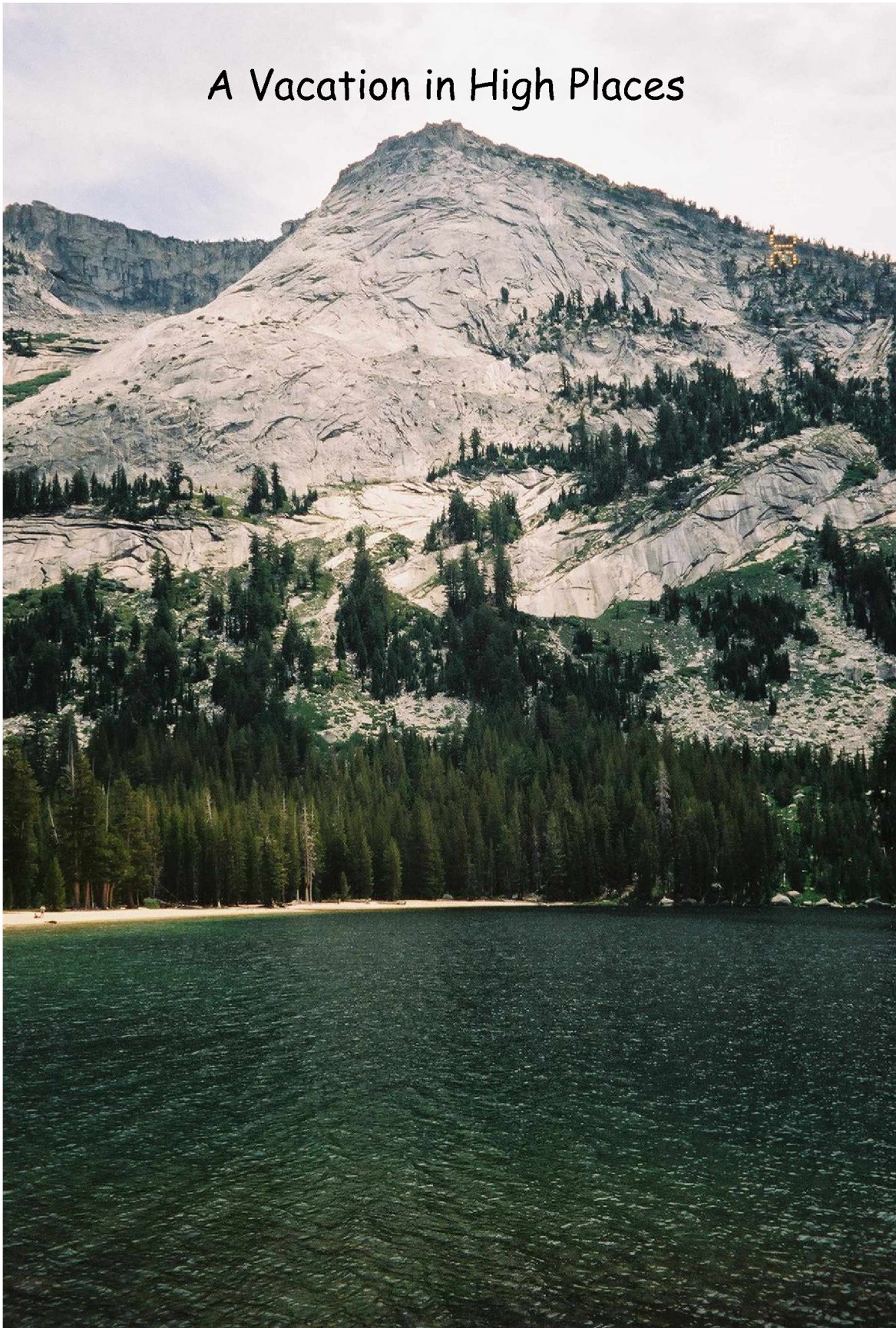


TENNESSEE TRASH #55

A Vacation in High Places



Tennessee Trash #55 was produced by Gary R. Robe in fits and starts during those rare periods when he was home during August and September. The mail still comes to P. O. Box 3221, Kingsport, TN 37664, the phone still rings at (423) 239-3106 and the e-mail downloads at grobe@chartertn.net. The period started with a high point of our family vacation in California and ended at a low point with another round of layoffs at Eastman in which several of my colleagues were terminated. In between we managed to attend a lot of baseball games, survived the starting of the school year, made a trip to Brazil, and gained a new niece. All of this very exciting stuff will be chronicled within.



