

Forks in the Road and My Travel Through Life

Chapter 14 On the Road 2002

Out of the Motel

We closed on the sale of the motel April 1, 2002. I left Arco in the truck pulling the fifth wheel trailer and headed to Twin Falls.

The truck was a white 2001 GMC Sierra 2500 crew cab with an 8.1 liter V-8 and Allison transmission. The fifth wheel was a 1987 26ft Alpenlite that we bought from my parents in 1991.

LaRue would follow in the car after she wrapped things up. The car was a light gold 2001 Chrysler 300M. It was a cold windy day, but typical for the time of year.

The Slettes' would not be in Twin Falls as they were traveling. They owned the empty lot next to their house on Buchannon Street where we would stay in the trailer. I backed in and parked.

We celebrated the first night out of the motel by going to dinner at the Rock Creek Restaurant. It was a strange experience not having to worry about how things were going at the motel. We celebrated by having Manhattans and prime rib. That was what we had after we were married in Pocatello.

I had an appointment with a dentist for a root canal on April 9. We would relax and look around until then. We had no idea where we wanted to live but Hagerman looked attractive.

We looked at property around Hagerman and came to the conclusion we would spend too much time running back and forth to Twin Falls. We had enough of that in Arco running back and forth to Idaho Falls.

Our next destination was Smithfield, Utah for the birth of the baby Matt and Julie were expecting. The morning of the 9th LaRue took off for Smithfield.

I had an unpleasant root canal. Then I hooked up the fifth wheel and drove to Smithfield. There was room to park the trailer beside their garage.

Two days later Summer Kristine arrived. A daughter for the Redd's after three sons. LaRue helped around the house. I worked on the trailer getting it road ready, since it had been sitting for seven years. I got new tires before we left Arco. I repacked the wheel bearings, checked out the brakes, and made sure everything worked in the trailer.

On the Road

We departed Smithfield April 17 heading south for Nevada and hit a heavy snowstorm south of Provo. I elected to pull into a campground in Nephi, Utah, making only 176 miles the first day. We were in no hurry and not on a schedule. In a short while the trailer was warm and comfortable, but we went out for dinner.

We continued to Overton, Nevada and parked at the Fun and Sun RV Park in space 14 at \$15 per night. This is the place that my folks wintered a couple of years. It was nice getting into warm weather and we changed into summer clothes.

We were curious to see what the Overton Motel looked like since we were not successful in buying it in 1995. The old gal had sold. It was not thriving under the new ownership.

A problem for Overton was Lake Meade had receded leaving the nearby marina high and dry. Just as well we didn't get the Overton Motel. However, we liked Overton and considered the possibility of making it our home.

We visited the Valley of Fire and reminisced about when we lived in Las Vegas and would have picnics there with the kids. In those days you had to dodge desert turtles crossing the road and there were wild burros everywhere. We didn't see any desert turtles and the burros were scarce.

We knew people in Idaho Falls that bought property for retirement in Pahrump, Nevada, so we decided to check out Pahrump.

After three days in Overton we headed to Pahrump and parked at the Pahrump Station RV Park at \$20 per night. We remembered it as only a junction on the way to Death Valley when we lived in Las Vegas. Now it is now a thriving retirement and casino city. We checked out the area and spent a day in Death Valley.

LaRue's sister Jane lived near Tehachapi, California and wanted us to visit. She owned and operated a water company, and needed help in buying and installing a new computer. That was our next destination via Ridgecrest and Mojave 240 miles away.

We looked at new computers in Lancaster and she bought one in Costco. I spent a couple of days setting it up and developing a spreadsheet for tracking customer billing and payments.

After three days we headed north to return to Idaho via Big Pine, California, Tonopah, and Wendover, Nevada.

It was rain and hail from Ely to Wendover. Parked at the KOA for \$22.50 per night .

The campground had a good slope to it. The trailer uphill from us dumped their holding tank. The sewer line was plugged, and their sewer flowed downhill to us. We had to hookup and move. Learned to check if the sewer will drain before opening the valve.

