

New Horizons by Les & Jean Potteiger

It has been over four months since we last visited here (and Bonnie did promise you a new article last month!). It has been a busy four months with many *New Horizons* for us and for our fellow travelers on the *Gulf Streamers Explore The Yukon and Alaska* caravan. As reported in our last article, it did turn out to be a 65-day caravan, but only for 32 of us. We had one last minute cancellation and five could not meet us at Great Falls, Montana 1 July. “Casper” Nordahl, who traveled with Joan Beason (GS #) in Beverly Hiltachk’s (GS #10396) Yellowstone RV visited a new grandbaby and did not get home in time for Beverly to leave California and meet us 1 July. Nancy McIntosh (GS #8871) suffered a mild stroke and had to stay near home with her husband Cal in southern California for two weeks to be stabilized on Coumadin – she did fine on the caravan! Cal’s brother Roy and his wife Brinda accompanied us in their Brave and Chet (cousin of Cal and Roy) and Helen Cawthon accompanied us in their Airstream. We thank Cal and Nancy for inviting their relatives to help make the caravan possible. Unfortunately, we did not get to see Dick and Mary Lou Ross (GS #9277) as planned at Great Falls because they had other commitments.

We left our home near the ‘Wilderness’ Civil War battlefield 19 June traveling with Ray and Theda Massie (GS #4337) to the Mid-Atlantic Streamers (MAS) rally at New Stanton, Pennsylvania where we had another most enjoyable weekend rally with our home chapter. (Ray and Theda did not accompany us any further.) Our next stop was the Gulf Stream Coach, Inc., Nappanee, Indiana (IN) facility 21 June where we met up with fellow travelers Don and Joyce Barker (GS # 9852), Bob and Kaye Combs (GS #9902), Richard and Phyllis Gilkey (GS #14162), and Richard and Virginia Raikes (GS #9547), Tail Gunners for the caravan. After some service on the coach, collecting supplies for the caravan and a nice dinner at Amish Acres, we were on-the-road again to Amana, Iowa (IA); Onawa, IA; Oacoma, South Dakota (SD); Black Hawk, SD; and, Billings, Montana (MT) before arriving at Great Falls, MT 30 June where we met 24 fellow travelers (Bob and Kaye Combs took the northern route to Great Falls).

We traveled 2,374 miles to Great Falls! On the way, we visited the Amana Colonies, Amana, IA; the Corn Palace, Mitchell, SD; Wall Drug, Wall, SD; and, Mount Rushmore and Custer State Park near Rapid City, SD. We had seen all but the Colonies, however, some fellow travelers had not. It is always nice to revisit historic sites as we travel – Mount Rushmore never ceases to amaze and inspire us! We saw wild antelope and buffalo along the way. At Custer State Park we found ourselves in the middle of a herd of about 80 buffalo, who crossed the road in front of us at their leisure – we were in their territory! At Great Falls we visited the informative, ‘must-see’ Lewis and Clark National Historic Interpretive Center and the spectacular Great Falls on the Missouri River.

We had nine days until the ‘official’ start of the caravan 8 July and over 900 miles to Dawson Creek, British Columbia (BC), Canada, the starting point. We spent the time and miles wisely visiting Lethbridge, Banff and Jasper National Parks, the Columbia Icefields and Pierre Grey’s Lakes Provincial Park, all in Alberta (AB), Canada, along the way. The Canadian Rockies are mountain scenery at its best! Who can forget the breath-taking views from the Banff and Lake Louise Gondolas and the summits, beautiful Lake Louise and Moraine Lake, and the awesome glaciers? Pierre Grey’s Lakes Provincial Park looked worthy of an extended stay even in the rain! The semi-circular pull-through campground sites are all wooded and the lakes are visible between the trees.

We departed Great Falls 3 July after orientation, coach inspection and engine service. Tail Gunner Richard Raikes (GS #9547) recruited John Lester (GS #8110) to attach the caravan decals to the RVs and

toads (tow vehicles). Crossing the border was 'a piece of cake' – the Customs agent did not even take our passports. This was the only time for that; in fact it was a little more difficult getting back into the states! Fellow travelers Bob and Kaye Combs were not as fortunate – ask them about it! Charles and Julie Hard (GS #17185) also received 'special' treatment at the border!