TENNESSEE TRASH #55

A ZINE BY GARY R. ROBE FOR MAILING NUMBER 235 OF
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A VOYAGE TO THE WEST, A TRIP TO THE MINOR LEAGUE CELLAR, A WHIRLWIND TOUR OF BRAZIL AND OTHER ADVENTURES IN TRAVEL...

After our trip to the Grand Canyon two years ago I was more than ready to lead our intrepid band on another western exploration this summer. Earlier in the year Isaac was playing a video game at a friend's house and later asked me if there was really such a place as the "Mo-jav" Desert and "Yosem-ite" Valley. I assured him that there were such places, showed him a map, corrected his pronunciation and started thinking of vacation. The original plan was to take the train from Louisville to Chicago and then to Reno and then to Yosemite. When I saw the price for that trip I thought it through again and started looking up airfares. Between Supersaver fares on Southwest and hotel deals found via Expedia.com I put together a trip that was both within our budget and packed with interesting things to see and do.

The first leg of the trip would be to drive to Louisville right after DSC and then take an early morning flight to Reno, NV. From there we would rent a car and spend the first night in Carson City. The next morning, we would drive into Yosemite, look the place over and plan the next two days and then spend the night in Mariposa CA. On the fifth day of the trip, we would spend the whole day driving from Mariposa all the way to Crescent City, CA right on the extreme northern coast of California. After one full day on the beach and among the redwoods we would then drive through the Klamath Mountains

across to I-5, then south to Mt. Shasta, cross country to Lassen Volcano National Park and finally back to Reno for a night in the Eldorado Casino. We would then fly back to Louisville and then home.

PART THE FIRST: THE JOURNEY WEST

We stayed over Sunday night of DSC although we didn't stay for much of the Dead Dog party after the Sunday Night Feed. Monday morning, we drove to Louisville and spent the night at Corlis' aunt and uncle's house. They had graciously agreed to let us sack out there and drive us to the airport at 5 a.m. the next morning. I believe in getting the most out of a vacation, so I booked us on the earliest flight out of Louisville, which was 7 a.m. This was our first experience of air travel with the whole family post 9/11/01 so we showed up as soon as the Southwest counter opened that morning. This assured us of boarding the flight first and having our choice of seats. I am happy to report that I don't have any colorful air travel stories to report on this leg of the trip.

Our route was Louisville/Phoenix/Reno so we had what seemed like a long day on the planes. With the time changes and the early start, however, we arrived in Reno just after noon! By the time we claimed our luggage, picked up our rental car, and drove to Carson City it was barely lunchtime in Nevada. I chose to stay in Carson City over Reno because it was closer to Yosemite and had several points of interest in its own right. We toured the Carson City Mint, which has now been turned into the Nevada State

Museum. They still have one of the coin presses on display that used to turn out Double Eagles when the mint was running. In the vault they had a display of one of each coin that was ever minted at Carson City. As a collector of silver dollars this was a bit like a trip to Mecca for me. After the museum we let the boys play in the hotel pool for a couple hours followed by a very nice Mexican meal at a place we had spotted earlier.

I was charmed by Carson City. It still feels like a frontier town yet is also a modern American small town with the added interest of the Nevada State Capitol plus the ubiquitous Nevada casinos, albeit on a much smaller scale than Reno or Las Vegas. Corlis' favorite bit of Carson City was that they felt a need to have a sign on the main road that pointed to the Justice of the Peace's office in the government complex. Not the State Capitol, not the Governor's Residence, the Justice of the Piece's Office.

PART THE SECOND: YOSEMITE

Our second day did not start auspiciously. Corlis had set the boys to pack their own suitcases and in an act of overconfidence had not bothered to check on the thoroughness of their job. In order to keep their clothing straight she had instructed the boys to pack an outfit for each day of the trip plus some spares in separate Wal-Mart bags. On Day Two we discovered that Isaac had packed the requisite number of bags but all he had put in them were underwear and pants. No shirts, no socks. We located the Carson City Wal-Mart, conveniently located on the road to Yosemite and bought Isaac enough clothing to get him through the trip.

US 395 runs straight south out of Carson City, skirting the Sierra Nevadas until you hit the cliff that drops you to the level of Mono Lake, CA. This was the first breathtaking view of the trip as we stopped at the Mono Lake overlook. Here the road drops almost 1,000 ft in two miles. A body of water a large of Mono Lake seems to contradict the image of the dry Southwest until you learn a bit of the history of the lake. Los Angeles has reached over to mountains to divert the flow of some of Mona's tributaries over the Continental Divide all the way to LA. Over the last 40 years the lake's water level has dropped by 40 ft and its salinity has quadrupled. It used to have a huge

waterfowl population that is now all gone and most of the aquatic life has died off. There is a plan for LA to divert less water for the Mona Watershed and to try and bring up the water level up by 19 feet. This may restore some of the lake's ecosystem over time, but the damage may have already been done.