While in Wendover we toured the old WW2 airbase where my Uncle Dallas was with the 509th Bomb Group. They were training to drop the atomic bombs on Japan. We also checked out the Bonneville Speedway, but nothing was happening that day.

We departed Wendover April 29 for Smithfield, Utah to see how things were going with new baby Summer. We took the cutoff (highway 233) between Wendover and Wells to Snowville, Utah then across to Logan. It is about 100 miles across the cutoff with nothing but a few ranches before you get to Snowville. That is the route we took when we lived in Logan and would go to California for a visit.

After a couple of days at the Redd's we headed to Twin Falls and parked at the Oregon Trail RV Park on Kimberley Road at \$85 for a week. It was packed with fulltime residents, but we lucked out and got the only space available.

We spent the week with a realtor looking at houses. We were not in a hurry to buy a house but wanted to see what was available and start narrowing down where we might want to live.

The next stop was Idaho Falls to check out the housing market and see old friends. We arrived on May 8 and parked at the Sunnyside RV Park at \$22.05 per night for three nights.

We looked at houses gathering information for later. We also looked at new fifth wheel trailers since our Alpenlite was 15 years old. Also, it's low-profile design did not have a bedroom that you can stand up in. Alpenlites' are built in Yakima, Washington, so we decided to visit, take the factory tour, and possibly pick up a new model.

We headed north to see mom. Then brother Garry and Gladys, stop at Tom and Bev's, and on to Yakima.

We arrived at moms in Salmon and parked on the street at her place on the bar at 714 Taft Avenue. It is the townhouse she bought after dad passed away. It was built by my cousin Ray and Little Ray.

LaRue lived in almost the exact place. Mom's front window faced across her driveway to where LaRue's bedroom window would have been. The house was demolished but a willow tree was still there. Now it is a huge tree.

During our travels we discovered that most Elks Lodges have trailer hookups for members and charge around \$5 per night. We were in Salmon and had friends that belonged to the Salmon Elks Lodge that would sponsor me. I applied for membership.

We spent four days in Salmon and headed north again and overnighted in St. Regis, Montana. We were a few miles north of Superior where my folks lived 1961-1964 while dad managed the Nancy Lee mine. The mine was between Superior and St. Regis.

The next day we continued through Kellogg and Couer d'lene then south to Garfield, Washington to visit brother Garry and Gladys for one night, which was enough.

On May 17 we continued to Pasco, Washington and parked at the Arrowhead RV Park at \$25 per night. This is as close as we could get near Kennewick where Tom and Bev live. We spent three days visiting and toured wineries. We drove by our old house in Richland, and it looked great after 29 years.

After three days we traveled 89 miles to Yakima and parked at the KOA at \$27 per night, which was pricey for an average RV park.

We visited the Alpenlite factory the next day and saw fifth wheel trailers being built from start to finish. We were impressed and picked out our favorite, a 32 ft model.

The local Alpenlite dealer would have to order one. However, \$74,000 was way more than we wanted to spend. They had a good inventory of trade-ins of several brands. We decided to look around.

There was a large dealership about 35 miles north in Ellensburg. We looked over their inventory and did not find what we wanted.

We went back to the dealer in Yakima and they had just taken in a 1997 29ft Alpenlite. It was a one-owner in good condition, and was bought from them. At \$26,900 it was affordable.

They offered \$8,000 for our 1987 Alpenlite, and we decided to go for it. The dealer was backlogged and would need a week to prep the trailer with new brakes, new tires, repacking wheel bearings, and make sure things work.

We closed the deal and decided we would go to Loa and Max's cabin near Tillamook, Oregon and relax for a week.

The next day, May 22, we hitched up and took highway 96 south to the Columbia River. It was then across to the Dalles, Portland, Beaverton, and on to Max and Loa's cabin near Lee's Camp, Oregon.

We parked under the big trees at their place on the Reeher Family homestead. I turned on the water and the water line into the house was broke. We had water for the trailer but not into the house. I spent the next day repairing the water line with Jim Reeher's help, so it would be fixed when Max and Loa arrive for the summer.

It was a relaxing week visiting Tillamook, Astoria, Fort Clatsop, and down the coast.

