

Letter (September 2010) from Dave Rottman to John Fiske, in response to John's of 9/13/2010.
See also "Remembrances from Dave Rottman" in the Assorted History section of this website.

4 days after
the autumnal
equinox

Hi, John.

I enjoyed your letter a lot. I'm feeling brave today, so I'm trying ink instead of pencil (wish me luck). I'm afraid I can't be of much help concerning the infamous kangaroo cage, even though I remember being there (just as an observer, I think). The name "Liz" doesn't ring a bell. On the subject of night climbing, I don't think many people know about it, but when certain girls participated (Marcia Gaines, Ann Rumble, and others), we would go to their rooming house and help them go out from the second floor via fire escape, and then, because they would be locked out of the building (via doors) until 8:00 a.m. or so, they would often grab a couple hours of sleep on the floor of my apartment before going back home. My place became known as a sort of "refuge for wayward women." There was no hanky-panky, though. That climb I did with Pratt on Rixon's Pinnacle was on the east side of the slab, so I think it was actually the East Chimney route, and we probably rappelled down part of the face route. I got a phone call from Dick Scheible the other night, and we talked for about an hour on a wide range of subjects. I've been out of touch with old UCHC friends for the most part during the last 50 years or so, so it's been fun to have several of them (such as you) pop out of the woodwork and contact me. I think that new spread sheet has something to do with it. After reading your short autobiographical paragraph, I thought I'd write something myself, in case anybody's interested.

Marcia and I got married in 1961, had a daughter, Terri, in 1965, and moved to Boulder, Colorado in 1969. We ran into several hiking clubbers there, including Vince and Margaret Arr, Paul Kunasz and Chela Varrentzoff, and Ed Leeper. Because of a depression, I had to grab any job I could get (at the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons facility). I wasn't happy with it or the snow in the winter, and Marcia informed me that she wasn't happy with me, so we split up and I came back to California. I had several mechanical engineering jobs in the Bay Area, including about 13 years with Xerox. Terri stayed with me for a couple of school years and during most summers. I went on many weekend hikes with the Sierra Club (too many people, but fun talking to them). At age 55 I took advantage of Xerox's retirement package offer, and I sold my house in Hayward and moved to my present location in Garden Valley. I bought a 10-acre lot, which is mostly forest and quite pretty, and I had a house built according to my own design. It's made of cedar, inside and out, with a "loacabin" appearance. (over)

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The outside walls are actually made of tongue-and-groove boards, about 7" wide and 2" thick, with rounded edges. The house has only one bedroom and one bathroom, so it's not designed to sell easily, but I built it to meet my own needs, such as a jigsaw puzzle table with a light over it, a closet for hiking/camping equipment, and a workshop attached to the rear of the 1-car garage. The high, exposed-beam ceilings make it look bigger than it is. Garden Valley is about halfway between Placerville and Auburn, so it's quite convenient for getting to the mountains up U.S. 50 or I-90. My house is at about 2300 feet elevation, so it usually shows a few times each winter, but it's pretty and I have 4-wheel drive, so I get along pretty well. My driveway is 1/4 mile long (asphalt) and goes uphill (with curves) from the highway, so it can be challenging at times. It's so great to be able to look out the window and see trees, flowers, deer, etc. instead of cars, houses, wires, etc. I have a friend in Pollock Pines who was a co-worker at Xerox, and we go hiking every Tuesday. We've been doing this for some 20 years, so we're starting to run out of new places to go. We go up to high elevation (e.g., Carson Pass area) to keep cool in the summer, and low elevation to avoid snow in the winter. We love cross-country—especially wandering around on granite slabs—and when we run across boulders, my friend takes a rest while I do a climb or two. I'm in good shape (at nearly 78 years of age), partly due to my yard work. My house is heated by a wood stove, so I spend a lot of time working on firewood. I don't have a big enough vehicle for gathering logs myself any more, so I buy the wood, which comes in chunks that I have to split to the size I like to use in my small stove. That job is made easier by my having a hydraulic log splitter. Every year I also have to use a gas-powered string trimmer to cut down the tall weeds that grow around the house and down the driveway shoulders. Then I have to do some pruning and raking. Sometimes there are fallen trees or branches, and I have to cut them up with a chainsaw. So you can see that the city boy has been converted into a country bumpkin! When I'm taking a break between strenuous activity days, I entertain myself by doing crossword (and other) puzzles, playing my violin, listening (TV is poor) to baseball games, and working on fun projects. I have a small lathe and a drill press and a grinder and lots of hand tools and shelves full of material, and a large vise, so I'm pretty well-equipped for fixing things or making things. I enjoy both. My weed-eater has four different improvements on it, for example, and I enjoyed building them.

