

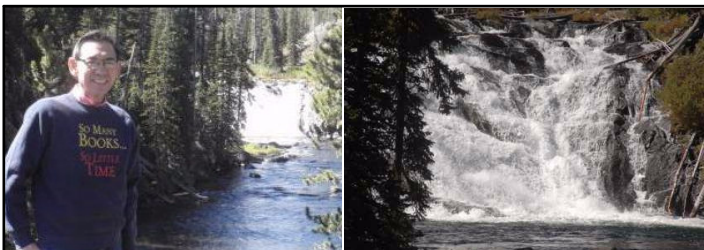
TRAVELOGUE 3, FINAL - LAKBAYAN TRIP TO YELLOWSTONE

The drive from Yellowstone to the next destination, the Grand Tetons, was not that far, but we decided that we'd do all our sightseeing at the Tetons prior to retiring to our hotel at Jackson Hole Wyoming, as this town was at the southern end of the National Park, and would be our jump off point for the long drive back to Vegas the following day.

TonyE drove the van, which allowed me to be a passenger and hook up the power inverter I had brought, thus providing the 110 volt power for the laptop. I could do all my computing, and that included updating the expense allocation spreadsheet and continuing the writeups of the events.

Since we had left mid-morning from Yellowstone, after that priestless mass we had attended, one important stop would be a picnic lunch at whatever sight proved most attractive. We still had lots of food from last night's BBQ.

We first stopped however at one of the many turn-offs indicated by a bunch of parked vehicles. This was a river view of a waterfall. TonyN took out his camera, tripod, and other paraphernalia so we knew this would be a good photo op. Later, he told us he had to put a combination of filters to "slow down the water", whatever that means. I suppose it was to enhance the turbulent water to make it's motion more visible. Anyway, here are my two samples.



That's Jimmy posing beside the river with the blur of the waterfall beyond. I like the logo on his shirt "So Many Books, So Little Time". So true indeed (I had brought a book to read, but never got to open it). And this trip turned out to be an exchange of reading material between Jimmy and two friends from another YahooGroup: Ninotchka Rosca and Vivienne Angeles. I was the courier. But I digress. Right photo shows a telephoto shot of the water falls. TonyN's photos were much better.

The picnic stop was at about 1:00 pm on the lakeside, with the Grand Tetons mountains beyond. Lower photos show wooded area, and the bear warnings on a picnic table.



Many were disappointed when we took a turn-off, drove a couple of miles high into the mountains to view the Grand Tetons with the lake backdrop in some panorama fashion. The sun was glaring into our eyes and the cameras for the views that seemed most appealing. Just the same, I snapped a couple, shown above. The Tetons seem to be craggy mountains that get snow covered in winter and are irresistible to nature lovers. The most popular site is at the other side of the lake where Ansel Adams made his famous portraits of haunting beauty. TonyN said something about getting up early tomorrow before we leave for Vegas to take some shots but we all nixed it.

There's something about high mountain air that affects oldies like us. Some complained of headaches, and general malaise, and rapid heartbeat. After all, Bryce was about 7,000 ft, Yellowstone was slightly lower, and the high part of Tetons was 9,000 ft above sea level. Earlier, we had Googled the subject of high altitude, and indeed such symptoms were indicated. No wonder the Peruvian Indians chew cocoa. It would have been interesting if we had some.

Though highly improbable, we mused that earlier grandiose plans for a Lakbay or two into Machu Picchu or Tibet would be out of the question now.

But down at the low lands was a must see: the Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration. See pics below. Cross altar



closeup is framed by open window view. Seemed to be far out in the boondocks, unmanned at that.



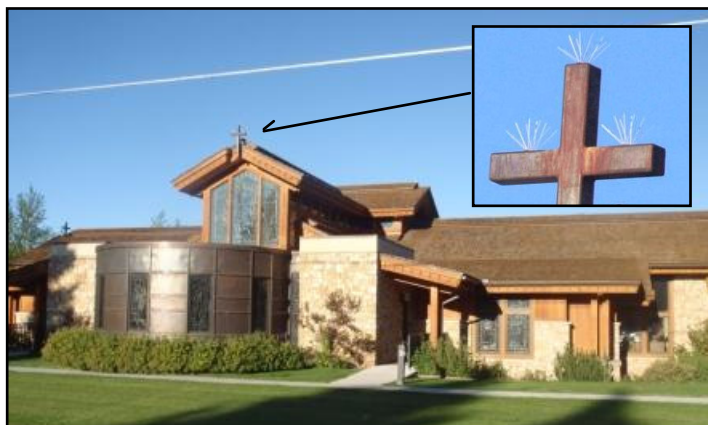
It was already nightfall when we entered Jackson Hole and found our Quality Inn Hotel. It was relatively expensive, almost double what one would expect. But this town was classy, a latter-day Aspen Colorado, where the who's who have vacation houses, starting from former veep Cheney who hails from here. The hotel clerk suggested a number of restaurants, including one that served all sorts of wildlife meat - bison, elk, deer, etc. We were tired of meat, and asked about fish, and he pointed out on a map a popular but pricey place, which also had some Asian restaurants nearby, and this was within walking distance. We finally settled for a Thai Restaurant, especially since they promised room for all 10 of us within a half hour or so wait.



