Our Trip Through the Mountains of Northern Idaho

A Photographic Journey with a Smartphone

by: Joseph W. Massey

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FROM INDY TO PORTLAND ON A BIG OL' JET PLANE

The Rocky Mtns. from airplane

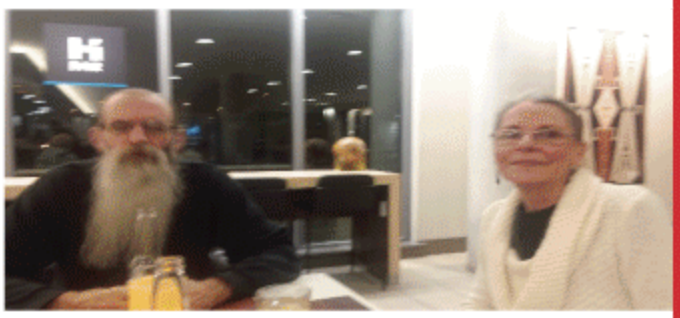
It was a cool November morning when Brenda & I boarded a plane to fly to Portland, OR. She was going to attend a Dyslexia Conference and then we were going on our first real vacation in years.

While she was conferencing I would have the opportunity to do a little exploring, but mostly I just relaxed. While relaxing I took a few pictures of the surrounding area.

White Stag Sign, (I didn't take this one)

Portland Sky Line behind marina on Columbia River

Bridge spanning The Columbia River



Greg & Jenette

While in Portland I had the opportunity to visit with an old friend from back home in Covington, IN. I had not seen Greg for almost 30 years and it was wonderful visiting with him and his wife for a few hours.

Greg moved out to Oregon in the mid 70's and has been growing that beard for 5 years. Even though it had been 30 years since we last visited, it was like we had never been apart.

Let the Vacation Begin!!!

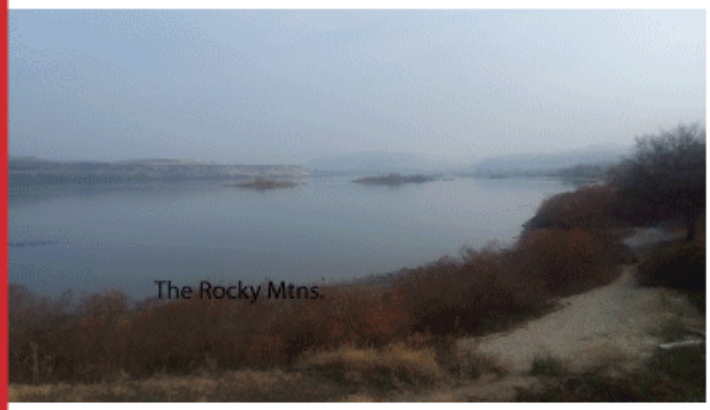
With the Conference over and our visit with Greg complete it was time to really go on our vacation. First stop: Kelso, WA. to have lunch with a high school classmate I hadn't seen for 51 years.

Jack is a Forest Ranger in the GIFFORD PINCHOT NATIONAL FOREST (between Mt. St. Helens & Mt. Rainier) & just like with Greg the years since our last visit didn't seem to exist.

Our paths through life were vastly different. Jack has lived his dream. Forestry was his goal in high scchool and he has spent 47 years minding the wilderness.

I admire Jack, though I don't regret my counter culture leanings. He had a life, I had adventures.

From Western Oregon to the Idaho Border



The Columbia River

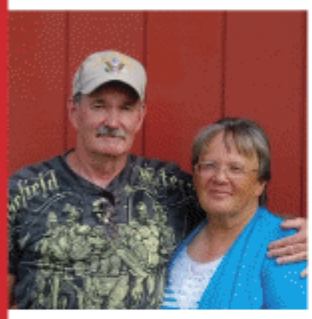
After lunch with Jack we headed back to Oregon and then east to Hood River for our 1st stop. This part of the journey would follow the Columbia River for most of its distance.

It is along this stretch we thought we were beginning to see mountains.

