

 **MERRY CHRISTMAS** from Harry and Mary 2024



Yes, once again, it's that most wonderful time of the year, at least if you believe Songwriters Eddie Pola & George Wyle. Maybe they're right but no most wonderful hundred-dollar, hundred-inch tv could have gotten me out of the house on Black Friday. There are some most wonderful things you just have to leave to the professionals.

So, we begin. As usual, Mary will delight you with kayaking, planting, gardening and green stuff and Harry will bore you with trips around the western US and Canada in his hot rod.

Harry's Stuffs follows:

As I get to that time I life when someone should take my keys away, soon, I find myself trying to stuff in more car related trips, car shows and trips across the border than usual. Some of the bucket list items may have slipped out of my grasp but we will just have to wait and see. A few of the more memorable trips follow:



Way back in Feb. I found that I had enough airline points to make it to New Zealand and back. There is a car show there called Americarna that I first became aware of years ago when a Kiwi mate posted me a ball cap from the show. Too far to drive, I opted to fly. Sixteen hours is a long time to sit, but the first time I left the US for EnZed, it was close on five years before I sailed into the Bay of Islands. Three different boats and four more trips cemented my love of the place, it's people and its basic attitude towards life.



Off I go to spend over 3 weeks for a four-day car show (best show I've ever been to) and many days of happy reunions with old mates. Makes me think that I could mail my car down in a big UPS box and ride along on board the freighter for a pittance. Sell it there and fly home. Probably a pipe dream but it doesn't hurt to have a dream.

I fly into Auckland, transfer to an early morning commuter plane to Wellington, bottom of the North Island, where Joan will pick me up. We have been mates since 1978 when Antigone, my homebuilt trimaran, first sailed into NZ. She gave me a job at the petrol station where I worked all summer. Dream job. The small town of Russell goes from a few hundred people to ten thousand in one day, Boxing Day. It was a wonderfully delightful, madhouse summer. Pumping petrol (something like gas but more expensive) I met every local and at least half the bloody tourists. I would return four more times before disappearing for two decades into the NW.



Joan and a friend did come to visit in 2016 so I arranged a trip to Canada where the exchange rate was a wee bit more bearable for them. Much to Mary's trepidations, the four of us jumped in the Heretic, the '56 Chevy and wandered north to Prince Rupert. "Oh, look, Mary. There's a car show. Who knew? Might as well stay the night."



A 24-hour ferry ride got us back to Port Hardy on Vancouver Island just as the Canada Day celebration started. "Oh, look, Mary, a car show. Who knew?" Another ferry ride, some more local touring and Joan once more faded from my life.

It's a New Zealand summer in February but the air still has a bit of a nip in it as I step into the terminal and find my friend waiting. She takes me home in her brand-new tiny car and we talk well into the night. BUT I'm not here to talk.



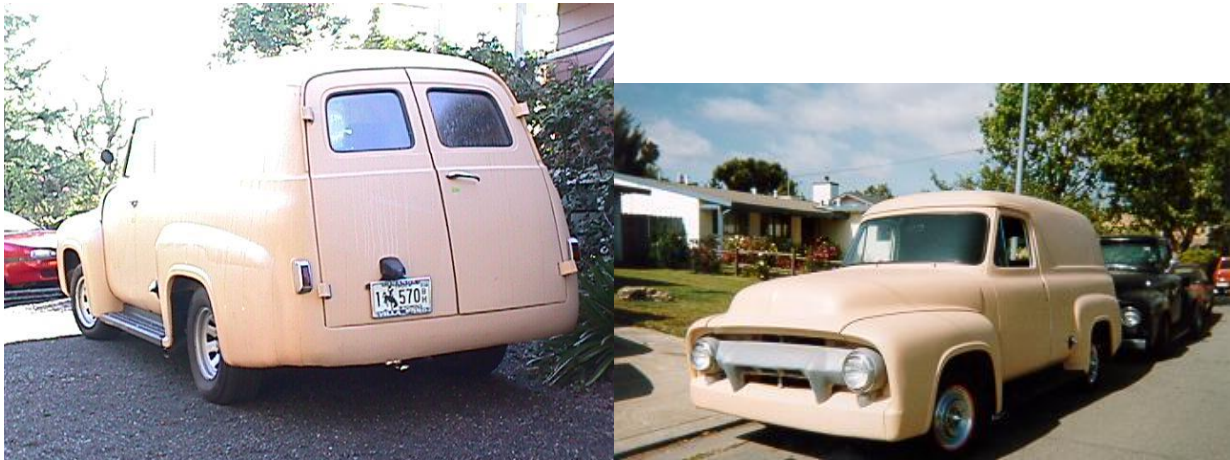
There's a car show. Off we shoot to New Plymouth, about 350 kms to the NW. We settle in and then for four days we walk, we talk, we drive, following the daily cruises where hundreds of Yank tanks gather and show off their flash classics. These are not ordinary motor cars. Entry to Americarna requires a fee of about 400 Kiwi dollars, plus an American car produced in America.