Here are some statistics that you should find interesting. We traveled in western AB, northern British Columbia, and the southern Yukon Territory, all in Canada, and Alaska. The two Provinces and Territory, and Alaska comprise just over 1.47 million square miles and their total population is estimated at just over 8.31 million residents! The area of Alaska is 2.5 times that of Texas, however, the population of Texas is nearly 23 million compared to less than 0.67 million for Alaska! Some 'run-of-the-mill' US cities with greater populations than that of Alaska include Jacksonville, Florida; Indianapolis, Indiana; Detroit, Michigan; Memphis, Tennessee; and, Austin, Texas!

The average population density in Canada is a little over 9 residents per square mile and that of Alaska is 1.2 residents per square mile. In Texas the average population density is 87.3 residents per square mile and people believe that it is sparsely populated! Now get this, the population density of New Jersey is 1,175 residents per square mile (the greatest density for any US state) and its population is 8.71 million, about the same as the two Provinces, Territory and Alaska combined! We were not even traveling in the most populated areas of AB and BC – do you think that we ran into traffic congestion? Alaska, especially, truly is the 'Last Frontier' and the same could be said for the Yukon Territory where 31 thousand people live in 186 thousand square miles – that's an average of approximately 0.166 people per square mile!

Our travels took us on the Icefields Parkway, 'one of the world's ten greatest drives' through Banff and Jasper National Parks in eastern AB Province. This is a beautiful drive with spectacular scenery, glaciers and wildlife. Unfortunately, it was raining when most of us rode the Snocoach onto the Athabasca Glacier from the Icefield Centre, a unique experience. The estimated volume of this glacier is 22,600 million cubic feet (837 million cubic yards). We dry camped at the Icefield Centre that night before going on to Pierre Grey's Lakes Provincial Park campground south of Grande Cache, AB 6 July. Unfortunately, it was still raining so we could not easily do much more than survive the rain! Some did find water leaks that they were not aware of!

Traveling to Dawson Creek, BC 8 July we passed Ron and Hazel Riffel (GS #9500) parked at a power station, safely down off the highway. When we inquired by CB, they said that their coach had very little power and they were being assisted by station employees as well as Tail Gunners Richard and Virginia Raikes, and we were told to on ahead. The Riffels and Raikes did not make it to Dawson Creek that day. The problem was diagnosed as a clogged air filter primarily caused by a hole in the air intake hose; a new filter was not immediately available. The next day, the air filter and hose were 'jury-rigged' and they were able to get to Dawson Creek. Early the following morning Ron Riffel and Art Nock (GS #10823) drove back to Grande Prairie, AB to pick up the air filter that had been ordered in.

We met the other travelers at Dawson Creek and had a very nice Welcome dinner at the George Dawson Inn. We took the Riffels and Raikes to dinner at the Inn the following night because they missed the 'official' Welcome dinner. Dawson Creek is 'Mile 0' of the Alaska Highway; we all received 'Mile 0' certificates and pins from Keltie Durrell of the Dawson Creek Visitors Center who spoke to us the first morning. There are nice museums and sights at Dawson Creek to orient one on the construction and history

of the Alaska Highway. We had our picture taken by various tourists, with our cameras, at the famous 'Mile 0' signpost by the grain elevator that houses the Dawson Creek Information Centre.

We spent the next eleven days traveling and visiting campgrounds along the Alaska Highway. One stop was Liard River Hot Springs Lodge & RV Park, BC, where some took advantage of the delightful Hot Springs. The next day took us to the beautiful Yukon Territory (YT) of Canada and historic Watson Lake, home of the famous Sign Post Forest. Here we spent two nights and had our first hamburger cook-out with our good buddy Donald Dunn, Norfolk, Arkansas doing a lot of the grilling assisted by some of the other fellows. Donald and Kay Dunn were one of our some-other-buddy (sob) couples driving some-other-brand, a Jayco Melbourne RV. They were an asset to our group with their positive attitude, smiling faces and of course, Donald's cooking ability! We *Gulf Streamers* do like to eat!

