

## Chapter One: SUMMER 2021

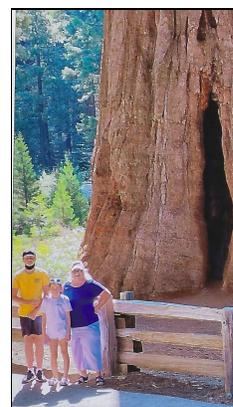
**June 20, Sunday** The trip east, home to Iowa, with the grandkids Violet and Keegan begins. There were just the usual, must point out, landmarks on our way toward our initial destination Sequoia. The excitement of seeing the refineries along-side the freeway around Long Beach did little more than cause a peek out the window before returning to the rapture of their I-Pads. The Goodyear Blimp, downtown Los Angeles, the Grapevine, Castaic Lake, Pyramid Lake, Gorman, the oil fields around Bakersfield, and the olive orchards of Lindsay had about the same effect. Pointing out Six Flags Magic Mountain, we found out, did not sit well with our replacement generation as they wanted to know why we weren't



staying there. And I think they were very serious about why it wasn't foremost on our itinerary. Grandma and I gave some weak excuses about our mobility. There was actually one curiosity that intrigued me. Acres upon acres of olive groves on one side of Highway 65 and acres upon acres of solar panels on the other side of the road. Why, you may ask, is this a curiosity? Well, which side produced the most income to support our burgeoning economy, olives or power? The Super 8 in Lindsay got our business, but the

sidewalks and pool area were too hot to walk on, so the pool was out and wouldn't you know it, the Lindsay Golf Course had just closed. Murphy's Law struck early.

**June 21, Monday** As Al Prukop has a cabin in Three Rivers and is quite familiar with the area and its swimming hole, he suggested we get to the Sequoia Park entrance early, as the line can be quite significant. So, we had a hardy gas station breakfast and beat feet for the park. Al was right. Anyway, the General Sherman grove is impressive, Lodgepole and the General Grant groves are aptly named giants, who served and continue to serve their country, America. On leaving the park we stopped at the Sherwood Forest Golf Course in Sanger where Keegan and I played 9 holes while Cheryl and Violet sat on the club house patio beside the King River. In addition to the golf course, Days Inn in Blackstone just North of Fresno and Appleby's they all helped us accelerate the transfer of U.S. dollars in our attempt to once again bolster the U.S. economy.



**June 22, Tuesday** Another hit and run bakery breakfast on the way to Yosemite National Park. There are several interesting towns on the way to the park entrance, Coarse Gold which has a resort casino,



Oakhurst and Shawnee where we have played golf in a galaxy far-far away. Worth consideration if we are ever in the area again. The suggestion, once again, is get to the entrance early. Apparently, we didn't appreciate the word early, nearly enough. Wouldn't you know it, the Wawona Golf Course inside the park has been closed! Woe is me! The tour of the valley was appreciated by the kids. The remarks about El Capitan being a tough climb were discounted out of hand. Decent lunch in the village, souvenirs, views of the valley floor, half dome and all the

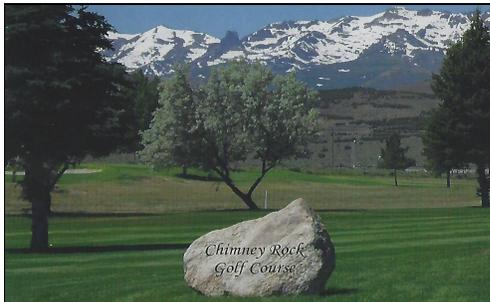
other great guardians of the valley made a lifetime impression. The drive through Tioga Pass, Tuolumne Meadows, the lake and streams was a new experience for some young ones too. 395 is 395, but 89 starts nowhere and ends up nowhere, some of my shortcuts may leave a bit to be desired. But I'll bet dollars to

donuts that some contractor, chairperson and highway commissioner made out all right with its construction. It's ranked pretty high on my do not use as a shortcut scale. Harvey's Casino in Stateline, Nevada got the nod for tonight's lodging. But because of the Covid issue there was no buffet, Joe's Sports Bar was a disappointment and the casino didn't appear to be rolling in the clover.

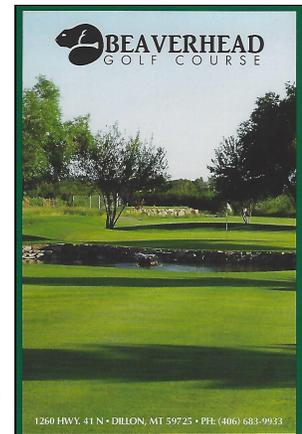
**June 23, Wednesday** Well the idea of taking Violet and Keegan to Lake Tahoe included a boat cruise of the lake and the gondola ride to the summit. However, Murphy beat me to the punch. The boat had a fire a few days earlier, the other boat line was closed Wednesdays and the gondola was too late in the day. So, Tahoe could be considered a bust. Perhaps someday they can finish this quest on their own, as Cheryl and I have experienced many wonderful times there. 400 miles of windshield time became the order of the day. We did get to see, sort of, the state capital in Carson City. Highways 50, 395, and 80 took us to the Super 8 in Wells, Nevada. Wells seems to be one of those towns that has been abandoned due to lost revenue because the interstate has bypassed the downtown. There were two motels I couldn't resist taking pictures of to share with Cheryl's ladies. My comment was "Cheryl was not particularly taken with this first lodging and as she is wont to do in a tone that is not difficult to understand, thus prompting myself, forthwith, to seek another alternative. Boy, was I lucky, and was it ever a good deal, The second motel was just \$1.00 an hour".



