

## 2006 COLUMBIA AND SNAKE RIVERS

June 23, 2006. This should really read April 1, 2006 (no fooling). Peggy Trospen and I planned to take a steamboat ride on the Columbia and Snake Rivers. The price was right for the April departure and we got free air to the west coast, plus a pre-cruise night at the Embassy Suites in Portland, Oregon. As my readers know, my trips don't always go off as planned. The ship ran aground and had to be repaired. Our cruise was canceled! American West Steamboat Company offered us a replacement cruise on June 24. The weather will be a lot better and we even get an upgraded room! The pre-cruise package with free air was also included. I carefully wrote June 24 in my date book.

So on June 23, Peggy and I played bridge. We then went out to the Red Lobster with Lou and Elizabeth and ended up playing more bridge that night.

[http://www.nationalgeographic.com/earthpulse/columbia/index\\_flash.html](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/earthpulse/columbia/index_flash.html)

Saturday, June 24, 2006. The limousine had advised we leave at 7:00 AM to allow lots of time for our 10:00 AM United Airlines flight. We got to the airport about 7:45, only to learn our flight had been cancelled. Thanks to the wonderful woman who pushed one of the wheelchairs, we were rebooked on the flight to Chicago that was already boarding. They held the flight and really hustled us through security and out onto Concourse T for the hour and a half flight to Chicago.

In Chicago we reconnoitered and called the steamship line to tell them of our change of plans. They promised to meet us at the airport and take us to the dock. I wasn't as lucky contacting my niece Barbara. We were supposed to have dinner with her the night we got to Portland. With a little help from daughter Mary we finally got a message through that we would not be seeing her.

From then things got better. When we boarded the Portland flight we found we had been put in first class. The movie was "Eight Below" a wonderful story about a dog team in Antarctica.

I always enjoy flying into Portland. If I am on the left side of the airplane I have a wonderful view of Mt Hood. If I am on the right I can see Mt St Helens and sometimes even Mt Rainier. In Portland we were met as promised. We waited a long time for our bags. I had bet Peggy they did not make the plane from Atlanta. I owe her a dollar for sure enough they were almost the last bags on the carousel. We were taken to a jitney bus for the trip to the dock. We actually got to the boat about the same time the others did, but since we were independent we got our bags right away.

The Queen of the West is 230 feet long and was built in 1995. She has 72 outside staterooms. Her paddlewheel is 26 feet in diameter and pushes the boat at a maximum of 14 knots (16 mph). Our cabin is delightful. It is all the way aft on deck three so we sport windows on two sides. We can sit in bed and watch where we have been. The only downside is that we are right over the paddlewheel but it turned out the vibrations were more like magic fingers and I slept like a baby.

We had to go to the safety drill. The Captain also introduced his crew.

Then it was time to go up on deck for the Historians lecture. There are lovely rocking chairs to lounge in. Ian, the Historian, told us about the history of the area. Lewis and Clark explored it in 1804. Then a fur trading post was set up where modern Portland is. The town was originally called Stumpville because of all the stumps from the trees that were cut down to build houses. Eventually it was called Portland after Portland Maine.

The Columbia is a major water channel through the western mountains. Originating in Montana, it was a much easier route to travel than the trail through the Donner Pass and other mountainous routes. The Oregon Trail brought thousands of settlers in their wagons down the shore of the Columbia River.

Today the Columbia is still a major transportation channel as the Southern Pacific Railroad runs along its south bank and the Burlington Northern runs along the north. Major highways also flank the river. 40% of the entire wheat crop passes through Portland on its way to the Far East. Potash comes from Wyoming and other basic materials come down the river, making Portland a major shipping port.

We boarded the Queen of the West at Swan's Island, so-called because of the swans that used to be here. This is a major shipyard and there were all sorts of ships in for retrofitting. We saw an old Oil Tanker being refitted, a NOAA ship, also a naval vessel in dry dock.

