

Family travels and farewells

During the time we were living in Maine we made a variety of trips with my family. We had Christmas visits when my parents would come to Massachusetts to see my sister and her children and then come up to Maine to visit us. We would all gather together on Christmas day in Boston.

We traveled extensively in New England with my parents, exploring local scenes. This got more difficult as the years went on and tourism increased so that it became difficult to find places to stay on the spur of the moment. Nonetheless we had many happy travels looking at waterfalls and mountains, wildlife and leaves, ocean and islands. I remember in particular one trip to Grand Manan Island where our accommodations turned out to be terrible and the weather unpleasant so we left early and traveled into Canada.

We made two trips to Mexico with my parents; one early on down to Monterey by car and another later to the colonial cities of Guanajuato and San Miguel. These were adventuresome tequila fueled good trips. They made us appreciate that central Mexican area which we visited ourselves in subsequent trips.

My parents invited us on an anniversary cruise to the southern Caribbean which would culminate in the stop in Caracas commemorating the family visit there in 1956. The cruise was a general success but because of problems with mudslides the ship did not stop in Venezuela. But we visited a sequence of Caribbean islands and got a taste for Caribbean cruise life. It was enjoyable but not something we chose to repeat. The pervasive feeling of being an intruder on someone else's land and being constantly asked to give money was difficult. Tourists were helping support the islands and degrade them at the same time. My best moment was encountering a sea turtle while snorkeling off one of the islands.

One of the last trips we took with both parents we visited New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island: ferry boat rides, walking on beaches, visiting interesting towns, the strange scenery of Prince Edward Island. I remember especially standing with my father on beaches looking out of the sea. We didn't guess this would be the last trip. Within a year he was bedridden and declining.

When we moved to Oregon after my father died, my mother was increasingly unable to travel so she never visited us in our new home. I think it would've been possible in the early years but it didn't work out that way. Some tensions with my

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sister at the time of our move blocked that.

My sister and I did take my mother on two trips after she came north, to visit her sister Alice in Florida, and to her sister Margaret's funeral in Pittsburgh. Big family reunions became more difficult after Margaret died, as her capacious house had been a center for many reunions.

When my mother became ill with enough heart problems that it was not feasible for her to stay in their lovely house outside Austin, we all decided that she would move near Boston with my sister. Over the years Anne and I have come to think that it might have been better for her to stay in Texas and be visited by us frequently. My sister would disagree with this strongly though.

Mom first lived first with my sister and then in an assisted living. I made about five or six trips a year to see her. They were always fun trips although toward the end as her health declined they had a more urgent tone — they involved a lot of transcontinental flying, which was difficult but not as difficult as it has become more recently.

We visited with Anne's family less frequently but any time we were in the Chicago area on business, or when we were coming for a summer visit or a family reunion or an holiday her family still had some members with big houses that could handle the large reunion. We made many visits to Elkhart Lake Wisconsin watching the town develop and change around it.

Looking back I'm aware of what good travel companions my parents were, patient, always ready to explore something different, always ready to provide a bottle of scotch, flexible and open.

The hardest travel was when they were dying. My father's cancer of the gallbladder developed suddenly. It manifested itself as jaundice which was first diagnosed as a gallstone but then they realized it was a tumor and he had about a year to live. He went on quite well but in the last six months he became wheelchair and then bedridden and spent a lot of time staring into space or staring at newspapers without changing the page. We never knew exactly what was going through his mind. He never talked about dying. It was a strange experience because he did all the things that were necessary to prepare for his death: he initiated my sister and I into the details of his finances and record-keeping with pride at the fortune he had accumulated. He made arrangements so there would be no trouble after his death.

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He made phone calls to Anne and others to say goodbye without saying so. He asked me to take his picture a day or two before he died. Everything was carefully thought out and planned but he wouldn't talk about it, even to my mother, which I found strange. It was an act of control, but also trying not to burden u,s but it had the opposite effect.

