Banff and Calgary Aug 1 to 4

This is an animal crossing going over the Icefields Parkway.

Elk ignore us as we pass by.

Leaving the Yellowhead Trans-Canada Highway and traveling south on the Icefields Parkway, from Jasper to Banff, was a highlight on our journey. Because the route follows the Continental Divide, it passes through high altitude terrain and a chain of huge glacial ice fields that are never out of sight on a clear day. The highest point is Bow Pass, and it's elevation is 6,875 feet. Bow Pass is a watershed divide. On one side the Bow River flows toward Calgary, and on the other side the Saskatchewan River flows to Edmonton. Along the way we were excited to see a beautiful elk (one with a tremendous rack, a few feet from the road), mountain goats, a large black bear swimming across a river, and deer.

We arrived in Banff in time for dinner at the Banff Springs Hotel, where we celebrated Lolly and Gene's 43rd anniversary.

We had fun celebrating the Nelson's anniversary at a Japanese restaurant in this beautiful hotel.

The town of Banff is named after Banffshire in Scotland, the birthplace of two major financiers of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Cave and Basin National Historic Site of Canada, the birthplace of Canada's National Parks System, is located here. Banff National Park was Canada's first, North America's second, and the worlds third National Park. We took a tour of the park and learned about its history. We also visited the original vent hole where, in 1883, Frank McCabe and William and Tom McCardell lay claim to the thermal springs. Then we went into the cave where the original hot springs pool is located. In 1885, the springs were taken from the men that discovered it and Hot Spring Reserve was established by Canada. In 1930 it was renamed Banff National Park.

The men found this hole, climbed down into it and found these thermal springs. Later the water was piped to a larger pool.

Canada Olympic Park in Calgary

On August 3rd we headed for Calgary, Canada's fourth largest city. It is set in the rolling foothills against the Canadian Rockies. The Bow River, well known to the Canadian Fly fisherman, divides the city into north and south. Visitors can fish right downtown and stroll, jog or cycle along the river.

On arriving in town we stopped at Canada Olympic Park, where the 1988 Winter Olympics were held. They offered a special family rate for a guided tour. Billy told the nice young lady he was here with his two brothers and three sisters. Graham started to laugh, but she gave us the family rate with a wondering glance.

Canada Olympic Park is a truly unique facility, situated at the gateway to the magnificent Rocky Mountains. It is a

This is where the athletes practice starts.

Maybe they should trade in their car for this "Rocket".

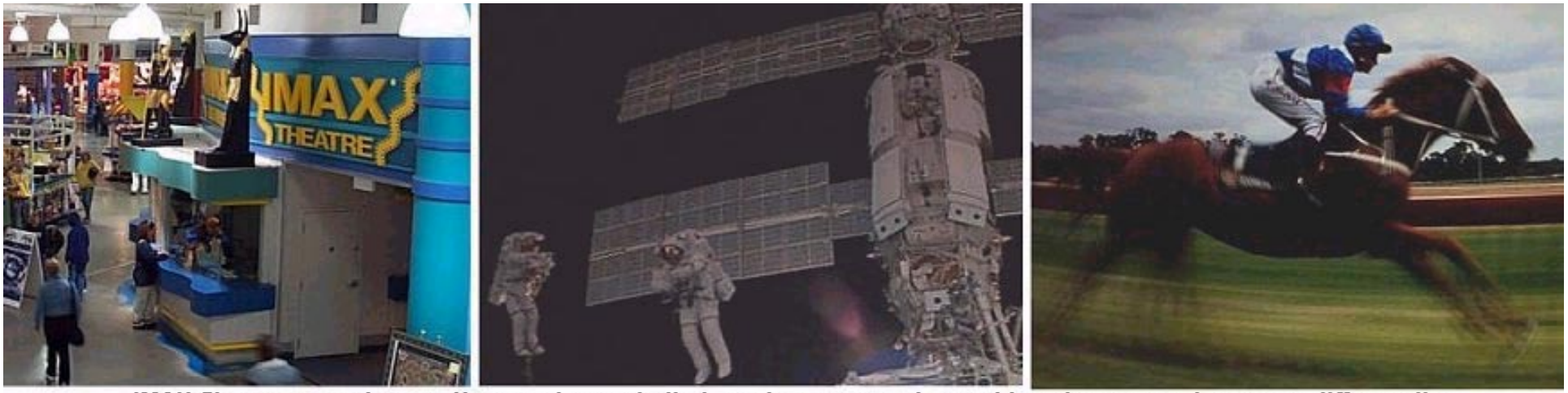
multipurpose competition, training and recreation area designed for year-round use by athletes, visitors and the general public. On the tour we explored the Olympic Hall of Fame and Museum. In was neat to get up close to gold, silver and bronze medals.

