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classical realism, from hounds to humans & and more!

JOURNEYS OF JOY! :: ALASKA :: PART FOUR :: 2018

SKAGWAY, ALASKA TO FARGO, ND

Day Thirteen...

JULY 3, 2018, TUESDAY, 9:22AM, 65 GLORIOUS DEGREES IN SKAGWAY, ALASKA

As we cruise downtown, some of the 11000 cruise ship passengers from four humongous ships stroll downtown. Earlier, Brian saw an entire ship full of Japanese board a narrow gauge train for sight seeing. What a glorious day after so many clouds!



Yesterday, the US border patrol asked where we found a car wash. "Oh, just tootling along there was a lot of rain."

As we retrace our drive back up the mountain toward Whitehorse, bicyclists ride down toward Skagway.

10:50AM: We are back in Canada. Brian sees rental Jeep, number 12. Rentals Jeeps are either blue or red. Each is numbered. Rent your Jeep near the harbor!

Three big tour busses chug up the mountain in front of us, and one bus is behind us. The elevation is 3046 feet.



11:05AM: Canadian border inspection approves trains, buses, and automobiles. Border guards wear bulletproof vests. Rain subdues dust from the gravel road - and - washes our vehicle!



11:37AM: Brian stops for me to take pictures of the pretty purple wildflowers along the road. I say road because we prefer two lane roads to four lane highways when we are in no hurry.

Gringos in car coats take pictures alongside their tour busses. Brian thinks the buses go as far as Carcross, Yukon, and then drive back to Skagway. It's 64 beautiful degrees.



Carcross, short for Caribou Crossing, is a tiny town with tiny houses. It seems to be supported by narrow gauge tourist trains. Little garage doors open to reveal little retail shops. Kids occupy the playground. Evergreens grow in sand dunes as we drive northwest out of town on YUKON-2. Carcross is a fun little diversion!

We wonder how many days Skagway is snowed in. There are snow gates (rail crossing gates) along this road in Yukon and one outside of Skagway. Gas in Skagway is \$4.55 a gallon!

12:50PM: Turn left on YUKON-1 toward Whitehorse, capitol of the Yukon Territory.

1:09AM: Brian learns at the Toyota dealership that we can get the oil changed at 7:30AM tomorrow morning.

2:25PM: The Norgetown Laundry is bustling! Our four loads are going...

7:53PM: I receive an email from Rita Toombs, the good lady who is taking care of Beau:

"Bad news.

"The Sunday after you left us (June 23) I stepped off the porch and reinjured my right knee.

"I saw the orthopedist today for results of MRI, which were not good. I have seriously torn the meniscus on both sides of the knee. It's difficult to move around much without considerable discomfort and bending my right knee much at all is just out of the question.

"While Beau's diarrhea is better, he still isn't good. The first day he was having bloody diarrhea but I got that stopped pretty fast. I have resorted to Dr. Carlson's rice diet but each time I try to advance him toward his regular food the diarrhea returns. He seems to be feeling pretty good now. The first few days he was clearly not feeling well at all but he does not act as though he is having any discomfort at all now.

"But—I really need to get my knee fixed. I am on the surgery schedule for July 16. Larry just cannot take care of Beau and everyone else works.

"If he were not making so many messes to be cleaned up I would ask one of my neighbors to help us out for a few days until I get going again following surgery, but I just can't ask them to clean up dog poop.

"I hate doing this but I have to ask you to pick him up by July 15 unless you have an alternative plan." Rita

We are really sorry to learn of Rita's fall and very glad we weren't way up north, and, that we did laundry today. Tomorrow we will head back to Rita's. Dear Rita gave me Lizzie, Braaehaus Hometown Girl, after Anna died in 1995 and I needed another model to finish "A Good Life". She bred our first male, a puppy named Ch. Retdachs Brwneyed Hansom Boy AKA Edgar. We showed him to his championship. These two standard smooth

dachshunds modeled for "A Good Life," "Life's a Ball!" "Sunnyside Up" and "So Good to See You." We feel for Rita who is very kind and very dear to us.

I make a reservation at the fabulous Northern Rockies Lodge in Muncho Lake, where we stayed two nights ago. Bernadette answers the phone and has all my information. Good!

Tonight we dine at Klondike Korner where this sign is posted.

10:19PM: We are ready for bed at the Coast High Country Inn, in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, Canada. It is clean, comfortable and a great value!



Day Fourteen

JULY 4, 2018, WEDNESDAY

Happy July 4th! May the USA remain a democracy for centuries to come!

7:30AM: Brian gets the FJ's oil changed at the Toyota dealer.

9:27AM, 54 SUNNY DEGREES: We depart Whitehorse, YT, Canada, for our 52-hour drive to Roach, MO to pick up Beau. I wish I had been able to take a picture of two deer walking in a shallow portion of the Yukon River.

No fear, Rita, we will not drive straight through to Roach.

A fire thermometer shows high fire danger along this section of the Alaska Highway. Here in Yukon Territory the highway is simply marked "1" when you can find a sign. In BC, the Alaska Highway is marked BC-97.

10:26AM: We have only 3000 more miles to reach Rita in Roach, MO.