Richard Raikes arranged to have Dalyce Stubenberg of the Sign Post Forest Visitor's Centre speak with us after our cookout. He and Virginia had met her on one of their four other journeys to Alaska. She was well received by the group. We learned a lot about the history of the area and her home life. Of course, we had visited the Forest that day where we met Norm and Mary Lindsey of Coon Rapids, Minnesota (MN) (GS #7507) – Les had met them in MN a few years back. They joined us for the cookout and later on in September, we met them again at the fall North Star Streamers rally in Faribault, MN. At the Forest, with 65,164 signs as of 27 September 2008 on posts – the signs are counted once each year – we added a sign that Richard Raikes made and that we all signed. We hope it survives the weather better than the two that the *Gulf Streamers* caravans left in 2004! We added a Virginia license plate from our old RV as well as an Indiana license plate from the Friendship – both plates were expired! Beverly Hiltachk added her current California RVNGRMA license plate to the Forest. We also visited the Northern Lights Centre at Watson Lake.

Our next stop was Whitehorse, YT where we spent four nights at Pioneer RV Park. (Taking a short break to open the mail, I found a 13 page document from Casper Nordahl, another good buddy who owns a Winnebago, *Explore The Yukon and Alaska, July 3-September 8, 2009, A 70 Day RV Caravan Trip, Enjoyed by Beverly Hiltachk, Joan Beason, and Casper Nordahl, written by Joan Beason and Casper Nordahl*. It is very interesting reading – we believe that they enjoyed the caravan!) At Whitehorse we had a bus tour of the city, visited the SS Klondike sternwheeler, Beringia Interpretive Centre and Transportation Museum, took a MV Schwatka River Cruise and went to a Frantic Follies Review. We learned that the Sternwheelers (there were many in their day) burned a cord of wood (a stack 4' x 4' x 8') every hour while underway! The SS Klondike was retired from service as recent as 1959, the year Les graduated from college!

We left the Alaska Highway just northwest of Whitehorse to travel to Dawson City, YT 19 July; we would later complete the section of the Alaska Highway from here to just east of Tok, AK. Don't confuse Dawson Creek, BC with Dawson City, YT – two distinct, far different cities – Mr. Dawson did get around! Along the road we stopped to purchase a humongous cinnamon bun for \$8.50 (Canadian) – we both dined twice on it! Several places in the Northwest are famous for their cinnamon buns and their best customers arrive in RVs! Highlights of Dawson City include the Danoja Zoo Cultural Centre (a First Nations People centre on the Yukon River), the Robert Service cabin, the Dawson city museum, Diamond Tooth Gerties gay-90s show, the Bonanza Creek Discovery Claim and a trip to Midnight Dome for spectacular views of the Yukon River, Dawson City and the surrounding mountains. Visiting Dawson City is the same as visiting a 19th Century town with dirt streets and wooden sidewalks!

While eating lunch one day in Dawson City, Les saw a RCMP Trouper eating lunch by herself; he introduced himself and asks if she would come speak to us in the morning at the pancake breakfast to be prepared by Don Barker, Donald Dunn, Art Nock and several other men for us. RCMP Watson agreed and we listened to her and ask her questions for over an hour. She gave Les a RCMP hat and had pins for everyone, including the *Gulf Streamers* newest Bear! The blueberry pancakes and other fixings were delicious, many thanks to all of the cooks.

We were now ready for Alaska. The shortest, most spectacular route by road is the 'Top of the World' highway. To reach this from Dawson City requires one to cross the Yukon River. There is a small, free, 24/7 ferry, the *George Black*, that takes passengers and vehicles across the river; it is serviced Wednesday mornings 5-7 AM and out of service. Jean drove our Saturn onto the ferry 22 July with other cars and some-other-buddies Wayne and Barbara Burnett, Fredericksburg, Virginia in their Bounder RV. Les drove the Friendship onto the next Ferry with several smaller vehicles on board and then Ron Riffel drove his Friendship beside, and somewhat to the rear of, Les! We made it across without taking on water and obviously, without sinking! We left Dawson City 22 July and spent the night dry camping with four RVs some fifteen miles beyond the river at a Rest Area clearly marked "No Overnight Camping". We were not bothered that night!