Small boats and jet skis were running up and down the Willamette River, which is one of only a few rivers in America to run from south to north. The ship was expertly turned and soon we were running up the river, which cuts the city of Portland in half. At the suspension bridge we turned

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and headed back north.

Dinner was announced at 6:30 (it is now 9:30 pm in Atlanta.) There is open seating in the dining room. One nice feature of the menu is that you can order half portions and even select from any other dish that is offered if you want to try two entrées.

Our seatmates were Fran and Dave Vaughan from Hawaii, a couple from Arizona and to my left a couple from Houston. Bill was quite interesting. Has lived all over before retiring to Houston Texas where he is now involved with venture capitol. His wife, Barbara, has the most beautiful white hair and blue eyes. I died early and went to bed.

<http://www.united.com/>

<http://disney.go.com/disneyvideos/liveaction/eightbelow/>

<http://cruises.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=cruises&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.>

[americanweststeamboat.com](http://americanweststeamboat.com)

<http://www.magicfingers.com/>

<http://www.portlandonline.com/>

<http://www.lewis-clark.org/>

<http://www.americanwest.com/trails/pages/oretrail.htm>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willamette\\_River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willamette_River)

<http://www.noaa.gov/>

Sunday, June 25. We docked at Hood River. This is the sailfish capital of the world, but today there isn't much wind.

We were loaded onto buses. Ours was the William Clark. We travel with Meriwether Lewis and the third bus; Sacagawea goes her own way. Our driver Tom entertains us with so many stories of an area he so obviously loves.

Our destination is the Dalles where there is a Discovery Museum and Historical Museum. This is a wonderful spot and you could spend hours looking at all the exhibits and listening to the various informative movies. It was a hands-on museum as one stuffed donkey illustrated. Children hands had worn off some of his hair.

The most interesting exhibit dealt with the origins of the Columbia River. There was a cataclysmic disaster where a glacier broke loose in Montana and blocked the river. A huge lake formed behind it. Eventually the glacial dam burst and countless gallons of water erupted behind it. It flooded a huge area and carved the high mountains and valleys that now make the Columbia River so scenic. Huge lava boulders encased in ice, called Glacial Eccentrics, floated downstream to attest to this.

From the Discovery museum we went to Rowena Overlook where we had a magnificent view of the river and the switchback road that lead to it. Much of this area is a protected scenic area where no one can build. Tom, the driver reminded us of the notorious Bagwan. Years ago he controlled a sect that wanted to control Oregon. Threats and terror tactics were used on the population to try and get the Bagwan's slate elected. They also were able to buy many derelicts votes due to a loophole in the Oregon Law requiring only one-day residency to vote. Fortunately the opposition managed to get the Bagwan deported back to India on drug charges. His considerable land holdings were bought and presented to the state to form this scenic area. Only the towns in the area were grandfathered so that new building could continue in them.

We drove down the historic scenic road through orchards where Bartlett pears and cherries grow. The maraschino cherry was invented here. We were back on the ship for lunch. I had a hot dog on the top deck. Peggy tried the dining room. In the afternoon we again got on Tom's bus and headed east, back toward Portland.

We reached Bonneville Dam, a huge public works program started under FDR. Susan the ranger took us thorough. We first saw the fish ladders, built so the salmon could go upstream to spawn. Other fish also used the ladder. We saw lamprey eels and shad. The eels use a suction cup to attach themselves to the side of the ladder and inch themselves upstream. The salmon return to their birthplace, spawn and die. The young salmon swim back to the ocean for three or four years and then return to repeat the whole cycle.

Below the ladder we were able to see the fish swimming through glass windows. A careful count is made to keep track of them. There are less and less of them as trawlers off the coast catch the returning fish before they can get to the river.

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Susan then took us up to the top of the building where we could see the huge power generating turbines. She used her audience to demonstrate the various stages there are to make power. I found a cross section of the high-tension wires interesting. It is not one wire but about 20 wires encased together. The increase in surface aluminum increases the power. Power starts out low but transformers turn it into a higher wattage. Once it reaches its destination, more transformers reduce it back so that it can be used in houses.