11:39AM: Near the Teslin River, Yukon, Canada, the Teslin Tlingit Heritage Center displays interesting masks, intricate beadwork and creative, functional uses for parts of animals.







The handwork at the Teslin Tlingit Heritage Center is worth the drive!

A cup in a ladies room offers free condoms. Brian reports no condoms are offered in the men's room

The nice cashier at the Yukon Motel & Restaurant gives me coffee to go. I need coffee. Wonder if wonders, the Bare cup by Solo is compostable! Interestingly it reads that it is suitable for a commercial composting facility but not suitable for backyard composting. Hey! It's a start in the right direction.

Seven big vehicles, RVs and campers, pass us as we cross the Nisutlin River Bridge.

12:13PM: "Super Natural British Columbia Welcomes YOU!" The ALASKA HIGHWAY, HIGHWAY 1, briefly dips into BC. Then, at Swift River, it is back in Yukon Territory until Watson Lake. The Alaska Highway follows the Rancheria River until Contact Creek.

Then, we head south to Muncho Lake on BC-97, which is still the Alaska Highway.

12:34PM, 70 DEGREES: Everywhere we look clouds are spectacular. We have never seen so many RVs and campers. Brian is amazed to see so many Mercedes Sprinters on the road.





12:58PM, 68 DEGREES: At the continental divide we get more coffee. Mother Nature starts her car wash.

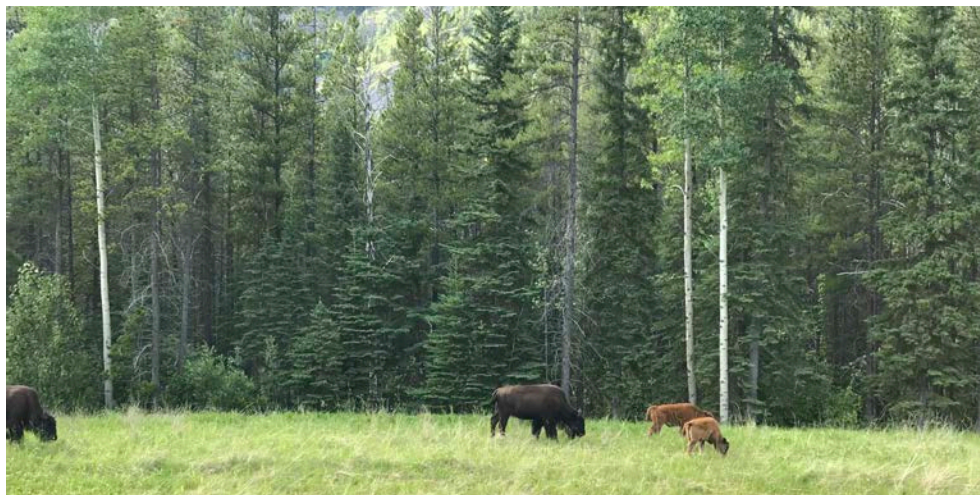
Brian naps in the back seat while I drive to Watson Lake where we get gas. The ladies room has a red bucket of free condoms. We have to love Canada! At 2:40PM, the temperature is a sunny 73 degrees.



3:07PM: A big bull buffalo contentedly eats beside the road - and - pays no attention to us. Not far beyond, another buffalo rests on its belly in the other side of the road.

3:46PM, 76 DEGREES: Road construction, dust, loose gravel and windshield rock chips slow traffic.

4:18PM: We think everyone else has pulled off the road for the night. It's awfully lonely out here, except for two black bears, one eating and the other walking. And, another is eating. Later, another bear scratches itself.



4:50PM: Our buffalo herd from two days ago is still here.





5:15PM: We pull into Northern Rockies Lodge, once again. We made good time coming back.

Perched outside the dining room is a sculpture of an owl. Are these glorious logs Englemann Spruce or pine? I love this place!

We are in our two double-bed room at The Northern Rockies Lodge at Muncho Lake. Watching TV, I am so saddened by the death of Anthony Bourdain.

Day Fifteen

JULY 5, 2018, THURSDAY, 6:36AM, 53 DEGREES, LAKE MUNCHO, B.C.: Sunlight awakens Lake Muncho Provincial Park. We head south toward???

Brian stops for coffee. A bee comes into our car and I open my window to let it escape. I hear wolves howl, and crows caw. It's a beautiful morning!

