

We are free and on the road at last! So we send you greetings from the Elks Lodge in Lodi, California. We left Redding on December 1st as planned, but it wasn't easy. Redding had lots of rain, cold, and a full day of snow. Yep, honest to goodness real snow that stuck to the ground and made driving dangerous. Hey, we're not stupid, we figured it out. Full time RVers are supposed to go south **before** it snows. A month ago the freeways were full of RVs heading south. When we left, there were none on the road.

In the last couple of days, we managed to empty out one of our big storage sheds, stock up on Annika's raw meat diet, get the oil changed in the motorhome, get the oil changed in our generator, get a 6,000 mile service on our motorcycle, fill up on propane and water, and empty the holding tanks. Hot damn, everything was ready to roll.

We haven't fully been able to comprehend our freedom to go anywhere we wish or stay as long as we want. We have always been driven by a long list of "have to's." It's almost scary to not have a list. It's almost like we have to have a list to stay in touch with reality. The psychology of freedom is quite complex. Certainly, many men imprisoned for a long time can't deal with it. Perhaps entire populations will have difficulty with it. Can the Iraqi people deal with freedom?

Chuck is highly driven by self-imposed goals and the need to achieve them. Without constant learning and achievement, he is not whole. So, our next goal is to visit and explore the greater Palm Springs, California, area. We have committed to being in Desert Hot Springs by Wednesday, December 7.

As we were traveling down Highway 99 yesterday afternoon, we looked up an Elks Lodge in Lodi and pulled in about 4:30 in the afternoon. What a great little stop. We have a nice place to park, the friendly bar was open, and dinner was served at 5:30. What a menu! Steak, chicken with Portabella mushrooms, baby back ribs, pork loin, and chioppino. Wow, gourmet cooking in Lodi. We shared a table with Tom and Joyce, a gracious RV couple from the California high desert. They have a home, but have traveled about 8 months a year for the last 4 years. What a wonderful conversation we had with them. Like us, they don't plan their trips. They start with a decision to go north, south, east, or west, and then let the journey unfold.

Lodi was an unplanned stop necessitated by fatigue, yet it was a perfect evening. Joy and opportunity are everywhere! Can we learn to quiet our minds and see what is available around us? Perhaps that is the goal of our great escape.

Until next time, our home is where we park it.

Chuck & Donna