The Ice House is a unique facility for athletes to practice their starts, including bobsled, luge and the skeleton. Ice is kept frozen on the starting track all year. The technique of each sport was explained and a few of us tried out the equipment, but fortunately we were not moving. We took an elevator up to the 90-meter ski jump tower to view the city and the ski jumps. An athlete preparing to jump never rides the elevator in the tower; they are super-stitious, so they use the stairs. Other park offerings included bobsled rides in a sled with rubber tires, and trails for mountain bike riding.

Skiers walk to the top, ski jump from here, ride back up and do it again. Reckon they're crazy?

That afternoon we treated ourselves to two power film experiences at an IMAX Theater. We found the images breathtaking on the giant five-story screen, and the unbelievable sound system made the two shows, “The Space Station” and “Horses”, quite exciting.

IMAX uses the largest film frame in motion picture history - more than ten times the size of conventional 35mm and three times the size of standard 70mm. That means breathtaking images of unsurpassed size and impact. The IMAX projector uses a unique “rolling loop”



IMAX films are a real treat. Here we learned all about the space station and how horses can have very different lives.

to advance the huge film at 24 frames-per-second with a gentle, waving action. There is also a six-channel digital sound system that adds to the sensation of being in the middle of a real event. IMAX Corporate headquarters are located in Toronto, Canada. Each year more than 30 million people worldwide enjoy the IMAX experience. We found that seeing an IMAX film is an amazing experience. It puts you in the center of the action in a way no ordinary movie can, drawing you in with images that are so real you want to touch them. The IMAX theatre we visited in Calgary is the 100th theatre in the IMAX network.

On the way back to the campground, we stopped at a Tony Romas. Some in our group would frequent this restaurant daily if possible. The history of this restaurant chain is kind of interesting. One weekend, back in the 70's, chef David Smith and Tony Roma decided to throw some racks of ribs on the grill. It was only going to be a temporary thing, using chef Dave's own secret barbecue recipe. On Monday, they'd go back to grilling their great burgers and steaks, and it would be business as usual at a little place called Tony Roma's restaurant in North Miami, FL. One taste and customers immediately forced them to change their plans. People started coming from all over. Whenever Dallas Cowboys' owner Clint Murchison was in Miami, he'd go out of his way to stop in at Tony Roma's (kind of like some other folks we know, like Gene Nelson). Because Clint couldn't come to town often enough, he finally just bought the concept and started building them in Texas, California, New York, Hawaii and even in Tokyo, Japan. Today, there are over 200 locations on five continents. And Chef Dave is still proudly manning the grill in one of the Miami locations. And none of us will ever enter a Tony Roma's again without thinking about our great trip to Alaska.

The Devonian Gardens were full of interesting plants and an animal or two. Even the guys got interested when they saw the size of those fish.

The next morning, a visit to the Devonian Gardens surprised us. Alberta's largest indoor garden, 2.5 acres in the heart of downtown Calgary, was on the third floor! The garden includes 20,000 plants of 138 local and tropical varieties; fountains, waterfalls, reflecting ponds (with fish food available to feed gold fish and rainbow trout), bridges and a playground.

Moose Jaw and Winnipeg, where the Monaco 3 become the Monaco 2 Aug 5 to 7

The world's tallest tepee at Medicine Hat has story boards telling native Canadian history.

The 5th and 6th were long traveling days, averaging about 430 miles each day. We made a brief stop in Medicine Hat to check out the world's tallest tepee. In 1988, at the Calgary Winter Olympics, this giant tepee shaped structure towered over the Olympic cauldron. Upon learning that the 20-story tepee was to be destroyed, a businessman from Medicine Hat saw the opportunity to fulfill his dream of building a monument to the natives of Canada. Built entirely of steel on a concrete foundation, the tepee is said to have more engineering challenges in its construction than the famous Eiffel Tower. The structure weighs almost 1000 tons and is built to withstand extreme temperatures and 150 mph winds. Attached to the tepee are ten large storyboards that depict various aspects of native culture and history.

