

Dear Friends,

Greetings from **Whidbey Island, Washington.**

We hope you had a wonderful Labor Day weekend. We certainly did, but we didn't get to bar-b-que and drink beer. Sixty degrees and drizzling rain isn't what we expect at Labor Day. We had fun, but it was a different kind of fun. Here is the rest of the story.

After three parks and three weeks in the Blaine/Ferndale, Washington area, we finally escaped. Although there is much to see in the area, including jaunts into **Canada**, we really did not see very much thanks to the extremely wet weather. We pulled out on Thursday, August 28, a day earlier than planned. We were heading for Whidbey Island with no reservations and we wanted to get ahead of the Labor Day traffic. Whidbey is a relatively long, narrow island in Puget Sound. The largest town is **Oak Harbor** which is dominated by **Whidbey Island Naval Air Station**. When Chuck was in high school, he was in the Naval Air Reserve which required that he spend one weekend a month at Oakland, California Naval Air Station, and two weeks a year at Whidbey Island Naval Air Station. Wow, has Oak Harbor grown up. Just another fairly large town with shopping malls and a Wal-Mart. There is a small Elks Lodge in town with seven RV spaces with electricity and water, but no dump. Not particularly attractive, but available with six empty spots. \$12 a night and maybe a couple of bucks over priced. We elected to drive just a couple of miles further and check out a city park with RV hookups. Bingo! Oak Harbor has a very beautiful municipal park right on the water with full hookup RV spots. They charge a flat \$20 a night and are worth it.



Oak Harbor as seen from the municipal park.

The municipal park has beautiful walking trails all around and through it. The above picture is what we saw on our nightly walks when it wasn't raining. There is also a beautiful trail through a protected marsh which takes you right to Wal-Mart and many other stores. About a mile from the park was a great seafood store. They had their own

boat and brought in fresh seafood every day. They also had an aerated holding tank for live crabs. They cooked crab every morning and you could buy live or cooked crab at very, very reasonable prices. Large live crabs were only \$5.50 a pound and cooked and cleaned were only \$6.50 a pound. That's way cheaper than we have seen in a long time. Yes, we have been pigging out on extremely fresh Dungeness crab.



Life guard tower disguised as a windmill at Oak Harbor City Park.

The park had acres and acres of beautiful, thick, well manicured lawns. Plenty of room to fly kites, play baseball, football, etc. There were lots of picnic tables and bar-b-que areas and benches. There was also a lovely bandstand and a free concert every Thursday night by the community band. All in all, one of the nicest community parks we have ever seen. Because the park is right on the water, it's a favored spot for ducks and seagulls. When Annika was younger, she loved to chase seagulls and collect seagull feathers. Well, she's gotten a little old for the chasing part and she wouldn't accept any feathers unless they were fresh and of good quality.



Annika with a premium seagull feather.

We came into the park around lunch time on Thursday, but couldn't do much because of the wet and cold. On Saturday afternoon, we got a break in the weather and took a short motorcycle ride south to the quaint harbor town of **Coupeville**. Coupeville is right on **Penn Cove** and Penn Cove is famous for their mussels which are shipped to restaurants nationwide. Coupeville has a very nice small museum

which nicely illustrates the history of this town. It is a very old town and has more than 100 buildings listed on the National Historic Register. **Mary**, who ran the museum, was a delightful source of information. Chuck asked her what the weather in winter is like. She said that it rains all the time, you don't see the sun for months, sometimes it snows, the wind blows hard, and power outages lasting for days are common. "Well, how about Spring," he asked. She told us that this Spring was the wettest Spring in recorded history. "Well, how about Summer?" "We didn't have one this year." "Why do you live here?" "Grandkids." Well Mary pretty well summed up our Summer experience in the state of Washington. We sit in the motorhome for days and watch the rain and about the time we are ready to give up and head south, we get a day or two that is so spectacular, it makes it all worthwhile.



Chuck on the Coupeville Wharf.