We then drove to Multnomah waterfall a magnificent fall, the second highest in the US (after Yosemite.) It is named for an Indian chief. It had gotten very hot and the 45-minute stay was too long!

At last we returned to the ship. Peggy brought some hors d'oeuvres to the room and we opened the complimentary bottle of Shiraz. For dinner we had "wild" salmon. Hatchery salmon are just like wild salmon and go off to sea to mature, but when they return a fin is cut off. Thus a fisherman knows he can keep it. The ones with the fins are off limits to preserve the gene pool. A totally different salmon is the ranch-bred salmon, which do not go through the same cycle of going to sea and returning to their birthplace. They are artificially fed and in my opinion not healthy to eat.

As we were finishing dinner we entered the Dalles lock and everyone went up on deck to watch us come through. The back gates were like ones I had seen elsewhere opening like doors, but the front gate had to roll down under the ship so we could proceed.

The entertainment was Western Night with many old cowboy songs and even cowboy poetry from the two talented guitar players.

We sat near Fran and her husband, Dave Vaughan. They are from Hawaii. However Fran and I have a lot in common. We both grew up in suburban Philadelphia. We both went to Shipley (although I was about 8 years ahead of her. We reminisced about dancing lessons with Mrs. Duer at the Merion Cricket Club, and then later the formal dances with Mrs. Sellers. Her maiden name was Cole but that didn't mean anything more to me than Guckes did to her. We both weren't cut out to be proper Philadelphians and married young and left. Even more interesting, she has a sailing background. We both had been on Adams Cup teams at one time.

[http://www.gonorthwest.com/Oregon/columbia/hood\\_river/Hood\\_River.htm](http://www.gonorthwest.com/Oregon/columbia/hood_river/Hood_River.htm)

<http://www.columbiagorge.org/>

<http://drugandhealthinfo.org/page02.php?ID=23>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonneville\\_Dam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonneville_Dam)

[http://trips.stateoforegon.com/multnomah\\_falls/](http://trips.stateoforegon.com/multnomah_falls/)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salmon>

<http://www.ussailing.org/championships/adult/women/uswsc/>

<http://www.engineeringsights.org/SightDetail.asp?Sightid=108&id=OR&view=s&name=Oregon&page=1&image=0>

<http://www.merioncricket.com/>

Monday, June 26. Woke early and was on deck in time to see us come through a spectacular lock with churning water from the power turbines and another fish ladder. This was McNary Lock and it lifted us 83 feet into Lake Wallula.

They announced the temperature was going to be in the high nineties or even 100 degrees and Peggy and I decided to stay on board and enjoy the ship rather than tour the Pendleton Mills and an Indian Reservation. This is the first river trip I have made where we didn't tie up at night and cruise during the day so you can enjoy the river.

Above the dam we pulled into Umatilla where most of the passengers debarked for the tour. We sat on the aft deck and watched the world go by. The river soon entered another gorge. We traveled about 2 1/2 hours before tying up at Sacagawea Park to wait for the bus group to return.

We played some scrabble and then got into a four-person cribbage match with Nancy and her mother. They are from Kansas. We had lunch in the dining room and found about 1/4 of the passengers had also stayed on board.

We entered the Snake River. The Snake starts at Yellowstone and is the sixth largest river in the US in terms of water volume.

We were invited to the Captains table tonight. Captain Craig Gibson is a delightful host and tells us about how he went for his first sailing cruise knowing nothing, and managed to save the cruise

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from disaster by figuring out they were going the wrong direction! Bill and Barbara were also at the table as well as Meredith and his wife. Our waiter was attired in a tuxedo and we each got a bottle of wine to keep.

The entertainment was a Salute to Broadway. Heather and Steven both have lovely voices and we thoroughly enjoyed the show.

