

Dear Friends,

Greetings from **Blaine, Washington.**

We are trapped in Blaine, Washington. No, we haven't had a breakdown. Yep, our health is okay. No, we haven't run out of money. We are trapped by the television coverage of the Olympics. My oh my, what a show. We sincerely hope that you're enjoying the Olympics as much as we are.

As you drive up Interstate 5 through Oregon and Washington, it all looks about the same... boring. But, when you get off the freeway there is so much to see and do. We are currently camped at **Beachwood RV Resort** which is kind of a dump. It's a very large park with lots of low end RVs all packed together like sardines. It's also packed with young Canadian families with lots of young children in tents. The Canadians seem to love it. We can't figure out why. We are only about 7 miles from the Canadian border, so if you want to camp out in America, Blaine is easy to get to. The Canadians don't seem to go anywhere. They just sit around their campsite or take their kids to the pool. Well, to each his own.

Ah, but Blaine is right on Puget Sound. Actually, it sits on Drayton Harbor, which is just lovely. Our park borders on **Birch Bay**, which is also very beautiful. Unfortunately, there are too many trees to see Birch Bay from the park. But just drive a few miles and the beauty of these Puget Sound bays and harbors are just stunning. We have fallen head over heels in love with all of Puget Sound. When you get a clear and sunny day, the beauty is incredible. Well, okay, there aren't very many sunny days in Washington. Your best bet for good weather is definitely August. In August you've probably got a 50-50 chance of sunny vs. fog, rain, and cold.

But, we're ahead of ourselves. When last you heard from us, we were having a blast at an airshow in Arlington, Washington. After the airshow, we went southeast over the Cascade Mountain Range. It's a beautiful drive on Highway 2. Good two lane road and perfectly okay for a motorhome. After you get over the mountains, you immediately drive along a beautiful stream and come upon **Cole's Corner**. We knew we'd have to come back to visit that spot. After Cole's Corner, you come upon the quaint and interesting Bavarian styled town of **Leavenworth**. We certainly had to come back and see Leavenworth also. We pressed on and passed through **Wenatchee** on our way to our beautiful campground on the Columbia River near **Quincy**. We parked at **Crescent Bar RV Resort** which is part of the Leisure Time Resorts chain.



Crescent Bar.

The resort is down in this spectacular gorge. Wow, the beauty literally takes your breath away. But there was a problem. Bad planning on our part. Once you get to the east side of the Cascade Mountains, the wet and cold of the Washington Coast is replaced by desert. A beautiful four hour drive through the mountains and you end up in an entirely different world. So what's the problem, you ask. Well, July may not be the perfect time to visit the desert. Particularly down in this gorge where the temperature ran about five degrees hotter than the plateaus above. As luck would have it, this particular park had very poor electrical power, so we could barely run one air conditioner and nothing else. No computers, etc. We had nine days reserved, but the heat drove us out after six days. Still, it's a fantastic area and we want to return during a cooler month.

We got up early one morning while it was cool and headed back through Leavenworth on the motorcycle to Cole's Corner. It's a pretty area, but other than a gas station and a restaurant, there isn't much there.



Chuck at Cole's Corner, Washington.

After spending five minutes in Cole's Corner where Donna attempted, with no luck, to find anything with "Cole's Corner" written on it at the little souvenir shop attached to the restaurant, we turned around and went back to Leavenworth.

The town of Leavenworth is clearly a tourist town. Some might call it a tourist trap. We, on the other hand, would describe it as brilliant and courageous. Originally, the area was populated by Yakima, Chinook, and Wenatchi tribes of Native Americans. The area was eventually settled by pioneers in search of gold, furs, and fertile farmland. By 1890 the original town was built. At the end of the century, the Great Northern Railway Company laid tracks through Leavenworth and the town really began to prosper. Ultimately, the railroad pulled out, the sawmill closed, and Leavenworth lived on the brink of extinction for more than thirty years.

But in the early 1960's, everything changed. In a last-chance effort to turn their precarious situation around, the leaders of the community decided to change Leavenworth's appearance, hoping to bring tourism into the area. Using the beautiful backdrop of the surrounding Alpine hills to their advantage, the town agreed to remodel their hamlet in the form of a Bavarian village.



Leavenworth, Washington.

Hoping to create more than a mere facelift, the entire community rallied to create the illusion of Bavaria in the middle of Washington state. Besides the complete renovation of the downtown area, community members worked to begin a series of festivals. The Autumn Leaf Festival, Maifest and the extremely popular Christmas Lighting Ceremony were the first of many attractions Leavenworth offered to passers-by.

And it worked!! Since the change to a Bavarian motif, Leavenworth has become a pillar of the tourism industry in the Pacific Northwest. Today, more than a million tourists come to Leavenworth each year, each visitor finding their own individual love affair with the community. The story is a landmark case of the human spirit: Not only did the people of Leavenworth survive their most critical hour, but they endured.



Bavarian styled shops in Leavenworth, Washington.

We spent an entire day shopping, eating, and drinking good beer. We had a great time. Was it worth a day? You bet. We spent about an hour listening to a Swiss accordion player that could yodel better than anyone we have ever heard. It was a really fun free concert.



Swiss yodeler in Leavenworth, Washington.

Another great hour was spent in the **Nutcracker Museum**. Absolutely unbelievable! One of the finest nutcracker collections in the world. We had no idea that collecting nutcrackers was such a worldwide hobby. Case after case, wall after wall, room after room, nutcrackers everywhere.





Nutcracker Museum, Leavenworth, Washington.

Now we told you that we enjoyed good food, good beer, and good entertainment. But for Donna, the highlight was one of the many candy shops. This particular candy shop had one of Donna's all time favorites--the candied apple. So what's the big deal? Lots of places have candied apples. Ah yes, but this shop had selection. A selection of fresh candied apples that was mind blowing. The picture below only shows some of the choices.



Candied apple case.

After a full day in Leavenworth, we got back on the bike and headed back to the desert and our beautiful gorge on the Columbia River. It was only about a one hour drive, but the heat all but finished us off. Enough is enough, we made the decision to pack up and leave early. So two days later, we headed south and west on Interstate 90. The goal was to get back on the western side of the Cascade Mountains. But that's another story.

Travel Plans:

We will leave Beachwood RV Resort on Friday, August 15 and move to Birch Bay RV Resort which is also in Blaine, Washington.

Until next time, home is where we park it.

Chuck & Donna