On May 29 we retraced our route of 240 miles to Yakima and parked at the KOA again. We checked with the dealer and our trailer would be ready late afternoon May 30.

They parked the trailers side by side with the doors lined up and planks across to make it easy to move everything across. We didn't realize how much stuff we had. It took all afternoon and into the evening before we were out of there.

It was nice having a bedroom that we could stand up in, and walk around the bed. We had to crawl into bed in the old trailer. We also had a lot more living space in the living room with the large slide out.

On May 31 we headed to Twin Falls. We spent two nights in Baker City, Oregon and one night in Boise. The fifth wheel trailer towed fine. It was much heavier than the old one.

On June 3 we parked at the Anderson RV Park at the Eden Exit on I84 near Twin Falls at \$21 per night in space 22. It was nice and shady under big trees. The plan was to spend several days relaxing, organizing, and get with a realtor to look at houses. We were there 10 days and then made trips to Salmon and Idaho Falls. On June 29 we headed south to go to Kaiser Bills seminar in central Utah.

We parked at an RV park behind a Chevron station in Logan. We visited the Redds in Smithfield and looked at houses to no avail.

On July 1 we went to Vernal, Utah and parked at the KOA. We stayed 2 nights and looked around the area. It was a hot 102 degrees.

On July 3 it was 61 miles to Kaiser Bills. We parked under big trees along with 4 or 5 attendees who were also camping. Other attendees were staying at a hunting lodge a few miles away, and at a small motel in Altona which was about 5 miles from Kaiser Bill's place. A few drove their cars from as far away as Pennsylvania.

Bill Brown known as "Kaiser Bill" is the utmost authority on Kaiser-Frazer cars and restoring them Kaiser Bill's way. His background follows:

Kaiser Bill grew up in Atlanta, Georgia where his father was a Kaiser-Frazer dealer. He worked at the dealership in high school then came out to BYU for college where he met Elaine, who would become his wife. She was a ranch girl who grew up on the property where they are

now living. He didn't finish at BYU and became an installer for the telephone company. His first job was installing the phone system for the Atomic Energy Commission on the new reactor site between Arco and Idaho Falls. He stayed at the DK Motel for the length of the job, so we had a connection that made us close friends. It assured me a slot in the seminar that was limited to about 30 attendees and filled up quickly.

Bill moved back to Atlanta with his new wife, Elaine. They had children and a son became a programmer and developed a banking system. Bill quit the telephone company to form a company with his son and they eventually sold the banking system to IBM for big money. Bill decided to retire and move to Utah and build a big home on the property where Elaine grew up near Altona, Utah which is about 20 miles north of Duchesne. He collected Kaiser and Frazer cars while they were in Atlanta and they moved about 80 to Utah. They built a huge lodge with big windows looking out on the Uintah Mountains, an indoor Olympic swimming pool, a vintage showroom/museum, and shops for restoring cars. It is an impressive place.

Bill had a classroom set up in his largest workshop where he had two restoration projects in progress. The projects were a 1951 Kaiser 2 door coupe and a 1952 Henry J, and were great visual aids. He would lecture for a couple of hours then we would break for hands on training in MIG welding, cutting and fitting patch panels, color sanding, media blasting, powder coating, spray painting, polishing chrome, and stainless steel.

We did this for two days. The third day was assisting with a car show that brought people and cars from all over. I directed traffic and parked cars. LaRue worked in the 1950's dealer showroom.

We had 90 vintage cars register and park around the premises. Free hotdogs and soda pop was served all day. The seminar and car show was a huge success. It was all courtesy of Kaiser Bill and Elaine. Bill was planning another seminar and car show next year and we planned to attend.

We departed July 7 and traveled to Evanston, Wyoming to look around since Val and Loi owned property there. They had moved to Arizona and were renting their property in Evanston. We looked around a day and went on to Pocatello, Idaho for a couple of days.

We found a place we liked on 2 ½ mile road in Chubbuck. It was a very nice manufactured home on 8 acres with two large shops. The downside was that it was downwind from the Simplot fertilizer plant. That was not desirable, and we returned to Twin Falls to the Anderson RV Park. We spent a week with a realtor looking at property to no avail.