Just past Mono Lake you turn off US 395 onto CA 120, the Tioga Pass Road. There are a host of signs at the intersection warning of the possible adverse conditions that could exist on the road and that it could be closed on a moment's notice. I felt that we were probably safe at the end of July. Once you turn onto the road you soon notice the transition from the dark reddish rocks of the eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada to the famous white granite peaks of Yosemite.

According to geologists¹ Yosemite is nothing more than a single slab of granite. This particular granite happens to have solidified from a volcanic flow at the bottom of the ocean somewhere in the Southern Hemisphere. How it managed to move half a planet north and several hundred miles inland is anybody's guess. Once deposited in North America the slab was then raised several thousand feet along with the rest of the Sierra Nevada chain. After a few ice ages the old slab eroded a bit to form what is now Yosemite Valley. The composition of the rocks is quite simple. Take white granite and sprinkle in some black inclusions like oversized pepper grains spilled in salt laced with veins of agate. Now stretch it to the horizon in all directions. Add ice and water and just stand back for about 5 million years. Simple, right?

Like the Grand Canyon, Yosemite is one of those places of jaw-dropping splendor and awesome scale that is just hard to take in. Each mile on

¹ Roadside Geology of Northern and Central California, Alt, D and Hyndman, D.W. Mountain Press Publishing Co., 2000.

Highway 120 takes you to another majestic peak, a pristine lake, a peaceful meadow, or a seemingly bottomless canyon. Furthermore, the casual visiting public never sees more than a fraction of the park. The Tioga Pass Road roughly bisects the park and most of the accessible areas are in the southern half. To the north of Tuolumne Meadows the mountains get *really* high and there's something called the Grand Canyon of the Sierra that is only accessible to the most rugged hikers. Even with our very cursory three-day tour of the park I didn't feel like we saw more than the tip of the iceberg.



Yosemite Falls, Yosemite Valley and the Merced River

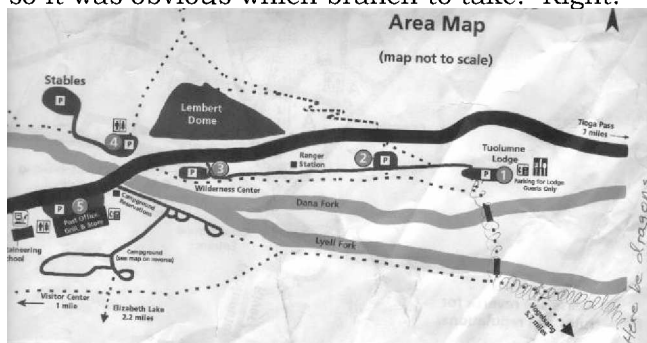
Although the Yosemite Valley attracts more visitors we liked the high section of the park around Tuolumne Meadows more. The boys loved Tenaya Lake at 8,000 ft but warm enough to swim in (on the cover). We decided to return each day even though it meant a 90-minute drive from our hotel in Mariposa.

I felt it would be sacrilege to go all the way to Yosemite without taking at least one hike. After reviewing the literature on day hikes, we decided on one that was supposed to be simple. The John Muir Trail starts at the Tuolumne Lodge and eventually ends up 5,000 ft down and 25 miles to the west in Yosemite Valley. We were not going to hike that. There was, however, a simple trail that followed beside the Tioga Pass Road from the Lodge to the Tuolumne Meadows Visitor Center for about 3 miles. The route was flat and as an added bonus we could take a shuttle bus from the Visitor Center back to the Lodge so we would not have to backtrack.



As the intrepid Scout Leader I provisioned the hike with all we would need. We all had hiking boots, backpacks full of food, a first aid kit, six liters of water, a map of the route, a compass, plenty of time to take a leisurely walk and a sunny summer day to do it in. Right.

Well, the hike started out pleasantly enough. The temperature was cool at 9,000 ft and the trail route was about as flat as you could hope for in mountainous terrain. About a half mile into the trail there was a fork. One branch was labeled Elizabeth Lake which the map identified as a side trail that would take us to a scenic lake about a half-mile further but would involve an 800 ft. climb. The other branch was labeled Muir Trail, Yosemite Valley, 26 mi. My map showed us following the Muir Trail for most of the hike, so it was obvious which branch to take. Right.