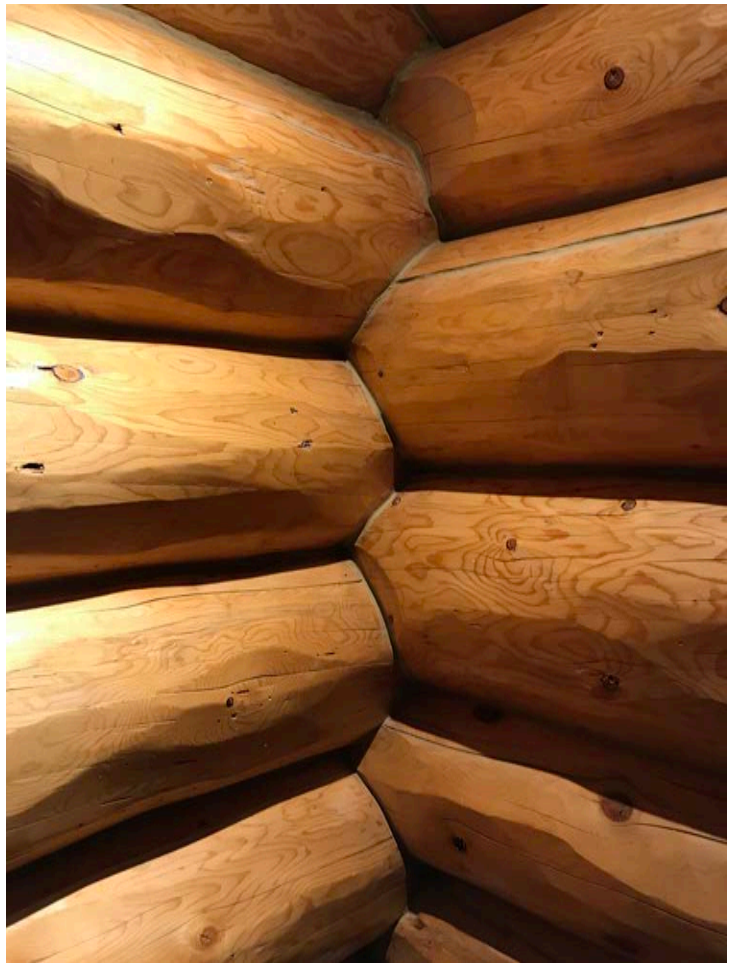
6:55AM: Today's first bear sighting! It's a little black bear. My ears pop.

One thing nice about getting up so early is we have the road to ourselves.

Alluvial fans have come down the mountains in numerous places. Along the road, grasses glisten an iridescent soft rosy pink, thanks to sunlight from behind them.



5:09PM: The color of Muncho Lake is not to be believed. It is almost a deep teal green.



7:17AM: Eight or ten horses feed to the left of the road. Are they wild? No one is watching them.

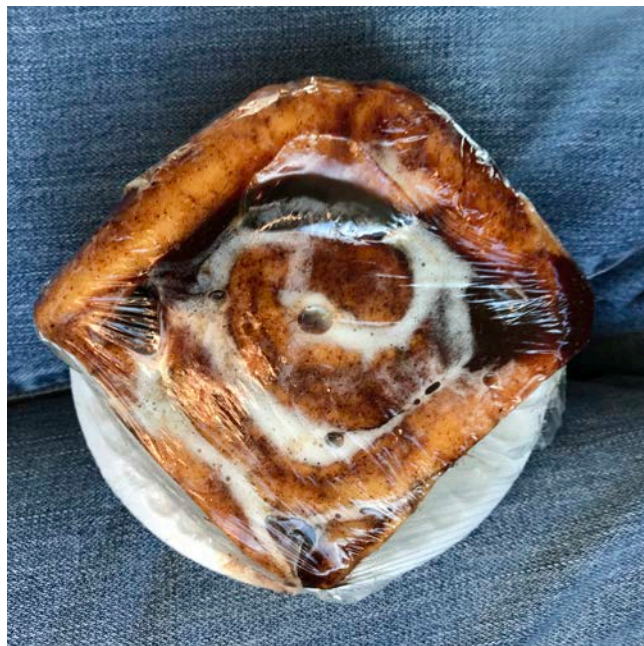


7:52AM: A big male caribou crosses the road. His female companion ducks back into the woods. Cool!

We enter Stone Mountain Provincial Park. Dew glitters in the sunlight as we cross the Tetsa River.



8:20AM: A Tetsa River Services sign for hot Cinnamon buns entices Brian to stop.



In retrospect, we estimate each bun was 3" high and 5" square. One hit the spot - and - we have one to share tomorrow morning. A local big eater could eat the whole thing!

I honestly do not remember if this glorious beadwork was for sale or if it was simply on display, but I had to share a picture of it.

9:01AM: The Kledo River is as muddy and as narrow as a big creek.

A full-figured, fair skinned woman flags us down to 30km an hour to prepare us for a pair of "Patchers". The first Patcher sprays oil on road cracks. The second sprays something else and finally gravel is applied. These are rather small machines.

Brian spies a doe with twins beside the road.

9:30AM, 68 DEGREES: In Fort Nelson, BC, we get gas and I drive.

11:41AM: While driving through a wild fire burned forest, I speculate that the roadbed and shoulders combined are at least 150 feet wide. The raised asphalt roadbed is maybe 40-50 feet wide. Are the shoulders kept wide in an effort to keep flicked cigarettes from igniting forest fires? Or, are these wide shoulders and median intended to be firebreaks?

A funky red bus like we saw in Banff is west bound. I honestly pulled this photo from the Internet, but found no information about it, other than the bus is from Australia. Brian thinks he saw one long ago in Mexico. There was no photo credit.

"Camions" is French for "trucks" I learn. Highway signs are in English and French.





A large black insect, at least an inch long, is safely wedged behind the corner of the wind deflector and is crawling toward freedom. I think it likes the safety, for now. Oops! It's free! Brian speculates, "Maybe it got tired."

2:00PM: We get gas in St. John, BC. I call Wellbridge to try to reinstate my membership for July.