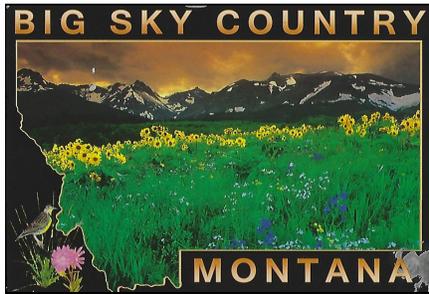
**June 24, Thursday** Keegan and I snuck out of the motel early and played Chimney Rock Golf Club. He is making better contact with his driver and getting some real distance. We had the pleasure of taking Highway 93 North through Jackpot and Idaho Falls on the way to Craters of The Moon National Preserve and Monument. Miles and miles of lava landscape was a curiosity to the kids. "Is this what the moon is really like?" Well, having never been to the moon myself I couldn't give an adequate response so we left further inquiries to the visitor center docents. There was some concern that we were standing on a vulnerable part of the earth's crust that had the potential for some kind of cataclysmic volcanic sinkhole explosion. Perhaps the thought entered their imaginations that this event might take place at any moment and it would behoove us to get in the car and get the hell out of dodge. Thereupon we hit the road until we came upon Interstate 15 North where we took refuge in the town of Dillon, Montana. After a healthy dinner at Subway and dessert at the local DQ (Dairy Queen) we took our weary bones to the local Super 8.



**June 25, Friday** The Beaverhead Golf Course in Dillon didn't open as promised, Murphy must have gotten to the starter somehow. Had an interesting experience though. While waiting on the club house porch a robin put in an appearance with a worm he'd just retrieved from the putting green. He kept coming, hopping closer and closer to me along the railing, no fear, as if he were offering me the worm. Why he didn't eat it immediately or take it to his nest seemed a bit curious. The day's plan had been to drive up to Kalispell, Montana and visit Amanda Biehn for a few days. Unbeknownst to us Amanda's dad and



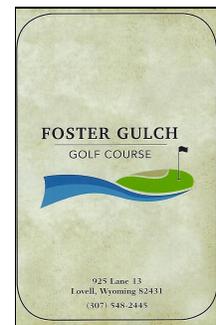
Matt's mom had dibs on their guest rooms. The rates at the local motels were a bit on the exorbitant side, somewhere in the \$400.00 range. Must have been some event going on, rodeo or something perhaps? Murphy is beginning to get under my skin. In any event this necessitated a change in plans. So, a short cut to Yellowstone became our next priority. Our Eagle pass into the national parks has served us well. The weather provided somewhat of a challenge, cold, rainy, blustery, but this didn't prevent Old Faithful from putting on his scheduled performance. Always thought there should have been a powerful background sound effect from some porn tape, you know, like OH YES, OH GOD, to offset all the OOHS and AAHS of the audience. But that's just my warped sense of humor. On the way out of the park we were blessed to have a bison cross the road in front of us and pace the car for the kids' benefit, probably petting distance if the windows had been down. The attempt to stay in Cody, Wyoming was not in the cards either because of our altered plan. No room at the inn. But we were fortunate to settle in at another Super 8 in Powell, Wyoming. There was an excellent sports pub in town, that we chose for dinner, the kids really liked, Stone something or other.



side, somewhere in the \$400.00 range. Must have been some event going on, rodeo or something perhaps? Murphy is beginning to get under my skin. In any event this necessitated a change in plans. So, a short cut to Yellowstone became our next priority. Our Eagle pass into the national parks has served us well. The weather provided somewhat of a challenge, cold, rainy, blustery, but this didn't prevent Old Faithful from putting on his scheduled performance.

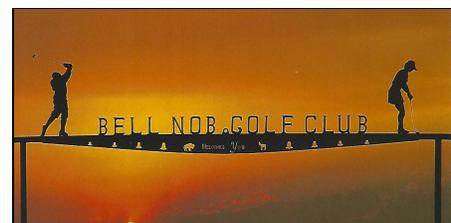


**June 26, Saturday** Foster Gulch Golf Course hosted our morning round. Cheryl and Violet played alternate shot, while Keegan and I played find the errant shot. In any event we came out on top as we found more balls than we lost. WE WON! WE WON! Keegan was impressed with the Big Horn National Forest enough so that he mentioned it would be a neat place to live. Of course, that would entail exchanging the life of a hermit for all that natural beauty. Part of the drive put us above the snow level in a number of places, and can you imagine kids from Iowa not wanting to get out of a nice warm car to have their pictures taken making snow angels. You go ahead grandpa, we'll wait here. Lunch break at the Sheridan, Wyoming Perkins Restaurant. The town seemed to be hosting early arrivals for Sturgis, but it was actually a



motorcycle gathering of Combat Veterans and their Auxiliary. Never realized there were so many veteran bikers, but I suppose of the tens of millions of veterans there has to be a certain percent who ride. Lots of rain on the drive to the Days Inn in Gillette, Wyoming. Wendy's provided us with a healthy dinner of chocolate shakes and other stuff.

**June 27, Sunday** Bell Nob Golf Club put me out early on the back 9 with local retirees Kent and Scott. What seemed like a long drive wasn't really too bad. Drove through downtown Deadwood. Visited the Crazy Horse Memorial for some souvenirs and a native American dance show. The progress on the carving doesn't appear to have made any significant progress since our first visit some 50 years ago, contrary to other's opinions. Cheryl agrees with me, and that doesn't happen all too often.



Consequently, we know, she who is never wrong, puts those of the other opinion in a difficult position. The approach walking up to Mt. Rushmore National Memorial is impressive and seems as if it were designed to prepare me emotionally for something I am about to witness. The following was an experience Murphy had to have been preparing for quite some time. Our reservations were for the Super 8 motel in Valentine. All of the day's activities put us a little behind schedule time wise, but not too bad. After exiting Interstate 90 onto Highway 83 south toward Valentine a road construction sign indicated there would be a rocky road ahead and recommended taking an alternate route. BUT NO! I insisted rock roads were very doable, until we came upon a flag-girl several miles further along who said the road was only open to residents. This required a significant backtrack to Interstate 90, another 35 miles to Highway 183 which would take us south another 35 miles to Highway 18 west and another 35 miles back to Highway 83. And that's when it happened! The highlight of the summer trip for the grandchildren! Grandma killed Bambi! The snap of your fingers was all the time it took for Bambi to dart out of hiding, run across the highway, get hit by our car and launched into another dimension. Bambi's name has been altered, in our lexicon she is now known as Blambi. After assessing the damage, picking up the pieces and putting the headlights back in the engine compartment, it was decided to head back to the town of Mission, South Dakota. As there was no cell service the local gas station, which seemed to comprise the whole town, volunteered their phone. Law Officer Samuel Antoine, of the Rosebud Reservation Police, took our report of the accident and helped contact the local tow service. Lucas Brave of the Mission Towing Company loaded up, and I mean up, the car onto his flatbed truck. Now getting Cheryl from the ground into the back of the crew cab was a story in itself. The ceiling hand grip seemed like it was probably 9 feet off the ground, and the bed of the cab was nearly shoulder height for her and her vertical leap of almost 2 inches was of no consideration, and of course there was no stair step as the truck needed ground clearance for some of its off-road recoveries. There was some boosting and grunting involved, but we got aboard and Lucas drove us down to Valentine and dropped the car in the back of the Super 8 lot. Our check in was about midnight. "A day like all days, filled with those events that alter and illuminate our times, because you were there."