We thought these were mountains
Give us a break, we are from flat lands

Anyway, we paralleled the Columbia River for most of our eastward treck across Oregon.

This part of our journey was pretty uneventful and while beautiful, nothing like what we were to see on our 3rd day as we moved from Oregon into the mountains of Idaho.



Roddy & Claudia

Destination: Salmon, Idaho

Roddy is the brother of Brenda's first husband, Dave (may he rest in peace) He and his wife, Claudia, have lived in Northern Idaho since the 70's. He worked for the BLM for many years in the mountains so he knows where the cool stuff is and how to get there.

When we were planning our trip he sent me a detailed route of how to get from Ontario, OR to Salmon, ID. He said it was the scenic route. It **is** called the scenic route, the signs say so.

As we moved into Idaho from Oregon the terrain began to change and we found ourselves moving into "REAL" mountains! From this point forward our jaws were hanging open and all we could say was "WOW!!!"

It seemed as if every corner brought a new and more spectacular view. As we entered the scenic drive the Payette River was at road level and we got our first glimpse of a fast running mountain river.

The river seemed to run wild. First on the driver's side, then on the passenger's side. There

The Scenic Drive to Salmon; With Every Turn The Views Just Kept Getting Better!

The Payette River

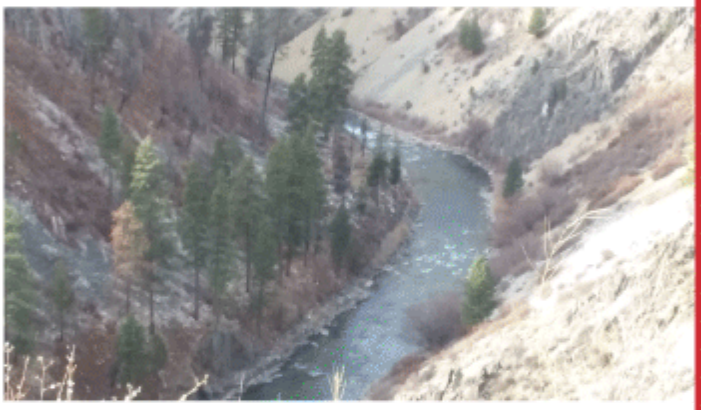
were rocks everywhere and the water rushed around them with great speed. These small rapids were interspersed with calm stretches and the water was clear and sparkeling.

The most incredible thing was the sound of the water rushing along its banks. We would drive a short distance and then have to stop to take more pictures. We just couldn't believe the views could get any better, yet they did.

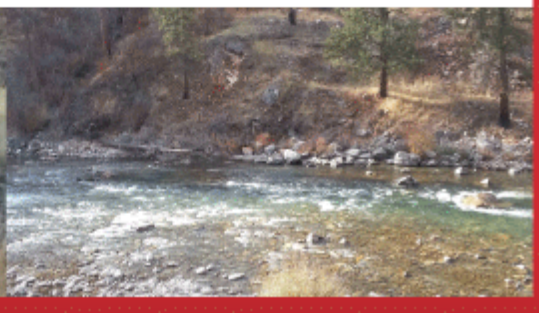
It was at this point that we started to understand what a moutain really is. Now, these mountains weren't really high; but they were most definitely mountains. Rocky, rugged and spectacular when being seen by this midwestern, flat lander.

I made several short videos just to capture the sound of the water. I could have set down beside this river and listened to it sing all day long. But it was a 5 hour drive to Salmon and though we wanted to sightsee as much as possible we couldn't linger long as we wanted to reach Salmon before or just shortly after dark.

So, we kept driving and stopping and driving and stopping all the while our jaws were hanging open because the scenery was phenomenal! At one point we noticed that the Payette had somehow plunged into a canyon and was a long way below the road level. No waterfalls, no real notice of it occurring, but sure enough a river that had been right beside us was all of a sudden 2,000 ft. below us.



At times it seemed as if we were entirely hemmed in by the mountains and then we'd round a curve and the road would open and on we would go to the next jaw dropping scene. We just kept drivng and stopping and taking more pictures.



