



Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

December 2019



Greetings from Southern Utah - Selected photos from this past year, clockwise from top left: (1) North Clear Creek Falls, Rio Grande National Forest, CO; (2) Coastal wildflowers at Garrapata State Park, Carmel, CA; (3) Dream Lake, Rocky Mtn. National Park, CO; (4) Osprey above the central CA coast, (5) Wildflower 'super bloom' on Tremblor Mtn. ridge, eastern side of Carrizo Plain National Monument, CA; (6) Section of the Capitol Reef, Fruita, UT; (7) Marshall Bentonite Clay Mine near Creede, CO; (8) Scorpion flower bloom at Factory Butte, UT; (9) Yellow-bellied marmots at historic Swett Ranch in the Uinta Mtns. UT and (10) Velvet Ridge with snow.



December 7, 2019

Dear family and friends,

When looking back over this past year, we could ask who pushed the pedal to the metal? The weeks and seasons seemed to fly by.

We still love camping, hiking and photography, along with visiting new places. Our 'Nemo' camper is compact and ready to go with a few moment's notice. There are plenty of new-to-us areas to explore near our house, but we can also drop down into the deserts of NV, AZ, NM, southern CA in a day's drive. We try to frequently get away on short trips. Annette is still teaching on-line grad courses for Indiana University at Indianapolis. 2020 will be the 3rd and final year of a National Endowment for the Humanities "Sparkling Humanities Grant." Each year the grant explores six themes featuring the cultural heritage of Wayne County. Each of the six themes include four after-school events for kids and wraps up with a community dinner celebration open to families and community members... people of all ages.

We started out last January driving west (3-day trip home) after having spent a few days with Brooke, Blake, Benjamin and Anna Zaitseva at Brooke's apartment in Chicago. We dodged storm fronts and scooted over Monarch Pass in Colorado. We continue to love the Mountain West. Currently, we have about a foot of snow from a Thanksgiving week storm. Larry has plowed the road. We are packing up to visit family during the holiday season (Austin TX, Hollister MO, and IL).

Although Annette was busy with teaching and the grant project in the winter and spring, we enjoyed travel throughout the year. One of our best getaway vacations was an early April trip to California for a wildflower 'superbloom.' We spent a few days camped in the Carrizo Plain National Monument. A superbloom is a rare desert botanical phenomenon in which an unusually high proportion of wildflowers whose seeds have lain dormant in desert soil germinate and blossom at roughly the same time. The phenomenon is associated with an unusually wet rainy season. A backroad trip over the crest of the Tremblor Mtns. gave us spectacular views. We continued on to the central CA coast, the Big Sur area, and more wildflowers. Along the way we stopped at the César E. Chávez National Monument and Pinacles National Park.

Earlier in the year we enjoyed an arts fair, parade, and rodeo at 'Gold Rush Days' in Wickenburg, AZ (Feb). Much of the remaining spring and summer found us finding wildflowers on Boulder and Fishlake Mountain foothills and in Capitol Reef National Park. We explored nearby Cedar Point and Arsenic Arch while camped off-road in the Little Egypt area (Mar). We returned to that region (June) to hike Leprechaun Canyon and Hog Springs. We camped, hiked, and traveled the backroads of Flaming Gorge (June) to Sheep Creek and Red Canyon near the Wyoming-Utah border. Another trip led us west to Delta, UT and on to the site of the Topaz

Japanese American Internment Camp. We extended out to visit Fish Springs and included birding and rockhounding (Now have some nice chunks of black and snowflake obsidian).

Other Summer trips to Colorado took us through the Kebler Pass to Crested Butte for their art festival (August). We continued on to Estes Park to catch up with the Rathsack family for more hiking and sightseeing. Earlier on a different trip, we camped outside Creede, CO and drove backroads to mine sites and a mine tour.

We traveled to Austin, then Hot Springs, AR (July) to celebrate Bill & Nancy Smith's anniversary and birthdays.

By late summer and into the fall, we had not had rain for many weeks . . . it was dry. The wet Spring was a distant memory. We again enjoyed photographing the Wayne County Fair (Aug) including the Gymkhana and Small Fry Rodeo events. For Annette's birthday, we celebrated with a Broadway production of The Book of Mormon musical comedy, a Stray Cats reunion concert, and an exploration of the Mirror Lake area for hiking.

September found us back in the Midwest for Larry's fifty-fifth Findlay High School class reunion (Class of 1964), and we spent several days with Annette's parents and her sister Allison.

We ended this year with medical appointments and procedures. Annette kicked off with a MRI and followup visits with a physical therapist to stretch and exercise her shoulder. She can feel some progress, but knows this will take a year or two. Larry visited our optometrist for new glasses, but Dr. Graf said it's time first to deal with those cataracts! A month and a half later, both eyes are done and new glasses are on the way.

We can both tell we're aging, but it's not going to slow us down! We look forward to a fun filled 2020.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

Annette and Larry