Food was excellent, as verified by Jimmy's intent look at the sweets after the main meal. TonyE couldn't even finish his.

Then it was hitting-the-sack time for all. We'd have a long drive tomorrow. And unlike the previous 2 hotels where we managed to cancel one room, here we couldn't and had to pay for all 6 rooms (originally reserved) for all ten of us. Yaya, the Nievera's Girl-Friday, who had proved herself invaluable early on, occupied a room. This caused TonyN and Bernie lots of ribbing because their 44th wedding anniversary had been the previous day. Never too late.

We had agreed to hit the road at 8 in the morning, which we almost did, but not before swinging by what Mercy heard was a modern Catholic Church two blocks away.

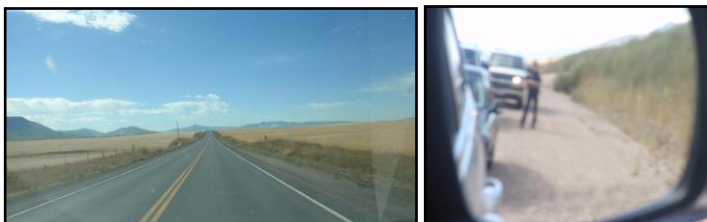


Except for Lisa & I in the van, and TonyN, Bernie & Yaya in the car, all the others trooped into the church premises for what we assumed would be a short visit. We waited, and waited as minutes ticked by. I started photographing all sorts of things around, including

the road construction, and the cross on the church top, which I later found out had whiskers(?). See inset. Yaya then stepped out to wait for them, as TonyN and I drove off to gas up. When we came back, even Yaya was gone. Then finally, all of them emerged, and in tow was Fr Florante Marcelo, a Filipino priest. See bottom left photo with him flanked by Lisa and I.

They had decided to stay for the remaining part of the 8:30 mass, and afterwards, had succumbed to the entreaties of Father to stay on and have coffee and chat, as he had been assistant parish priest there for already 3 years, serving among others, a Hispanic community (he said he honed his Spanish in Mexico) and a handful of Pinoys. He longed for more Pinoy company. TonyE said his homily was indistinguishable from that of an American, but with us it was all Tagalog and Cebuano. And Lisa and him had some mutual friends.

TonyE plotted the best route on his portable GPS back to Las Vegas, about 700 miles away, and this took us through excellent scenic back roads with practically no traffic. Wheat fields and grain silos dotted the route, especially in Idaho. See left photo below. I drove the van with TonyE navigating, while TonyN followed in the Mercedes. But on a downhill stretch in a construction zone, I didn't notice the lone vehicle parked on the side. It was a cop, who soon zoomed with flashing lights overtaking us, so I felt relieved



that he probably was after the car in front of me. Well, he quickly stopped in front and hailed both of us to pull over. He then radioed for a backup cop, a lady officer whom I snapped above through my side mirror. He clocked me at 79 mph in a 45 mph zone (which truly I didn't see). TonyN was worse at 81. The cop's first comment to TonyN was a query if the Mercedes was racing to catch up with the van, but TonyN admitted we were one party together. He was most pleasant though; gave us a break with a minimum fine, and said that he loved the Philippines when there years ago.

Once we hit I-15, the Mercedes took the lead, and in Utah, TonyN was caught again speeding by what he later described as a surly cop. We broke the convoy and after the usual rest stops, motored in to TonyN's at about 9:30 pm.

The next day was Las Vegas sightseeing and shopping time, girls and boys separately, with us guys doing a drive by at a shooting range, the Gehry bldg (below left), and that



night, we all went to the Cirque du Soleil in MGM (2 pics above), ate bulalo dinner at California Casino, gambled on slots, but before all that, had the formal group photo.

And by the way, the guys also met up with Chay Lumba, then went to Little Darlings. Sorry, no photos.

Report by Danny Gil, 19 Sep 2010