The Scenic Drive to Salmon Continues...

The Payette River

Of course, it being November, there was not a lot of color, just the fir trees and many of them are brown because there has been an infestation of beetles and they are dying. That is somewhat discouraging, but nature heals itself even if it takes longer than we have to see it.

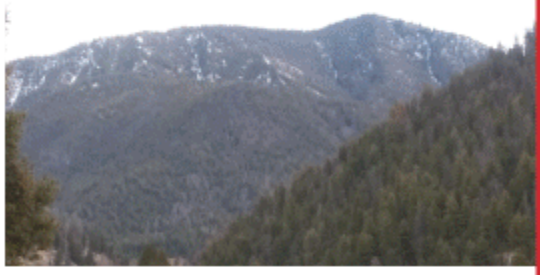
As an observation, the roadsides were extremely clean and devoid of trash. That was a pleasant discovery. There are so many places where the scenery is spectacular, but ruined by the carelessness of those who travel through it and discard whatever they no longer need or want wherever its usefulness is exhausted.

As we traveled along both Brenda and I came to appreciate the wonders of nature around us and the forces required to create such magnificent countryside.

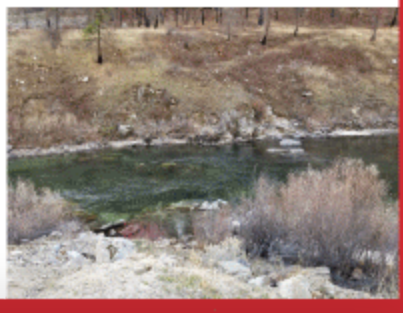
We didn't know that the best was yet to come. How naive we can be when we don't know what we don't know!

We did know we were missing some spectacular countryside in our slow rush to reach Salmon. We knew that in Illinois and Indiana there were many deer that could riun one's day. We also knew that in this country there were not only deer, but elk, moose, longhorn sheep and many other large creatures that tended to move after dark and we didn't want to encounter any of them as we drove through this unfamiliar territory.

So, we kept driving and when we reached a little town just south of Salmon we decided to get something to eat. We found a little restaurant outside a little hotel and had a decent hamburger and we then started the last leg of our drive to Salmon. It got dark on us about an hour before we got to Salmon and it seemed as if we would never reach our destination. But we were determined and finally Salmon, ID came into view. I called Roddy to tell him we were just a few blocks away and we arrived at our destination shortly thereafter.



We were tired and kind of lost, but we had a wonderful day traveling the Scenic Drive and had seen many beautiful sights and listened to the Mountain Rivers sing. We went to bed that night with smiles on our faces and wondering how we could top what we had already seen.



Could the area around Salmon be as Spectacular as the drive to get there?

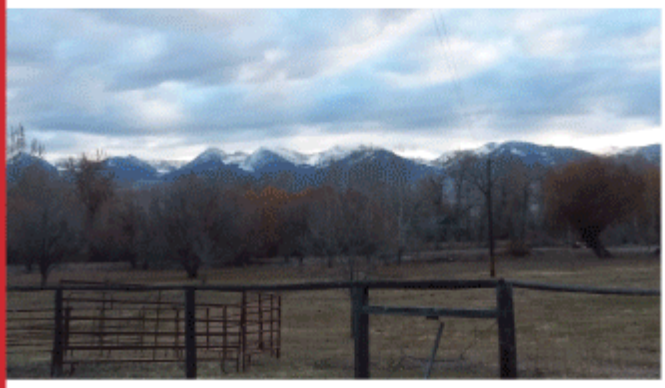
This is just outside Salmon.
Lewis and Clark's Expedition
came through here.

On our 1st day in Salmon, Roddy took us sightseeing. We didn't have to go far. You can see the Continetal Divide from his front yard and the Salmon Rver and Lemhi Rivers flow all around it. I say all around it because almost everywhere you go you have to cross these rivers.

They wind around and around, are part of one another and they are beautiful.