About halfway between Calgary and Winnipeg is Moose Jaw, where we spent one night. We learned that Moose Jaw boasts a set of underground tunnels in downtown, so we decided to see them for ourselves. Here we found theatrical guides that represented characters of Moose Jaw in the early 1900's, and we saw re-enactments of stories from that era. Our tour was called the "Passage to Fortune". This story began in the late 1800's when the construction of the trans-continental Canadian Pacific Railway ended. A few Chinese moved into Moose Jaw in hopes of finding job opportunities.

Moose Jaw has beautiful historic architecture which is enhanced by 33 colorful murals found on downtown buildings.

This is where the moving story of triumph over adversity began. We took an hour-long journey through the underground tunnels, gaining an understanding of what a struggle the Chinese had.

The underground tunnels where the Chinese worked, ate, and slept. Life was very difficult for the Chinese living in Moose Jaw.

August 7th was spent sightseeing Winnipeg and boy did we see a lot of sights! The first European settlers came to Winnipeg in 1812, and the town was incorporated in 1870 with a population of 300. The city's existence is due to a few motivated businessmen who convinced the Canadian Pacific Railway to route the railway through the town. Today, Winnipeg is home to over 670,000 people from more than forty different cultures.

We began the morning with a trip to the Royal Canadian Mint. The Mint was originally established in Ottawa (the capital of Canada) in 1908 to produce Canada's circulation coins. It soon became an international producer of coins for countries around the world. The Winnipeg plant that we toured was built in 1976 for high speed and high volume production of circulation coins. We saw a film on the coin production process and then were given a very informative tour through the plant, were we saw the coins being made. At the gift shop we had an opportunity to see up close some of the unusual shapes and sizes that are minted there for other countries.

The Royal Canadian Mint is contemporary on the outside and inviting on the inside. They make coins for countries all over the world.

Next stop was lunch. We picked the highest place in town, with a restaurant that revolved, so we could get a birds eye view of the city.

We had a very nice meal as we took a spin of Winnipeg. And we could see for miles.

That afternoon we visited The Forks, a historical area of the city where the Red River and the Assiniboine River converge. For thousands of years, Aboriginal people from across North America came to this spot to hunt, fish and trade. Today, The Forks is still a meeting place where people learn about history and different cultures. It is also a place of special events.

While we were there, we had the opportunity to see Golden Boy being restored. Golden Boy is the statue that sits atop Manitoba's Legislative Building. This statue is over 17 feet tall and weighs 3,640 pound. It was determined that after 82 years the statue's internal support post had corroded and needed replacing. Golden Boy also needed a new coat of gold and some minor surface repairs. The statue was taken to the marketplace at The Forks for this re-gilding process so Canadians could watch. It is being covered in 24-carat gold leaf, which is being applied one very small sheet at a time. The Queen of England will officially unveil the restored Golden Boy during a public ceremony on October 8, 2002. Then it will be returned to the dome of the Legislative Building.

The Market at The Forks had international shops, lots of food places and Golden Boy.

From The Forks we “took a trip to the tropics” at the Club Regent Casino. This casino has Mayan ruins, cascading waterfalls, contiki torches and jungle creatures. One of these jungle creatures, a toucan, struck up a conversation with us when we arrived. We talked with him for a few minutes and then he began to ask to go home with us. Our conservation ended when he suggested that we get rid of Hope the cat and replace her with him! We took a quick tour of the place and left before anyone lost any money.

During the first weeks of August, Winnipeg sponsors Folk-o-rama, the largest and longest running multicultural festival of its kind in the world. Representing cultures from around the world, this two-week event is chocked full of culture, dance, music, food and art. Forty-seven pavilions all over Winnipeg produce traditional home-cooked meals, ethnic displays, and three nightly performances by entertainers.

At the Folk-o-rama we saw demonstrations and handmade items.

Since the Nelsons are of Scandinavian descent, we decided to go to that pavilion. We toured their displays, observing demonstrations and making some great needlework purchases. Dinner was a delicious meal of roasted pork, potatoes and red cabbage. While we ate, three generations from the local community presented a show featuring song, dance and age-old customs.

