and dinner, and made an evening out of it. It was great to catch up with Dave & Merritt and to spend some time with Karyn and Rob. We talked and laughed until we had to head out onto the street to catch the T for the ride back to the apartment.

Day 4: Ehhh...Dreary

Everybody was up at a reasonable time this morning, showering and shaving and ready for the last day of '04.

Jenelle and I took off fairly early, returned to the city, and found our way to Government Center. There, we walked around Fanuel Hall and Quincy Market. In the market, we stopped for lunch, choosing from the myriad vendors and eating liberally from the equally-numerous 'free sample' trays. Eventually we decided and found a seat in the jam-packed hall.

With lunch in our stomachs we decided to begin our moderate journey over to the theater district. We had cemented one event long before the trip, and that was an early-afternoon matinee of "The Lion King." Karyn & Rob met us at the theater and we proceeded to enjoy the pageantry, costumes, and music of a great show.

Rain greeted us outside the theater after the show, which led us to head directly for the T and back to Karyn & Rob's. At the apartment, Anthony and John arrived just a few minutes after us, followed by

Nick, Bonnie, Gram, and Ryan. With 10 hungry mouths around the place, pizza seemed the only viable dinner option. So, Rob and I set out for the pizza place and the neighborhood beverage retailer. When we got back, a stack of pizzas and wings was reduced to bones, boxes, and paper napkins in record time.

The New Year's Eve party of choice was being hosted at a Webb-full house in Cambridge, requiring a drive across town. We all piled into two cars and then piled out into a house full of faces from the past. We sat and partied and talked all evening – well past the dropping of the ball. Highlights: Gabe and his roasted cured meats, Bonnie and her tales of Aggie football, Ryan's crazy outburst, a snowball fight, and frozen four-square.

Day 5: Apparently sunny.

POD got the first day of '05 off to a surprisingly early start with his clamorings for breakfast. One by one there were clamorings from every corner of the apartment until Karyn and Constable had cooked breakfast for nine.

Towards the end of the meal somebody tuned in to the end of the Outback Bowl, just in time to see Iowa pull out a crazy last-play Hail Mary victory. This was exactly the event we needed to commit to an entire day of college football and snacking and catching up with old friends.

Over the course of the day we saw several games, but the highlight was absolutely the grand-daddy of them all – Michigan versus Texas in the Rose Bowl Game. As the 5:00 kickoff approached, Anthony dug out a Texas shirt while I donned my season ticket shirt and we braced for the battle ahead.

Keith Jackson called the game, and it was a Deusey, as he would say. There was a ton of offense, marginal defense, and plenty of excitement. When it was over the 'Horns had gained the victory with a last-second field goal – a heart-breaking loss for the Wolverine(s) in the room.

After the Rose Bowl, there was more food and more football, but the evening was definitely soured by the Rose Bowl result.

With the late night the previous night, early morning, and long day ahead, Jenelle and I headed off a bit earlier than the rest of the group and slept very soundly.

Day 6: rainy, cloudy

All was quiet when we slipped out the door this morning. We made our way out of the neighborhood, onto the interstate, and pointed west on the Mass Pike.

The sun came out briefly as we crossed the Hudson into New York, but it was gone when we stopped for gas halfway across the NY State thru-way. We were well ahead of schedule, so we allowed the stop to stretch to over an hour. Jenelle worked on grading papers while I checked the truck and tried to loosen the muscles in my legs.

From New York, we crossed into Ontario. There, Jenelle took over and drove through the foggy darkness of Canadian farmland while I slept. By the time I got up, we could almost see the towers of Port Huron's Ambassador Bridge.

The crossing took almost no time, and we were back onto I-96 barreling towards Lansing. We got gas and a few groceries before getting home, road-weary and hungry.