These mountain rivers go from shallow to deep, rapids to calm, silent to incredibly musical, from rock strewn to no visible rocks and they have clear, beautiful water that calls for the viewer to come fish, come tube, come set and relax. Hope to return in the summer to enjoy the water.

This is the Salmon River outside Salmon, ID



The Continental Divide outside Salmon, ID

In the directions Roddy sent, he made reference to our heading to the Continental Divide. Now, I though I knew my geography and thought the Continental Divde was somehow only in the Rocky Mountains.

Dumb me, come to learn the Continental Divide runs up into Canada and just a few miles from Roddy and Claudia's house. We didn't venture there on our 1st day, but we would and it would provide one of the adventures within our adventure.

This day was to be spent around Salmon seeing the river, the surrounding mountains, some historical locations. Lewis and Clark came through here on their expedition to the Pacific. Sacagawea was born in this area and is credited with much of the Expedition's success.

There is a museum in Salmon, unfortunately it was closed while we were there. More reasons to return.

Day 2 in Salmon, The Sawtooth Mountains...

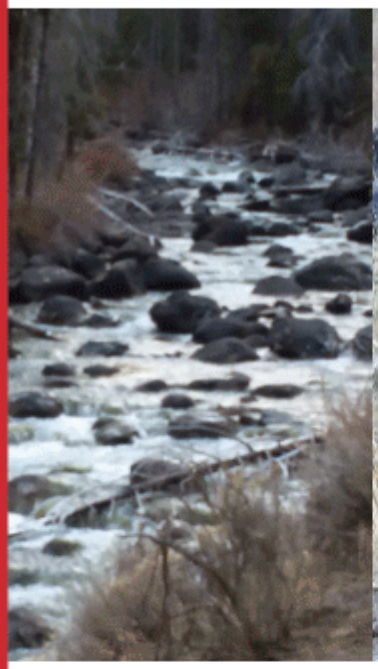
On our second day in Salmon, Roddy took us to the Sawtooth Mountains. On the way we stopped at a museum about the history of the area which centered on the mining industry.

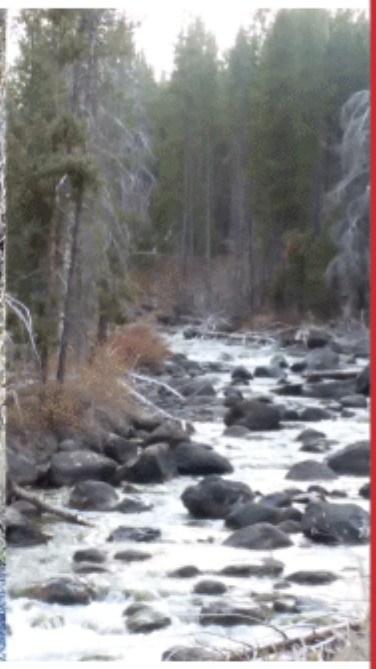
We enjoyed seeing the artifacts from days gone by in an area we had no connection with. A different life than the midwest. Our journey took us to the shores of a mountain lake where a couple of the best pictures were captured.

The Sawtooth Mountains are not a big range. But they deserve their name. They are rugged and they are what one might expect to see when thinking of mountains.

The picture below is probably my favorite of all I took.

The Sawtooth Mountains

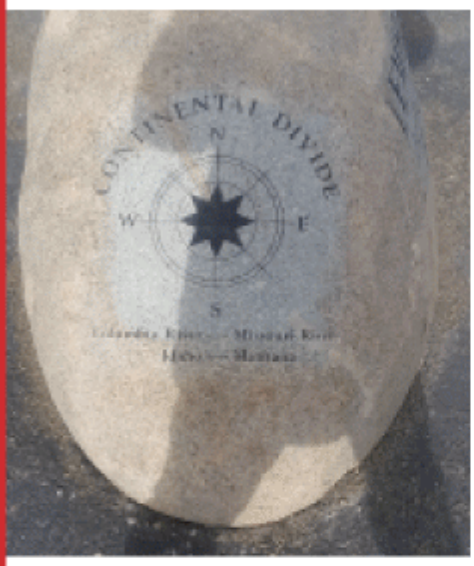




As you may have noticed, water played a predominant role in our sightseeing. There was much of it and it was all very beautiful. We also saw some of the local fauna. We came upon this guy and his harem walking down the road. He had quite a group and they weren't scared by the truck, after all, we were in their territory.