2:18PM: "Canola fields forever." Yes, Beatles, there are wild strawberry fields in Canada - and - canola fields!

2:44PM: Dawson City, BC, is quite industrial, yet a golf course is west of the highway.

4:13OM MDT: Welcome to Alberta! I am ready to lose an hour; I'm trying not to fall asleep.

Strange. More horses are beside the road with no apparent keeper.



What ARE these tiny yellow flowers next to the highway??? Are they Canola with Queen Anne's lace?

4:25PM: Brian turns east on ALBERTA-59, the back road to Grand Prairie via the town of Sexsmith. We can go 70mph in this road! We find a herd of buffalo in rather flat farming country.

We enter “The Hamlet of La Glacé” and leave in about a minute. Farmland around is pretty.

Brian wonders if he has a leak in our gas tank. We’ve only gone 107 miles and 3/4 of the full tank is gone!

4:59PM, 77 DEGREES: We turn south on ALBERTA-2, a busy, four-lane divided highway. Sexsmith is not to be found.

The GPS is sending us east on CANADA-43 toward Edmonton. It is rush hour and everyone moves slowly.

Good! Our gas tank is not dripping.

It is definitely road construction season.

Our goal for tonight is Whitecourt, Alberta, about 150 miles northwest of Edmonton.

7:07PM: On ALBERTA-16, we are back in evergreen country. Good! This highway must be an 8th of a mile wide, complete with moose signs!

There is not a lot of litter, although a bare chested, brown haired boy in the median is looking for litter to put in his black plastic trash bag.



7:51PM: It is still 77 degrees and sunny.

8:46PM: After checking into the Kanata Inn, in Whitecourt, Alberta, we enjoy a delicious steak at the Mountain Pizza and Steak House.



9:44PM, 66 DEGREES: After an excellent dinner, we get a car wash! It's time for bed. But, wait! Brian points out an engine block plug-in that is bolted to the concrete in front of our parking spot. Fortunately these are turned off for the summer, but come winter at 35 below zero, plug-ins are essential for no dead batteries.

We notice truck patties in parking lots. They are much like cow patties, except they are mud!

Day Sixteen

JULY 6, 2018, 7:09AM, FRIDAY, WHITECOURT, ALBERTA:

Good morning, from rainy Alberta. Good! "On the road again; we are on the road again." The handsome Kanata Hotel is well detailed, even down to the beautifully installed tile in the bathroom and the middle-tone grey PVC pipe that blends with the background under the sink. The tasteful, contemporary design is texturally pleasing and with two beds, two sinks, two chairs, a table, fridge, microwave, real glasses including wine glasses, a wine opener, ice tongs and 100% cotton towels all beautifully displayed, how can one go wrong for, darn! I forgot how much. This place rocks! The fourth floor is nice and quiet. What a fabulous value!

Rain falls as the sun rises behind the clouds. It's 60 degrees. Rolling hillsides precede the town of Mayerthorpe. We pass under a gorgeous old wooden trestle bridge after which I see a round roof barn. The soil is dark and rich.

Gee, not only the farmland is rolling, the highway is rolling too with BIG frost heaves! The highway has the shakes.

8:16AM: We proceed east on HIGHWAY 16. Edmonton has a pretty nice skyline, complete with cranes on top of two tall buildings. It also has Walmart, Costco, and a large evergreen shaded cemetery south of the highway. Freight trains move goods north of the highway.

"Hansel & Gretel's Berry Farm" is inviting. The rolling hills and rich soil remind us of Kansas, except here, seagulls fly over the fields.

I am impressed with Canadian's respect for the environment. There are recycle bins and trash bins at most rest stops, and Brian said Tim Horton's has a recycle basket next to the trash basket inside. There is hardly any trash along the highways. Rarely do I see wind-whipped plastic plastered to wire fences. We could learn from Canada!



Canola!

10:53AM, 75 DEGREES: Agriculture and oil are the big businesses here in Lloydminster, Alberta. A road sign with a picture of a logging truck, talked about stopping agricultural and forest pests

Brian finds gas and it is my turn to drive. We are now in Saskatchewan.

Ravens and/or crows amaze me. Sometimes singly and other times in groups of two or three, I see them pecking at things along the highway. They move faster than I can get a picture.

12:38PM: We gas up again in Battleford, Saskatchewan and Brian drives.

We have driven about halfway to Roach, MO, to pick up Beau. We have 25 hours drive time and 1541 miles to go. I can't say how happy I am that we were not way north in Alaska when we learned about Rita's unfortunate fall.



1:24PM: An old bridge is beautiful. Happiness! We see a monarch butterfly fly overhead.

1:53PM, 91 DEGREES: Our GPS says to turn left on Circle Drive, which is still CANADA-16 through a busy section of Saskatoon, Canada. "Highways aircraft patrolled" reads a sign.



