

Advent, 1989

Dear Friends,

This has been an interesting year of travel that has created a restlessness within us and a yearning to get away from the crowded area and smog in which we live. Last Christmas, we visited Hearst Castle with Margaret and John McIntyre (Mary Beth's mother and brother). In February, we began to look at retirement/vacation property in the Cambria area which is a five hour drive north of here along the coast, and near Hearst Castle. We found two different alternatives for the same amount of money—90 acres of land inland with a 360 degree view and a tiny vacant oceanfront property within the town of Cambria where a 700 square foot home could be built after waiting ten years for a water permit. After careful consideration, we opted not to buy but rather to spend more long weekends trying to get away from it all.

The month of July spoiled us even more! We had a marvellous driving trip to Alaska and the Yukon. The beautiful scenery, clean air and the lack of crowds (very few vehicles on the road) were unbelievable! As usual, Richard took advantage of taking as many pictures as possible (61 rolls of 36 exposures!). However, it wasn't until the end of November that we got our slides organized into a slide show.

Our trip was twenty-six days long, and our ten-year-old Jeep Wagoneer finally had his trip to Alaska. Richard had been promising him this since he was new. We drove to Watson Lake via the Cassiar Highway and saw a black bear alongside the road. We then took the Alaska Highway to Whitehorse, the capital of the Yukon, and then on to Dawson City where we hit record high temperatures. Entering Alaska at the northernmost border crossing in North America on the "Top Of The World Highway", we headed south back to the Alaska Highway and on to Fairbanks.

We took a two-day air/bus tour to Barrow and Prudhoe Bay which was most interesting. Following that, we spent two nights at Denali and saw Mount McKinley and some wildlife—although too far away. We drove east and south, past the Wrangell-St. Elias Mountains, and Kluane Park to Skagway. The Kluane Museum at Burwash Landing, and Kluane Lake were both marvellous. From Skagway we began our travel on the Alaska Marine Highway (ferries). We first went to Juneau and viewed the Mendenhall Glacier at sunrise, and then flew to Glacier Bay and took a cruise where we saw whales, birds, bear, mountain goat, seals, and birds. Glacier Bay Lodge is a relaxing oasis. We flew back to Juneau and continued south on the ferry to Prince Rupert where we headed for home. Richard was somewhat disappointed with the photographic results and began researching ways around the limitations discovered on this trip. Part of the problem was that three rolls were damaged in processing by the Palo Alto Kodak laboratory!

In August, Richard did a film shoot-out to evaluate various available slide films. Over

Labor Day, we took a three-day trip to Death Valley (our third time there) and saw the Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest (at over 10,000 feet) for the first time. This gave Richard an opportunity to compare the two finalists in the film shoot-out, and gave us both the opportunity to breathe clean air. Fujichrome 100 will be his general-purpose film for a while. We are very happy with the end results. The trip was fun, although we were perhaps a little crazed. We got up one morning for sunrise at the Sand Dunes, and drove about 300 miles of dirt and gravel roads that weekend in order to see fantastic portions of the desert which many miss.

At the end of September, we had some camera equipment on loan from Canon and spent a weekend shooting with it. This convinced Richard that the new equipment offered help that was unavailable in his present equipment. We spent October and November selling the existing camera equipment which had held its value surprisingly well. Richard now has a new Canon EOS-1 Camera with 430EZ intelligent electronic flash and the following lenses: 20-35mm f/2.8L, 28-70mm f/3.5-4.5, 80-200mm f/2.8L, and a 50mm f/2.5 macro.

He hopes to have a 300mm f/2.8L lens with 1.4x and 2x extenders before long. We are both very happy with the improvement in quality from the new equipment. He has gone from a fully manual system to a fully automated one. Finally there are automated cameras which please him! Richard is currently preparing a portfolio for submission to a stock photo agency.

Richard's career has been a potpourri this year. Before Alaska he was working crazy hours to get everything done. There have been more than the usual amount of "hurry up and wait" projects, and he is frustrated—this is one of the reasons for his increased interest in photography. Between the middle of October and Christmas, he has spent (or is scheduled to spend) a total of four weeks in Washington, DC. The only bright side of this is that in the middle of November he got away with a colleague to Callao, Virginia, which resulted in some great photographs. Despite all of the frustrations, work is getting done and both clients and National TeleConsultants' owners are happy, so we really can't complain—except for the travel. Richard's friend from Toronto, Ian Kerr, is now also part of the Voice of America project team.

Richard and Mary Beth were able to be at Jay's (his stepmother) 70th birthday party in May at CJ and Ken Hancock's (CJ is one of Jay's daughters) in Shelton,

CT. Jim and Bill Hancock; and Scottie, Jeff, Ian, and Adria Twine were also there. It was great seeing everyone and catching up with each other.

Mary Beth's career has also been a potpourri this year. After receiving her Real Estate Broker's license, and going out on her own and putting together a couple of sales,

she decided that this was not the way she wanted to work. One of the great difficulties is that real estate involves working with people in their spare time—which also happens to be Richard's spare time—so we got to see each other far less than we would have liked. After several months of searching for suitable employment, Mary Beth landed a job as a secretary to a husband and wife team of ministers at Glendale Presbyterian Church. Now we both work in offices within the city of Glendale, and are close to home.

At the end of April, Mary Beth enjoyed a ten-day trip to Aurora to visit family as well as to attend the wedding of Sally McIntyre. She had a wonderful time visiting family and friends and it was great to see the McIntyre clan all together on such a happy occasion.

We have, as in the past, become involved in many church activities. Richard is in the process of upgrading all of the speakers throughout the church and the parish hall. This has involved crawling around under the church. He is also hoping to have a new Strand Environ light dimming system installed before Christmas. Mary Beth has continued to chair a 30ish social club which meets once a month for a potluck supper and entertainment. We both sing in the choir, which is now under the direction of our good friend Diane Killgore. Her husband, Bob, is the organist. Richard shows up when he can depending on his travels and other church work.

With our home addition finished for a year and half now, we are really settling in to the space, and enjoy it. By the way, we are not planning to move even though it is tempting to move to a less populated area. We bought an Ethan Allen Canova bedroom set this spring, and are very pleased with it. Spending time together in our shared office using our Steelcase office furniture has worked out very well for us. It allows us to do our own projects as well as joint projects while still being together in the evenings. There are a few more things we would like to do to the house, but these can wait for a while as there is nothing urgent and we are enjoying doing other things at the moment.

We are planning to go to Aurora (Mary Beth's home), with a side trip to Muskoka, for Christmas and New Year's. We are both looking forward to a colder climate as we have not really experienced much cold for several years, and we would really like to see snow. We saw snow and ice in the distance this summer, but very little up close. Only at Barrow were we able to actually touch ice—Arctic Ocean ice at that!

As soon as we return, we are planning to place our names in the lottery for Alaska's McNeil River Bear Sanctuary for next summer. If we are selected, we will get to go for four days and watch giant brown bears having a salmon feast.

We hope that this greeting finds you and yours well and happy. We wish you a happy Christmas and a wonderful New Year.