<http://www.scsc.k12.ar.us/2002Outwest/NaturalHistory/Projects/WylieT/default.htm>

[http://englishriverwebsite.com/LewisClarkColumbiaRiver/Regions/Places/mcnary\\_dam.html](http://englishriverwebsite.com/LewisClarkColumbiaRiver/Regions/Places/mcnary_dam.html)

<http://www.pendleton-usa.com/>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snake\\_River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snake_River)

Tuesday, June 27. We cruised the Snake River enjoying a lecture from Ian of the early history of this area and the treaties that divided it between the Russians, Spanish and French. Finally in 1804 Jefferson accomplishes the Louisiana Purchase from Napoleon and commissions Lewis and Clark to lead a corps of Discovery to explore the area.

Two towns, Lewiston, ID and Clarkston, WA straddle the Snake River at the confluence of the Snake and the Clearwater River. After an early lunch we dock at Clarkston and are loaded into jet boats for the trip up the Snake to Hell's Canyon. These aluminum boats hold about 45 passengers and travel at 30+ mph. They only draw a few inches so can navigate shallow rivers.

The bare mountains undulate on either side. Outcroppings of basalt support horizontally challenged pastures that only a mountain goat could use. Hardly a tree is to be seen except for some willows along the shore.

A county road follows our course for 25 miles and there are occasional ranches to be seen squeezed between the river and the steep mountains. After the road ends we still see houses, more like camps, for they are only reached by boat and have no electricity and an outhouse.

On this hot day we see many families on the small sandy beaches enjoying the river.

We saw basalt formations like organ pipes where swallows have built their mud nests. We spotted a deer. We also saw mountain goats. First we saw two billies with their wonderful coiled horns. Then we saw some nannies with their babies drinking out of the river.

An osprey flew with us down part of the river.

At last we came to Eagle Orchard Ranch, which is maintained by the nature conservancy. A hot walk uphill brought us to some porta-potties and a small refreshment stop and gift shop. It was hardly worth the walk.

Above the ranch Hell's Canyon is uninhabited. The mountains seem to get higher and the river gets narrower. We passed many rapids but only one group of rafters. Only one raft group is allowed at a time. We traveled up as far as "The Narrows where the river is only about 30 feet wide. It is a beautiful spot.

Our trip down the river was much speedier. We did stop to view a petroglyph which carbon dating has dated at 2000 years. You could clearly see the men and the mountain goats.

We passed one beach and the guide tooted his horn. Two young men stood up and promptly mooned us!

It was a wonderful day but I was so tired when we got back to the boat that I could barely get my act together before we went up to the Calliope Lounge where the piano player was having a sing-along.

After dinner I went to bed but Peggy told me Heather gave a wonderful solo performance.

[http://www.alaskaair.com/www2/Destinations/munged\\_qs/destination.asp\(city+lws\)](http://www.alaskaair.com/www2/Destinations/munged_qs/destination.asp(city+lws))

<http://www.snakeriveradventures.com/>

<http://www.scsc.k12.ar.us/2002Outwest/NaturalHistory/Projects/WylieT/default.htm>

[http://www.digitalartsphotography.com/artstore/idaho\\_washington\\_oregon\\_art\\_photos/idaho%20-%20buffalo%20eddy%20petroglyphs%20b.htm](http://www.digitalartsphotography.com/artstore/idaho_washington_oregon_art_photos/idaho%20-%20buffalo%20eddy%20petroglyphs%20b.htm)

Wednesday, June 28. With no stops planned we can enjoy the river. Ian continued the story of Lewis and Clark. He is a good storyteller and makes us feel we know many of the men in the expedition. However the room was cold. When we came to the break, I decided to hear the second part in our room.

I finally connected with my niece, Barbara, and she will meet me on Saturday morning. I am so happy it worked out for I was very disappointed not to see her on our arrival.

