



My Drift

Title: Utah/Vegas Trip

Written By: Jerry D. Petersen

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Mount Timpanogos (Picture taken from Downtown Pleasant Grove, Utah)

I have taken a lot of trips in my lifetime and not written anything about them, however, this trip was special in several ways.

First, I have not been off the island of Oahu in 7 years. And that trip was to Utah to attend my mother's funeral. My mother, Dorothy Petersen, died on May 18, 2017, at age 99. Me and my son Mike went to the funeral. My daughter Tracy who lives in Erie, Pennsylvania came to Hawaii to take care of my wife who was having multiple health issues at the time.

I was the caretaker for my wife Patsy for 10+ years and could not go anywhere for more than a couple of hours. She had diabetes, heart disease along with multiple heart failures, respiratory problems which required oxygen, and her kidneys failed and was a dialysis patient until she died on July 19, 2023.

Second, this trip may very well have been my last trip. I'm 83 years old and starting to have a few health issues. However, me and my dog Apache (who is 6 years old) live in my house in Mililani and hope to have a few more good years.

On this trip to Utah, I was able to visit my sister Linda and her family. I visited my cousin Dee who just lost his wife Norma two weeks prior. Dee's family lived two houses down the street from our house in Pleasant Grove. Dee is 4 or 5 years older than me and was like a big brother to me when we were young. I was also able to visit my best friend Lew who lost his wife Majel a year ago.

And lastly, I was finally able to go to Las Vegas during March Madness. I played basketball most of my life and like to watch it. I was able to spend some time with my good friends Dave and Emmy who live just outside Vegas in Henderson, Nevada. My friend Donna and her husband Andrew from Hawaii were in Vegas at the same time, and we planned to meet to watch basketball and go to the hockey game together.

My itinerary (basically 5 days in Utah and 4 days in Las Vegas)

Honolulu to Salt Lake City

Delta Airlines Flight Nr: 347 (direct flight)

Departed on Thursday, 14 Mar at 9:16pm

Arrived on Friday, 15 Mar at 7:25am

Premium Economy Seat 20B with extra leg room

Budget Rent-a-Car

Full size Toyota Highlander SUV



Salt Lake City to Las Vegas

Delta Airlines Flight Nr: 2111

Departed on Wednesday, 20 Mar at 8:25am

Arrived on Wednesday, 20 Mar at 9:00am

Premium Economy Seat 10D with extra leg room

Hotel in Downtown Las Vegas

Main Street Station

Deluxe room with king sized bed – No smoking

**Las Vegas to Honolulu
Hawaiian Airlines Flight Nr: 7
Departed on Sunday, 24 Mar at 9:25am
Arrived on Sunday, 24 Mar at 12:45pm
Extra Comfort Seat 11C**

What I did each day in Utah

Friday, 15 Mar 24 – Drove my rent-a-car the 40 miles to Orem, Utah where I was going to be staying. This ground floor condo has been in our family for some time. Here is a short history:

Our family lived on a small farm in Pleasant Grove. Besides my mother and father, I had two brothers and a sister. Sadly, my two brothers died early – John died of Leukemia at age 6 on 17 Jan 1960 and Scott died in an auto accident at age 20 on 17 Nov 1977. My dad Delbert had diabetes and died of a stroke at age 62 on 17 Apr 1982.

I left home in late 1958 to attend the University of Utah. A few years later my sister left home to attend Utah State University. After my dad died, that left my mother Dorothy alone on the farm. It was too much for her to maintain so in 1993, she sold the property and purchased the 2-bedroom condo in Orem. After my mother died, me and my sister inherited the condo. Linda bought out my half and her daughter Jennifer has been living there since.

Linda, her husband Bill, and family lived in Logan, Utah. After they retired, they moved in with their daughter Jolyn who along with her husband Mark own a large house in Spanish Fork, Utah.

So, while I was in town, Jennifer went to stay with Linda and Bill in Spanish Fork. I had the condo to myself for 5 days. Well, not quite to myself! Jennifer has a cat, and it was my job to take care of the cat while living there.

Me and Kitty Cat got along just fine.



All I had to eat on the all-night flight was two small bags of chips. So, I went to Denny's for breakfast. I had chicken fried steak with gravy, scrambled eggs, hash browns, toast, coffee, and water. It was so good that I had the same thing all 5 mornings while in Utah.

Since I was up most of the night, I went back to the condo and me and the cat took a nap.



In the early afternoon, I drove over to Spanish Fork to see my sister. After visiting for a while, we decided to play some cards. We always play games when I visit Utah. It is something our family does. We played Rook first, me and Bill were partners against Linda and Jolyn. Me and Bill managed to come from way behind to win the game. Next, we played Up and Down – Linda won this game.

When I arrived in Salt Lake that morning the temperature was 37 degrees, and it was windy. All I brought with me was a sweater and I was freezing when outside. Linda said there was a big and tall section in JC Pennys nearby. So, on my way back I stopped there and purchased a jacket.