Tuolumne Meadows Visitor's Map - Note Annotation on the Side: Here Be Dragons

After walking for about an hour we decided to eat lunch. We were at about the halfway point of the hike and at that point we needed to decide whether to just backtrack or forge ahead. We were having fun, so we decided to go ahead. We crossed the second of three streams that were on the map and then took another branch that

seemed to be heading in the right direction. The trail wasn't matching up to the map very well, so I decided to refer to the compass to choose the trail. When I fished it out, I discovered that it had been smashed when the boys were climbing on rocks. Oh, well. My sense of direction is usually very good, so I just picked the branch that headed west and off we went. Right.

Soon we were in an absolutely gorgeous valley with a clear stream running down the center. For the first time that day we were out from under the trees so we could appreciate the mountains surrounding us. We could also see the darkening clouds and hear rumbles of thunder in the distance. Undaunted we pressed on even though the babbling brook was on the wrong side of the trail according to the map and we should have passed another branch. After another half hour of walking, I was pretty certain that we were on a part of the trail that was off the map I had. We stopped the next hiker that passed us to find to my horror that we were on the wrong trail, headed into absolute wilderness, on a trail that was hell and gone from the Tuolumne Meadows Visitor Center. Right.

At that point I was not the most popular member of The Robe Experience. It got even better when it started to rain within minutes of our starting The Great Backtrack. It got practically giddy when Nick was the only person with rain gear in the group. Understand, this was mid summer in Yosemite. One thing that guidebooks all agree on is that this is the dry season, and it *never* rains there in July and August. Right.



Luckily the rain didn't last long, but there is something about backtracking that makes your feet wear out twice as fast as hiking through. After about 45 minutes of trudging back we came

to the fork in the trail where I thought I must have gone wrong. We decided to take the right branch since the Visitor Center should not be far and there was a bus there to take us back to the car. This trail, however, headed straight up the side of a mountain. After hiking for four hours already this was almost more than we could bear. As we seemed to finally be coming to the top of the ridge, we met another pair of hikers who asked us if we knew where we were going. "This is the trail to the Tuolumne Visitor Center isn't it?" I asked timorously. No, said the pair, this was the trail to the Vogelsang High Sierra Wilderness camping area. Right.

As we hiked *down* the mountain it really started to rain hard. We knew now that the only thing to do was to slog all the way back to our starting point. Everyone did manage to make it back on their feet although by the time we made it we were all soaked to the bone footsore and rather ready to lynch the tour guide. I actually enjoyed the whole experience. I could have done without the rain, but I did have a nice day hike in the Yosemite back country. My usually infallible sense of direction and a very poor tourist trail map did betray me, but a bad day hiking beats a good day working. I suspect that if you ask any other members of The Robe Experience you will get a rather different opinion.



We did spend another day in Yosemite and the boys, and I did one thing that they had wanted to do from the first. On the edge of Tuolumne Meadows there is a solid granite dome that juts out of the ground for a couple hundred feet. It is called Pothole Dome and as we passed it on the

first day the boys say people climbing it and wanted to follow. Since the trip needed a distinct high point, I was glad to oblige them with yet another hike.



Corlis opted out of this one. I had strained a quadriceps muscle the day before on The Hike, but I wasn't about to let the boys I was letting the pain stop me. The view from the top of Pothole Dome was worth the climb. The only problem was that we could see all the other even higher peaks around us that beacons to be climbed. It would have been even better if it hadn't started raining while we were at the top.

PART THE THIRD: PACIFIC COAST

Saturday August 2nd was in a way the most challenging day of the trip. We tested our ability to cram together as a family by driving about 500 miles from Mariposa to Crescent City, CA. For those of you unfamiliar with the Northern California coast that is the last dot on the map before you cross into Oregon. I picked it because it was smack in the middle of the Redwoods National Forest and because it was right on the coast.

The drive was mostly pleasant. From Mariposa we drove to Fresno, got on Highway 99 to Sacramento, changed over to I-5, then picked up Highway 20 across to the Pacific Coast Highway and then to Crescent City. The drive took us from the Sierra Nevada Mountains through the Central Valley to the Coast Range and then through the redwoods and finally up along the coast. The drive through the Sacramento Valley was not exciting but the rest was.

The next day gifted us a typical Northern California dreary fog, but at least it did not rain.

The first thing on the agenda that day was to explore Pacific tide pools. Low tide was at about 10:30 that morning so we had a great opportunity to comb the beach. The boy's reaction to the beach was predictable. Even though the water was frigid, as expected, the only thing that got us to move on was the encroaching rising tide.

