

Oh! Washington!



Monday, October 20, 2008

Four the past four days I have been fortunate enough to be able to travel around with my husband while he filled in for a co worker in Washington State. I say I am fortunate because I have never seen this part of Washington before – ever. We’ve touched down in Yakima, Yakima Canyon, Richland, The Tri Cities area, Pasco, Cannel, Sunnyside, and Outlook. Those of you, who know me, know that I’m not a spring chicken anymore. When I first saw this part of Washington it was easy to just be full of awe at the wondrous sites. But, as I have seen more, I’ve realized even if I ever wanted to live in this place I’d never make it. It looks cold even when it’s not, and this arthritis that I now have would never allow me to live here. Oregon is bad enough on that account. Washington is a great place to visit. As Clyde’s job took him up the Columbia Gorge today, I have learned that there is far more to Washington than evergreen trees and apples. Cousin, Keith, is right, the mighty Columbia River is nothing more than a series of Lakes with dams spaced at a predicable rate up the river. As we traveled up the river today, and I peered over, I couldn’t help but wonder just what it was that ran through the minds of Lewis and Clark as they followed the water. That river flows through some mighty canyons. And I had no idea how much of this river and its Gorge was actually in Washington State and not in Oregon at all!!! Today the wind is blowing pretty hard. It was blowing the van all over the road. There has been rain in some places, enough to wash the bugs off the windshield. But, most the day has been sunny, as we are ahead of the coming storms. The roads between Wenatchee and Richland are mostly flat and between the Steeps, plateaus and mountains. And the views are so vast and clear that I could see the dust, or probably more accurate, the top soil being blown off the mountains and onto the valley floors. That’s windy!!! He has one more call to take care of before he can drop off keys to his co worker and then head home. Home is an eight hour drive from Yakima and probably 10 hours from this last call in Cannel, Washington. It’s pretty cool all I’ve seen. A gas station built to look like a teapot, probably in the 1940’s. Now it’s a National Historical Place. Oh, and the irrigation system here, also a National Hysterical Place. Having spent my teenager years in Sacramento Valley (Orland), with the irrigation ditch right behind my grandparents farm, the system here doesn’t

really impress me. I do see it as equal to what was done in California. But, what I have made note of is that without this irrigation we'd not be enjoying a few things we really take for granted, like apples. 75% of the nation's supplies of hops are grown here! I was so happy to see hop plants. When I was growing up a lot of hops were grown in northwestern Oregon. I saw them every year when visiting my grandparents, and when they went away, I really missed them. I guess they moved to Washington! And don't laugh friends in Sonoma County, but GRAPES! You'll soon be getting a run for your money, with competition from the folks in the "Palm Springs of Washington!" It doesn't feel much like grape country here, but I have to admit, I am tainted by my California heritage, and by living in Sonoma County for 10 years. In this country, there are many stock animals. Horses and cattle everywhere! Speaking of those cowboy animals! I truly believe this is the last of the "old west" right here. I truly believe we drove through an area that should have been named the "badlands". In this remote area you've got miles of ferocious, wild, tumbling sagebrush. Along with a thousand old barns and corrals just waiting to be photographed! But, more than that, It's obvious that the culture here more revolves around ranching than where I grew up. Walk into a Wal-mart (we did) and you'll see nine out of ten of the adult (ahem, mature) men wearing cowboy boots! Free magazines at 7-11 included, a horse magazine for those who love the rodeo (a.k.a. Horse loving) life. I thought I grew up in a "cow town". Okay, laugh now, the East side, otherwise known as the East Bay, of San Francisco Bay did have agriculture back in my day and before! After all, the high school I went to was built in the middle of a cow pasture, and so we kids called it "cow pie high." Each year our family crossed the Dumbarton Bridge and headed north to South San Francisco and the Cow Palace to partake of the Grand National, the grand daddy of all rodeos. We made the rounds of the stables; I knew the stock was coming from all over the Western United States. But, knowing a place where something or someone comes from in your minds eye and "seeing" it, so that you really "know" can be and are, in this instance, two different critters! Yesterday was Sunday. Clyde did not have one call. So, we headed down "old Canyon Road" and into the Yakima Canyon. This road was finally modernized just in 2004. Before that it was the same road that was there nearly 80 years ago; narrow, winding, but beautiful from what I saw. It was here, that I saw my very first wild Big Horn Sheep. What a thrill that was. I saw them running, trotting, and jumping down some pretty shear drops. One sheep dropped down such a steep jump that it literally took my breath away to watch it. Clyde stopped in some pretty strategic spots so that I could take photos. I tried to get some "post cards" of some pretty spectacular fall colors. I'll pass along some photographs after I process them. I guess, the biggest joy of this trip was realizing and then SEEING the town of Goldendale in Klickitat County. For those of you Coop cousins, you know what the big deal is of this town. For those of you who are not, my maternal Great Great Grandparents spent some time near here, in fact according to the San Francisco Morning Call, my great great Grandmother, Lydia Burbank Hinkley Coop died near this town. From her grandson, Charles Eslum Coop, I learned years ago that she was buried in "Pine Forest Cemetery" in Goldendale, Washington. The mystery over the years has been, "where is this cemetery." As we drove up the Gorge up from Oregon (we crossed at The Dalles), the first and obvious observation is why in the world anyone would name a cemetery "Pine Forest" when there aren't any trees in sight! Then as we got closer to Goldendale, I saw that there were Cottonwood trees, which were very numerous along the creeks. When Goldendale was finally in my eyesight I could see that there was a "Pine Forest" that started just about at the town: A literal forest of what I think are Ponderosa Pines. I contacted a local expert on the cemeteries

