

Merry Christmas!

Well, it's that time of year again. Jennie and I hope you have a very Merry Christmas!

It's hard to believe another year is drawing to a close. When we returned to BC last year, we knew we wanted to travel. With our trusty Golden Retriever "Mattie" by our side, we asked ourselves: "Why not start by touring Canada and the US?" But how? In a recreational vehicle – an RV! The only problem was Jennie's power wheelchair. Where do we put it? After some research and a lot of discussion, we decided to convert our cargo trailer into our own personal travel trailer, configured for Jen's wheelchair.

The conversion took approximately 5 months. Tin Can 'Ally' was the result:



From this...



to this...

Beginning May 1, and for the next 3½ months, we toured beautiful BC and the Yukon Territory. We drove north to Prince George, then north-east to Dawson Creek (Mile 0–Alaska Highway), Fort St. John to Whitehorse, YT. From Whitehorse, we headed south hugging the Alaska/BC border, then east, across to almost the Alberta border before turning south through Kamloops, Hope, and Victoria. We arrived back in Parksville on Aug. 15 just over 11,000 kms later. We had seen a lot, learned a lot, and met some really lovely folk along the way: Hi *Judy & Gary*, hi *Sharall & Tom*, hi *Jean*!



Yale - First of 7 tunnels in the Fraser Canyon



Confluence of Fraser and Thompson rivers



Barkerville, BC



Wood carving, Chetwynd, BC



Flower Pot Island, Peace River, BC



Mile 0 Alaska Highway, Dawson Creek, BC



Alaska Highway

← 1942

Today →



Merry Christmas!



Whitehorse, YT



Iskut, BC



One of many glaciers on the way to Stewart, BC



Helmcken Falls, Wells Gray Provincial Park, Clearwater, BC



Othello Tunnels, Hope, BC

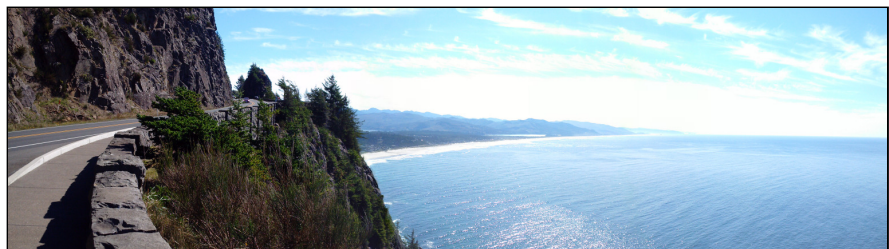
For the next couple of weeks, I worked on 'Ally' while we got our ducks in a row – van insurance, medical insurance, etc – for the next leg of our tour.

On Sep 22, we said our goodbyes and headed to Sidney, BC. The next morning, we boarded a Washington state ferry to Anacortes, WA via the scenic Gulf Islands. We camped that night at Deception Pass State Park.

Early the next morning, Mattie, our beloved Golden Retriever, had a massive stroke and left us for that big off-leash doggy park in the sky. She was just 3 weeks shy of her 13th birthday. After arranging for Mattie's cremation, we soldiered on. It was tough; and it still is.



Avenue of the Giants



Oregon Coast

We headed south west towards the northern Oregon coast, then drove down the coast into northern California, ticking items of our bucket list: Redwoods (Avenue of the Giants).



Happy New Year!



At Leggett, Hwy 1 turns west out to the coast and so did we. We continued on Hwy 1 all the way to San Francisco up hill, down dale, around hairpin turns; all the while enjoying spectacular views of sand and surf. Over the Golden Gate (on the Columbus day long weekend), out to the coast, and down Hwy 1. It was busy with traffic and cyclists weaving all over the road, but again lovely scenery.

We stayed at an RV park just outside of San Juan Bautista (east of Monterey). The temperature was 30-32C under brilliant sunny skies. We visited Santa Cruz and the old mission in San Juan. The drought was evident here yet thousands of acres of berries, salad greens, and garlic were being cultivated.



Mission at San Juan Bautista, CA



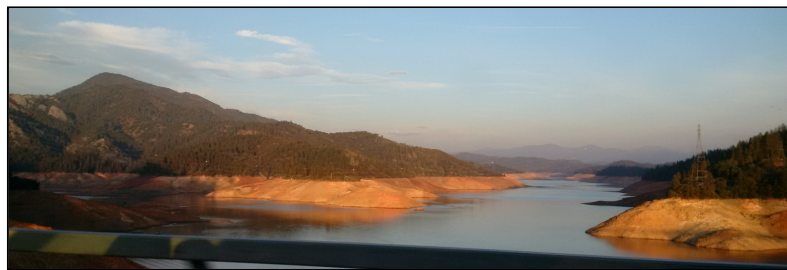
Strawberry fields

Before arriving in San Juan, I had not been feeling 100%. I had kept this to myself, but figured it was time to 'fess up. After a severe tongue lashing from Jen (rightly deserved), we decided to return home to get me checked out.

As we drove up I-5, the extent of the California drought was evident – trees in citrus groves lying dead on the ground, extremely low water reservoirs, and dried up river beds.

We arrived home on Sat. Oct 17. The following Monday we booked into Ocean Trails Resort for the winter.

For me, I feel fine. I've had no re-occurrence of the symptoms I had in California. I've seen my doc and am scheduled for further tests in early December. So right now, it is hurry up and wait. But enough about me.



Jennie is fine. Her PPS still gangs up on her frequently as does her immune system. But together we walk, feeling blessed that we are still able to plan for the next leg of our journey.

In early May 2016, the plan is to head east to Newfoundland, south to the Florida keys, then west to the desert southwest, and finally north, home to beautiful BC.

As we found, things can change but for now that's the plan.

Jennie and I wish you a very Happy New Year! May you be happy, healthy, safe, and prosperous in 2016.