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They offered a peek at the kitchen and I marvel that they can feed so many people out of such a small space. I missed the bridge tour, but I have seen many bridges on my cruises. Then I heard the remainder of Ian's lecture in the room and Peggy and I played a couple of rounds of backgammon before lunch. After lunch we went back to the room and after a few rousing games of cribbage took a nap. The entertainment we missed was napkin folding and a wine tasting. The latter would have made me take an even longer nap. The program tonight was A Salute to America done by Heather and Steven. They do a great job.

Thursday, June 29. Ian gave his last lecture about the history of the area. Then we had an early lunch in the dining room.

We docked at Longview, Washington and our buses were waiting for the trip to Mt St Helens. We made a stop at Castle Rock to view an Imax-like movie of the 1980 eruption at the Cinedome. There was some amazing footage. The noise was heard for miles and the force was so large that it toppled forests of Douglas Firs and covered large areas in mud, ash and lava. It is amazing that only 57 people died. There were other eruptions later in the next year. Volcanic dust clogged the streets as far away as Walla Walla. The Columbia River had to be dredged to reopen the channels. As an aside, Barbara told me she still finds Mt Helen's Ash on her car in Portland as it continues to erupt.

I was here when they first reopened the park and remember driving up past vast slopes of barren rock. Toppled trees lay where they had fallen. Very little life was to be seen.

Now, after 25 years, nature is repairing the mountain. Some reforestation has occurred but even where there has been no manmade help tiny trees are starting to grow and green shrubs and grass can also be seen. Elk have come back.

We drove up to Johnson's Ridge Visitors center from which you can see right into the crater and see the new cone that is forming inside. It may take 100 years before the volcano rebuilds itself. Mt St Helens lost 1300 feet of elevation in the blast.

I heard a ranger describe what had happened and then viewed the film inside the Visitor's Center. From the Mt Helen's disaster, volcanologists have learned a great deal. It was once believed that volcanoes erupted straight up through their top. Mt St Helens erupted through the side and the whole north face of the mountain is gone. They are now able to predict with greater accuracy when an eruption will occur.

It was a long day and a 100-mile drive each direction. For the first time on the trip I had to resort to pain pills for my back. Peggy went to the entertainment and reported it to be excellent. I couldn't make it.

<http://www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/mshnvm/>

<http://www.thecinedome.com/>

Friday, June 30. We docked in Astoria, the first permanent settlement west of the Rockies. John Jacob Astor started a fur trading business here in 1811. Around it grew the town. It has many 19th century buildings, lovingly restored and on the National Register.

There is no level land in the town except along the waterfront where the buildings sit on fill dirt. From the river the land rises steeply and the houses cling to the side. Most of them are several stories tall for land is at such a premium.

The main sight is the Astoria Column on a hilltop above the town. 125 feet tall, it was completed in 1926 and was underwritten by Vincent Astor, great grandson of John Jacob Astor. An art form called sgraffito, which combines paint and plaster, decorates the side. The term graffiti comes from its name. As it coils upward it depicts an historical timeline of the Northwest. There are great views from the tower of the Columbia River and its tributary, the Lewis and Clark River.

Lewis and Clark came to the end of the Columbia River and in December 1805, established Fort Clatsop across the river. It was named for the Indian tribe living here. We drove across the four-mile bridge to Washington and went to a replica of the original fort. It seemed very small. It sits in a rain forest of Sitka spruce. These are enormous trees a couple of feet in diameter. We are told these are fairly young ones. Huge ferns lie in their shadow.

Several Rangers were there and one gave a most interesting description of the flint-loading rifle. He then fired a replica of one from the period of Lewis and Clark. Our stay was too short to see the entire museum or to walk down to the shore to see the dugout canoes.

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We returned to the ship to catch the end of a Change of Command for the Coast Guard cutter Steadfast. All the men were lined up in their blue uniforms. The Steadfast has captured more shipments of marijuana than any other.

A maritime museum lies next to the dock. I went back after lunch to explore it. It is one of the most interesting ones I have seen. Instead of having hundreds of say models in a row, they have a dozen really choice ones. There are life size models of old fishing boats and a diorama of a rolling Coast Guard boat rescuing a man from the sea. It was so lifelike I was almost seasick!