The Alaska border is some 65 miles from the Yukon River crossing. Customs there has limited hours, 8 AM to 8 PM (Alaska Time) on the U.S. side and 9 AM to 9 PM (Pacific Time) on the Canadian side. The town of Chicken, Alaska (AK) is about 45 miles from the border. There is very little between Dawson Creek and Chicken besides fantastic views on both sides of the road of mountain range after mountain range as far as the eye can see. We were fortunate to see several groups of the migrating '40-mile' caribou herd along the road. We had some rain which did reduce the dust on the road. There are no edge or center lines on the 'Top of the World' highway, no guard rails and no shoulders along most of the road! The views are spectacular and not obstructed by bill boards, litter or trees! We had 37 individuals on the caravan and there are 37 opinions about the condition of 'Top of the World' highway! As Ted Glas (GS #13078) put it at our farewell dinner, he had gone where no man should have ever gone! We do not believe that it is any worse than some in the lower forty-eight and not as bad as many roads traveled during construction projects. It certainly was enough to shake, rattle and roll our RVs though!

At Chicken, AK we enjoyed a 'Welcome to Alaska' dinner presented by Jean and the ladies. Jean made Chicken Tetrastini base before we left home and froze it. At Dawson Creek, Jean thawed the base; she and Virginia cooked the spaghetti and prepared five pans of Tetrastini for baking the next day by the ladies. It was delicious – several ladies asked for the recipe! In 2004, we had a Mexican dinner in Chicken and some thought it inappropriate! We toured old town Chicken and some panned for gold (Chet Cawthon, another buddy and the Tail Gunners were the only ones to strike it 'rich'). (The rain stopped just before dinner!)

We took the road from Chicken to Tok (pronounced like yoke), AK where we stayed at the Sourdough Campground that held hilarious, entertaining pancake tosses each evening. We enjoyed breakfast at the campground and an excellent evening meal at Fast Eddy's Restaurant. The Salmon Bake Restaurant where we ate in 2004 was not open this year; we found this true of a lot of facilities, two being famous Mukluk Annie's Restaurant and Ester Gold Camp. It was reported that Caravans were down 30-40% this year, whereas, travelers in rental RVs and individuals traveling in their own RVs were up. Overall tourism is not good in the Northwest this year. A lot of businesses simply did not open this year!

Our next stop was Riverview RV Park, North Pole/Fairbanks, AK 26 July. We stayed there six nights. Don Skinner (GS #7122) arranged a tour of Eielson Air Force Base which was very interesting. The main aircraft runway is over two-miles in length by 300 feet wide. To build it, the permafrost had to be excavated to a depth of 30 feet and the hole filled with gravel before paving the runway! We saw a section of the Alaska Pipeline and the 'Lady of the Lake', the remains of a B29 in a lake used to train for underwater rescue.

Other highlights of our stay at Fairbanks include an Alaska Salmon Bake at Pioneer Park followed by The Palace Dinner Show. We saw the performers of this show in 2004 at Ester Gold Camp, now closed. Sarah Palin was at Pioneer Park earlier in the day to announce her resignation as Governor of Alaska! The Fairbanks Ice Museum (yes, an ice museum!) is a must see as is the University of Alaska Fairbanks Museum of the North. We had a scrumptious lunch at the Pumphouse Restaurant followed by a cruise on the Riverboat Discovery seeing reindeer, stopping at a native village, and alongside the late Susan Butcher's home. Susan won the Iditarod race four times; her husband, David Monson, shared her story and her love for her huskies with us and provided a sled dog team demonstration. We also visited the El Dorado Gold Mine where we panned for gold.

Ten of us took flights from Fairbanks to Barrow, AK on the Arctic Ocean – the northern-most city in the United States. (Key West, Florida is the southern-most city.) There are over 4000 residents in Barrow, which is located above the Arctic Circle! Do you know why we have the imaginary latitude called the Arctic Circle? On the Summer solstice the sun never sets above this line and on the winter solstice the sun never rises above this line! Our Expanded Edition New Webster's Dictionary defines arctic as "Pertaining to the regions about the north pole; frigid; cold." Who would have guessed? The permafrost at Barrow is several thousand feet deep and the lowest temperature recorded this past winter was minus 87 degrees! Even the Arctic Ocean freezes over in the winter! The native people of Barrow are allowed to kill 24 whales a year for subsistence; so far this year, they had only killed three of their yearly quota!

