

**Los Angeles to Oak Ridge – 3 Dec. 90:** The day started with a 4 am wakeup call from the desk of the Crowne Plaza Hotel at the LA Airport. The major goal of today was to make the trip from Los Angeles to our home in Oak Ridge. That was to be accomplished by our Delta flight to Knoxville, TN via Atlanta, GA. Steve would pick us up at the Knoxville Airport for the 40 minute drive to Oak Ridge. Our Delta Flight to Atlanta with connections to Knoxville was scheduled to leave at 6:05am so we hustled around to get ready. We checked out of the hotel and luckily there was a shuttle bus waiting to take us to the airport. There was a stop at a nearby Radisson Hotel where about 15 military guys and gals got on. The shuttle let us off at the Delta terminal and we worked our way through the check-in and security hassle.

Our Delta Flight left from gate 53 and we arrived there about 5:30am. We found our East Tennessee neighbors and Amsterdam cruising friends, Doug and Jean, waiting for the same flight that we had. We were alarmed by the fact that Jean had her left arm in a sling. It turned out that in all the luggage handling in the last few days of packing and getting off the Amsterdam, Jean had aggravated a previous shoulder injury. She was holding up well but not looking forward to the flight across the country. The good news was that with the shoulder injury she and Doug could board the plane early with the 1st class passengers. That should ease the problem of finding space for the carry-on luggage.

With the charges being made for checking luggage nowadays it seems everyone is carrying as much as possible into the passenger cabin so if you board late there is little room left for your stuff. We got a photo of Doug and Jean with Barbara as shown on the right. We'll use this "before travel picture" along with an arrival picture to judge how well these cruising buddies survive air travel.



We boarded the plane and it left on time. The 4.5 hour flight to Atlanta was uneventful and we arrived about 1:30pm. There was a 2 hour layover in Atlanta which was a bit of a pain but we had Doug and Jean to chat with so the time went fairly fast. We boarded our flight to Knoxville about 3:30 and after the usual 30 minute wait on the tarmac for our turn we took off and after a 30 minute ride we landed at the Knoxville Airport about 4:30pm.

A welcome sight was son Steve waiting there in the airport breezeway. Jean took a picture of the three of us, shown on the right, back together again after the two month cruise. Steve had been saddled for two months with doing all the household stuff we would normally do. However, he looked great so maybe we should do this more often. Steve is also our blog-Meister and not only set us up with the blog but keeps it running when we have cyber-trouble on the high seas.



We also took a photo of Doug, Jean and us for the travel survival comparison test. Here on the four of us on the left. We are probably a little bit biased but it looks like these hearty souls survived very well and could do it again soon if the travel bug bites.

Actually, airline travel appears to be good for Jean's health since she apparently was able to shed the sling on her left arm sometime during the flight.

We parted with Doug and Jean at the airport with hugs and kisses. After traveling together for 63 days on a cruise ship the bonds get pretty strong.

Barbara took some time to photograph the beautiful fountain and wooden Black Bear statues that decorate the airport breezeway.

The fountain, shown on the right, must represent a considerable engineering achievement because it has a huge size but water flows out uniformly over the granite edge completely around the circumference.



The wooden statues of a black bear mother and cub greet passengers year around at the Knoxville Airport. At this time of year they put on Santa hats in preparation of the Christmas Season. Barbara's photos show these jaunty good will ambassadors on the right.



Steve had brought our car to the airport so we loaded our luggage and drove it back to Oak Ridge. We had recently heard the sad news that a friend of Becky had passed away after a long illness. Tonight Becky was at the funeral of her friend so she was not with Steve.

It was still daylight and Barbara's well trained eyes searched the gas stations as we passed. Never resting from the awesome task of gathering vital data she photographed the price signs for two stations as shown below.



At \$2.449 to \$2.499 per gallon, and based on what we have seen in the last two months in foreign lands, we conclude that the gasoline prices in our neighborhood may be some of the lowest in world.

On the way home from the airport we decided to skip going directly to our place and instead go to Steve's home where the grandchildren, Andrew and Emily were supposedly doing their homework. We were all hungry so we decided to pick up the grandkids and hit a local Italian restaurant known as the Gondolier. After about a 40 minute ride we got to Steve's home and had an enthusiastic reunion with the grandchildren. They are both growing fast now so we are really thankful that we can see them often to keep up with the changes. After the commotion died down a bit we gathered the grandkids and headed for the Gondolier.

We had three different kinds of pizza in order to get something everyone could eat. The waitress kindly took a picture of our impromptu coming home party, as shown on the right. We ate about half the pizza and boxed up the rest for snacks tomorrow.

Our waitress kindly took our picture after she had delivered the pizzas, as shown on the right.



Left to right: Steve, Emily (11yr) Barbara, Orlin, Andrew (13yr).

We finally had to go home. We dropped off Steve and the kids at their place and made our way the short distance to our home. Steve and our other son, Scott, had kept the place looking great so even though the leaves had all fallen, the drive way was clear and looked well used. Steve had even turned on the furnace so the place was a comfortable 71 degrees when we walked in. We always have a little uneasy feeling as we check out the house after being gone for long periods and we went through that again tonight. However, everything looked good and as if we had never left. Whew! That's a relief.

A stack of mail about 18 inches high accumulated while we were gone and there are doctor appointments and other things to take care of for the next few days so we will have no trouble filling the time. In addition, we are approaching Christmas at breakneck speed and the house needs some work to show the proper amount of Christmas Cheer. We will keep busy until the FedEx truck brings our four suitcases down the driveway and deposits them on our porch. We expect delivery on Tuesday 8 December. Our next and final entry to the blog will report on the FedEx delivery and how well our stuff did in transit.