here in Klickitat County. After hearing all the facts, and making sure that there are no cemeteries in Klickitat County called "Pine Forest", he believes that my great great grandmother was probably buried close to where she lived/ or died in that forest surrounding Goldendale. He is unaware of any headstones up there, not that she's not be there somewhere. He did email me some maps of areas that he feels are more probable areas where we might find her. Other than knowing where the family actually lived, we are pretty much out of luck in finding her. More than likely, this mystery is as solved as it will ever be. Kind of sad, I'd liked to be able to put flowers on her grave or paid some kind of tribute to her memory where she lay. Clyde and I had a fun debate Saturday morning. We kept seeing a mountain top. It seemed logical that we would not be able to see Mount Hood from here. But we passed it on the way up here, and saw it until we went around Goldendale. I had read about Mt. Adams being near, so my money was on Mount Adams. Clyde kept saying that we must be seeing Mount Rainer. As it turns out, we realized after getting turned around at the FedEx office (to pick up a part for a job) that we were seeing two mountain tops! Sunday morning, Clyde wanted a 'real' breakfast so we went to Denny's. We had the pleasure of sitting next to a nice couple. She had personality to spare. She thought we should pay for the pleasure of sitting in the table next to hers! She was helpful in pointing out "free" things that we could go and see and do, AND Clyde asked her what mountains we were seeing, and we were seeing, Mount Adams and Mount Rainer. I loved the way that woman said grace when her breakfast arrived, "Lord, Thank you for this food, I hope it goes down good, Amen." Honest, and to the point. It's reaching the point where I'm almost dreading going into public with Clyde. He is very vocal about his political views. Not that I disagree a whole heck of a lot with them, but I don't go around voicing my views. In my family, when I was growing up, it was not polite to talk of religion, politics, and sex! My how the world has changed! But this couple voiced many of the same concerns we have. If my observations mean anything, than McCain has rural Washington sewn up. But, Washington like Oregon has most of its population in its cities, and it is the city population that decides for the whole state what happens on the state level decisions. I don't know how Washington will go on that level, but it is clear in Oregon that Obama will take the state by a good margin. I found out why that certain rail road is called the Rock Island Line. Lot's of rocks here! LOL, sometimes, I can make things so difficult to figure out, when in fact, a rock is just a rock! Ok, Fantastical Rock formations that took thousands if not millions of years to form! I'm done!!! I can yak forever! Take care.

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