John and Margaret Lester (and their dog Lady) drove their 23' Ultra to the Arctic Circle without incident (see Bonnie's last E-news, #21). Red and Wilda Farrar (GS #11401) drove their pickup toad to the Arctic Circle and had two flat tires on the way back, leaving them stranded about 50 miles from Fairbanks most of the night. Finally, a gentleman with a satellite phone stopped and summoned a tow truck for them. Les joined the crowd with flat tires when one of the inside dual tires was punctured on the sidewall. Bob Combs, Art Nock and John Lester had flat tires earlier. We had another hamburger/hot dog cookout at Fairbanks. Some went fishing and some went to Chena Hot Springs.

Our next stop was Denali RV Park and Motel 1 August where we stayed for three nights. We had three perfect days to see Mt. McKinley (Denali – the Great One) and do other things. Fifteen of us went white water rafting on the Nenana River, many for the first time. I (Les) did not hear anyone say that they did not like it. Be sure to ask Joan Beason and Casper Nordahl (and the others in the boat with them – Les, Bob Combs, Chet Cawthon, Julie and Charles Hard) about our ride when you see them. Many of us took the Denali shuttle bus to Wonderlake while some elected to go only to Eielson. We had a 'grand slam' day – we saw at least one of each of the large animals indigenous to Denali plus a wolf (twice) – very unusual! Some went to the sled dog demonstration in the Park and all of us went to the Cabin Night Dinner Theater at the McKinley Chalets for an excellent meal and entertainment.

We traveled from Denali to Anchorage, AK 4 August where we stayed for five nights at the Golden Nugget RV Park. There are many things to see and do in Anchorage, Alaska's largest city with a population of approximately 284,000, 42% of Alaska's 677,000 citizens! We took a bus tour of the city with a stop at the Ulu factory and Alaska Native Heritage Center. We went to the Sourdough Mining Company for a delicious dinner and visited the chocolate waterfall across the parking lot before dinner. We toured the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center where we could get up close to many animals. Afterward we took a cruise to Portage Glacier and some of us drove through the 2.5 mile long train/auto tunnel to Whittier, AK. We took the Alyeska Resort Tram to the fogged-in summit where we had lunch.

In Anchorage, Red and Wilda Farrar totaled their toad vehicle in an accident. Fortunately, Wilda's injuries were relatively minor although she was black and blue and plenty sore, and Red said that he was not hurt, but Wilda did not believe him! They were able to complete the caravan without a toad.

Sunday, 9 August we were off to Seward, AK. We had an informative city tour by Whitey VanDuesen followed by a stop at Exit Glacier where many walked as close as possible to the face of the awesome glacier. Afterward, Whitey and his wife, Marty served refreshments and told us about their life in Alaska. We had heard their story before and hoped that all would enjoy it this trip – we believe that they did! We took a Kenai Fjords Cruise to Fox Island for a delicious dinner and on the way home, we searched for birds, whales and other sea creatures, and we found some to the delight of all the on board photographers! Chet Cawthon was our most prolific photographer closely followed by a few others. Chet took over 11,000 pictures from his home in California to Prince George, BC!

Next on our agenda was Homer, AK 12-15 August where we stayed at the Oceanview RV Park. Some of us went Halibut fishing 'just for the halibut'! Limits were made and we came back with a couple hundred pounds of halibut filet. Some visited the famous (or infamous) Salty Dog Salon where the walls and ceiling are decorated with autographed dollar bills. Les had hoped all could see the famous 'Eagle Lady's' residence. Unfortunately, the Eagle Lady passed away in January and her residence had been removed from Homer Spit where she resided and fed the Bald Eagles. She had permission to feed them during the winter; when she died that right also died – no one will be given permission to do that again! It is against the law to feed wildlife in the Northwest.

