
Epilogue

Jennifer went back to work the day after Labor Day. She took the 6:00AM shuttle from her New Jersey office to the Manhattan Office Headquarters to meet with her boss. He and several others let her know how much they had missed her by leaving security issues piled up for her to personally review rather than forwarding them to her by now the overburdened staff. Her office was untouched, except that the handmade Alaskan bowl that she had left full of candy was empty. Her staff was also intact. One of them welcomed her with refills for the candy bowl. Jennifer gave out a few special gifts, and walked around for a few days with bookmarks from various National Park bookstores. People who welcomed her back were invited to choose a random bookmark, and then exchange a story or two about events in the park pictured on the bookmark, or another they had in common.

Michael had not gotten a formal leave of absence. His company had had layoffs while we were gone. So instead of going back to the office, he set to work sorting through piles of mail. We finally had received a check from the owner of the bookstore in Craig, Colorado to whom we had sold our Audio Books in early July! Michael also had some doctor's appointments to catch up on. He got a CAT scan that showed his cancer in full remission and a dermatology checkup that showed that none of his perfect tan was malignant. He did not actively seek full employment, but set up a full tennis

schedule and a full honey-do list. It lowers both of our stress levels to have him at home, so if he does go back to work, it only be on temporary consulting basis for clients of his former company.

Every fall, we try to anticipate when the colors will turn, and plan a weekend as far into the forest wilderness as we can find appropriate accommodations. This year, we chose the first weekend of October, which is usually on the early side of peak color, but almost guaranteed not to be post-peak. We had just driven through Pennsylvania without stopping, so we chose The Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania as a destination appropriate for this year's fall foliage hiking excursion. Though a few yellow and orange leaves speckled the landscape, the Canyon and all other hiking destinations were still very green. But we stayed in the charming Eagle's Mere Inn and had warm weather for hiking, so we appreciated the excursion nonetheless for the lack of a few red leaves. The Eagle's Mere hosts kept congratulating us on arriving during peak season. Michael joked that the locals were out at night painting trees to give the illusion that fall foliage had arrived.

The entire fall foliage season was very unusual. There was not a uniform progression from pre-peak to peak to post-peak. It seemed that every individual tree had its own schedule. Some trees were completely bare while others right next to them had not yet started to turn color. Some trees on our lawn are just



The Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania.

starting to turn now, the second week of November. We savor the lingering foliage, as its final disappearance will mark the end of our once-in-a-lifetime summer.

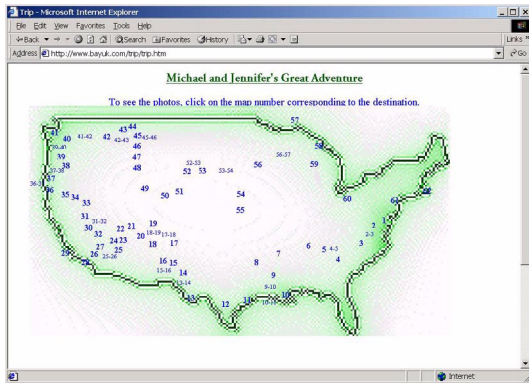
On the wall of our office hangs a 4'x6' map of the United States. We had planned the trip in Michael's hospital room, and when we got home from the hospital, we plotted out the stop numbers with dry erase marker on this map. We see no reason to erase it. It matches our website. The website also has a map of the United States dotted with stop numbers. A click on the stop number displays a photo or so from the corresponding stop. We have a CD of

photos from each stop, but so far have only printed out a few nice 8x10s. We put together a scrapbook of park brochures and hiking maps, one sleeve per stop .



The map in the office.

We traveled 19,128 miles by land and approximately 375 nautical miles by sea.



The website.

We visited 35 National Parks and dozens more National Monuments, Historic Sites, and other areas of National interest. Every time the trip comes up in

conversation, we hear, “I always wanted to do that!” Those who have already done some parts of the trip are also eager to relive it through our experiences. After listening to us describe an experience or two, people invariably say, “You should write a book!” After we admit we kept a log, people ask to read it. So rather than leave our unedited notes on the web page for others to try to make sense of, we decided to composed a book that ties the log to the photographs we took along the way. It has been a joy for us to relive the trip through the telling, and we hope our audience has enjoyed the experience as well.