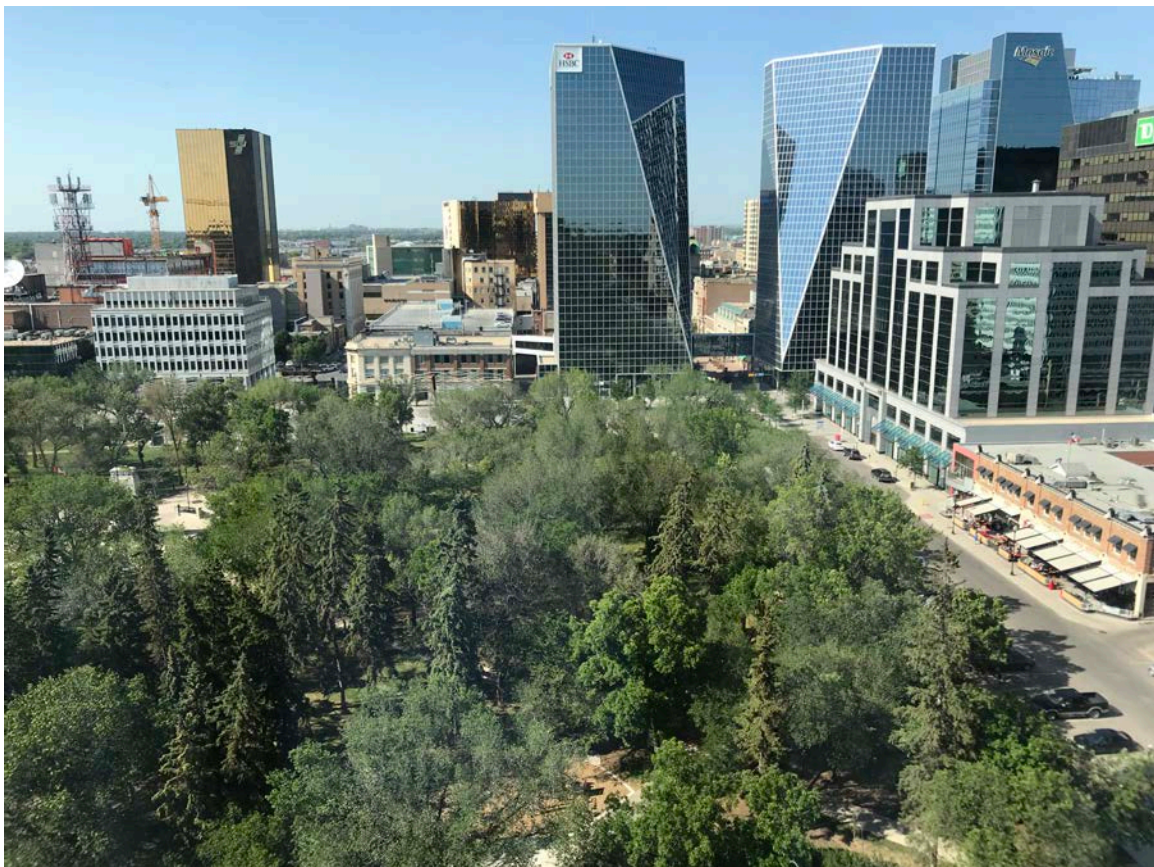
2:41PM: It seems unusual to find a three-story house in the middle of a field.

I make a reservation in Regina, Saskatchewan at the Hotel Saskatchewan.

3:11PM, 92 DEGREES: Brian's correct. This looks like Montana, complete with herds of cattle in fields and interlocking ridges to the north. A brisk wind blows out of the cloudless south.

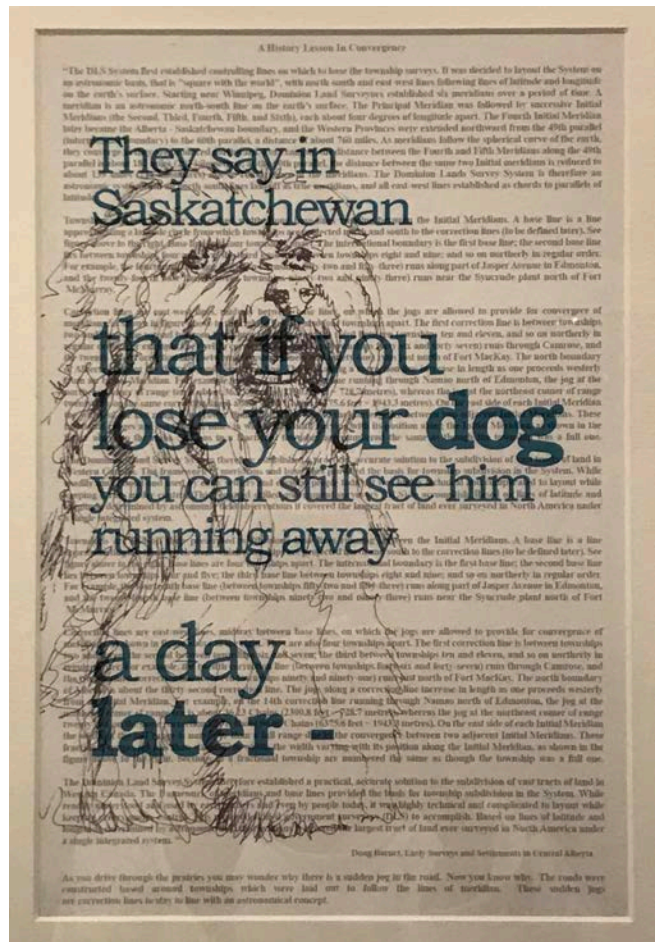
We approach tiny Chamberlain. It has a diner, cafe, and gas station. The highway is narrower here. A place offers pre-fab homes that might be perfect as a cabin in the woods.