We were off to Kenai, AK for the night of 15 August and a fabulous, to-die-for meal. Here our 'cooks' prepared halibut and mahi mahi for us. The cooks for this meal in addition to John and Margaret Lester who prepared the mahi mahi were Art Nock, Bob Combs and Ron Riffel. Art had his special beer-batter breading mix with him as well as a deep fat fryer. He used peanut oil to fry the halibut. Others contributed dishes for this scrumptious meal – we do know how to eat. Les ate so many meals of halibut that he lost count early on!

Palmer, AK was our next stop. We had a wonderful history presentation of the Matanuska Colony Project of 1935. In 1935 President Franklin D. Roosevelt invoked a project to colonize Alaska providing a new start for families from Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin. This was a very interesting 'experiment' that was at least 40% successful, 40% being the number that stayed more than one year. Kathleen Nock (GS #10823) played an upright piano brought to the wilderness by one family; the piano resides in a restored colony house home. We visited a Musk Ox farm. Joan and Casper describe the Musk Ox as "the cutest, ugliest animals on God's green earth!"

Pam Flowers gave us a presentation one evening in Palmer. At the age of 46, she took two sleds and eight dogs and traveled from Barrow, AK to Repulse Bay, Northwest Territories (now Nunavut) Canada, across North America above the Arctic Circle. It took her 11 months because she was trapped for five months by an ice-out - open seas. She finished with the same eight dogs that she started with. Another time she took a sled and three dogs and walked to the North Pole. One year she entered and completed the Iditarod race. September 2008 she and one of her dogs hiked the entire Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia finishing in March of this year at the age of 62! She is now thinking of doing a similar hike on the west coast.

On to Valdez, AK home of the famous Exxon Oil Tanker spill and the terminus of the Alaska Pipeline from Prudhoe Bay on the Beaufort Sea. The road to Valdez is one of the most scenic in Alaska. We cruised eight hours on Prince William Sound aboard Capt. Fred Rudolf's Lu-Lu Belle yacht with oriental rugs, teak wood and mahogany trim! The continuous narration by Capt. Fred was annoying to some or should we say, to many! His brain is overflowing with information that he acquired during 31 years of cruising the Sound. The sea otters (Oscar was the resident sea otter on the wharf), dolphins, whales, stellar sea lions and birds were delightful to watch and photograph. We saw Columbia Glacier up close and 'personal'. At one point it looked like the Lu-Lu-Belle was hemmed in by icebergs! We had our picture taken in front of the bergs posing with several props. We thoroughly enjoyed this experience in 2004 and again this year.

After an overnight stay at Tok, AK with another pancake toss and breakfast, we resumed our drive of the Alaska Highway. We stopped for two nights at the Destruction Bay Lodge, YT where Loren Maluorno was our host. Loren told us about his life in the Yukon where he has spent 16 years, he fed us some scrumptious food, and entertained us with his poetry and songs with Timothy Naylor. We met Loren in 2004 and just had to see him again. He is a colorful character; his personality is exhilarating and exudes his love of The Yukon and life. A good friend of his, Dubie, taught us how to make walking sticks of black diamond willow wood. Les made one in 2004 and purchased another stick this year. Hopefully, he will have time to clean it and finish it in Florida next year.

We drove through Whitehorse, completing our drive of the Alaska Highway, and on to Skagway, a most unique city surrounded by majestic mountains and glaciers. Skagway was our departure point for a high-speed catamaran ride that Joan and Casper described as "better than a five star ride at Disney World" to Juneau, the capital of Alaska, This was an all day adventure; we took a bus tour of Juneau, visited Mendenhall Glacier, and had three hours on our own. Juneau is only accessible by sea or air; there are only 45 miles of road in and surrounding Juneau! On the catamaran we saw a beautiful rainbow over Haines, AK.

We took the White Pass and Yukon Railway from Skagway to the Summit in the rain. The rain didn't stop us from taking photos; however, the screen on Les' camera stopped working that day - probably the rain! The narrow-gauge railway is an engineering marvel completed at the turn of the last century; the Klondike gold rush was over by the time it was completed! The potential miners had to walk over the mountain on the famous Chilkoot Trail, but, they could not enter Canada without having one ton of provisions! The Trail claimed the lives of many men and horses.