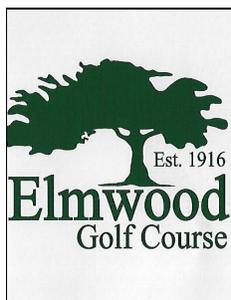
**June 28, Monday** Today could be filed under the heading of cluster fuck. Reporting the accident to Farmers Insurance, being advised that the field agent was being notified as we speak via fax, and would be contacting us shortly, notifying Joe Leight and his co-worker Danny our Farmers agent didn't take up very much time. Expecting the field agent in our area to call and tell us when he would come by and evaluate the damage took a bit longer. It necessitated calling back Farmers after several hours that we had not been contacted. They provided me with his number, which proved to be less than useless. Another call to Farmers, by Cheryl, who was not too pleased, aggravated may be more like it, with the delays, got the number of the supervisor Elizabeth Ewers. Apparently, Elizabeth was able to get in touch with Keith Jackson, the field agent, who was able to call us back immediately after the conversation with Elizabeth. He assured us he would be in touch shortly. As it turns out Keith is located in Oklahoma City which is a bit more than a few minutes-drive from Valentine, Nebraska. After not hearing from Keith, his recording indicated that either himself or a team member would be in touch, which we almost believed. Once again, a supervisorial call prompted Keith's team partner, Patrick Greenland to call us. Patrick assured us again that as claim field adjuster he would get right on the problem. Can you guess where Patrick is located? That's right, Denver, Colorado! Just another hop, skip and a jump from Valentine, Nebraska. He actually asked us where we wanted our car towed to, by what towing company, and who we wanted to do the repair work. It's just a guess, but I'm thinking he didn't have any information as to our California residency. I apprised him of our location in regards to our home and suggested he look into

these services himself as that was what his job entailed. Perhaps that suggestion prompted the eventual two-week delay in having the car towed and delivered to a repair center of their choosing. There are no car rental outfits in Valentine. There was one in Ainsworth, but they could only rent us a car for one day. The used car lot was closed and their message service went unanswered. A local trucking company might be able to give me a ride tomorrow depending on where they were going. Enterprise could provide me a car, but they were located 120 miles south of North Platte, Nebraska.

**June 29, Tuesday** North Platte, Nebraska may be renowned as the world's largest railroad switching yard, but in the Waters family, Michael Figge of the North Platte Enterprise car rental company takes precedence. He is renowned as our good Samaritan. He understood our predicament, trapped in Valentine with little possibility of escape. He sent Jayson, one of his employees, 120 plus miles north to Valentine on a rescue mission. Jayson, bless his heart, listened to my blathering on about golf and even chipped in about his high school and college golf team experiences. So that was a pleasant way to pass the 120 mile drive time back to North Platte where I signed us up for a huge SUV. Then another 120 miles back to Valentine. Of course, the constant calls and messages to Farmers, questioning when someone would come to pick up our car, went unanswered.

**June 30, Wednesday** Cheryl and I, mostly Cheryl, began transferring all of our cars' worldly possessions, which seem to accumulate over the years, and our summer baggage, to our new means of conveyance. Herself decided that Violet and Keegan couldn't possibly stand any more beauty sleep. These kids prioritize their game boy time and sleep time a tad differently than some old folks I know. After leaving multiple messages with multiple Farmer's agents as to where the car was and how to acquire the keys from the motel manager, we hit the road. Valentine to Omaha via 20 and 275 sort of easterly and south. Nebraskans are referred to as huskers, must have something to do with corn. Of course, Husker's has a more pleasant reference than Bug Eaters, their previous nickname. Tim and Sue DeHeck, Cheryl's brother and his wife hosted us. Those of you who are chocoholics who have never experienced Culver's chocolate-chocolate cement mixer are in for a treat if you ever get the opportunity. Tim's treat and he is almost as good as myself at spoiling grandkids.

**July 1, Thursday** Out and about early, got in the back 9 at Elmwood Golf Course. Sue and I did my obligatory drive-by of Sol's Pawn Shop to see if he had changed his mind as to letting me buy his fake Jackson Pollock painting. But once again the answer was a firm NO! Tim suggested if I went to Menards and bought a bunch of returned paint can's he'd make an original with an autograph for me on an old sheet out on the garage floor. One of the Sol's employee's, who was the gun specialist, had lived in Lake Forest at one point. AR's can only be sold to state residents or residents of adjoining states. So, it was onward to a series of thrift stores where I was actually able to score a number of other pictures for our garage art collection and books for my perusal. Jack and Mary's Family Restaurant is the only place, anywhere we know of that has chicken livers on the menu that are done to perfection. The kids weren't too enthusiastic about either the chicken liver or the gizzards so they settled on steak or some such other alternative. Tim has a magnificent, nearly wall to wall HD-TV, but it must be a little faulty as the only station it doesn't receive is FOX. Maybe they somehow preprogram these TV's specially for Democrats.