A sign says to "TIP" "Turn in Poachers!" YES! Another sign orders persons to "Stop the Spread of Dutch Elm Disease!" YES!





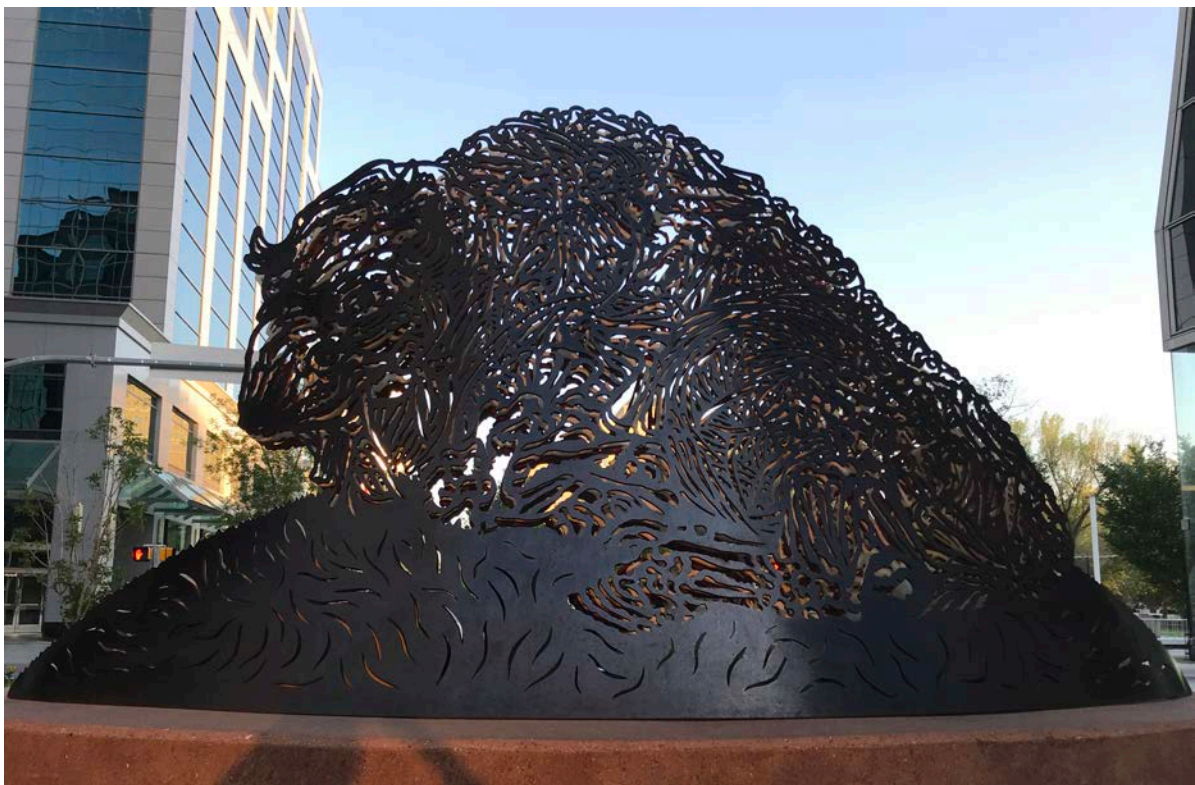
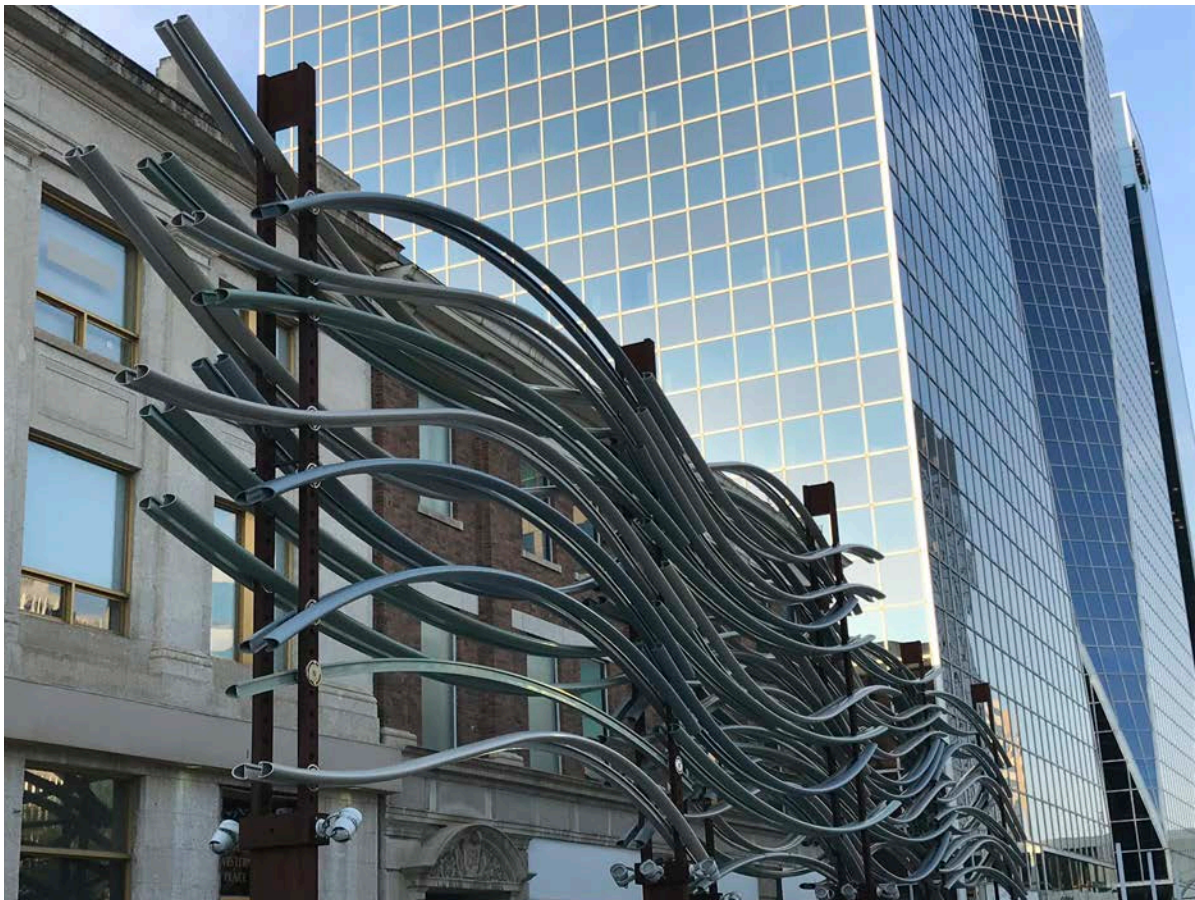
4:41PM: We are on the 10th floor of the exquisite Hotel Saskatchewan, which is complete with crystal chandeliers in the lobby and crystal doorknobs in the room. Wow! Located across from a park, above is our view.