The rocks were covered with all kinds of crawly slimy sea critters like anemones, barnacles, crabs, and starfish. I expected all of these, but I was still fascinated by the diversity. Even the starfish were all different. I expected them to be brown, not orange, blue, purple, green and red! Corlis has little interest in potentially snotty sea life so she stayed in the car and read a book while we explored.



After a quick lunch we then drove into the heart of the Redwood Forest. For the whole time we drove up the PCH we were increasingly aware of how the trees were getting bigger. As we approached Crescent City, we drove through about 30 miles of Redwood Forest National Park but it was getting dark and was very foggy. Now we drove inland and uphill a bit and out of the fog. Among these majestic giants it is perhaps easier to understand why so many tree-hugging environmentalists come from California.

Isaac asked if we were allowed to stop and actually touch one of the trees. I told him to pick one. Even from a car it is difficult to understand the scale of the redwoods. I thought I knew what big trees were from walking through the Appalachian woods, but these are on another scale altogether. After days of exploring awe-inspiring vistas of mountains and ocean I came

to expect nature on a grand scale. I was not, however, prepared to comprehend single organisms on the same scale as a mountain.



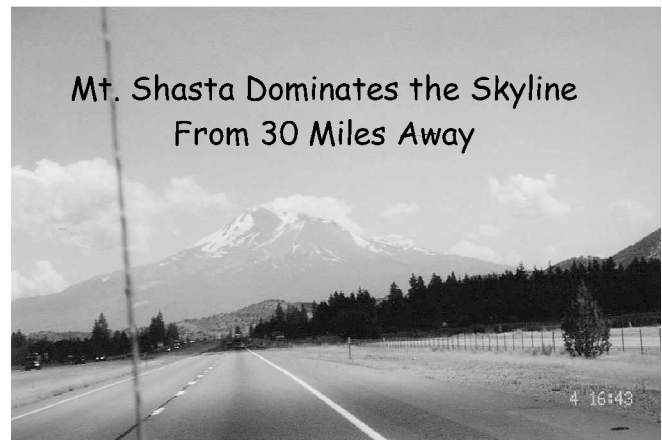
We drove through a back road that wound through the woods that took us past some truly spectacular trees. The drive was the closest I could get the family to hiking. Frankly, I was still nursing a strained quad that would have hampered my ability to hike very far although I was admitting this to no one. Some of the trees were hollowed out so that you can walk or crawl through them. One was large enough that some had used it as a shelter. There was space to stretch out a sleeping bag on one end and light a fire on the other with the hollow in the tree acting as a natural chimney.

PART THE THIRD: KLAMATH MOUNTAINS, MT. SHASTA AND MT. LASSEN

If I had been interested only in getting back to Reno quickly and efficiently, I could have planned a much more effective route for our last day. Instead, I planned a bit more interesting route that would include mountain ranges, two

volcanoes and some interesting scenery. Coming out of Crescent City along US Highway 199 you run directly into the Klamath Mountains. While the Klamaths are not the highest or most renowned mountains in California they are interesting. *Roadside Geology* describes them as a wild assortment of old ocean floor, volcanic rocks and sedimentary formations that geologists are still trying to understand.

Just past the Oregon border on Highway 199 there is a side road that connects to I-5 just north of Yreka. This is not a road for the faint hearted. The locals warn you that if you are trying to save time, forget this road. It does, however, wind through a pass at 7,000+ feet and includes some really beautiful valley overlooks and mountain peaks. Just after joining up with I-5 heading south within a few miles you get your first look at Mt. Shasta in the distance. Although the mountain is clearly visible and looming it is still 60 miles away at this point.



Just south of Mt. Shasta Highway 89 heads almost due east except for an interesting detour through Mt. Lassen Volcano National Park. This volcano has the distinction of being the last one to erupt in North America before Mt. St. Helens blew. Lassen erupted in 1915 and the evidence of this eruption is still evident although its eruption was a bit less exciting. Besides not exploding the 1915 eruption did produce something interesting since included a lava flow. The strange black rock marbled with white flecks that litter the ground in the vicinity of Lassen have the distinction of being the youngest rocks in North America. That is a must-have souvenir if you ask me.

Besides lava Mt. Lassen has some other attractions. It still had snow cover in early

August and the mountain did not completely hibernate after the 1915 events. There are still active hot springs and fumaroles right beside the road through the park on the southern slope of the mountain.



