

## The Parkins Report

### Events of 2011

As we complete our second full year of non-retirement, we could characterize 2011 as the Year of Traveling Wildly. In mid-January, we traded our 1994 Jeep and cargo trailer on a new 2010 Jeep, with 16 miles on the odometer. By the end of the year, the mileage is well beyond 35,000, and the "Green Hornet" sports new tires, having worn out the first set.

We also augmented our stable of bicycles in May with a custom-built Bike Friday Traveler "Q," dubbed the "Mean Green Machine," which converts from tandem to the "Lean Green Machine" single, and packs in its own trailer-- disguised as ordinary luggage--for remote touring. Our old (1986) Santana tandem, having lost its carrier vehicle, is now relegated to round-trip rides from home.

### Travels:

Our car travels took us to California and New Mexico in January, Vancouver, BC in March, Bellingham in May, Salem, OR, Montana, and Portland, OR, in June, Montana and Minnesota (for Larye's 50<sup>th</sup> high school reunion) in July, then back to Montana to finally sell our house (after 25 months on the market, and a 35% price reduction) in the Bitterroot.

In August, Judy took visiting friends on a one-day circuit of the Olympic Peninsula. In September, we headed east again, intending to inaugurate our new bicycle with a supported tour of Upper Michigan. However, the unexpected passing of Judy's sister turned us around in Wisconsin, where we had stopped to visit grandkids, headed instead for California. We returned home via the coast highway, spending three days getting to the Oregon border before heading inland.

In late October, we set out again, our vacation rescheduled for a self-sustained bicycle tour of the Florida Keys, dropping quilts off in Montana and Georgia on the way and visiting the Beechcraft museum in Tennessee, which we had missed on our visit last year. Despite shedding cycle wear more suited to the shores of Lake Superior and Puget Sound than the Keys, 150 miles of 80-degree heat and rough roads took their toll on riders and gear, 50 miles short of Key West. We retrieved our car from Fort Lauderdale and continued the tour as a support vehicle for the rest of the group. After a bit of maintenance on the bike to tighten fittings vibrated loose by hard riding and conversion to the "Lean" mode, Larye rode solo, into the wind, on the 76-mile stage ending along Lake Okeechobee. We later discovered a broken spoke in the rear wheel, no doubt a casualty of road construction in the Keys earlier.

Our trip home took us by more relatives, with stops at Cape Canaveral, Orlando, Las Cruces, and Anaheim, plus a detour to walk around the Alamo at dawn as we passed through Texas. The children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren in New Mexico surprised us with an early Thanksgiving before we continued on to Anaheim for a quiet day with Judy's brother-in-law, Ben.

### At home:

In the brief moments between travels this year, we have managed to settle in at "Chaos Central," as we call our 1920s bungalow perched above downtown Shelton. After our Montana house sold, we commissioned a number of upgrades and repairs: we replaced the aging and dangerous electrical panel that had been on the "short list" since we moved in two years ago; we had a gas fireplace insert installed so we could read on winter evenings without hats and mittens; and, we had some major landscaping work done. The lawn has been replaced with wood chips and plant groupings, redistributing the existing plants and adding others. We had a patio built off the dining room and replaced the steep stair to the lower yard with a sloping path through the trees.

Of course, we make a lot of trips to Olympia to visit grandkids there, often picking them up from school

when parents are busy, which is what grandparents are for, after all. We only wish it wasn't thousands of miles to visit the others.

### Work and Hobbies:

Larye continues to operate his consulting practice from home, focused on managing and programming Unix and Linux systems. Work for the NIH has expanded a bit to include several projects at the main campus in Bethesda, Maryland, as well as legacy and emerging projects at the Montana facility. He also continues to support several web sites for commercial and non-profit clients. He attended two computer conferences this year, in Bellingham and Portland.

Judy has officially closed her quilting service, but continues to work off the backlog while indulging her creativity in weaving, beading, and quilting. Larye also took a weaving class in the spring and is working on a new project in his "copious spare time." Judy remains active in the Ladies of the Lake Quilt Club and both are members of the Tacoma and Olympia weavers guilds, as well as the art quilt group that meets at Ruby Street Quiltworks. Judy sold a number of items at the Olympia Weavers holiday show and sale, and entered a jacket in the guild display at the ANWG show in Salem in late spring.