Most of these cars are top quality and if you look at the prices for parts, it's plain scary. Even more frightening is that petrol translates to NZ\$11 a US gal. The big finale is in New Plymouth itself taking up blocks and blocks of downtown.



The ball cap. Remember the ball cap? That's what brought me here. Before leaving WA, I emailed the Americarna web site and asked if by some rare chance anyone knew Kerrie and Mad Dog who sent the cap. Reply was almost instant, "Righteo, I'll pop her a text". This is in a country of 5 million people and the first person I contact is her mate. Bloody unreal! We do make contact during the show, I give her the cap back but I'm too late as Mad Dog has died two years earlier in a motorcycle accident. We both hug, sniffle and I leave, having crossed off one of the most important items on my life's bucket list.



Flying north for only a few hours put me back in Auckland where, Clive, another Kiwi mate that I had never met insisted that he and his lovely wife take me out to dinner during my layover. We had met via the internet because of our interest in Ford F-100's. He had a '54 panel. His other interest was repairing pin ball machines. Years later, parts would show up at my place and I would post them on. A good trade considering he shouted the tucker that afternoon. Clive, I haven't forgiven you for that.

I'm beginning to like flying. It sure is a heck of a lot faster than



sailing. Mamie greets me in Kerikeri, 200kms north of Auckland, takes me home and once again, I am lost in memories as we talk through the night. One of my favorite memories represents the ingenuity and imagination of the people here.



Mamie and her two brothers got wind of a free pub in Auckland that was to be demolished if not moved. The catch was that it had to be moved in ten days. This is not your grandfather's small pub. It's a huge, two-story building. What to do? I know! We'll cut it up into six pieces and truck them that 200 kms up to Kerikeri on a two-lane road with 50 bridges and a billion power/utility lines. What can go wrong? The phrase, "She'll be right, mate" was designed for this job. All this had to be accomplished in ten days.

Well, luckily, they did all this while I was between boats and wives. I must say that I was very happy not to be part of the moving or reassembly party.



Ah but, summer's later Mary and I sailed in just in time for a Mauri hangi (that's a pig they are digging up) and the Putt's Last Waltz, an invitation only, all night doo with tons of free drinks and six different blues bands. Mary finally went to sleep in our car at around two but I bravely soldiered on 'til dawn. The sale of the pub ended an era.

They split up the money, Mamie bought some land and built a house and Gordon bought a breeding ostrich and named him Big Dick. He unfortunately died of some virus - Big Dick, not Gordon. Twenty-five K down the loo. John bought a boat and spent the New Zealand winters a thousand miles north in Port Vila, Vanuatu. If we were passing through, we would often row ashore as the sun set and find him and a few mates playing and singing at a charming waterfront bistro. Wonderful times.



Long distance award stories! Back in the reality of Oak Harbor, I found myself and Mark, another Cruzer, headed for the 25th Anniversary of the two-day American Graffiti car show in Modesto, CA. Mark and I marked out a shaded spot among our 1100 new friends. The second day we found ourselves in the middle of the MOPAR club. Mark, never at a loss for ingenuity, made a sign for our two cars. We joined the club, sort of.



As for long distance, no one had driven as far as Mark and myself.....except.....one jerk from Ohio or somewhere. I think he drove his '56 Chevy wagon 2500 miles. Good on 'um. I really wasn't complaining. He's my kind of guy. And this was my kind of car show. One you really should go to once.

And who else would you expect at American Graffiti but

Suzanne Somers and her white T-Bird.



Canadian long-haul stories: Back on the continent was a trip up to 100 Mile House. Why it's called that I don't know. It's not 100 miles from the border and I haven't found a zero-mile house. Anyway, it's within reach. The fires were just getting started when I went north. Up at Hundred Mile only a whiff of smoke but as the wind shifted, the next morning found a nice collection of soot covering the car and trailer. Yep, I took the trailer and parked it one block from the car show in the, what else, The Hundred Mile RV, Trailer and Motel Joint or something like that. The place was packed with Canadians and their cars.



It was warmish (92 is warmish) so we all sat in the shade of a giant Oak tree and I helped them kill a bottle of rum. Cars filled the town in the morning. Lots of people and lots of conversation. The main reason I go. There were plenty of quality machines (large and small) here so I wasn't counting on any prizes.