We enjoyed our first pavilion so well that we decided to stop at another one. The African/Caribbean pavilion was within a few blocks so we went there. Before the show we checked out the cultural displays of handmade crafts and clothing. The show featured a very limber Limbo Dancer from Jamaica and a steel drum band. Graham was chosen from the audience to have a Limbo lesson. He bravely and successfully went under the bar!

The teacher . . .

the pupil . . .

the successful student! Go Graham go!

The morning of the 8th the Nelsons headed home, and then there were only two Monacos left.

Returning to the USA and visiting Mackinac Island - Aug 8 to 10

The next several days the Moores and Ricks traveled across the southern part of Canada, skirting around the top of Lake Superior. They entered back into the United States at Sault Ste. Marie, MI and decided to spend a day on Mackinac Island.

Mackinac Island - You can only arrive by plane or water.

Once there, you can only travel by bicycle or horse 'n buggy to see this quaint Victorian place.

American Indians and the French and British fur traders originally settled Mackinac Island in the early 1700's. It is only accessible by ferryboat or plane. Located in Lake Michigan, 80% of the island is state park and includes historic Fort Mackinac. Surrounded on all sides by water, it has managed to escape the changes of time. Mackinaw Island is a step back in time where transportation is limited to horse and buggy, bicycle or foot. The authentic Victorian setting is preserved and enhanced by a small population of 200 year-round residents and scores of summer visitors.

After a 20-minute ferry ride to the island, we hiked to the Grand Hotel, the focal point of the island. The Grand Hotel opened on July 10, 1887 and has always been considered the

The Grand Hotel has a grand front porch, a grand buffet, and a super dessert selection.

We "sampled" at least half of these goodies.

world's largest summer hotel. The porch at the Grand Hotel is 650 feet long, across which 100 rocking chairs are lined. Five U.S. Presidents have stayed at the Grand Hotel including Presidents Clinton, Bush, Ford, Kennedy and Truman.

The hotel boasts a 100-foot long buffet, including a 20-foot long dessert table. Of coarse, we could not pass up this feast! Graham is pretty sure he ate a foot of the desserts. It was certainly tempting to eat dessert first.

After lunch we waddled back down to the docks to catch a carriage tour of the island. The descendants of the original carriage men are still responsible for the Mackinac Island carriages. The company that runs this operation is the oldest livery service in the country, and the world's largest horse-and-buggy livery. They own and operate about 100 horse-drawn vehicles that utilize approximately 400 horses. We found the tour a perfect way to see the island. At the end of the day, we were glad that we could be counted as one of the more than one million people to visit Mackinac Island each year.

Fortunately we didn't see this sign until the end of the trip!

Mackinaw City and Holland, MI, the Indiana State Fair and HOME - Aug 11 to 17

This, the world's largest suspension bridge, was started on May 7, 1954 and finished only 42 months later, right on schedule on November 1, 1957. Until the bridge was built, it took two hours to travel the 17 miles by ferry, across the great lakes that separate the state of Michigan into two parts. A maximum of 462 cars could be carried at a time. Now that the bridge is finished, over 6000 cars can cross in a single hour. The towers that support the bridge are 552 feet tall (the same height as the Washington Monument). During construction only five workers lost their lives, a phenomenal feat considering over 11,000 people worked on the bridge.

That afternoon we traveled along the beautiful coast of Lake Michigan. On Monday the 11th we took a slight detour over to Silver

Could this be a desert?

Nope, there's Lake Michigan.

A great place to get wet on a hot day.

Lakes where we took a ride on the sand dunes. This 2000-acre area of Michigan is located between Lake Michigan and Silver Lake. Here, huge windswept mountains are moving 10 to 20 feet per year, a few grains of sand at a time. The sand engulfs trees and is gradually filling in Silver Lake as it moves eastward. At Mac Wood's Dune Rides, we hopped aboard "dune buggies" for a seven-mile ride.

Close by we found the Shelby Gem Factory. This company has created a process by which "gems" can be man-made. They are chemically and physically identical to gems produced by nature. The difference between these stones and real ones is that Shelby stones are nearly flawless, since they control the ingredients and cooking temperature. In some cases, like with emeralds, the chemical stones are about 2 times harder and considerable tougher that natural gems. Another advantage is that they are much less expensive. The day we visited, the showroom was low on stock, so fortunately nothing was found that we could not live without!