*Love is always in the details...
Hotel Saskatchewan
Regina, Saskatchewan*



4:46PM: Just look how smart Canadians are! Above is the hotel wastebasket complete with a recycle section!!! YAY!



Sculpture in downtown Regina.

We chose a local restaurant, The Copper Kettle, for dinner. My calamari and Greek salad are quite good, but the piece de resistance, is the humus! Oh my! It is tasty enough to want to find it back home.

Day Seventeen

JULY 7, 2018, SAT., 7:21AM, 77 DEGREES, REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN

Tim Horton's makes two medium lattes for us.

I am continually amazed by the homogenization of North America. Thai, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, and middle-Eastern restaurants can be found in Regina. Plus, Pets Mart, Lowe's, Home Depot, McDonalds & Starbucks are here. I think one of the few local businesses is the Regina Funeral Home and Cemetery.

8:46AM, 80 DEGREES: Two very long freight trains play follow-the-leader as they chug west

Canada saves money and saves bees by letting grasses and wildflowers grow in the wide median and shoulders of this highway. Go Canada! Why don't we follow suit???



Occasionally lush wetlands border the highway and can be seen in the median.

We pass a grain elevator from which yet another train is headed west.

10:08AM: Yikes! I've used 75% of my cellular data for the month. It's time for Airplane mode!

10:30AM: Time just changed to Central time. Yay!

The landscape here reminds me of my childhood when my parents and I drove through southern Illinois to relatives, except here there is a much longer view. Also, there Corn was/is king where here Canola is king. Narrow two lane dirt/gravel roads lead off this highway that we would call an Interstate. We are on CANADA-1. We believe it is known as the Trans Canada Highway.

10:51AM: Brian brings me a Canola flower! I smile and give him a big smack! "Thank you!"

10:57AM: On two lane MANITOBA-81 South we can still see for miles. A creative farmer's canola field is bordered with corn and soybeans. Canola matures from seed to full grown in 3 1/2 months!

Happy birds find a wet spot and congregations of cows huddle near their fence beside the road.



11:35AM: In Melita, Manitoba, we buy gas and Planters Peanuts to use all but about \$1.50 of our Canadian money. A machine in the ladies room offers tampons for \$1 and two varieties of condoms for \$1.25 each. No machines are in the men's room.

We turn east on MANITOBA-3. There is big business to the north of the roadway.

11:51AM, 84 DEGREES:

To the left of the grain elevator, a sign points to Lauder, Manitoba.



These little communities have a lot of pride in their attractions. Farmers and oil co-exist!

“Moose Hunting is Prohibited” reads a sign.

12:22PM: Turn south on MANITOBA-10. The land is slightly more rolling here. Cows are happy.



12:37PM: Now, in North Dakota, we are on US-281 SOUTH and wind blows from the west. The landscape reminds me of driving east on US-34 in eastern Colorado.

A big casino is in this middle of nowhere. To the right are dilapidated abandoned houses on blocks next to a big tent like affair. Strange.

This little highway is busy at 1:01PM. Graves are colorfully decorated in St. Ann's Cemetery, Belcourt, ND.