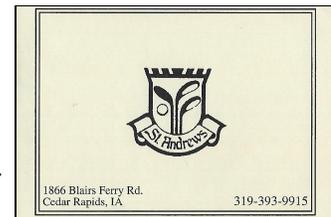


**July 2, Friday** The kids have been real troopers, trapped in a car and every conceivable confined space you could think of with two old geezers for over a week. We get the sense that they are actually looking forward to getting home. You almost get the impression that they can't wait to see their friends, who

they have missed for a good part of their summer vacation, celebrating their version of the 4th of July, sleeping in their own beds, and the presence of the two people they love most in the world, Mom and Dad. The drive from Omaha to Cedar Rapids culminated in the neighborhood Culvers. You guessed it, chocolate-chocolate cement mixer. The kids didn't want to order as it would take an additional minute or so ordering before they could bust out. Our evening was special. We got the grandkids home alive to their parents. We had quality time with our own kids, relating the highlights of the trip, the occasional beer, which used to be consumed in prodigious amounts, but not so much anymore. And a bed in which we would spend more than one night.

**July 3, Saturday** Menards and Home Depot used to recommend contractors for home projects. Apparently, they have decided that being named in lawsuits based on contractor's performance or lack thereof was not sufficient reason to continue with the recommendations. Was able to google two plumbing contractors to come by and give estimates on a basement bathroom. Sean, Heather and the dogs took grandpa for a familiarization walk around their neighborhood. The dogs got to converse with their buddies in the hood, some nice, some not so much. The front porch is our comfort zone to relax, read, smoke, swat flies, do the occasional beer or its substitute and watch what goes on in the hood. We went over and introduced ourselves to Bruce, a neighbor from across the street and a few houses down. Bruce, who incidentally is from California and a professor at one of the Cal State campuses, bought the house for his son while going to college here. Son decided to quit school, move back to California and walked away from the house, leaving Bruce with coming back here to prepare the place for resale. We got all this gossip over a beer or twelve. P.S. No response from our trusty Farmers agents.

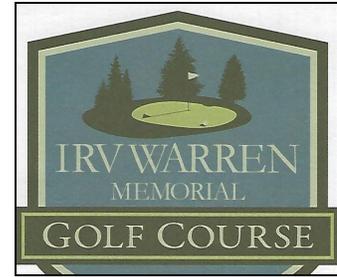
**July 4, Sunday** Bragging rights, St. Andrews! Not everyone gets to play St. Andrews with his son in the summer, albeit the Cedar Rapids version. Sean and Heather put on a wondrous B.B.Q. feast. Fireworks all over the neighborhood all day and into the night. The dogs didn't seem too fazed by the noise. A good part of the day was consumed by watching the Virgin River serial.



**July 5, Monday** On the way to Kelly and Tony's we stopped at Junie's truck stop in Elk Run for breakfast. The grits were a little chunky even with lots of melted butter and sugar. Had one of my esophageal events, which passed in the medical center. Kind of like taking your car to the mechanic to see if he can figure out what is causing that odd noise. Of course, it won't make the noise in his presence. Did you really think it would? Tony and Kelly like to support Dave's Mexican Restaurant in Evansdale probably because finding authentic Mexican food in Iowa is quite the challenge. The better part of the day was following the marathon Yellowstone series starring Kevin Costner, the golfer.

**July 6, Tuesday** Made the run back to Sean and Heathers to house sit awaiting the plumber's arrival for the basement bathroom estimates. Made a short side trip to Stuff, a consignment store, where I scored a nice original oil painting of a rowboat. After the estimates we drove back to Evansdale to enjoy Tony's BBQ burgers. The rest of the day's entertainment involved watching Tony and his neighbor address the woodchuck infestation issue. They are sort of a cute rodent. Kind of a cross between a beaver and a possum, but built lower to the ground. The Honda may or may not have been towed to Grand Island or North Platte.

**July 7, Wednesday** The old Lone Star steakhouse has been converted into a Perkins restaurant, anyway, that's where we had breakfast. My strawberry cream cheese topped crepes were special and will be my future go-to breakfast order at Perkins. Cheryl and I got in 9 holes at the Irv Warren Golf Course, which for your edification was established in 1908. Some nice young gentleman at the AT&T store may have, sort of, helped resolve our ringer cell phone issue. God bless this generation's patience in dealing with us old head bobbers. The old Safeway markets always necessitated me to ask myself, "Is there a safe way?" That probably has nothing to do with anything. We went to the Fairway Market for some of the bare necessities. BEER! Tony, Kelly, Cheryl and I went to the Longhorn SteakHouse for dinner. Not having had salmon in quite some time, it was now time. Was it really salmon?



**July 8, Thursday** The La Porte City Golf Course is once again under new ownership. The previous owner had bought the course from the city with his lottery winnings and the improvements were noticeable. The new owners have kept up with and continue with further improvements. The BBQ master made chicken tonight. With beer and fly swatters we continued enjoying the woodchuck circus. Maybe one night Tony will surprise us with a mystery meat treat. Made a number of calls to Farmers re. Where's the car?



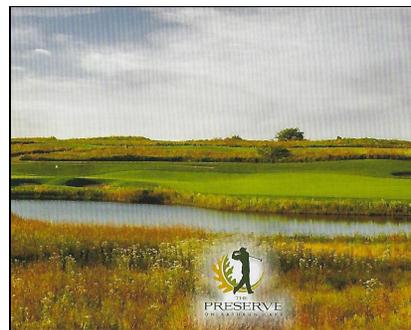
**July 9, Friday** Gates Park Golf Course was the main course on today's agenda. A visit to Waterloo's version of the Stuff consignment store yielded nada. Enjoyed the further adventures in woodchuck land. Oh yes! How much wood would a wood chuck-chuck if a woodchuck would chuck wood? Just thought I'd ask. Drizzle, just a small case, precluded the continued watching of the neighborhood wood chucks, but did not interrupt the consuming of beer nor the swatting of flies.

**July 10, Saturday** Marty and Debbie, who we haven't seen in a coons age, or a wood chucks age for that matter either, dropped by for a nice visit. Perhaps I over did the donut run this morning. They do lend themselves to pass as another version of hors d'oeuvres, going nicely with the beer. Smoked pellets added a nice accent to Tony's pork roast. You can never take too much pleasure in watching the family of woodchucks, it's something you just can't dial up on the TV. This will probably be our only opportunity in this lifetime.