Traveling on, we came to Holland, MI. Our first stop here was at Veldheer's Tulip farm, but it wasn't tulips that we wanted to see. It was wooden shoes and Delft porcelain. The wearing of wooden shoes is an old tradition in the Netherlands, dating back to the 1300's. Because of the high cost of leather and Holland's wet climate, which causes leather to rot quickly, wooden shoes developed as the ideal footwear. They are relatively inexpensive and long lasting. Wooden shoes, despite their inflexibility, are comfortable and warm when worn with thick socks. In some regions of the Netherlands, they are still worn today. The shoes are made of willow, a wood that is both hard and water resistant.

These machines make the wooden shoes. Then they are hung by sizes for customers to try on.

Delft is the name given to a type of pottery, which is traditionally blue and white and originates from the Netherlands. Delft was first produced in the city of Delft, from which it derives its name, during the 12th century. It began as an imitation of oriental porcelains, but gradually evolved its own style and became recognized and highly valued for its beauty and handcrafted quality. Today, delft is produced in a variety of colors.

The Delft process is as follows:

The Pour Room - Delft begins as a liquid clay slip, which is poured into plaster molds. The clay is allowed to set until the desired wall thickness is attained. When the piece is removed from the mold, it retains the mold's form, but is fragile and moist. The pottery, at this

point, is called greenware. After the greenware is trimmed and polished, it is left to dry before being fired.

This lady has been Delft painting for 25 years.

The Kiln Room - Firing causes the piece to harden and whiten. The firing takes place in the kilns, or ovens, where the greenware is baked at a temperature of 1600 degrees. The heating, firing, and cooling is a 24-hour process. Pottery at this stage is called bisque.

The Paint Room - All the delft made here is entirely hand painted. The artists employ a special water-based under-glaze, which is imported from the Netherlands and is unavailable commercially. They freehand paint traditional patterns onto the pieces, using strokes which embody the style of delft. It requires nearly two years apprenticeship to learn the art of delft painting.

After the bisque is painted, it is fired again to set the under-glaze, and then dipped into an over-glaze. It is during the third and final firing that a chemical reaction takes place between the blue under-glaze and the clear over-glaze, resulting in the bright blue color associated with delft.

Our last stop in this area was at Windmill Island. Here we found a 230-year-old windmill. “DeZwaan” (The Swan) is the only authentic Dutch windmill operating in the United States. Windmill Island has a lot to offer. There is the tour of the windmill, a show by Dutch dancers, a film on the dismantling and reconstructing of the windmill, a 1895 carousel, a miniature Dutch village, and candle artists that dip and sculpt candles while you watch. Summer annuals were in bloom and color was everywhere. They say it is the most beautiful in the spring when the tulips are in bloom. That’s hard to imagine.

Windmill Island has an authentic working windmill, Dutch dancers, a great organ and a very talented lady that carves candles.

It took us 5 more days to get home. During those days we stopped in Elkhart, IN and had our chipped front windshield changed. We also spent a few hours in Indianapolis at the state fair. It was hot there, but we had fun looking at “stuff” and eating “junk”.

The fair covered so much area, it was nice to have transportation.

And there were demonstrations for the ladies . . . . . and shop talk for the guys.

On August 17th we arrived back home. Everything was as we had left it almost 3 months ago. And Hope was REALLY glad to get back home.

Hope's Trip

I always started the day with a good nights rest.

On arising, I checked out the drawers.

And occasionally I'd get lucky!

Everytime we moved,
I was the co-pilot.

I always ate when mom & dad did.

Sometimes I had to show my papers
and be counted at the boarder.

I tried to be a good camper
and refer to Milepost frequently.

Uncle Gene would come along
often and lay my ears back.

I found looking for bears was easy.

Some days were soooo boring.

I would look a place to hide and then spend the day.

One morning, the caravan was held up because I hid so well!

Being vacumned and watching TV were my 2 favorite things to do.

I also loved for mom to put the bed up
so I could be Queen of the hill.

All in all I was purrrfectly happy with my trip.

Love to my fans,

Hope