An August Snowball Fight on Mt. Lassen

My enjoyment of Mt. Lassen was somewhat reduced when I had a migraine attack just as we arrived at the Visitor's Center. I did have a dose of my medicine in my billfold, so I was able to take action, but Corlis had to take over the rest of the driving that day. The migraine medicine has a very strange effect on me in that when I fight the headache and force myself to stay awake my speech centers seem to shut down.

The excitement of the trip increased when Corlis announced as we were leaving Mt. Lassen National Park that we were down to an eighth of a tank of gas. She was hoping that there would be a gas station at the park entrance, but no such luck. The only gas station in the nearest town was closed for the night so we had to cross our fingers and hope that we could make it to the next sizable town 25 miles away. We did make it but with as little safety margin as I ever want to have. The rest of the trip to Reno was uneventful even if we were pretty late getting there. The late arrival turned out to work to our advantage.

PART THE FOURTH: EL DORADO

As I planned out our trip, I decided that we should spend the last night of our trip in Reno so that we would not have to hurry to the airport the next day. When I queried Expedia.com about lodging in Reno I was surprised to discover that the first hit I got was the El Dorado casino that

was offering a room for \$35. How could I go wrong with that? I made the reservation.

By the time we cruised into Reno that night and found the hotel it was 11:00 p.m. and we were all fried to say the least. When we finally arrived at the check-in desk the clerk apologized to me because even though I had confirmed the reservation they had sold out all the double double rooms for the night. To make this up to us they booked us into a Jacuzzi Suite. I knew we were in for an experience when we arrived at the door to the room and discovered that it was double wide.

Our jaws dropped when we went inside. Not only was there a four-person Jacuzzi in the room, but there was also a bar, a 10-person marble dining table, lounge area with a central wide-screen TV flanked by two smaller ones, a king-sized bed, walk-in closet, two bathrooms and a glassed-in shower that alone was as large as our master bathroom at home. The suite covered 1500 ft² at least. The only problem was that there was only one bed, so the boys had to sleep on the couches. They didn't even mind that very much because they had been sharing a bed for the whole trip and their mutual tolerance was wearing thin. The rack rate listed the room as renting between \$35 and \$3000 a night!



It was a shame that we were all so exhausted from the day's 400-mile drive that we couldn't enjoy the room very much that night. The next morning, we did allow the boys to play in the Jacuzzi for a while before heading down to breakfast at the casino buffet. Later when my credit card bill arrived, I discovered that they had not even bothered to bill us for the room. The only charge was for breakfast at the restaurant.

It was a real shame that we had to check out the next morning and head for the airport. The only hitch in the return flight to Louisville was that Corlis had a Swill Army Credit Card in her purse that included a tiny knife. They missed it at the security check as we left Louisville, but they found it in Reno.

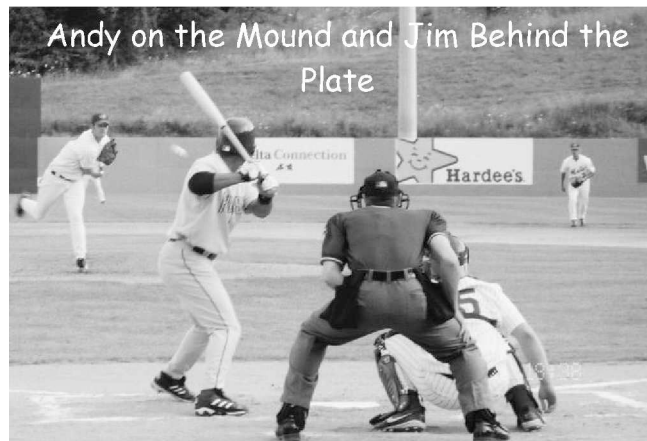
Our return flight got in on schedule at midnight. I was not going to attempt the drive back to Kingsport that night even though my body was thinking it was only 9 p.m. We spent the rest of the night at our relative's house in Louisville and drove back home the next morning. It was really hard to return to the mundane although the baseball season made it more interesting.

EVEN A CELLAR-DWELLING ROOKIE LEAGUE BASEBALL TEAM IN ENTERTAINING IF YOU GET IN FREE

The K-Mets baseball season ran through the end of August and we made the most of our host family privileges by going to most of the home games. Our houseguest pitcher, Andy Sides, pitched well for most of the season, keeping his ERA below 2.5 until his next-to-last outing where he gave up seven runs in three innings and didn't last his usual five. Jim Wallace "our" catcher didn't play every day, but he was almost assured of playing at least one of the games in one of the frequent double headers played this season due to rain outs.