Our next exciting stop was Stewart, BC/Hyder, AK. We stayed in Stewart, BC which borders Alaska and Hyder, "a town of about a hundred happy people and a few old s--- heads" as the sign on the general store reads. Just outside Hyder is a fish and bear viewing area run by the National Park Service. Just as we

had checked in with our Golden Age Passports, we asked if they had seen any bears today. We turned and there crossing the road, was a huge grizzly with a large salmon in its mouth. Of course, we snapped pictures as we were herded behind the wooden gate onto the fenced-in boardwalk. We couldn't have been more than ten feet from that bear who paid no mind to us; it was just interested in taking its catch to the woods on the other side of the road to its 'dining room'!

We drove some 20 miles out of Hyder, back into BC, to Salmon Glacier. We could look down on this beautiful, humongous glacier – this river of ice and rock granules coming down between walls of the mountains. We purchased a somewhat amateur DVD called "A White Black Bear" including Fish Creek and Salmon Glacier, about 50 minutes long. It was made by Keith Scott of Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. In it, Keith hikes up to ice chunks at the base of the glacier and this demonstrates just how massive these ice chunks are – some great video of the glacier. The road to Stewart is paved and it is gravel from the Alaska border all the way to Salmon Glacier, but, well worth the drive. We understand that the 'happy people' of Hyder just voted to have the road in their town paved next year!

Our Farewell dinner was held 3 September at the Cariboo Steak and Seafood Restaurant owned by Chef John, a Greek. The food was scrumptious, service excellent and all had a chance to express their thoughts. The *Gulf Streamers* Bears attended, but they were quiet! We greatly appreciated all of the impromptu 'speeches' that honestly expressed the speaker's thoughts. We learn by listening and take pleasure in your pleasure! It is very rewarding to us to observe the joy in your face when you speak or experience something that makes you happy.

After ninety-five days and eleven-thousand-two-hundred-thirty-one miles we pulled into our driveway a little after 7:00 PM 21 September. We began the journey at the Mid-Atlantic Streamers rally in New Stanton, Pennsylvania and ended the journey at the Michigan Overloaders 20th Anniversary rally, Niles, Michigan (MI). Between these two rallies we visited the Gulf Stream facility at Nappanee, IN; managed the pre-rally and caravan, attended a North Star Streamers rally at Faribault, Minnesota and revisited the Gulf Stream facility.

We spoke above of the MAS rally that we thoroughly enjoyed. The North Star rally was another great one – their rallies always are. Dave and Diane Hering (GS # 14228) were our hosts. They arranged a tour of the Sellner Manufacturing Company; Sellner is home of the world famous Tilt-A-Whirl amusement ride 'creating fun for families since 1926'. A great granddaughter of the founder and her mother were our tour guides; they provided a very interesting tour. Dave and Diane also arranged a tour of Shattuck-St. Mary's, an internationally recognized private prep school with grades 6 through 12 founded in 1858. Its beautiful, stately campus with absolutely gorgeous stone buildings is listed on the National Historic Register. Being in 'cold' Minnesota, they have two Olympic-size indoor hockey rinks and an indoor Soccer field 125 yards by 75 yards. Ninety-nine percent of its students go on to college. Our tour guide was a senior on a full scholarship (tuition is \$38,000 per year) and a goalie on the soccer team. To hear her speak and interact with her, one would guess that she is a college graduate! "The student body typically draws from about twenty countries and 30 or more states." This was indeed a New Horizon for us and another fantastic chapter rally; many thanks to the North Star Streamers for having us.

The Michigan Overloaders rally was held at the beautiful Spaulding Lake Campground, Niles, MI. President Deb Fair and husband Bob (GS #4329) were our hosts and as usual they performed admirably. There were lots of games and contests including a fishing contest which was not really too successful – the

campground owners feed the fish in their three ponds so that they are not really hungry! Nevertheless, some of us tried to catch them. The weather was perfect all weekend, good for horseshoe pitching, lawn-chair baseball, etc. The men did not last long at the horseshoe pits – too hot and too out of shape, but they did win the lawn-chair baseball! The ladies had their craft class to paint refrigerator magnets. Of course, there was food every time we turned around, and a beautiful Anniversary cake made by who else, Deb Fair. It was great to see so many familiar faces. Joyce Bailey (GS #442) attended; she is a charter member of the chapter who has attended all but one of their rallies. Joyce brought Jan Malott along; Jan was a former member whose husband had a stroke ten years ago. Family members brought Mary Meyer (GS #979) to the rally one day. One sad note: Deb Fair lost her father Saturday night of the rally. We offer our sincere condolences to her and family members. We thank the Michigan Overloaders, 20 YEARS and counting! for once again having us.