After a delicious ice cream cone in Coupeville, we hopped back on the bike and headed for **Fort Casey** and the **Keystone State Parks**. We would certainly have missed Ft. Casey had it not been for a tip from our friend, **David** in Ventura, California. David told us we should go to Ft. Casey and see the famous and historic "disappearing cannons." In the 1890s, Ft. Casey on Whidbey Island, Ft. Worden at Port Townsend and Ft. Flagler on Marrowstone Island were established with 10 inch cannons to form a "Triangle of Fire" guarding the entrance to Puget Sound. The idea was to protect Bremerton Naval Shipyard, Everett, Seattle, and Tacoma. The forts never saw combat, but they were heavily used during World War I for training. Shortly thereafter, the forts were declared obsolete and by 1945 all of the cannons had been sold or melted down as scrap. At the start of World War II, Ft. Casey was reactivated as a training center. Barracks were rebuilt and anti-aircraft guns were mounted in the old cannon emplacements. In 1950, Ft. Casey was again deactivated. But in 1956, the Washington State Parks purchased Ft. Casey and in 1968, they were able to purchase two disappearing cannons from the Philippines. The cannons are loaded down behind very thick concrete walls and then pop up to shoot and then drop down to be reloaded. The ammunition is extremely well protected in underground bunkers. All in all, it's a very interesting park and well worth your time to visit.



One of the abandoned 10 inch cannon stations.

There were originally seven of these large 10 inch gun emplacements. Fortunately two are being refurbished with cannons. Unfortunately, the area was roped off during construction and we were unable to get photographs.

Also at the park is a historic lighthouse worth visiting. The lighthouse was first built in 1858, removed in the 1890s, and then reconstructed. In the 1920s it was declared obsolete. Now it has been converted into an interpretive center and museum.



Admiralty Head Lighthouse on Whidbey Island.

After touring the lighthouse, it got very cold so we hopped back on the motorcycle and headed for our motorhome in Oak Harbor. It was a great Saturday afternoon. We had so much fun on Saturday that we decided we would motorcycle tour all day on Sunday. So Sunday morning we put on boots, rain pants, heavy waterproof jackets, heavy gloves, and full face helmets. We were determined to see the rest of Whidbey Island even if we got drenched. The weather looked threatening and it was definitely cold, but we managed to see all of the southern end of Whidbey without getting wet. Our primary goal was to visit the town of **Langley** which is quite a little artist community. We had a so-so lunch at **The Dog House** restaurant which is in a 100 year old building that overlooks **Saratoga Passage**. The

restaurant and tavern were established in 1933.