**July 11, Sunday** Mickey seems to be doing reasonably well after her hundredth hip surgery. We are a bit critical of her pushing herself, but she insists her physical therapist says she is supposed to do certain things. My guess is her interpretation or understanding of the therapist's instructions may be slightly exaggerated. Apparently, I didn't leave myself enough notes as to what happened today, but in any event, it involved Kelly, Tony, Allan, Jordan, James, Milo, Will, Tammy, Harper, Taylor and many others. Back at Kelly's a nap was in order while attempting to watch the final round of the John Deere Golf Tournament from Silvis, Illinois. Spaghetti and toasted garlic bread were our Sunday repast.

**July 12, Monday** Drove back to Sean and Heathers in Cedar Rapids, with a breakfast stop at Riley's. Today's highlight was the news that our Honda Pilot had been towed to a repair shop in Grand Island. June 28th to July 12th seems an inordinate amount of time to have the car sit in an unsecured location before having it towed. What would have been the repercussions if it had been stripped or stolen?

**July 13, Tuesday** Golf Magazine publishes various lists of golf courses. The world's 100 greatest, America's 100 greatest, and their Best Courses Near you is done on a state-by-state basis and is the list that I use to select public courses along our travel route. Iowa has 5 courses: The Harvester, Spirit Hollow, Blue Top Ridge, Amana Colonies and The Preserve on Rathbun Lake. The early morning trip down to the Rathbun course was well worth the drive. This course was every bit as good as its reputation and I did not embarrass myself posting a decent score of 96. Chris, from Manhattan, Kansas and I went out as a pair, neither of us having played here before. This completes all the best public courses in Iowa for me, say HALLELUJAH! When I got back to Cedar Rapids, a Chinese dinner was ordered and it was a surprise that it was better than our local California Chinese restaurant.

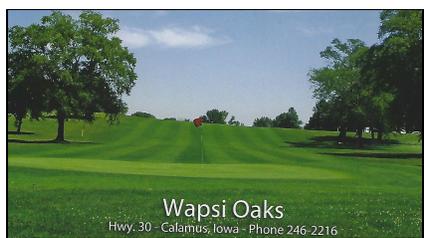


**July 14, Wednesday** We made a trip to Target for more essentials and then over to their in-store CVS pharmacy in an attempt to fill a prescription. No problem. Computers erase the miles. Really rained the rest of the day, we're talking rain with all the bells and whistles. Took a ride over to the Cedar Rapids Country Club to see if the manager could arrange a tee time for a Californian with one of their members. They took my information, but I didn't detect any enthusiasm in the idea.

**July 15, Thursday** Violet and Keegan went to the Indian Creek Country Club for the obligatory round of golf with their grandparents. Cheryl and Violet played alternate shot. Keegan is contacting the ball well, but desperately needs a professional lesson in how to straighten out his drives. Looking to myself for direction is futile, there are just not enough tools in my golfing bag of knowledge to be of much help. Cheryl is a professional napper, me on the other hand, not so much, but today I experienced a real power nap. Sean and Heather took us to the Bike Place for dinner and real Moscow Mules in real copper cups. The Bike Place derives its name from the clientele they serve. Bicyclists from all over the place convene here. Us humans are somewhat of a conceited sort, assuming that we are the ultimate species, yet more dangerous than the sharks and snakes we fear. We've only just climbed down from the trees a few thousand years ago, yet we continue in the attempt to destroy our planet and ourselves. The conversation eventually devolved into the progression and expansion of not only the universe, but drug overdose deaths. It's tough resolving all the world's issues, but with my extensive background in the field of astrophysics and the assistance of another case of beer I'm pretty sure the riddle can be solved.



**July 16, Friday** Hit the road early this morning to pick off a few more courses East of Cedar Rapids, that haven't been experienced yet. Wapsi Oaks in Calamus and 3/30 Golf & Country Club in Lowden, Iowa are both nice rolling hilled, well maintained 9 hole courses that proved to be very receptive to my game. 42 and 44 respectively. Wapsi gets its name from its proximity to the Wapsipinicon River and 3/30 from its proximity to the two highways which cross near-by.



Levander's Repair in Grand Island called to inform us that they got the go ahead from Farmers to begin disassembling the part of our car that needs to be repaired. Sausage, chicken and vegetables were the master BBQ'ers masterpieces tonight.



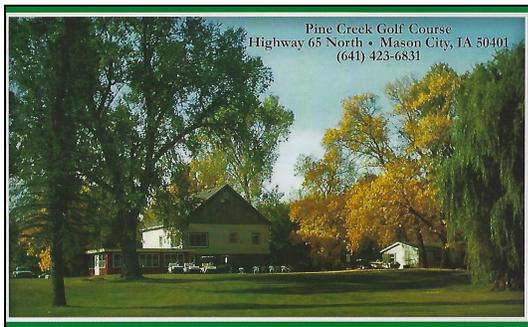
**July 17, Saturday** Sean drove us around to a number of garage sales, but as luck would have it all the stops were young couples who were offloading children's stuff. No treasures, with one exception. Violet scored some sort of electric blue tiny refrigerator. Drove up to Cedar Falls for Taylor's Birthday. Both extended families were on hand, that's a crowd. So, Will and Tammy had their hands full with introductions, food, drinks and just plain old hosting. On the way back we attempted to see the bison that a local farmer was raising for commercial purposes, but they were in a pasture that was not too accessible.

**July 18, Sunday** Today we were housebound due to the showers. The British Open and some extended Irish show, reading and napping held our interest.

**July 19, Monday** Cheryl drove up to Waterloo to spend the day with Mickey who seems to think she is good to go, but all her family are not so sure just yet. So, shopping and keeping her off her feet was the main idea. My distraction for the day was picking pebbles out of the lawn-dirt area where they had been placed long ago when there was a tree there. Mushrooms and dog poop around the rest of the yard got some attention also. Don't recall what that Irish series on TV was all about but it must have been interesting enough to hold our attention for another day.