There was, however, a long-distance award. Only two other entries were slightly further away so I decided to look at them. Both disqualified themselves, one because he was a yank and just kept a truck up here in case he wanted to go to a Canadian car show. Turns out he "owns" the Portland Roadster Show and has a nice collection of his own. So, his truck wasn't really from Portland, just him but he said he wasn't in the running. The end comes, the long-distance award is next, when...the announcer introduces a couple of guys who had arrived late. Just before this, everyone's curiosity had been piqued by two Model A 4 door Touring cars that had been pushed into the award's area. So, the announcer relates the story of how these two guys had met up just by their interest in Model A's. They decided to get together and drive north to Alaska. So far, so

good. However, one was living in Brazil and one in Argentina. Not to be intimidated by the 6,500 mi (11,000 clicks) distance, off they went. They replaced practically every part on both cars as the trip progressed. Across Yukon and a wee bit of Alaska and they're home free. Never again will I brag about driving a thousand miles to a car show. These guys are my heroes. I was detoured 2-300 clicks out of the way to get home as the highway south was closed due to the increased fire activity. I kept my mouth shut.



One last time, in Sept, I drove down to Califoricated for the Old Hangtown Show. You can see why Placerville used to be called Old Hangtown. That poor dude has been hanging up there as long as I remember. He's done a metamorphous of sorts, changing from black to brown as the town struggles to keep their identity and yet come into the 21 century. To say that they are doing poorly at it would be an understatement. And above are some of the Class of '59 including an ex-wife and Wally who started the White Lightning'.



Third time to visit, at least according to the T-shirts in my dresser. It usually takes over downtown Placerville but this year the Lions who put it on were celebrating their 100th year as an organization so it was moved to the fairgrounds. It's better in town. I'll have to give next year a little thought. I was born in this town but a thousand miles is a long way to drive for a 3-4 hr. car show. They had improved though. There were four trophies instead of two. Nothin' cheap about my town.



Let's move back to the location of my most favorite forays up north. A few stand out. Through the PISRA organization (It sounds better as Pacific International Street Rod Association), I got invited to two private garage/BBQ events. Both were close



to the border and one included a cruise around Abbotsford to roads and places that I didn't even know existed. Our BBQ stop was at a house built for 25mil 15 years ago. Of course, running that through currency exchange, it was probably only a paltry 20mil US. His collection of cars focused primarily on the Deuce. Lots and perfect. His display area was even more impressive. Live music, food and drink. A very generous person. A memorable afternoon.



Number two was a horse breeder whose 70 acres was dedicated to boarding, raising, and taking care of race horses. His collection of cars numbered over 50 in the main hanger (the best analogy I can think of) and another 15+ in a separate adjoining building. Almost all restored and perfect. An incredible collection. Once again, food and drinks, Elvis



dropped in and sang, live music. You know, just your average garage get-together.

Finally last, (I hear a chorus of Hallelujah.), a sad farewell to all my mates who passed on this year, especially my mate Dave, who fought Parkinson's to the end. My heart still aches and I am haunted by the experience. It reminds me that I should enjoy every moment, every encounter, every experience. I think of Arnold Cruthers who, at my age, wrote about building and sailing his little trimaran to the Marquesas. Some time, somewhere, he vanished. This was the last entry in his diary.

We know how to kick an anchovy right in the teeth.

We sing a song you've never heard of.

I hope for a wonderful holiday season for all of you. May you, as the guy with the long pointy ears says, Live long and prosper.



I can't add much to Harry's list of adventures: I was at home sick. June was lost to Covid, and the garden was badly neglected. It was beautiful anyway; we just have to learn to appreciate weeds.

It was a strange year for everyone's garden; cool weather crops like beans, peas, carrots, beets and chard did very well, but the tomato harvest failed utterly, and there were no acorns. They say it must have been the wet spring so the pollinators couldn't do their jobs. The new growth on everything was prodigious, and of course the lawn went crazy.

The summer was beautiful, with a little August rain that kept everything green, and the smoke from the fires was hardly noticeable here. The good weather continued into fall, with great fig and apple harvests, and lots of time for sitting on the porch in the sun.

I couldn't get into the mountains this year, but granddaughter Soleil and I had a few days in our favorite campsite at Troublesome Creek State Park, and a fine hike on a brand-new WTA built trail up a little mountain nearby.

Kayaking added a new experience: staying in a lodge. Everyone is getting too old to camp. The big two-man kayaks were like paddling a barge, but the food was good and there was a hot tub. And only yesterday I achieved a goal: paddling under the Deception Pass bridge. It was a very slack tide, and though the little whirlpools and tide rips made it interesting, it was safe enough, even for old ones like us.

For next year – barring some new virus – there are always plans and dreams of places to go. Hell's Canyon: I still haven't made it there, and we can only hope that one day they will remove all the dams on the Snake River. The Wallowa mountain high country: too far for me to walk these days, but they have horse packers. (I haven't been on a horse since I was 12...) Maybe a real kayak camping trip to the Broken Island group off Vancouver island, where the beaches are paved with oysters, and there are bears.... One can dream. Or sit in the sun on the porch; that's good enough.