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December, 2009

Our 18th year in Alaska!

Executive Summary:

- Diane still working for the State of Alaska as a Petroleum Geophysicist.
- Bruce still 'retired'
- Elyse is a junior at University of Wyoming
- Cin-D still a dog (you guessed it, 9th year in a row)
- We are still in Alaska (mostly)

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A Years Worth of News

Elyse and Dylan are now officially engaged, date to be set later. It could be Christmas 2010 or Summer 2011.

Diane's mom came up in May and we did a whirlwind tour of Skagway with her and our friend Rosy. Took the ferry from Juneau, had a very fun time. Skagway was the jumping off point (more or less) to the Yukon gold rush. The historic Chilkoot Trail starts just outside of town. Pictures are online at

<http://bshellenbaum.smugmug.com>

We had our driveway dug out, dug down 3 feet, filled and replaced. No more frost heave. Pictures are in the usual place (see above)

Elyse was only home for about 3 weeks this summer, went back to Laramie to take summer school. She will probably do the same next summer. She's working part time at the university's Early Childcare Education Center as well.

In September we went to Italy for two weeks. We spent the first week in Cinque Terre with 4 friends, where the pictures above were taken. Five small former fishing villages. Now mostly a tourist destination. Lots of good hiking and the ocean was the most gorgeous blue color.

The second week we all went our separate ways. Diane and I went to Venice for 2 nights and then Rome for another 3 days. Venice was totally cool. It was like a maze walking around. St. Mark's Square was awesome as you can't get a feel for it until you actually walk in. We found the Doge's Palace to be much more interesting than St. Mark's Basilica. The Doges were the actual rulers of Venice and they had quite the system of checks and balances on their powers.

Rome, what can I say about Rome, we walked all day long for 3 days. There was no way to take it all in, we didn't even come close. We paid big bucks for a hotel close to the Colosseum and paid even more for a room on the top floor with a balcony. We could see the Colosseum from our balcony and St Peter's Basilica off in the distance. Another week or two

and maybe we would have felt that we had 'seen' Rome.

Again, the pictures are online.

In October the family gathered in Denver for Glen's 80th birthday. Elyse and Dylan came down from Wyoming, Mary Lou from Illinois and Diane and Bruce from Alaska. Mark was there of course and our cousin Karen. We did a nice dinner at The Fort, one of our favorite places in Denver and we all went to see Wicked at the Performing Arts Center in Denver. Wicked was great. The basic plot is The Wizard of Oz as seen from the Wicked Witch's viewpoint.

Mid October and we had temperatures in the teens in Denver. Even the Alaskans were cold. We are heading back down in Mid December to collect Elyse in Denver and then flying to Kansas for a short visit with Diane's sister and her husband and their ever expanding clan (4 kids, 4 spouses, 7 grandkids, unless I've miscounted).

No misadventures with wildlife this year, Cin-D and I did run across one bear early in the hiking season, but we saw him well before any danger and just turned around and cut it short.

Cin-D is starting to show her age a bit, no longer racing up and down mountain valleys, more content to just

walk beside us. She still loves to lay down in every mud puddle and creek we come across.



Oh, I almost forgot, in March Mt. Redoubt started venting steam and ash. We had one fairly minor ash fall here in Anchorage, but it sure messed up air travel for several weeks. It turned all the snow gray and a few days later it snowed again. It completely hid the problem until breakup, at which time the ash came back out of the snow as a thick gray mud that got into everything. It is as fine as talcum powder when dry. 17 years, 2 volcanic eruptions, numerous earthquakes, a couple of flat out blizzards, cold weather to -30 degrees, wind that snaps 2 foot diameter trees at their base (we lost 2 such trees our very first fall here) and we still love it, wouldn't live anywhere else (the previous comment is subject to change at any time, the management assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of such statements).



Volcanic ash on snow