Max and Loa were at their cabin in Oregon and working on the old cabin that now belonged to David. We decided to hook up and go to Oregon to visit and help.

We arrived on July 18 and helped where we could on the old cabin. It was in bad shape and needed major work that was beyond what we could do in a short time. They had a new metal

roof installed and that was a start. We departed on July 29 and went down the coast to Waldport and parked at the KOA in one of the few spaces available.

Our next destination was further south to Bandon, Oregon but there was no RV space available. We decided to head east for Idaho and spent the night in Coquille, Oregon.

We talked to mom on the phone and found that I had been accepted for membership in the Salmon Elks Lodge. We needed to be there for the initiation ceremony on August 8.

We headed west on winding mountain roads for a long day, and an overnight stay in Burns, Oregon. From there we made stops in Arco, Slette's cabin on Antelope Creek, a Salmon River campground, and on to Salmon and the Salmon Meadows Campground at \$20 per night.

I was initiated into the Elks in an impressive ceremony on August 8th. We could now park at the Salmon Elks RV Park for \$5 per night. We would stay there often in the future.

A leak had developed in the water heater. We went to Idaho Falls on August 9 and dropped the trailer at Eagle Rock RV. It was replaced under warranty. We knew the owner from our days in Idaho Falls and it was nice to see him again.

The rest of August we checked out areas around Idaho Falls, Logan, Boise, Salmon, and Twin Falls. We made a lowball offer in Ammon. We later discovered there was a flooding problem with heavy rain. We were happy when our offer was rejected. We also submitted an offer in Kimberly, but they accepted another offer.

I had Air Force reunion scheduled September 19-21 in San Antonio, Texas. We planned a road trip to Texas in the car and would leave the truck and trailer at my friends ranch in Firth. We went to Idaho Falls on August 29 and spent a week at the Sunnyside RV Park to visit friends and look at housing. September 8 we took the truck and trailer to Firth and parked them.

We took off in the car for Safford, Arizona to visit LaRue's brother Val then on to her brother Milton in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico. A highlight was a stopover in Hatch, New Mexico where the Hatch chili peppers are grown. After visiting Milton we got on I10 for the very long drive to San Antonio. We overnighted in Fort Stockton and checked out Kerrville as it is a great retirement community. The Texas hill country is an area we liked.

The following is a summary I wrote on the reunion:

Reunion 2002 San Antonio
September 19-21, 2002
Summary

LaRue and I arrived early on September 18th, checked in at the Fairfield Inn, and headed downtown. We enjoyed walking on the River Walk, the boat tour, the Alamo, and a nice lunch that afternoon. San Antonio is a beautiful city and caters to the tourist.

Day 1, September 19 saw us on the "Silver Arrow" bus headed for Fredricksburg (about an hour and half ride through the scenic hill country). Our tour guide kept us informed with area information and entertained with jokes. It poured down rain for a while but stopped before we arrived. The destination was the Admiral Nimitz Museum and the Pacific War Museum, which are adjacent. It was so informative and well done that it was hard to believe. A person could easily spend a day or two looking at and reading all of the information on the displays. We had about three hours and time for lunch at one of many excellent German restaurants. Then it was back on the "Silver Arrow" for the ride back to the hotel. About 50 people were on the tour.

That evening was registration and reception at the hotel with great snack foods and beverages. There were lots of old pictures passed around and reminiscing about the "good old days" at Kirknewton. Many old friends were there and new friends made.

Day 2, Friday morning, September 20 and it was off bright and early to Lackland AFB for the parade and graduation ceremonies. We had reserved seats in front of the grand stands and to our surprise we were introduced and asked to stand up and be recognized. The moment was outstanding. The ceremony was very impressive and it kind of brought a tear to the eye, especially to those that graduated, almost to the day, 50 years earlier. After the ceremony we walked around and viewed the aircraft displays, then went to the base museum which was very nostalgic. The museum curator met with us and gave us an insight as to what had been done and plans for the future. Following that we had a nice sit down lunch at the Officer/NCO club before returning to the hotel to get ready for the evening.