Larye's airplane construction project continues to be "on hold" as life takes its course and we are busy with other things, not the least of which will involve making the basement garage workshop a bit more usable. He did get a bit of "stick time" in the right seat of a friend's RV-9A homebuilt in the spring.

## Links 'n Tidbits:

In the past year, both of us have been busy blogging. You can find our blogs at

<http://www.parkins.org/blogs>

by clicking on each of the links there, or you can access them directly at:

<http://blogs.judyparkins.com>

or

<http://blogs.info-engineering-svc.com>

Larye has day-by-day entries chronicling our interesting but unpredictable bicycle adventures in Florida and the epic car trip that bracketed the tour.

Photos of our Florida adventure can be found at

<http://www.parkins.org/biking/slide-show.php>

Links to maps of our training rides, in Washington, Montana, and

Wisconsin, can be found at <http://www.parkins.org/biking/bike-maps.php>

You can also find us both on Facebook (primarily to keep track of friends and family—we post links to our blogs there), and Larye infrequently tweets as @laryep on Twitter.

In the spring, about the time we ordered our new bicycle and started planning for the tour (which turned out much differently than we could have imagined), we registered with Warm Showers

(<http://www.warmshowers.org>), a loose organization of bicycle tourists who share lodging. Since we live just a few blocks off the very popular Adventure Cycling Association Pacific Coast Trail and the Olympic Peninsula is a popular touring destination, we got a lot of bicycle tourists through our house between May and October, plus some who called while we were on travel, and some for whom time schedules didn't work so we helped them find alternate lodging (campgrounds, hostels, motels) near where their day ended. We learned a lot from our 13 guests, who ranged in age from "almost 2" to "just turned 69." Not surprisingly, we had a lot in common with most of our guests, other than a love of bicycling. We are looking forward to taking advantage of staying with other hosts on future tours.

Of course, we learned a lot from our Adventure Cycling tour group, as well, and a lot about ourselves. We will tour again, but on our own,

like many of our guests, and like we have in the past. We are cool-weather cyclists, and no longer as goal-driven as when we were younger. We knew when we transferred our tour to the later, longer, more difficult tour that we weren't as well-prepared as we should have been, and that the daily ride distances (60-75 miles) were at the upper end of what we're comfortable riding, even without being fully loaded for camping. Had we not been with a group, we would have cut short some days due to poor roads, headwinds, and mechanical problems (some caused by riding too fast for the road conditions). Self-contained touring with a fixed schedule is a risk, even when riding in a group, and, as always, a tandem handles differently than single bikes, so we are seldom riding "with" our group. The "need for speed" meant not taking time to explore interesting sites along the way, some of which we were able to indulge in after we switched to car mode.

In the coming years, we hope to take a few self-contained, self-guided bike tours, probably using Amtrak to stretch our miles and stage ourselves in interesting places without having to circle back to the car.

## Family

As mentioned, most of our travels involved visiting family. Our

January trip took us to California, where we visited with Judy's sister "Bing" and brother-in-law Ben and explored the "world's largest yard sale" in Quartzite, Arizona, before heading east to New Mexico to visit the several generations of descendants there. On the way home, we stopped in to visit cousin Mary and her husband Paul in Oregon.

We exchanged visits with Judy's brother Tom (and Danielle) in eastern Washington. Of course, we saw Bing and Ben in Montana on our trips through in the summer and they visited us in Washington just the week before Bing's untimely passing in September.

We saw Aunt Jo and cousin Cathy in Minnesota when we were there for Larye's 50-year class reunion, and stopped at Matt's in Wisconsin in September. And, we saw many cousins in Tacoma at Stan Kurka's service earlier in the year. We visited grand-nephew Josh and his family in Georgia, and nieces Rose and Rhonda in Florida.

We are so blessed with family, and enjoyed all of our visits this year, but we're traveled out. The welcome mat is out at Chaos Central, and we have lots of guest space. Y'all come by now, y'hear?

*Judy & Larye*

Shelton, Washington, December 11, 2011.

<http://www.parkins.org/ParkinsReport.pdf>