If you haven't attended a chapter rally, you do not know what you are missing. Chapter rallies are fun and they offer much fellowship, entertainment and enlightenment.

At the Gulf Stream Coach, Inc. facility we saw a lot more activity in September than we did in June. Gulf Stream is alive and well. They are looking at some new products in the electric vehicle line, a transporter like the buses used by hotels, for example, to take people to the airport and electric trucks. They are not abandoning the recreational vehicle business.

During our 95 day journey, we drove 461 miles (the most in a single day) in 12 hours 5 September when we left Prince George, BC and spent the night at the Yellowhead Casino, Edmonton, AB. We drove the least in one day 17 September (50.6 miles) from Nappanee, IN to Niles, MI. The average daily mileage is just less than 250 miles for the 45 days that we traveled; we spent a single night at 15 campgrounds.

We met 12 fantastic new friends at Great Falls, MT and three more at Dawson Creek, BC, and many more at the three chapter rallies. We look forward to seeing all of them again. We look forward to seeing you at a rally in the future.

There are at least four sites on line where you can see photos and/or read about the Caravan. Joan Beason posted a trip journal at: <http://www.mytripjournal.com/JoansAlaskaTrip2009>. Kathleen Nock's photo album can be viewed at: <http://gulfstreamers.snapfish.com/snapfish/otsc=SYE/otsi=CRI> with the room code July 2009. Donald and Kay Dunn posted their journal at: <http://www.mytripjournal.com/travel-463756>. Bonnie Cooper has opened a Facebook page for *Gulf Streamers* at: www.facebook.com.

We hope that you will consider attending the *Gulf Streamers* Buddy Rally 12 to 17 January 2010 at the Tampa RV Super Show. A 'Reunion' luncheon is planned for 2004 and 2009 Alaska caravan participants 13 January. The International Back Home in Indiana rally is planned for 21-26 June at the Elkhart County Fairgrounds, Goshen, IN. Please plan to attend to support the *Gulf Streamers* and Gulf Stream Coach, Inc. Bonnie spends a lot of time planning rallies for your enjoyment; if possible, you should plan on attending as many as possible for the fun and fellowship!

We greatly appreciate all who participated in the Caravan, and all of the help and encouragement that they gave us. We are deeply indebted to each and everyone for a successful caravan. We could not have done it without the able assistance of many. That is what is so great about the *Gulf Streamers* – we are all family. Our Tail Gunners Richard and Virginia Raikes were invaluable to us, and we believe, also to all who caravanned with us. Most of all, we enjoy seeing smiling faces at rallies and the joy that they express while experiencing *New Horizons* and great fellowship.

We probably will not visit here again before the Holidays, therefore, we wish you Happy Holidays. This year we will spend Christmas in Virginia vice Amesbury, Massachusetts. (We will visit our youngest daughter, Charlene (Charli), husband Charles (Chuck) and their children Alec, Brock, Derek and Sara Johnson later this month in Amesbury.) After Christmas, we will fly to California for the Rose Parade and return home 4 January 2010 to prepare for Florida and the Buddy Rally.

May God bless you and provide excellent health, safe travels, and much quality time with relatives and friends, and the *Gulf Streamers* family. We are saddened by the death of so many Gulf Streamers and family members this past year. Our sincere condolences to all of those they 'left behind'. (As son-in-law Chuck Johnson's late father who died at 81 used to say: "There is only one thing wrong with growing old, all of my friends are dead!" It is a sad reality than none of us can escape if we live long enough!) Please remember in your prayers all of those 'left behind' (we number ourselves among them because we are all family!) and all of those who protect us - our Service, Police, Fire and Medical personnel. *God bless the USA!*

Love to All, *Les & Jean*