

Dear Friends & Family, July 8, 2005

Greetings from Yakima, Washington. A couple of days ago we sent you an update from Moses Lake, Washington. We are now a little southwest and tomorrow we continue south heading toward Redmond, Oregon.

At any rate, in that last letter we told you how much we liked our week of RV school, but we were also exhausted. As a result, we took a fairly short trip north to Coeur D'Alene, Idaho and spent four days resting up in a truly wonderful Elks Lodge. The Elks allowed us to dry camp on a lovely lawn area for only \$5 a day. Even though it was 4th of July weekend, there were also water and electric sites still available for only \$12 per day. The Lodge is quite small, but really fun, and very inexpensive. We pulled in and headed straight for the bar. We ordered a couple of 16 oz. draft beers at only \$1.75 each and then we were shocked when the Lodge bought us a second round as a welcome gesture. Dinners and breakfasts were very nice and incredibly cheap. If you're an Elk and get near Coeur D'Alene, that little Lodge is the place to go.

Coeur D'Alene celebrated 4th of July with a really fun parade through the downtown area. It reminded us of Weaverville's parade, but had lots more entries. Coeur D'Alene's fireworks are shot over the lake, for a stunning show. In addition, professional looking fireworks are sold to regular citizens in northern Idaho, so there were fireworks going off all around us for about 3 nights. No "safe and sane" fireworks for these folks. Coming from the northern California forests where fireworks have been banned for about as long as we can remember, it was quite a display.

Here is a hot tip for you. If you drive north from Coeur D'Alene on Hwy 95, you will come to a charming town called Sandpoint and Idaho's largest and deepest lake, Lake Pend Oreille (pictured below.) Lake Pend Oreille is 43 miles long and 1,200 feet deep. If you then head east about 12 miles you will get to the town of Hope. Now, if you go just a little way past Hope, you will find an RV resort called, "Beyond Hope." This is one gorgeous destination. The RV resort is right on the lake with a lovely swimming area, nice dock with boats for rent, a 4 star restaurant, and a charming rustic bar. The parking has beautiful grass sites with lots of distance between RVs and tons of tame deer all over the area. This resort is truly a destination and not just a place to stop. The beauty of the lake is incredible and certainly equals Tahoe and Crater Lake. We were stunned. The lake is huge and magnificent, and we had never heard of it! Humbling in one sense and exciting in another. Are there hundreds of other beautiful spots in the U.S. of which we know nothing? There must be. What an adventure we have started!



Also in Northern Idaho is a smaller lake, Priest Lake. In the same area is the Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge. More than 2,000 acres, it has an abundance of wildlife including elk, deer, moose and bear. We definitely have to come back to this area since we only just scratched the surface of places to see and things to do. Well heck, once you're in Sandpoint, Idaho, maybe you'll also want to drive another hour and cross into Canada. Golly, once you're in Canada you might as well continue on and see Alaska. We are finding it very difficult to turn around and head south again.

But south we did go and we are in the Yakama Nation RV Park in Toppenish. This is a very nice Indian RV park located about a block from an unusual Indian Casino. The casino is nice, but small and has two unusual characteristics: 1.) It allows no alcohol. We've never seen a casino without alcohol. Most unusual. 2.) It books big name entertainment. Last night Kenny Rogers was here.

Tomorrow morning we head off for the Great North American RV Rally in Redmond, Oregon. We don't know what to expect except that this is one big deal of an RV event. They are sold out and have more than 5,000 rigs from all over the nation. There will be about 15,000 people, big name entertainment, and 150 RV-related vendors. We don't know if we will love it or hate it, or something in between. We will drop you a note from Redmond and let you know.

In the meantime, home is where you park it.

Chuck & Donna