Friday evening we were on two busses headed for the 7A Ranch about 1 hour away. We had a superb Texas BBQ and entertainment complete with a hay ride. The trick roper, gun slinging, and western swing band was as good as you can find. The evening was perfect with a full moon and even the mosquitos behaved. The ranch owners were most gracious and took time to answer all questions and make you feel at home. It was a very nice evening. After returning to the hotel a bunch of us sat up swapping stories, most of which were true.

Day 3, September 19th, what a wind up! It began with a briefing at 10 AM by the Air Intelligence Agency. While walking down the driveway to the meeting room we could hear a bagpipe playing and thought what a coincidence. Upon rounding the corner we were greeted by Colonel (Cook?) and an Air Force Captain playing the bagpipe. What a surprise and such thoughtfulness. We all enjoyed it with the Scottish ladies leading the singing and requests for special songs. This could have gone on all day.

The briefing was superb and gave us an insight into the mission and what the AIA is all about. It was special in that they led off with the history of Kirknewton and showed pictures taken during our era at Kirknewton. There were people in the pictures that were actually in the audience. The wife and I came away duly impressed. I believe most of us were thinking if we could just get back in and be a part of it. It made you proud that we played a role in the past.

At 5:30 we were on the busses again bound for the dinner/dance at Lackland. We were at our tables socializing when we heard bagpipes again. To our amazement the San Antonio Pipe Band marched in dressed in full regalia with bagpipes and drums going full blast. It was a stand up ovation with clapping and cheering. They proceeded to entertain us royally with everyone joining in. There were a lot of moist eyes at times.

The dinner was very well done and the music was our era. and at the right decibel level What a nice night. As a result of a vote the 4th Reunion will be held in Biloxi, Mississippi in 2004. The last bus left Lackland around 11 PM and we enjoyed an impromptu and entertaining ride back. I understand the riders on one of the busses coming back from the 7A ranch enjoyed the same spontaneous fun. The bus driver said he would never forget that ride!

Many of us sat up and talked into the night and Sunday morning it was still going on with reluctant farewells and "see ya in Biloxi".

Enough cannot be said about the hospitality and staff of the Fairfield Inn. They were great and the coffee was always on. The tour organizers did a great job in that everything came off as planned and access to Lackland was as simple as riding the bus through the gate.

Throughout the reunion Charles Jenkins was doing a professional job videotaping. He plans to produce an edited videotape that will be available for purchase in the future. I can't wait to see it.

We departed September 22 and went north to I80 in Nebraska to get back to Idaho. It was a long road trip, and we enjoyed it.

We picked up the truck and trailer in Firth on September 26th and went to Sunnyside RV Park for the night. The next day we went to the Redds in Smithfield, Utah to visit and look around. Then it was to Anderson RV near Twin Falls on October 1 for a night and on to Boise to visit Brian and look around.

On October 6 it was to Jerome and the Tall Tree Trailer Park, space 25 at \$12 per night. We needed to get ready to go for our timeshare annual fixed week in Puerto Vallarta the last week of October.

The first thing we did was get with our realtor who had shown us several houses previously. He just had an open house on a newly finished home in Sawtooth Acres he thought we would like. He took us to it and we instantly liked what we saw. Another interested couple drove in, and LaRue told them we were buying it!

We had been looking for several months, and we knew this was our retirement home. We made a full price offer and it was accepted that day. We had a home. We could move in as financing and closing was not a problem. It was on a full acre, so there was ample room to park the trailer. That had been a priority as well as a view in our house hunting, We were happy and satisfied.

Now we have to get everything moved from Arco. My first thought was to do it myself. I decided it would be too many trips and take too long. A moving company gave me a reasonable bid of \$2,200. They could do it in two days with a large moving van. We gave the go ahead to get it done. I met them one morning at our four storage sheds in Arco. They loaded it all and unloaded the next day in our new home. It was well worth \$2,200.

We parked the trailer beside the house on October 9, 2002. It was six months after leaving the motel. Our wandering lifestyle was over.

End chapter 14

