

Dear Friends & Relatives, Saturday, 4/23/2005

Greetings from 7 Feathers Indian Casino in Canyonville, Oregon. We are dry camped (no hookups) here for the night. Dry camping here is free and we really don't need hookups anyway. At the moment we have 92 gallons of fresh water on board and about 30 gallons of propane, our 8 house batteries are fully charged, both holding tanks are empty, and we have 75 gallons of diesel. We don't have solar electricity yet, but we can always fire up the 8 kilowatt diesel generator if we need more electricity.

The cell phone does not have the enhanced signal we need to send email, so we are not sure when we will be able to send this message, probably Monday when we hit the big city of Springfield, OR. The casino is next to a large, beautiful river where Donna walked our dog, Annika, when we first arrived. We left warm, almost hot weather in Northern California, but it is cool and rainy here in Oregon this weekend. The weeds are growing taller and taller in Trinity County, but we don't have to mow any of them! Yay!

Well the great escape is sort of underway. We no longer have any "home base" and are pretty much vagabonds. Donna has shut down her tax office in Weaverville, we've moved the motorhome out of Douglas City, we no longer have any 623-xxxx Trinity County phones, and we've closed our Douglas City post office box and left no forwarding address. Wow, sounds kind of final, doesn't it? On the other side of the coin, we're still not completely free. We still have a lot of stuff to work on and sell before we can really hit the road with complete abandon. We just got a newsletter from our very special friends, Gary and Linda, who are working on their great escape via a 40 ft. catamaran sailboat. Their newsletter prompted us to send another one of ours.

Well, the fixes, modifications, and improvements to the motorhome seem to be neverending. On Monday we are taking out the 2000 watt "modified sine wave" inverter (12 volt DC to 117 volt AC) and replacing it with a unit that produces a true sine wave like you get from your power company. We would have purchased a true sine wave unit in the first place, but it was not an option when we purchased the coach. If we could do it again, we would not get one with the coach and put the better unit in ourselves. For most things, the modified sine wave works okay, but our microwave oven definitely doesn't like it and moans and groans. Also, there are definite problems with modified sine wave and some computer printers. The modified sine wave units have the advantage of being cheaper and more tolerant to overload. The true sine wave units are slightly more efficient and produce AC power that is compatible with everything.

In our last newsletter, we told you about the problem of having cupboard doors and drawers opening in hard turns and fast stops. After a ton of research and a lot of time online, we think we have the solution in hand. We purchased 50 brass, chrome-plated slide latches and we are about to latch down every single cabinet and drawer while traveling. But, yes, there was another glitch. The brass latches came with brass screws made in China. The heads of the screws are so soft that you can't tighten them down without stripping out the Philips head. Yesterday, we went to a fastener company and purchased 300 steel screws. That should solve the problem. We will find out right after this letter.

Now there is a problem putting in the solar system that we want. Many of you know that the price of anything made of steel has skyrocketed. This is because China has been buying up scrap steel from all over the world. They are paying such a high price that our scrap dealers are shipping overseas and hence, there is a shortage of steel and thus, high prices in the U.S. (Although evidently they are NOT making screws out of this steel!) You have also probably noticed that the price of diesel has skyrocketed and in fact, is often more expensive than gasoline. Why is that? Once again China is buying up the most appropriate crude oil for making diesel. China has an industrial expansion going on that staggers the imagination. Now, Germany has seen the light and has no intention of being held captive by the oil producing nations of the World. So, Germany is going solar big time and is paying such a high price that the U.S. has a dramatic shortage of solar panels. If that's not bad enough, the French just caught on and are copying the German solar strategies. The end result is a serious shortage of solar panels in the U.S. that is likely to continue for some time. If you want solar panels, start building a relationship with a dealer, don't expect deals, and expect to wait.

I used to be a strong proponent of worldwide free trade, but that was before I realized that a lot of foreign governments are smarter than ours. Sorry for the political essay. There is a light at the end of the tunnel and we are moving down the road to independence and relative freedom. We're focusing on the bright side so I'm not going to bitch about the \$154 worth of fuel we purchased today. (Gary and Linda, the idea of having sails sounds really good at the moment.)

Well that's the good, the bad, and the ugly for this newsletter. Please remember that when we have an Internet connection, it's usually pretty darn slow. So, don't send us jokes and try and keep your graphics to a minimum. If you're sending pictures, crop them down and lower the resolution.

Caution: This lifestyle might be contagious. Another of our friends, Jennifer, has just sold her home, is searching for the right RV and expects to travel full time for a year. We look forward to meeting up with her on the road.

The casino shuttlebus is coming down the road, so we are going to hop on board and head for the casino for cocktails and dinner.

Until next time, "home is where you park it."

Chuck & Donna