Needless to say day two was as spectacular is day one. One could only expect things to get better?

Day 3 in Salmon... The Continental Divide



On our third day in Salmon we traveled up to the Continental Divide. I had never realized that the Continental Divide extended up into Canada.

The border of Idaho & Montana marks the Divide and at this location you can stand with one foot in Idaho and one in Montana. Does this make one a two stater?

The trip to the continental Divde provided one of the adventures we had inside our adventure. To get there we had to travel up a narrow, winding road that had snow covering it in places. It was not too bad, but being on the edge of a mountain on a snow covered road that was anything but level and smooth gave us a feeling of adventure and just enough danger to make it exciting.

Now, as is generally the case, once you get up there you have to get back down. The road we came up on continued and would bring us back down to civilization some 30 mi. from where we were. Roddy proceeded to head down when we came to a section that was more than just a little snow covered. In fact, it got pretty slick and we stopped to check things out and discovered ice under the snow.

At this point Roddy decided it would make sense to put on chains. We put chains on the back tires and proceeded for another 100 yards or so when Roddy decided it was just too slick to go that way. So, here we are, on a snow and ice covered mountain road that is too narrow to turn around on, with very little opportunity to back up and go back the way we came. I was glad Roddy had lived and worked in this area for so long. He was not unfamiliar with this type of situation and got us turned around and headed back down the mountian with no incident. It was a good day and I got to say I was in Montana while we were there as I had never been to Montna before.

Headed back home...

In the immortal words of George Harrison "All Things Must Pass". So too did our time in Salmon and it was time to start the long journey home.

We had two more stops to make before we would board the big airplane home in Boise, ID. So, we bade goodbye to Roddy and Claudia and set out to St. Anthony, ID to complete, what for me was 'old home week'. A dear old friend on mine, Tony, had ended up here many years ago and we had not seen each other for at least 10 years. Tony & I have been friends since the early 70's and we had a lot of adventures in our youth. Some still wonder how we survived.

Anyway, as we left Salmon I was sad to leave such a beautiful place but excited about seeing another great friend that I had't seen for way too long.

This is Tony's Granddaughter, Talulah. She has the prettiest red hair and according to Tony she loves to dance to Credence Clearwater Revival. Like so many grand-parents these days they are helping raise her. They got her a little drum set and she plays her heart out on it.

It was nice to meet her and Tony's wife, Beth. We had a nice visit and talked of old times, friends and some of the adventures we had. Brenda couldn't believe some of the things we did and sat there amazed that we could do those things and still be sane.

Tony and Beth live in the small city of St. Anthony and it is located just a few miles west of the Montana border and Yellowstone National Park. Yellowstone was closed for the winter but Tony said we should come back in the spring and they would take us there. He said to make sure it was before school let out or there would be so many people it might not be enjoyable. Would very much like to do that.

After a nice visist with Tony and Beth it was on toward Boise and our flight back home. Before we got to Boise we had one more night's stay in Idaho. We stopped in Idaho Falls and spent the night. The next morning we headed west and at the edge of Idaho Falls we stopped at the Snake River Gorge. This location is just south of where Evel Knieval made his attempt to jump the Canyon. (he didn't make it, but he did survive.

What an amazing view from the observation deck and we just missed a group of base jumpers that

Time to wrap this up...

had just jumped from the bridge into the canyon. Wish we had gotten there in time to see that. But, alas, it was not to be.