**July 20, Tuesday** Quinton must have had the day off, either that or his parents suggested he visit some old relatives who were in town. He dropped by and spent the better part of the day with us and throwing the football around with the kids. We had a discussion about the pros and cons of covid shots, to which he is not too receptive. Because he is planning a trip to Maine with his friend who happens to be a girl, we suggested that it might behoove him to reconsider getting shots as some airlines might require proof of shots and wouldn't he find that to be a bit embarrassing leaving your lady at the airport whilst she went on to Maine? He called the next day to apprise us of having just taken his first shot. Willy's BBQ got our business today. His rib joint made national news on TV because of his generosity in feeding an incredible number of people for free during some recent dilemma.

**July 21, Wednesday** Cheryl spent another day keeping Mickey company while I drove North to pick off a few more courses that hadn't received my attention as yet.



Pine Creek Golf Course (40), under new ownership, just outside of Mason City is actually an extended executive course. Pioneer Town and Country Club (44), a little bit further up the road in Manly is also a 9 hole, but of legitimate length. Some of these courses sport a coiled thing-a-ma-jig on the base of the flag stick which can be lifted by the players club head after putting. No bending over to retrieve the ball out of the hole. BEER!

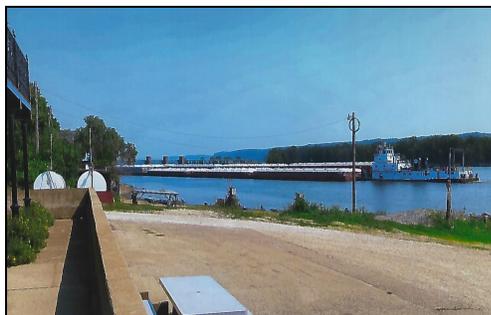
**July 22, Thursday** Picked up Cheryl and Mickey after a day of hitting all the Goodwill, Stuff and other thrift stores. Oh yeah! Scored 5 pictures for our garage art gallery. South Town is our go to restaurant in Waterloo as no place else in our experience offers delicious pork loin sandwiches, real thick home-made potato chips and deep-fried onion rings that are so crisp you can actually bite through them and the onion doesn't slide out.

**July 23, Friday** Once again the sisters spent another day doing whatever it is that sisters do, while himself drove up to play Silvercrest Golf and Country Club in Decorah. Established in 1936, Silvercrest has just moved into the number one best 9-hole course I've ever played. The hills, setting, forest and condition are every bit as good as Dysart. Drove down to Tim and Nichole's for dinner. They ordered out Mexican, which is probably a holdover from what one does during these latter covid days. Really a good visit to catch up on a few missed years. Alex has grown into a handsome young man, his senior year. Quinton just bought his first home. Tim and Nicole fantasizing about retiring in the not too-distant future. Loose tongues, yes, a really good visit.



**July 24, Saturday** Tony and Kelly went to their niece's wedding in either Iowa City or Coralville, not sure which. Not only that, but I didn't make a note on what we did today.

**July 25, Sunday** As we have been imposing on Kelly and Tony's hospitality for these many years, we decided to leave a few days early for our Dubuque rendezvous. You know the old saying about relatives and dead fish? After a few days they begin to stink. Our reservation at the Landing in Guttenberg, well, our room was most interesting. The Landing had been a button factory in days of yore. Buttons you say? Why yes! Before the advent of plastic, buttons were made by drilling the shells of river clams to various sizes. The landscaping around the Landing would be of a clam shell motif, all of which display perfectly round holes. Well, the factory was constructed of



stone masonry, consequently the walls were shaped quarry rock. How cool is that? There is a patio facing the Mississippi just outside our room where we can sit and watch Dat Ol Man Ribber, as he just keeps rolling along. Plenty of barge traffic, speed boats, fishermen, and activity at the boat landing rental and bait place just below. Lunch across the street at Nori's. A gourmet dinner, on our patio of Oreos, Velveeta cheese spread, Vodka and other health foods was provided by Casey's Gas station.

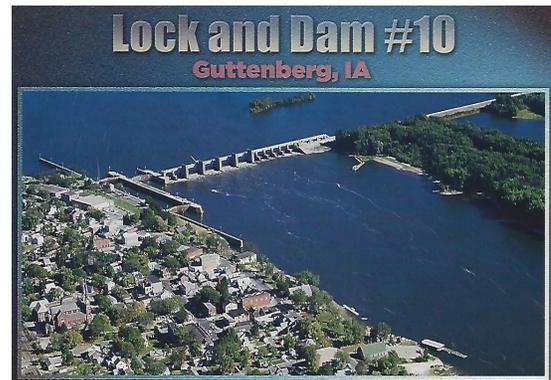
**July 26, Monday** Guttenberg Golf and Country Club doesn't open until 8. It seems their understanding of an early first out and our version needed a little clarification. So back to town for breakfast before our second attempt at golf. Another pleasant 9-hole course followed by another pleasant nap. There was a bar, which we needed to patronize based solely on its name. The Dam Bar. Appropriately named because Lock and Dam #10 on the Mississippi is right there. Guess which bar is not open on Monday's. Moving on to the Fish Shack, you'll never guess what beverages they don't sell.



Nori's for fish and chips and Mai Tais. The Guttenberg Public Library was having their annual book sale. And wouldn't you know it, the Guttenberg Bible was right there in plain view. Murphy stepped right up to the plate. No, I wasn't able to acquire that fine collector's item for \$1.00. We watched them break down a string of barges, maneuver them into the locks with the tugboat, fill the lock, raise the barges to the upriver level. But how do they get the barges out of the locks with the tug boat still down river? Herself, imparted some wisdom: "Google it."