Exhibits told of the scrimshaw and needlework crafts the sailors did.

There was a lot about the fishing and canning industry. At one time canneries lined Astoria's shores. In many cases nothing but the pilings remain.

Most interesting is the 20-minute film. It deals with the famous Columbia Bar where the current from the river meets the currents from the sea. Over 2000 shipwrecks have happened on this treacherous bar. An arriving ship has to have a special "bar pilot" as well as a regular pilot, for the channel across the bar shifts with tides and weather.

Before I returned to the ship I toured the lightship Columbia, part of the museum. She was the last of the light ships retired about 1979. Lightships were out at sea where no lighthouse could be built and they marked the approach to harbors. The ship was anchored and stayed in place for months at a time while supply ships kept her provisioned. Bad weather might mean the ship was unreachable for weeks at a time. The officers had single rooms, the crewmen bunked four to a room. Their wardroom must have seemed cramped with 20 some odd men living aboard for weeks at a time. The ship had to be well equipped for bad weather might have delayed a supply ship for weeks.

The entertainment our last night was a singer who asked for our favorite divas and then sang appropriate songs for each selection. It was an enjoyable evening.

<http://www.el.com/to/astoria/>

<http://www.oldoregon.com/Pages/fortclatsop.htm>

<http://www.oldoregon.com/Pages/maritime.htm>

<http://www.bcadventure.com/adventure/wilderness/forest/sitka.htm>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flint-lock>

<http://www.uscg.mil/pacarea/cgcsteadfast/main.htm>

[http://www.columbiariverbarpilots.com/Picture\\_gallery/ships\\_crossing\\_the\\_bar/Page.html](http://www.columbiariverbarpilots.com/Picture_gallery/ships_crossing_the_bar/Page.html)

Saturday, July 1. We docked bright and early at Portland and Barbara was there to meet me. After dropping my bags at her lovely home, we set out to "see" Portland. First stop was the Art Museum, which has an interesting Chinese collection. We also had a docent tour of "Great Paintings in Brescia [Italy] from the Renaissance to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century". It is amazing how much a docent helps with your appreciation of the work in question. I saw things I would not have found by myself.

We then drove to a beautiful rose garden. Portland is known as the city of Roses. There were many beautiful varieties. This is a popular place to get married (or at least pictured) and we saw several brides being photographed.

For dinner we went to Jakes in the Governor Hotel. The hotel is an historical monument and Jakes is a gourmet restaurant. Barbara's son, Ethan joined us. He is a recent college graduate from Evergreen College in Washington and is having a fine time camping and traveling. I had an assortment of oysters on the half shell and some mouth-watering scallops.

<http://www.portlandartmuseum.org/>

<http://www.rosegardenstore.org/>

<http://www.govhotel.com/>

Sunday, July 2. I arrived at the airport with plenty of time for my 11:00 am flight only to find it had been canceled. So I had a lot of time to kill waiting for the 1:30 flight. This flight was delayed for 45 minutes but we did eventually get to Chicago. Here United really dropped the ball. I had ordered a wheelchair since it is a long way from Concourse C to Concourse H. None was there when I got off the flight. I cooled my heels for a half hour until a cart arrived. The driver loaded two of us on and then drove up and down Concourse C for a half hour picking up and unloading people. At last we left and went to Concourse B where we dropped some people at baggage

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claim and then a gate. I could see on the monitor that my flight was loading and there was no way I would make this last flight for Atlanta. I finally bribed a woman who was off duty to put me in a chair and take me to H 12. We got there after the plane was fully loaded but they let me board and we were only a half hour taking off. I got to Atlanta after midnight. Again United failed to get me a wheelchair. I decided to walk it although I hurt all over from the long travel I had been doing. One of the stewardesses saw my plight and found a chair and she pushed me to baggage claim where fortunately the limo driver was waiting. I walked in my door at 1:00 am.