

Roots in Ripon

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Chuck Roots

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A Little Traveling Music, Please

"A Little Traveling Music, Please," is the signature expression uttered by The Great One, Jackie Gleason on his television show from 1952-1966.

I have taken the liberty of borrowing this phrase to start my column this week. You see, Isaura and I, along with nine-year-old granddaughter Alyssa are currently in Delta, Utah, visiting her brother Tony and numerous other relatives.

What prompted this trip was my involvement in my hobby of singing barbershop. The Barbershop Harmony Society (BHS), the parent organization for all things barbershop, officiates an annual International Competition for barbershop quartets and choruses which is held in a major city somewhere around the country. This year we are gathering in Las Vegas.

Since I am a member of Voices of California (VoCal) out of Sacramento, I will be joining 71 other members of the chorus on stage competing against 29 other choruses. This is my first time to sing on the International stage. What an exciting opportunity!

Isaura's brother, Tony, has developed a very prosperous dairy farm here in Delta over the last eighteen years, and Isaura loves visiting whenever possible. So, we decided to head for Delta last Friday making this part of the overall trip to Vegas. We were thrilled when Alyssa asked to come with us. This would give her an opportunity to meet and get to know better some of her extended family. Plus, she was really excited to see (Great) Uncle Tony's cows!

The nearly 700-mile drive to Delta would likely be a challenge since we had not taken any of our grandkids on such a long trip before. But we planned it well, leaving Ripon at ten o'clock in the morning. About 12:30 we stopped at a Subway shop in Truckee for lunch. Then it was back on the road following Highway 80 east. Somewhere around Fallon, Nevada we cut over to pick up Highway 50 east. We basically stayed on this road for the remainder of the trip. We stopped a few more times. We grabbed a smoothie in Austin at an old bar and grill after traveling over small mountain ranges, and dipping into more valleys than I could count. When we arrived in Ely we stopped for dinner at a Denny's restaurant on the downtown drag. Casinos are everywhere! I've never been a big fan of this restaurant chain, mostly because the service has been terrible most everywhere I've stopped, but we were hungry and we didn't know any of the local eateries. Much to my delight, the service at this Denny's was superb, and the food was excellent.

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We finally rolled into Tony and Edna's about 11:30 that night. I did all the driving so I was pretty much done in. I was up early, made some strong coffee and did some reading. Isaura and Alyssa didn't show themselves till about mid-morning. We relaxed most of the day which we sorely needed. But Alyssa was anxious to have a tour of the dairy, so off we went. Crossroads Dairy runs more than two thousand cows which requires three eight-hour shifts for milking. It is quite a process with cows shuffling in and out of the milking barn. In one hour, a four-person crew is expected to milk 260 cows. If they move more than that through then they get a bonus. Tony has forty employees working somewhere on their spread every day.

Seeing the enormous undertaking required to bring milk and other dairy products to a store near you always leaves me deeply impressed by the efficiency of the entire system. However, I really enjoyed watching Alyssa marvel at the production required so she could have milk on her cereal. Computers control everything, including the amount of milk each cow produces in a day, along with the quantity of grain they eat and what kind, and very soon each cow will have a necklace of sorts that is computerized and will be able to record everything going on in the cow. If the cow starts to get sick, the device will signal the computer, and then that cow is pulled out of production and sent to their animal hospital for treatment. And the hospital is right here on the dairy.

Alyssa's favorite part is feeding the calves. At any one time, they have 500 or more calves (heifers) in individual shelters where they receive personalized attention until they're old enough to be released into the herd. I've been around these dairy farms and all that goes on since I was first introduced to Isaura's family in 1975. But as I mentioned earlier, I am always in awe of the strenuous and diligent work that is necessary in the care and feeding of the cows. Alyssa was thrilled to hold big milk bottles for the two-day-old calves to drink from.

Usually when Isaura and I are here in Delta, I'm invited to preach to the small independent evangelical congregation known as The Way, which meet in a store front. And so it was this weekend. What a wonderful time of fellowship we had!

Tomorrow morning I'm meeting Dan, one of the dairymen, at the Sunset View Golf Course for a round before it gets too warm.

On Tuesday, we leave for Las Vegas where I'll meet up with the others from VoCal so we can get a few more rehearsal sessions in before our Friday competition. Then it's back home to Ripon.

This evening Alyssa was asked if she'd like to live here in Delta, Utah. Her immediate answer was, YES! She loves animals and has expressed an interest for some time in being a veterinarian. I guess we'll have to wait and see.

Happy 241st Birthday, America!