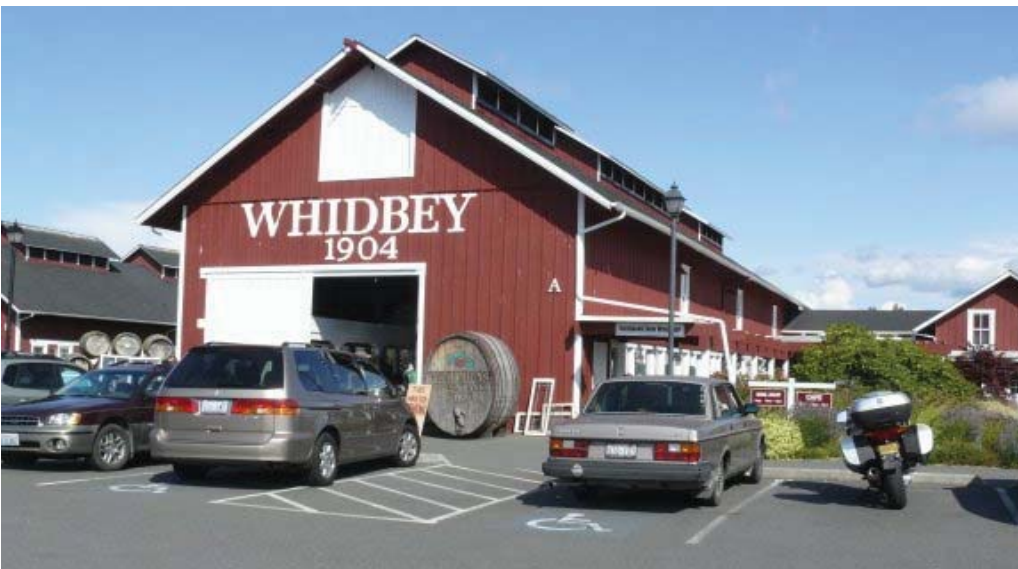


Saratoga Passage as seen from The Dog House restaurant.

After lunch, we walked the entire town and visited just about every shop. Somehow, we resisted all temptation except for another ice cream cone. Leaving Langley, we once again headed south determined to see more of the south end of the island. We went to the town of **Clinton** and took a brief tour of the ferry terminal. There is a ferry that goes from Clinton to Mukilteo which is about 10 miles from Everett via Hwy 526 or about 30 miles to Seattle via Hwy 525 and I-5. Well, the truth is there isn't much in Clinton to see or do.

Just a side note about Whidbey Island. There are only three ways on and off the island. There is a bridge across Deception Pass to Fidalgo Island, a ferry from Ft. Casey to Port Townsend, and a ferry from Clinton to Mukilteo. The only other choices are private boats and sea plane services.

Okay, so we saw the south end of the island and now it was time to head north again. We took the main road heading toward Oak Harbor, but we were planning a quick stop at **Greenbank Farm**. This is a tiny little community featuring antiques, cafe and pie shop, wine tasting, a cheese shop and miscellaneous vendors set up in a grassy field on weekends. We bought some darn good cheese and a large bag of the best kettle corn we have ever eaten. Wow! Light, fluffy, and perfectly seasoned.



Main antique barn at Greenbank Farm. Our motorcycle is on the right.

By now it's after 5 p.m. and the vendors are loading their trucks and leaving. We are exhausted and ready to once again brave the cold and head for Oak Harbor. In spite of the fact that we wore rain pants the whole day and heavy clothes, it was still a pleasure to turn on the heated handlebars and the heated seats. Dang, August in Washington has been a whole 'nuther kettle of fish.



Smart Car in Oak Harbor.

While in Washington we had hoped to go to Canada and see and drive one of the original **Smart** cars with a turbo diesel engine. Unfortunately, the weather just wasn't good enough. But, low and behold, a Canadian turbo diesel Smart car showed up in our park. The gal who owned it was more than happy to show it to us. It was two years old and had 45,000 problem-free miles. She commutes to work in it and drives the freeway at about 70 miles per hour. At these speeds, she claims her fuel mileage averages 65 miles per gallon! Diesel Smart cars are all over the world, but not the U.S. Our government will not allow them to be sold in our country since they don't meet U.S. smog standards. Good grief, how much smog can a 900cc engine getting 65 mpg produce? Yes, Penske is now bringing in a U.S. legal Smart car, but our version has a larger, naturally aspirated, gasoline engine that only gets a little over 40 miles per gallon. Do we have a stupid bureaucracy or has big oil bought off our government? It's a sad story that gets worse. Since the diesel version can't be sold in the U.S., Mercedes has decided not to sell them in Canada either. Apparently, the Canadian market is just too small to bother with. It looks like we will have to give up the thought of ever owning one. Rats!

Well we have to sign off now and drive the rig to Keystone Harbor and catch the ferry to Port Townsend. It should be an interesting trip and we'll save hours of driving. We will tell you more about it in our next travelogue.

Travel Plans:

We will get off the ferry at Port Townsend and then go west to **Sequim**, Washington. We expect to be in Sequim from September 2 to September 16. We will definitely be at the **Monaco Homecoming Rally** in **Salem**, Oregon from September 21 through September 25. Monaco motorhomes only.

Until next time, home is where we park it.

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