Andy and Jim were very enjoyable to have as houseguests. They would show up at about noon for lunch but that was about the only time we saw them regularly. For one thing playing baseball, even in the lowest level minor leagues is *work!* At least three days a week Andy and Jim had to be at the gym in the morning for strength training. They then had four hours off for lunch before arriving at the field by three for practice. Game time is at 7 p.m. for single games and 6 for double headers. There were often meetings after the game so on most nights the players didn't leave the field until 11 p.m. for a home game. Three of the seven other teams in the league are within 45 minutes of Kingsport so for most of the season they could at least be back home by midnight. That was rare, however, because Andy and Jim were in the social center of the team and most nights they were either out with teammates

or some of them ended up at our house until the wee hours of the morning.



Since our house was a bit of a Grand Central Station, we got to know more players than just Andy and Jim. One of those is a player that appears to have a very bright future, In the final two weeks of the season the Mets Organization finally signed a contract with their number one draft pick of the year, Lastings Mullridge. It is unusual for the Mets to start their high drafts in Kingsport. Since the contract negotiations with Lastings took so long they let him start with the K-Mets for a couple games as a designated hitter. While he had some trouble hitting professional pitching (yes, the pitchers in the Appy league throw 90+ mph fastballs) he had a good eye for the ball and drew several walks in his first games. Once on first, there was nothing the other teams could do to hold him on first. On three nights in a row, I saw him steal second and third on consecutive pitches and the throw from home was never close. Watch for that name out there baseball fans. The Mets often don't hang on to their best players in the minors. Preston Wilson is the most recent example of that. Just pay attention to that name, Lastings Mullridge. In a few years when he is playing in an All-Star game or a World Series Corlis will be able to say that she fixed him a peanut butter and jelly sandwich at our house once upon a time!

Although the K-Mets were destined to be their league's bottom feeders this year it was not from lack of trying. Most of their games were close and the team did improve noticeably over the season. It adds a new level of interest to the game when you know the team so well that you can identify most of the players by their numbers and you are sitting close enough to home plate

that they can hear your voice when you cheer them on.

Now that the Appy League season is over we can go back to following that other team that plays in Atlanta as the playoffs approach. We collected contact information and e-mail addresses for the players that stayed with us. Although the New York Mets are pretty much a lost cause these days since players are so mobile who knows where "our" boys may end up in a few years. It can't hurt to ask for World Series tickets,

A DASH TO BRAZIL

Every other year the biggest event for the Latin American coatings industry occurs in Sao Paulo. The Tintas Congresso attracts about 10,000 people for three days from all over the continent, so it is a must attend event for me. I started preparing for it in January when I submitted an abstract for a paper to be placed on the technical program. The topic for the paper was a typically nerdy coatings subject but the end result was interesting enough to the audience for one of the trade magazines to request it for publication and for another to ask me to write another article for them on a related topic.

Traveling to Brazil is always an adventure even if the details are as mundane as corn flakes. I had to sacrifice my Labor Day holiday for travel since the show was September 3-5. At least Delta has a direct flight from Atlanta to Sao Paulo, so I do not have to brave changing planes in the Miami airport. This trip was certainly much less emotionally charged than the one two years ago when I had to fly on September 15, 2001. This time the flight to Brazil was as empty as I've ever seen it and I received the Holy Grail of intercontinental travel: a whole middle section row of seats to myself! I was able to pop in my earplugs and take an Ambien and stretch out in more comfort than if I had forced the company to shell out for business class.

Working the show is exhausting in several ways. First, the hours for the expo are 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. each day. Second, many of the visitors to the stand speak only Portuguese so I really have to work hard to understand them. I can adapt my Spanish with some of the Portuguese differences in conjugation and pronunciation and usually make myself be understood. It is much

harder for me to understand someone who is speaking in rapid Portuguese.

At least our stand came equipped with a limited buffet of meat, cheese, snacks and drinks so I never had to even leave for lunch. The traffic through the booth was never really heavy but since I was the only techie there, I was kept occupied for most of the duration. The Eastman booth was a pass-through design open on both sides, so we had to employ two teams of "receptionists" to greet and direct people as they arrived. One of these drop dead gorgeous Brazilian models was familiar because she had worked with us on the last Congresso. The other three were strangers but very friendly and eager to practice English with someone. I know it is hard work, but someone has to do it,

My presentation was scheduled for Friday afternoon, so I had plenty of opportunity to review it and practice giving it. The day before I was to go on stage, I discovered a horrendous error on one of the slides. It was a technical mistake in which one key component was omitted from one of the example formulas I was using. To make it worse, the formula was taken directly from an Eastman publication. I had copied the formula exactly from the brochure. The problem was that my source material was wrong and there was no way for me to correct the error. It was just the kind of nerdy detail that someone in the audience might pick out and bring to the attention of everyone. What to do?