**July 27, Tuesday** Well our best laid plans to take the Cassville ferry across the Mississippi and play golf at the Platteville Municipal course were foiled. Rats! The ferry doesn't begin operations until 10:00. Apparently, they just don't know who we are? They just don't seem to appreciate the serious consequences of the financial damage the golf course will suffer with the loss of our patronage. Duh Bears, as in The Chicago Bears used to practice in Platteville. Sherrill, Iowa got our breakfast business and not only that but the old guy who went around refilling everyone's coffee cup, well his son used to work with Cheryl's brother Pat and not only that but he knew Cheryl's dad Don. How 'bout them apples. Take that, you stupid old ferry! The Dubuque Public Library is a magnificent old building which cannot be driven past by John Waters, who knows full well what their Friends of The Library has to offer. Once again it did not fail me. Steve and Barb once again made reservations at the Dubuque Best Western where he somehow gets a preferred rate. Chip and Nancy Bliss hosted an all-day BBQ, beer, vodka fest. Don't recall what we had to eat other than ears and ears of Iowa sweet corn with butter running off my elbows. The decibel level of the old classmates, Nancy, Barb and Cheryl didn't quite reach the screeching point, but did they ever enjoy each-others company.

**July 28, Wednesday** After a decent motel breakfast the day was spent driving the girls all around their old stomping grounds. The 4th Street Elevator, Lock and Dam #11, the marina and boat basin, Eagle Points finger bowl, the old neighborhoods and the shortcuts to get to each other's homes, Dubuque Senior High School, which has the first Heisman trophy in their athletic department, Tony Roma's for dinner and back to Chip and Nancy's for a continuation of yesterday's bacchanal.



**July 29, Thursday** Cheryl has known these girls nearly her entire life so the parting was pretty tough for her. There are precious few summers left to share a lifetime of memories. The drive back to Cedar Rapids was somewhat of a minor disaster having missed a turn, adding an additional hour and a half to the drive and almost ending up in Davenport. We checked into the Days Inn as Heather's classmate, Bianca, had moved into their basement so she wouldn't have to commute from Davenport to University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls every day. Keegan got a few wiffle ball practice shots in with his wedge. Elizabeth and Danny of Farmers conference called to update us on the cars progress. Seems to be some issue about the availability and price of off market vs. Honda manufactured parts.

**July 30, Friday** Riley's for breakfast before Keegan and I headed over to St. Andrews for a round of golf. Sean's living room fireplace mantle was out in the garage partially sanded so that gave us a little project to work on. You may not believe this but the grandkids have sold us on Chick-Fil A for lunch, and not for the first time. Just don't forget plenty of Polynesian sauce. Took the car over to the Enterprise dealer as Mike needed assurance the oil and tires were adequate for the length of time we were using their car. Returned Elizabeth's call. It was a bit contentious as she seemed to be running some excuse about the covid epidemic being responsible for all the towing and parts issues. The parts I understand, but two weeks to tow the car is ridiculous, after I was able to arrange our initial tow in an hour. My issue was with the field agents either not having Farmer's authorization to do anything or being negligent in their job. Mexican for dinner, but I can't remember where.

**July 31, Saturday** Sean and Heather hosted a terrific pot luck Willy Ray's BBQ style party. Bocci ball, croquet, corn hole, wiffle ball chipping, football, well they are better observed than played by some old geezers. Marty, Debbie, Mickey, Kelly, Tony, Holly, Cory, Will, Tammy, Derrick and more grand kids and grand nephews than you can shake a stick at. Thank you all for the fond and affectionate farewell.

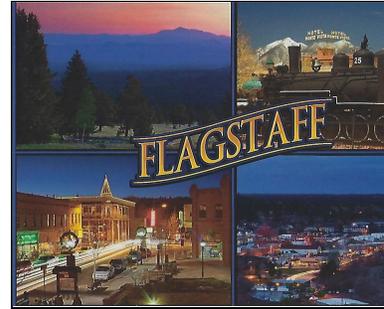
**August 1, Sunday** Go West young man! The plan is to drive the Enterprise rental back to North Platte and swap it for a smaller version as there is no love regarding our car ever being done. Breakfast at the Cracker Barrel just west of Des Moines off Interstate 80. Jack and Mary's chicken liver emporium in Omaha has closed up shop forever, another victim of covid. Tim and Sue took us out for pizza and then home for a marathon viewing of the Tokyo Olympics.

**August 2, Monday** Called Adam and Tina at the Levander's Repair in Grand Island said something about an unknown delay for some part from the Honda dealership. Romeos for lunch, pinochle, Sue checking on her babysitting Kevin and Lisa's dogs while they are at their place in the Bahamas, visited their house to check on dogs again, marathon Olympics, Tim angry with me, something about his backyard drain.

**August 3, Tuesday** Hit the road early, 80 West heading toward North Platte to exchange cars. Mike called and had us turn in our car at the Kearney, Nebraska Enterprise as he wasn't able to provide a small SUV we requested, but Kearney had a Chevy Equinox that worked out fine for us. Some dummy decided to ignore the interstate warning signs that Highway 70 was closed to westbound traffic at Glenwood Springs due to mudslides from a recent rain storm. So said dummy, over the request of she who is smarter than himself, drove from the 80, to the 76 through Denver, to the 70 and our Microtel reservation in Georgetown, Colorado. Will I ever learn? The odds are pretty slim in that regard. But I do remember being right once, maybe two or three years ago?

**August 4, Wednesday** So guess what, dummy had to backtrack to Denver on the 70, then South onto the 25 into downtown Denver during the morning rush hour. Almost caused an accident on the interchange, and was chewed a new asshole by she who was not at all pleased with my decision-making abilities or driving skills. The conversation was quite subdued, OH that's right there was no conversation. We were in full on pout mode. Well, anyway until we decided on breakfast at Pueblo, Colorado's Cracker Barrel. Massive windshield time. South to Albuquerque, West toward Flagstaff, Arizona. Only one incident outside Placitas, New Mexico. Gas! Someone queried, how's the gas? And some dummy responded UH OH! As luck would have it the aforementioned dummy made it to a gas station on fumes. WHEW! Super 8 had one room left, a huge family room. Put away a few large Coors and slept tight.

**August 5, Thursday** Flagstaff to Barstow where Cheryl took over the driving. Yes, of course there was heavy traffic all the way from The Cajon Pass to Lake Forest. Do you think I would have planned it otherwise? Unloaded the car, began laundry, put things away and climbed into our crystal vodka tonic glasses. What a summer!