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I've been on quite a few long trips over the years. You mentioned the Zion narrows. What a neat place! I backpacked there for just one night, bringing a change of pants with me. While I was there, I explored a large side canyon, but I was stopped by a tricky watercourse that I decided not to attempt by myself. I was impressed by the fact that the main canyon had only a narrow slit opening out to the sky. Terri and I once went on a narrow canyon backpacking trip to Coyote Canyon. I went on many trips to Death Valley, and did a lot of 4-wheeling up the canyons there. One time I went to Maine, driving about 600 miles a day, to see that corner of the country that I hadn't seen except on business trips. On the way home I did a short hike in Shenandoah Natl. Park and saw lots of pretty leaves. I visited Tom Aley and stayed overnight at his place in Missouri. We sang folk songs and really enjoyed getting together. Another memorable trip was taking my car on the ferry from Bellingham, Wash. to Skagway, and then exploring Alaska and Yukon Terr. for several days while camping. I had to go in Sept. instead of August because of boat reservation problems, and everything was shutting down and the weather was getting worse, but I managed O.K. except for a little ice on the inside of the windows in the morning and an inch of snow during the night. I didn't do a lot of hiking, but I saw a large area of beautiful scenery and lots of pretty fall colors. I sleep in my car, on a wooden platform that I made, and I can cook in there if necessary (only my main dish for supper). I got back onto the ferry at Haines. There's no connection by road between Haines and Skagway. Another time I went to Hawaii, visiting four islands. I did one hike overlooking the ocean and did a little lava tubing, but it was too hot and humid and too many plantations. I enjoyed the flowers and waterfalls, though. I took a trip to New Zealand a few years ago and did about 16 hikes there. I only went to the South Island because it's more mountainous and less populated, which can be a challenge if you're not camping and have to rely on restaurants and motels at night. It's very pretty there—green and clean (no litter along the roads). My rental car wasn't ready on time, so they did me a big favor and upgraded me to a bigger car. It was bad enough that I had to learn instantly how to drive on the left, but I also had to maneuver this big boat of a car, once in the rain and another time on a narrow, winding road. They would have had a fit at the rental company if they had seen me later driving on a dirt road with seven creek fords and then on another dirt road leading to a cave, where I passed an oncoming car on the right instead of the left. Oops! I had to learn the language while I was there. It's nominally English, but there are certain pronunciation differences. (over)

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For example, I stayed overnight in a "bed-and-breakfast" place. Pears are "peers".
They have different expressions, too:

Eng.
End construction = work's end

Food to go = takeaways

Paved (road) = sealed

Hike = tramp or trek

Trail = track

Veggies = veges

Motel room = motel

Yield = give way

French fries = chips

British influence:

Tyre

Kerb

Hire (rent)

I could write another 2 pages about N.Z., but I'd better stop. A great place, though.

Marcia has remarried and lives in Corvallis, OR. Terri lives in Beaverton, so they see each other often. Terri's husband is a former Univ. of Wash schoolmate. They adopted a Chinese girl who is now 8 years old. She's my only grandchild, and I wish I could see her more than once or twice a year. I've driven up there a few times, camping on the way, but it's a pain. Then I'd continue after the visit to do more exploring/hiking/camping. The weather up there is often a problem. Marcia and I are on good terms, and we've seen each other's house. She phones me once in a while (like on my birthday) and we chat for an hour. She's retired but keeps very active. Terri is a manager for Intel, and I've met her in Folsom a couple of times for a local hike and a game of Scrabble. Marcia's husband works on-and-off as a mediator for legal disputes. She met him in Indonesia!

Well, since you were hoping my pen would run out of ink and it didn't, I'll take pity on you and shut up. Sorry my letter's so long, but 50 years is a long time to catch up on! You can show it to anyone else who might be interested.
Great to hear from you!

Dave



Dave Rottman, 2008, with granddaughter Natalie