

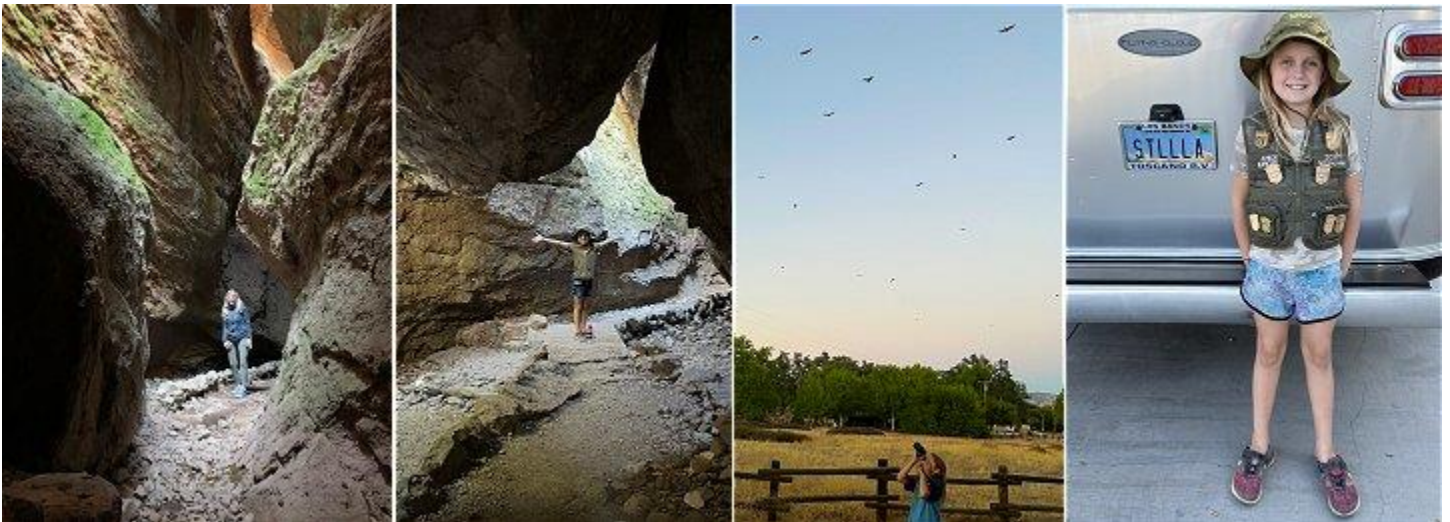


“Pony Express Rider” sculpture at the Schellbourne rest area on US highway 93, middle of nowhere in eastern Nevada.

2022 was another wonderful year of travel with “Stella”, our 25’ Airstream: 65 days over 9 trips covering 6,251 miles. We’ve now made 51 trips for a total of 36,544 miles. This year, in addition to traveling with each of our 3 older grandchildren, we also had trips with our good friends Linda Holiday and Pat Hendricks. Our destinations included 6 National Parks, other locations of natural beauty, and visits with family and friends. We are grateful that our ‘silver transporter’ allows us to experience (and to share the experience) of these places. We are equally grateful to live in a place that inspires us each day with its own natural beauty.

PINNACLES NATIONAL PARK

After our first visit to Pinnacles NP last year, we made two more trips to Pinnacles NP this year. Obviously, we love this park and the great setup they have for RVs. Our first trip was in early April and included a side trip to Monterey for an outdoor lunch at Tarpy’s Roadhouse with a few co-workers from SHOP.COM (Michael still works remotely, part-time, for them). Our friend, Pat Hendricks, joined us for two days and enjoyed hiking Bear Gulch Trail and its rock formations, talus caves, and reservoir.



Above: our friend, Pat Hendricks at Bear Gulch Talus cave | Kara: Bear Gulch cave | Kara: condor spotting | Jr Ranger

We visited again in October with our (almost) 10-year-old grand-daughter, Kara, as part of her trip with us to 3 National Parks. Kara was especially excited to see a “kettle” of the critically endangered California Condor soaring overhead each evening. While at Pinnacles NP, Kara earned her 8th Junior Ranger badge (9 National Parks). Well done, Kara!