My mother's death was very different; she discussed the matter and we faced a medical issue when she fell and broke her hip. Should she have the hip replaced? We were assured by the doctors that if we didn't she would become immobile and given the problems she was already having with breathing and swallowing she would probably be dead in three months. So we went ahead with the operation, which was successful. She began physical therapy which was working well. But her problems with swallowing had gotten so acute and the ghastly diet in the rehab nursing home where she was recovering made her decide it wasn't worth going on. Without consulting either me or my sister she signed herself into hospice care, came back to my sister's house, and stopped eating and drinking. Then she consulted a doctor friend and a priest who said what she was doing was courageous and good that she took things into her own hands in a firm but pleasant way. She was weak but quite coherent until about a day and half before she died. When my father died it was my mother and I at his side, my sister being unable to get there quickly, and when my mother died my sister, one of her daughters, and I and Anne were there at her side. My first encounters with people dying in front of me were both reassuring and frightening.

One memory which was very important to me was a week or two before my father died I was at a conference on hypertext apps University of Santa Cruz in California getting daily bulletins about my father's situation. As it turned out the paper which I had written for that conference received the \$1000 prize as the best research paper; I was given a printed plaque to bring with me that I could show my father as he lay on his deathbed. He studied it for a long time then looked at me and said I must be very proud. I could see we shared that pride. It confirmed for him that he had been right when he tried to suggest gred school alternatives to my entering t he Jesuits

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During the time we were living in Maine we made a variety of trips with my family. These were in addition to the fairly standard Christmas visits when my parents would come to Massachusetts to see my sister and her children and then come up to Maine to visit us. We would all get together on Christmas day down in Boston.

We traveled extensively in New England with my parents, exploring local scenes. This got more difficult as the years went on and tourism increased so that it became difficult to find places to stay on the spur of the moment. Nonetheless we had many happy travels looking at waterfalls and mountains, wildlife and leaves, ocean and islands. I remember in particular one trip to Grand Manan Island where our terrible accommodations and bad weather made us leave early and travel into Canada.

We made two trips to Mexico with my parents; one early on down to Monterey by car and another later to the colonial cities of Guanajuato and San Miguel. These adventuresome tequila fueled trips made us appreciate that central Mexican area which we later visited several more times.

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On the last trip we took with both parents we visited New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island: ferry boat rides, walking on beaches, interesting towns, the strange scenery of Prince Edward Island. I remember especially standing with my father on beaches looking out of the sea. Within a year he was bedridden and declining. We didn't know that this would be the last trip.

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My father died in 2004. Increasing heart problems made it difficult for my mother to live alone. It was not feasible for her to stay in their lovely house in Lakeway. We all decided that she would move near Boston with my sister. In Boston Mom lived first with my sister and then in a nearby assisted living. Anne and I suspect that it might have been less lonely for her to have stayed in Texas, in assisted living near her wide circle of friends, and been visited by us frequently.

When we moved to Oregon on 2006, my mother was sad that we were leaving new England, and she never visited us in our new home. To deal with the distance I phoned her every day and traveled to Boston five or six trips a year to visit. They were always fun trips although toward the end as her health declined they had a more urgent tone. Transcontinental flying was not as painful as it has become with sardine packed airlines.

My sister joined me to accompany my mother on two trips, one to visit her sister Alice in Florida, and one to her sister Margaret's funeral in Pittsburgh. At that family reunion my mother discovered her 1938 wedding dress, which had been handed down to a series of cousins for their marriage ceremonies; she proudly demonstrated that it still fit her. That was the last of our family's wonderful family reunions at Margaret's large old house.

We visited with Anne's Milwaukee family less frequently from Oregon than we had from Maine, but we saw them most times we were in the Chicago area on business and flew in deliberately for summer visits or family reunions or an occasional holiday. Several of Anne's siblings had houses that could handle their large family reunions.

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A week or two before my father died I was at a conference on hypertext apps University of Santa Cruz in California getting daily bulletins about my father's situation. As it turned out the paper which I had written for that conference \$1000 prize is the best research paper; I had a printed plaque to bring with me to show my father as he lay on his deathbed. He studied it for a long time and looked at me and said you must be very proud that I was and I felt assured that he too felt proud of me and that is efforts which had been involved in trying to get me not to go into the Jesuits by suggesting alternative path would now give them a feeling that the path I had chosen had led to the same goal he had hoped for though with some detours it took longer than perhaps he expected. It was a moment of pride in sharing.

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