## Chapter Two: SUMMER 2021

**August 18, Wednesday** You see, if the car had been towed to the repair shop in a timely manner, not taking two weeks, but in a timely manner, repairs would have been completed in time for us to pick up our car considerably earlier. Perhaps two weeks earlier. BUT NO! Now I've got to fly back to Grand Island, Nebraska to recover our car. You may sense that Farmer's competence has been somewhat of a disappointment. Frontier Airlines from John Wayne Airport in Santa Ana to McCarran Airport in Las Vegas. The McCarran airport shuttle from terminal one to terminal three to pick up my baggage and then take the shuttle back to terminal one was a real nuisance. The August heat in Las Vegas waiting for the La Quinta Hotel taxi was a pleasant reminder as to why the desert doesn't hold much interest for me. Called Cheryl to check in. Sleep deprivation!

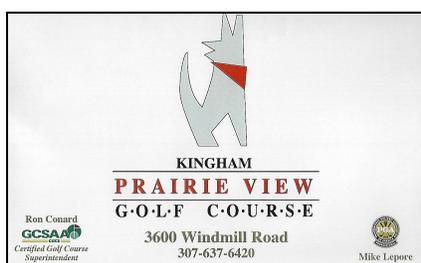
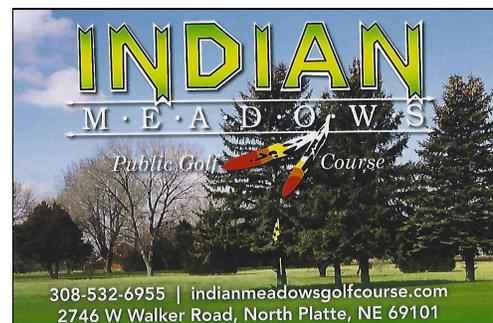
**August 19, Thursday** La Quinta's hotel shuttle back to McCarren left the hotel at 5 AM. Rumors of Allegiants airline service being less than desirable were unfounded, in any event, there were no other airline services into Grand Island that I was aware of. The flight left at 7:15 and arrived in Grand Island at 11:45. Not bad considering the two-hour time zone change. Deplaning from the last row of seats, getting our luggage and departing the airport took all of 20 minutes. That is something I have never experienced at any airport, ever. How about this for service? Levander's picked me up at the airport, took me to their shop, had me check out the car and paperwork, pay my deductible, load my luggage and hit the road in another 20 minutes. Guess what their response to my inquiry as to "Would the car get me back to California"? So long as you don't drive it at night! That was their deer sense of humor. As everyone knows deer only cross roads at night because that's the only time the roads are lit with headlights. Fonner View Golf Course (40) is a tired little course in Grand Island just off Interstate 80. Finished the



day, keeping my fingers crossed and putting 150 miles on the car to a sorry old Motel 6 in North Platte, Nebraska. Checked out the Iron Eagle 18-hole golf course, but it was closed due to covid, which is a shame because its location beside the Platte River is very attractive. The Indian Meadows course opens at 8 AM so I'll be first out tomorrow morning. Checked in with

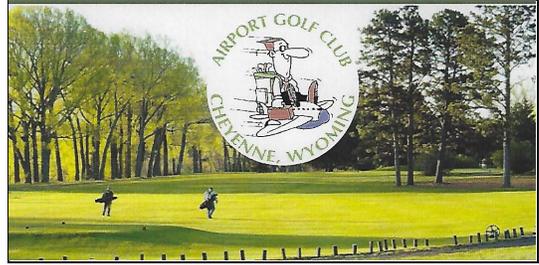
Cheryl, returned a call to Samantha, Dr. Hagan's nurse, take out from Wendy's and a few Coors from the gas station.

**August 20, Friday** Last night it rained with all the studio sound and light effects. According to the starter they had 2 and a half inches of rain at the course, so Indian Meadows was closed to golf carts for the day. It seems that if I'm to make any time driving and don't want to fill my shoes with water it would behoove me to hit the road once



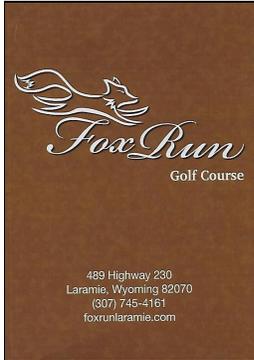
again. It was probably a good decision not to play golf this morning as the 210-mile drive to Cheyenne, Wyoming was mostly through rain squalls. The sun was shining, though the wind was a shade more than blustery in Cheyenne. The Prairie View 9-hole Golf Course (45) was able to get me out immediately.

Nearby the Airport Golf Course (43) is a legitimate 18-holer of which I only played the front 9. Laramie is only 50 miles further up the pike, so I decided to take another bite out of the total drive. Days Inn is a member of Wyndham, so the reward points made for a free night's stay.



**August 21, Saturday** Was a little disconcerted when I woke up this morning to find Mr. Pouch full of blood. Changed that puppy immediately, shit, showered and shaved, ate a

decent motel breakfast, checked Mr. Pouch who only showed urine and headed over to the Fox Run Golf Course south of Laramie just off Interstate 80. Being somewhat anxious about last night's event I checked Mr. Pouch after the second hole and he informed me in no uncertain terms that discontinuing the round would be in my best interest. Dr. Hagan told me what to do if I were out in the middle of nowhere and might need a hospital. "Drive faster". Yep, that was his advice and I took it to heart. Made several anxious stops on the drive from Laramie, Wyoming to The Virgin River Hotel and Casino in Mesquite, Nevada. Checking on Mr. Pouch, gassing up, junk food, all were positive in my favor. Golf being tabled until I got home was not a difficult decision.



**August 22, Sunday** Another pedal to the metal drive, early rise, got me home about 10:00 AM. What man proposes Allah disposes. Not quite the adventure I had envisioned, but bottom line, the car and driver are both home safely and doing what their retirement purpose in life is, driving to and from the golf course.