Above: Pinnacles NP with Pat Hendricks | with Kara | Bear Gulch Reservoir, Pat Hendricks | Kara at the reservoir

GREAT BASIN NATIONAL PARK / ANNUAL PONY EXPRESS RE-RIDE

Our grand-son, Brennan, turned 7 years old in June and made his first trip with grandpa and grandma in the Airstream. A month earlier we had volunteered to be part of the communications support team for the Annual Pony Express Re-ride. Each year the National Pony Express Association (NPEA) organizes a re-ride on/near the original route from St. Joseph MO to Sacramento CA. The 10-day, 1996-mile ride involves hundreds of riders and horses ('ponies') transferring actual mail carried in a mochila. Our assigned location was the Schellbourne rest area in a remote area of eastern Nevada. Our role was to provide communications support via amateur "ham" radio for the Ibapah, Utah – Schellbourne segment of the ride. Schellbourne also served as a (quick!) rider-pony relay station. It seemed a natural fit for Brennan to join us, and since Great Basin National Park was less than two hours from Schellbourne we decided to go there first.



Above: At Great Basin National Park | Lehman Cave | Trail to Bristlecone Grove | Ancient Bristlecone Pine

On our previous visit to Great Basin NP, we tried to visit the Lehman Caves, but all the tours for the day were already sold out. This time, we made reservations in advance. The caves are visually amazing and our tour guide added a lot of interesting information regarding the history, geology, and biology of the cave system. After the tour we retreated back to "Stella" for lunch and a change of clothes, then headed up to the Wheeler Peak trailhead. The trail to the Bristlecone Pine Grove starts at 10,000' – and goes up! It took us over 2 hours to reach the grove. These rare trees are among the oldest living organisms on the planet – some more than 4000 years old! Brennan thought it was "a long way to go to see some old trees." ☺ On the return hike to the trailhead, Brennan and Michael made a short side trip to Teresa Lake (elevation 10,230'). The next day we drove up to the Schellbourne rest stop, where we set up for an overnight stay.



Above: Brennan at Teresa Lake | Pony Express rider arrives at Schellbourne | comm team with NPEA president and VP

Early the next morning we assisted with radio communications until... the Pony Express rider arrived! Two minutes later the mochila had been transferred to another rider-pony and off they galloped across the open desert... Earlier on the trip Danielle had read some stories to Brennan about the history and adventures of the original Pony Express. We also let him know that included in the mail that the rider was carrying was a postcard addressed to him and his family.



Above: Danielle and Brennan playing "Pooh Sticks" at Welcome Station | Brennan gets his Pony Express carried postcard

REDWOODS NATIONAL PARK / CRATER LAKE NATIONAL PARK

In July we travelled with Aria, our 11-year-old granddaughter, to visit Redwoods National Park and Crater Lake National Park. We cruised leisurely through the "Avenue of the Giants", making our way to Ancient Redwoods RV Park near Redcrest, CA. The next day was spent strolling among the ferns and giant redwoods of Grieg-French-Bell State Park and Drury-Chaney Grove. With no one else around, we became keenly aware of the serene, quiet peace of these ancient forests. No sounds of birds or animals, only the wind through the trees or our own voices to break the silence. We drove north along the coast the next day, stopping at the Hiouchi Visitor Center in Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park where Aria earned her first Junior Ranger badge. ☺ Our overnight stay was at the Augustino Winery in O'Brien, Oregon. From there we proceeded to Crater Lake RV Park in Prospect, Oregon which would be our home base for the next 3 days. On our first day we walked along the nearby Pearsoney Falls Nature Trail to see 3 beautiful waterfalls: Pearsoney, Mill Creek Falls (173'), and Barr Creek Falls (240'). The next day we drove up to Crater Lake National Park. We first visited Crater Lake 20 years ago when we made our long motorcycle trip to Oregon (see 2002 newsletter). As many have said, the astonishingly deep blue waters of Crater Lake are hard to capture in pictures or words. Aria worked hard on the Junior Ranger requirements and earned her second badge before we departed. The last day of our trip was spent

relaxing at the park, except for (on the suggestion of a friend) a quick dash up the road to Beckie's Café for one of their FAMOUS home-made pies!



Above: Redwood Forest | Crater Lake | Pearsoney Falls (can you spot Aria, on the rocks?) | Aria, 2 Junior Ranger badges

LOTS O' LAKES



Our long-time friend from Santa Cruz, Linda Holiday, visited us for a week in August. At her suggestion we packed up "Stella" and drove down to Crowley Lake, our jump-off point for the next day's hike up Little Lakes Valley. Threatening clouds greeted us at the trailhead, which started at 10,300' elevation. Our destination was Heart Lake, 1.5 miles up the trail. We only experienced a fraction, but with its breath-taking scenery, we can see why this is such a popular hike. The clouds held off until we started our return to the trailhead, and then it **REALLY** dumped on us! On our return the next day we drove the June Lakes Loop and hung out at Grant Lake for a few hours.

