



Merry Christmas to one and all! It is the season to look back over the year and contemplate “Where did the year go?” and “Do you remember what year it is?”

News about the family: Diana still lives in Chicago with her dog, Malcolm (our first grand-puppy) and Sabastian, part kitty and part Lynx. Yep, all three are still alive and well. Erik and Lauren are still in their home in St. Paul with two cats and their dog (Peanut, our second grand-puppy).

News on the soda business: “It continues on...” Boat House Brothers, a Prior Lake brewery opened in April on Main Street, is carrying our soda for those who want an alternative to beer (can’t imagine why). We pulled off selling at three Farmer’s Markets this summer; in Prior Lake, Farmington and our newest market in downtown Shakopee on Sunday mornings. Mark also hosted 4 open house events with the help of Deanna Miller, a good friend and neighbor. At the open houses Glewwe Castle Brewery hosted an array of great musical talents. Check our website for the listing of the superb talent we had and if you like Bluegrass plan on joining us next year. We want to express our many thanks to these musicians who are always a blast to have at Glewwe Castle Brewery. And we had a special guest during campaign season when Angie Craig stopped by to have a beer (or two). We suspect that is why she won the election.

So is that all we do? What other news is there? Well we “planned” a trip to California as autumn (and the end of the market season) approached. As we were planning this trip Laurel’s van received a fatal notice. So with one week before leaving for California we got another Toyota Sienna. So on Sunday September 30th we attended the Confirmation of my niece, Gracie, and headed west. Relatives questioned our sanity as our route plans were a bit vague and looked at us a bit strangely when we told them we were heading to California and that is as far as we had planned. Oh yea, did we mention Diana flew out from Chicago and joined us on October 5. So we did have some more detailed plans - to meet her in San Jose.

We had a great time just driving West. Stopped off and saw the Corn Palace in Mitchell, stopped in and had lunch at Mt. Rushmore, gambled in a small town we spent the night in Nevada all before arriving in California. We did meet Diana at the San Jose airport. We now know the airport quite well as we circled it dozens of times before picking her up. That airport really needs to expand their parking facilities.

Then we did a mad dash to see many sites in central California. We remember squeezing in a “few” wineries, cannery row, a castle (at one of the wineries), a couple of vineyards, tipped back a pint or two, explored Napa and Central valley, and even tried dropping the new van into a deep dark valley while traversing the road through Muir Woods. There were a few things on our bucket list we missed, but that gives us reasons to go back someday.

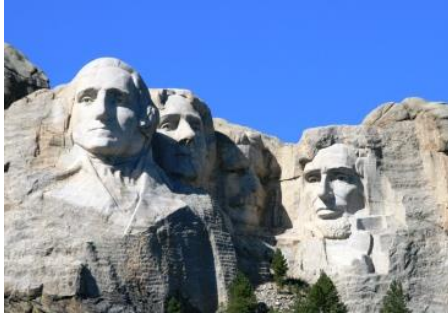
After dropping Diana back off at the Airport on Monday so she could go back to the drudgery of being a wage earner, we started heading east via Las Vegas and the Mojave Dessert. Yea, that maybe more south than east, but we were on vacation. Oh! and there was a snow storm in Vail, Colorado (predicting 14 inches of snow) so we did not slow down for that. Eventually, after 5,000+ miles we found our way back to Prior Lake. Mark is threatening to write up more since he has not done a road trip report in many years. Don’t hold your breath, but this letter may inspire him to actually do it.

Christmas is fast approaching with plans of our family getting together, celebrating the birth of Christ, enjoying good food, friends and raising a glass or two or three or...*let’s just say we picked-up a few bottles in California.*

Merry Christmas to all and have a Happy New Year.

Mark and Laurel

A few of our favorite places we visited along the way to/from California.



Not in California, but a classic favorite. We had lunch and we recommend the great ice cream!



Fields Winery (privately owned) outside of Lodi, CA was a favorite. This wine is estate sold only. They don't distribute or sell in stores.



It's warm in Monterey along the Pacific coastline.

Winchester House in San Jose offers stairs that go no-where and if you believe – ghosts! House covers 5 plus acres.



The Castello di Amorosa Winery (privately owned) is in the Napa Valley region. It's a must visit with \$100 bottles of wine and a cool castle to explore. The owner liked castles so much he built one over 16 years in front of the winery. Need to go to the castle for wine – not sold in stores.



Hidden treasure...On the way home Interstate I-70 offered spectacular views. Notice the relative size of the cars!