

Roots in Ripon

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Chuck Roots

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www.chuckroots.com

No Place Like Home

Home Sweet Home! That is such a true statement. About an hour ago Isaura and I walked in our front door after ten days of romping and playing across California, Nevada and Utah. We even clipped the edge of Arizona on our drive from Delta, Utah to Las Vegas, Nevada. What a beautiful drive! Nevada and Utah have one thing in particular in common. Both states have specific high population areas. The rest of the state is open and fairly barren. For awesome scenic beauty, there are parts of eastern Utah that are simply breathtaking. Then there's the drive through the southern part of Utah that brings you through some fantastic mountains (a spill-over of the Rocky Mountains).

Our time spent with family was priceless. But the biggest treat for me was watching Alyssa, our nine-year-old granddaughter, rise up early three mornings in a row to help hold the super-sized milk bottles for the one and two-day-old heifers to nurse from.

So, on Tuesday we pulled out of Delta for the roughly five-hour drive to Las Vegas. We had booked tickets for Popovich's Comedy Pet Theater for the 2:30 show. We arrived in Vegas about 1:20, quickly settling into our hotel room at Bally's. We then walked to the V Theater for the show. It was a delightful performance with Popovich using most of the 30 dogs, cats, birds and mice he has rescued from animal shelters. It was non-stop activity on stage with several assistants helping keep things moving along. Alyssa loved the show! Popovich was in the lobby afterward to sell his books and CDs. We bought one of the CDs for Alyssa, and I took a nice picture of her with him in his clown costume.

It has been some time since I was last in Vegas, so either my memory is failing me, or the raunchiness of sex for sale has gone to new levels of depravity. There are no areas in the Vegas Strip that are safe from the sexual perversion that oozes from every casino, and ditto for the fleet of stores and entertainment facilities that feed off the lust we humans seem to have for money and sex. If it had not been for the International Barbershop Annual Competition held in the Axis Theater, located in Planet Hollywood next door to Bally's, you simply could not have gotten me to go there.

I had to call into question my being there at all in the midst of the raw nakedness evidenced on the sidewalks, not to mention the performers in the casinos. But then to have my wife and our nine-year-old Alyssa there, too, made me stop and rethink the wisdom of bringing her along. I suspect I'll be mulling this

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over for some time to come. There were, however, several street preachers positioned on the curbside using loudspeaker systems to proclaim God's Word from the Bible. I had to admire their tenacity. That's a rough place for ministry, but they were persistent in proclaiming God's righteousness, and calling sinners to repent from their immoral behavior. It was an amazing contrast to witness.

My time in Vegas was spent either resting in my hotel room, finding a decent place to eat that was close by, or rehearsing with the VoCal chorus in preparation for our performance on Friday afternoon. We seventy stout-hearted souls put all of our effort into giving our best performance. As I mentioned in my last column, we were going up against 29 other choruses. Well, as it turned out, we fell well short of our hoped-for score. When all the choruses were done on Friday, we placed 26th of the 30. We can take some consolation in the fact that very few choruses even make it to this level of competition, and furthermore, a chorus from our district, the Far Western District, took first place, receiving the coveted gold medal. We are very proud of the Santa Fe Springs, California chapter, Masters of Harmony, for winning first place.

As for the quartet competition, it was tight because the top ten quartets are just that good. These ten were left standing from the original 55 which started the competition on Thursday. The gold medal winning quartet, Main Street, is from Florida. Listening to these ten quartets competing down to the wire on Saturday night was such a treat. The musical quality and presentation on stage is worth the price of admission – literally! Afterward, Alyssa and I joined several of the VoCal chorus members down in the hotel's food court for some chocolate ice cream! Yum!

On Sunday morning, we attended a church service with other barbershop singers along with friends and family in the inner sanctums of Bally's Hotel and Casino. Then it was time to drag our suitcases down to the car and drive home.

It was a hectic ten days, but we sure had fun, especially with Alyssa. Next year our International Barbershop Competition will be in Orlando, Florida. Now won't that be fun!

But, when it's all said and done, there's no place like home!