Since discovering the Grouse Lake Trail, which starts at Upper Blue Lake, it has become our favorite trail for a day hike. During the summer we made several hikes up there, with friends, or just the two of us. We camped at Upper Blue Lakes in "Stella" for 12 days in August, which got off to a rather distressing start when we somehow managed to wedge (but thankfully not scrape) "Stella" between two large rocks. The nearest towing service was 35 miles away, but fortunately we had GoodSam coverage and they were able to "winch" her free. The rest of the time was

spent relaxing, drawing, playing the kantele, and hiking up to Granite Lake, which is on the Grouse Lake Trail. Before returning home, we drove over to Kit Carson Lodge at Silver Lake for dinner to celebrate Danielle's 75th birthday.



Above: Linda & Danielle at Little Lakes Valley [1,2] | Linda & Danielle – Sunset at Crowley Lake | us at Grant Lake



Above: Stuck "Stella" | Danielle on the Grouse Lake Trail | Michael gets caught by the "Rock Monster"



Above: Grouse Lake Trail to Granite Lake with Linda Holiday | Pat Hendricks | Linda Holiday | Nancy and Alex Adams

HOPE VALLEY

The weather turned HOT in late August/early September so we packed up “Stella” and headed up to Hope Valley – only 20 miles away, but at least 20 degrees cooler! After we’d been there a few days, Colin asked if he could come up with the grandkids and tent-camp with us at our campsite. Well, of course ☺! After three days, Colin made a day-trip back to the Central Valley while the kids stayed with us. Things went well until a sudden afternoon thunderstorm appeared! Fortunately, we had the awning up, so the grandkids took shelter underneath until we could get them cleaned and dried off; then everyone crowded into “Stella”. We made dinner, played games, and Michael read a story until Colin returned.



Above: Sequoia tree on a Hope Valley trail | West Fork Carson River: Danielle | Splash! Brennan, Kara, Keeva, Aria

KINGS CANYON | SEQUOIA | PINNACLES NATIONAL PARKS

In October we made our last trip of the year in “Stella” and we had our almost-10-year-old granddaughter Kara with us. Our first stop was the Shooting Star Sanctuary (Harvest Host), a ‘rescue’ home to goats, sheep, chickens, ducks, and mini-pigs. The next day we drove to Sequoia RV Park, about 25 minutes from the entrance to Kings Canyon/Sequoia National Parks. We spent the two days exploring parts of both parks, including Boyden Cavern and the General Sherman and General Grant giant sequoia trees – the 2 largest trees in the world. While driving back along the Generals Highway, we encountered a black bear casually strolling the middle of the roadway. It was Michael’s first time seeing one in the wild. Before we left, Kara completed the Kings Canyon/Sequoia workbook and earned her 7th Junior Ranger badge.



Above: General Sherman sequoia tree | between two young sequoias | black bear crossing Generals Highway



Above: Boyden Cavern | Junction View overlooking the deepest canyon in North America | Kara practices on her kantele

HERE AND THERE

Throughout the year we made several shorter trips to visit Colin, Jaclyn, the grandkids and to celebrate birthdays. In late November we drove to the Monterey area to attend the 80th birthday celebration for Dennis Evans (Colin's dad). Michael continues working part-time for SHOP.COM, but things are definitely winding down for him there. We both remain active in the Aikido world, teaching and participating in on-line seminars/classes.

SHIZEN NO UTSUKUSHI-SA NI KANSHA-SURU. SHIAWASE-DESU!

Each morning we step out our back door and greet the first rays of sunshine reflecting from the high peaks of the Eastern Sierras. We clap our hands and express our gratitude for the new day and for the many blessings we have received. We lift our hearts with joy for the new year, in faith, hope and courage. We feel the connection with you and envision being able to once again embrace our families and friends. Blessings for peace, health, and joy in abundance.

Love,
Michael & Danielle



Above left: full moon shining on fresh snow | Above right: pre-dawn glow



Above: Journey of the Sun | Carson Valley viewed from Heavenly Valley ski area – arrow points to location of our home



Above: the “mothership”?! - lenticular clouds above the Sierra Front | Danielle on her new cruiser bike (Happy Birthday!)



Above: Danielle & Michael at Silver Lake | Evans family: Kara, Colin, Brennan, Aria, Keeva, Kiwi (puppy), Jaclyn