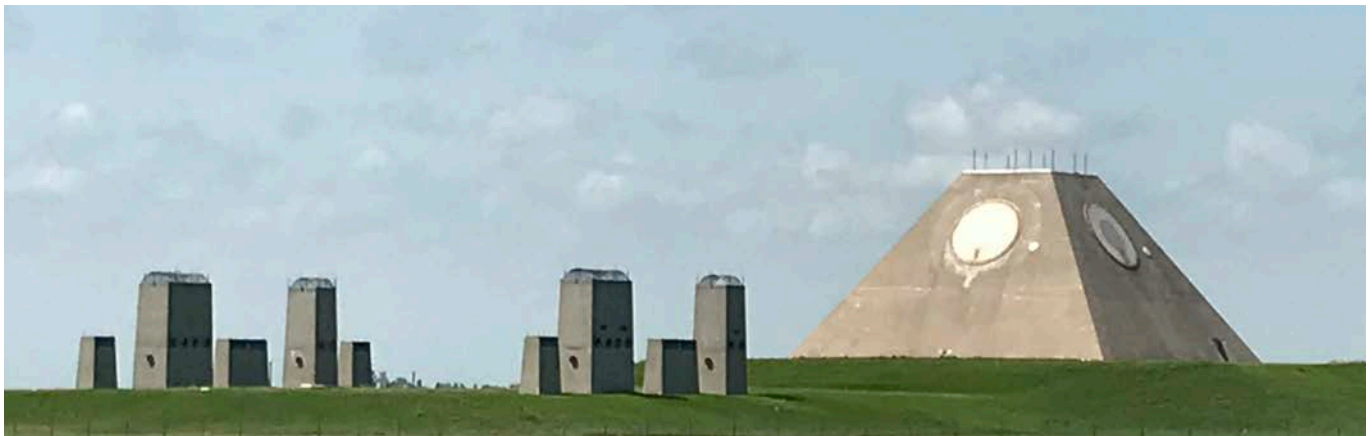
Not long after, we are in Rolla, ND, where a beekeeper has about 10 hives along the road.

We turn east on ND-5 toward Langdon. The sky is pretty but definitely has humidity. Multiple bees hit the windshield almost like fat raindrops. Sad.

1:51PM: We turn south on COUNTY ROAD 17. After a while the road in front is dirt. We turn left per the GPS.

Two ducks paddle on the pond across from what appears to be the only farm in Loma, ND. (White buildings round tops) a wind farm spans the horizon. Oh, and is there ever wind turning those turbines!

Multiple beehives are nested to the north of the road. They remind me of containers on rail cars. It's a shame so many bees are killed on windshields.



2:19PM: We turn south on ND-1 and left on CAVALIER COUNTY ROAD 26 near Nekoma, ND, to see the inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) site that was built in 1975 during the Cold War for \$500 million dollars. The Nekoma Missile site at the Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard complex once housed 100 missiles meant to shoot down Soviet nuclear missiles. It was only in operation for 24 hours because President Reagan and Russian President Gorbachev signed a non-nuclear proliferation pact.

In 2012, when the Fed auctioned the site the original cost would have been \$2 billion dollars when adjusted for inflation.

On Sept. 14, 2017, The Cavalier Republican reported that on June 23, 2017, Cavalier County purchased part of the property for \$462,900. The money is part of a \$600,000 grant from the North Dakota Department of Commerce that the Job Development Authority (JDA) received to help buy and redevelop the property. It was a deal that Carol Goodman and the JDA had been working on since 2012.

Brian saw this info on TV about two months ago and, when he realized we would be very near, he made an effort to find and see it. It is under 24-hour surveillance.

The 80-foot tall pyramid shaped building had the most advanced radar system of its kind at the time.

Turn east on ND-17. Gas, washer fluid and beef jerky hit the spots!

Marvin Windows and Doors are made right here in Grafton, ND.

3:34PM: We turn south on I-29 toward Kansas City, which is 531 miles. It's 866 miles to Roach, MO. We have driven 2200 miles from Whitehorse, BC, in 3 3/4 days since July 4th. Today we've driven 469 miles so far. Brian knows how to make time on the road.

I think we are south of canola country, but cemeteries are plentiful in North Dakota.

Many billboards punctuate the wind-driven, waving tall grasses along the highway.

Had we been able to take our entire trip to Alaska we were going to go to Wenatchee, WA, to meet Adele Wolford who is in charge of "Art on the Avenues" a show in which I have participated since 2001. Adele kindly writes she is sad we will not be coming. We are too, but we have to take care of Rita and Beau.

We are in the Hawthorne Suites by Wyndham in Fargo, ND. This place has everything including a big upright refrigerator, a dishwasher and a carbon monoxide detector in the room! In addition, they have really high speed Internet! For the last week or so, I could not download photos from my iPhone; I thought it was a problem with my phone or computer. Thank goodness it is not. All is well. I am honored to meet Lakota, the young man who checked us in to the Hawthorn Suites. I believe he is the first Native American I have met.

Tonight Brian finds a TV show, "Northland Outdoors." This episode is about harvesting wild rice in Minnesota. The family business started in the 1950s and I find it fascinating.

Thank you for joining us.

Please continue on our journey in

Part Five!

Joy

www.joybeckner.com

JKß