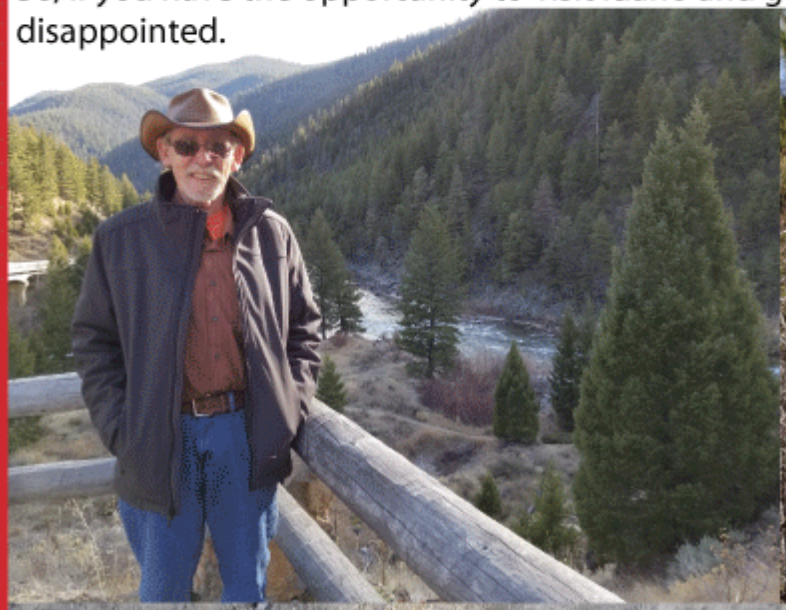
The observation deck was so high up it gave me vertigo looking over the edge. I can't imagine how some one could jump off even with a parachute. Maybe when Iwas younger I could have done it, but at my age it was too scarry to even think about it.

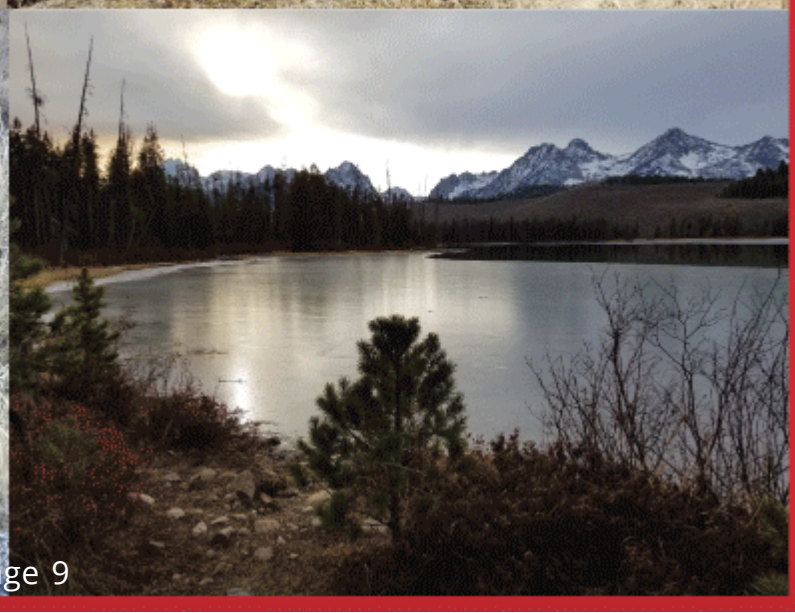
This was our last sightseeing stop. From here it was get to Boise, and get on the plane for home. There was one more first for me on this trip and I am not sure it really counts but I was in Arizona for the first time. Never got out of the airport, but I was in Arizona.

I have to say that other than my time in the Caribbean, this was the coolest vacation I had ever had. We saw country unlike anything around us in the Midwest. Mother Nature is incredible and we got to see some sights we will never forget.

We also got to relax and get away for 12 days and that was refreshing. It is now mid January and I have still not gotten caught up with my work. Oh well, that is OK it was certainly worth it and I would recommend the trip to anyone looking to see countryside that boggles the mind.

So, if you have the opportunity to visit Idaho and go to the mountains and rivers take it. You won't be disappointed.





THANK YOU

For reading my little missive. I hope you enjoyed it. If you have any comments please send them to me at joe@atdmarketing.com. I welcome your feedback and should you wish to have a calendar with pictures of our trip we can do that and we can start from any month, so you don't have to wait a year for it be relevant.

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