I decided to take a proactive approach to the problem. Since I had to leave the error in the presentation, I headed off the question by saying up front to the audience that there was a fatal error on one of the slides. I then made a goodie bag of a sample of the giveaways we were handing out at the booth to give as a prize to whomever spotted the mistake in the slides. It was a good thing that I did it too because someone did actually find the mistake. I'll never know if the lady would have spotted the gaffe without my heads-up but at least I had a fallback position that didn't make me look stupid.

I never got to see much of Brazil outside the convention center. One night we managed to have a very nice meal at a *churrascaria* Brazilian barbecue restaurant. I also had to leave directly from the show and go to the airport on Friday night. The traffic in Sao Paulo on a Friday

evening has to be experienced to be understood. I was riding with two other Eastman colleagues, so we had a hired car instead of a cab. The driver took a quite Byzantine route across the city that *only* took an hour and a half to make the trip that would have taken 20 minutes without the traffic.

I had expended all my Travel Karma on the trip to Brazil because on the return flight the plane was full, and I was seated next to a young lady with a very bad cold. I was glad that there were no known cases of SARS in Brazil because I came down with the cold a couple of days after the trip. Aside from that I suffered no ill effects from the trip like I often do. I suppose that the trip was really too short to have gotten The Revenge unless I had been very unlucky or careless.

THE ARRIVAL OF NIECE ROSIE

While I was in Brazil Corlis e-mailed me that my sister-in-law Ana had delivered her baby girl about three weeks ahead of schedule. Rosanna Martin came into the world on September 2nd with very little fanfare and only three hours of labor. Since the Robe Clan is limited to my father's six siblings and their associated families, I never got to be around many uncles aunts and cousins as a child. I am therefore getting a kick out of accumulating nieces and nephews.

I wish the arrival of Rosie were a completely happy event, but unfortunately Corlis' sister Anna has pretty much evolved into a Slacker. She has no plans to marry the father of her child although they have been living together for two years now. This is a bit creepy for me because Anna's SO is one of my kid brother's best friends from grade school, Mike McCurry. Furthermore, of the two of them Anna is the only one with a steady job so for the time being Mike and Anna have moved into my mother-in-law's house. Once Anna goes back to work, I suspect that most of the childcare duties will fall to my in-laws. Still, for the moment everyone seems at least resigned to the situation and nobody is yelling at each other about the disgrace to the family.

We made a quick weekend trip to Bowling Green after I got back from Brazil to meet baby Rosie. Since both Nick and Isaac were hulking nearly 10 lb at birth behemoths I have not had a lot of

experience with "average" infants. Rosie appears to be a very contented and passive child who is only active at feeding and diaper changing times. Unlike our two wiggle monsters you can hold Rosie for hours quite comfortably.

When the boys were able to see and hold Rosie they were much more enthusiastic about having a new cousin. They had never had the opportunity be around a newborn before and holding her thrilled Nick. He very patiently learned newborn holding technique and sat for a long time with Rosie in his lap. I have a feeling that the boys are going to get to be around Rosie more than their other cousins because she will be spending a lot of time at Grandma's house.

TURMOIL AT WORK

The current economic instability has hit the American chemical industry hard, and Eastman is no exception. The company is being squeezed between high feedstock prices and the inability to pass those increases on to customers. If that weren't bad enough our management made some very bad acquisitions over the last five years. Of the six businesses the Eastman bought only one is making money at all. Last year the worst of these lost \$75 Million and this year is worse.

In August our CEO announced that after playing with turning those businesses around for three years the plan is now to get rid of them as quickly as possible. Additionally, it is estimated that Eastman's labor costs will increase by 10% next year due to rising healthcare premiums alone. Management's answer to that is to lay off 10% of the workforce.

Each division director has to submit a budget for next year the cuts at least 10% of expenses. Once the budget is approved the people affected are being fired. The hammer dropped in our lab on September 10th. That morning I was in a long meeting with my boss. While we were out of the building the division director and HR manager called up the people being fired and showed them the door. My supervisor didn't even know who, how many and when the firings were taking place! So far I feel I'm pretty secure in my job because I have a lot of skills that simply aren't duplicated in any of the other current employees. Keep your fingers crossed for me!