**Me, Linda, Bill at top
Jolyn and Mark on right
Jennifer sitting**

I decided it was time for a cold beer, so I went to the Pleasant Grove pool hall. This is the only bar in town and is the place where I learned how to play pool.

I walked in and the place looked exactly the same as it has for the past 60+ years. A long bar, two pool tables, some tables/chairs, and two pinball machines. One thing did change – there was a new bunch of drunks in there. I didn't know a soul!

I sat at the bar and ordered a bottle of regular Coors. It was good so I had a couple more before calling it a day. Besides it was time to feed the cat.



Pleasant Grove Pool Hall

Saturday, 16 Mar 24 – After breakfast I stopped at Macey's grocery store near the condo. Macey's is famous for flying the largest US flag in Utah.

I purchased milk, juice, ice cream, and some snacks. Groceries in Utah are cheap compared to Hawaii. Milk is half the price I pay in Mililani.



Jolyn and Mark said they wanted me back on Saturday night for dinner. They were making a special barbecued steak dinner just for me. Linda called me and told me to come early so we could play games before dinner. So, I hung out at the condo until time to leave for Spanish Fork. I was getting quite attached to Kitty Cat. By the way, that is the cat's real name – Kitty. I would sit in the easy chair reading my book and Kitty would jump up on my lap and want me to pet her.

Jolyn was busy preparing dinner, so Linda and Jennifer were partners against me and Bill in our Rook game. We lost this time, and it was time for dinner.

The steak was very good and tender so I could eat it with my limited number of teeth. We also had baked potatoes and cooked corn. Jello and whipped cream for dessert. I had a root beer to drink.



Jolyn's dogs

Linda and Bill have two other children that couldn't make it to dinner. Anne who lives in Texas and Ryan who lives in Springville not too far away. I talked to Ryan on the phone, and we made plans to go out to lunch the next day – Sunday.

Sunday, 17 Mar 24 – Ryan picked me up about 11:30am and took me to a new restaurant and bar called Bout Time Pub & Grill on the west side of Orem where the Geneva Steel Plant used to be. The steel plant is where my dad worked until health issues forced him to retire early. Geneva steel operated from December 1944 to November 2001 when it closed for good. It was the largest and employed the most employees of any business in Utah county.



Geneva Steel Plant

On most of my trips to Utah I would get together with Ryan to do something. Sometimes we would go golfing, sometimes we would play one-on-one basketball, and sometimes we would go to his house to play cards with his wife Jeena.

This time we went to this restaurant (right) for lunch and to watch basketball on TV.

Ryan and I got caught up on what's happening in our lives. There seemed to be a lot going on in his life but I'm not going write about it.



Sundays in Utah for most Mormons is a day for going to church and a day of worship. For this reason, I wasn't going to bother my sister. So, I went back to the condo to take a nap.

I called my friend Lew, and we are going to get together tomorrow (Monday).

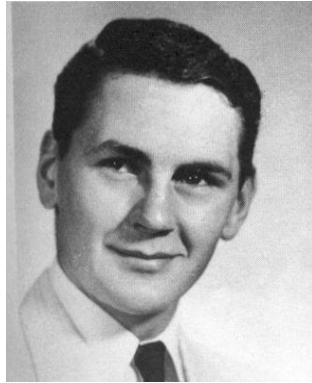
I've had a craving for a caramel malt for sometime now, so I went to the Dairy Queen. It was closed! I forgot that many businesses are closed on Sunday in Utah. I did find an open Baskin-Robbins ice cream place and got a quart of Pralines 'N Cream ice cream. Then I went to Pizza Hut for a meat lover's pizza and I was all set for dinner.

Fed Kitty and read my book until time to sleep.

Monday, 18 Mar 24 – My best Utah friend was (and still is) Lew Deveraux. I started running around with Lew in grade school and he is the only friend from my school days (grade school, high school and college) who I have kept in contact with over the years. We get together every time I go to Utah for a visit, a drink or two, a game of pool and sometimes we go fishing on the Provo River.



Jerry
High School Senior Pictures in 1958



Lew



Lew taking a pool shot on this trip

On my way to American Fork to pick up Lew, I drove through Pleasant Grove and by the house I grew up in. Our old house is still there but there are 7 other houses on the rest of the property.

Lew lives alone in his house like me, but he doesn't have a dog. When I got there, he was on the backyard patio drinking coffee and smoking.



Our family house in Pleasant Grove

Lew has developed several health issues in recent years. He suffered a heart attack about a year ago, his kidneys are starting to fail, his hearing and eyesight are bad. Lew said his son and his neighbor check on him most days to make sure he is doing okay.

We talked for a while and decided to go find a pool table and have a beer. We went to a bar in Orem that we knew had pool tables and played for about an hour. I won 4 games to 1. We sat at a table and had a few more beers.

It was good seeing Lew again. You never know – due to our age, health, and distance, it could very well be our last get together.

Tuesday, 19 Mar 24 – My last day in Utah for this trip. The plan was for Linda, Bill, and Jennifer to come over to the condo to play cards. Then we were going to visit Cousin Dee who lives in Lindon – not too far away.

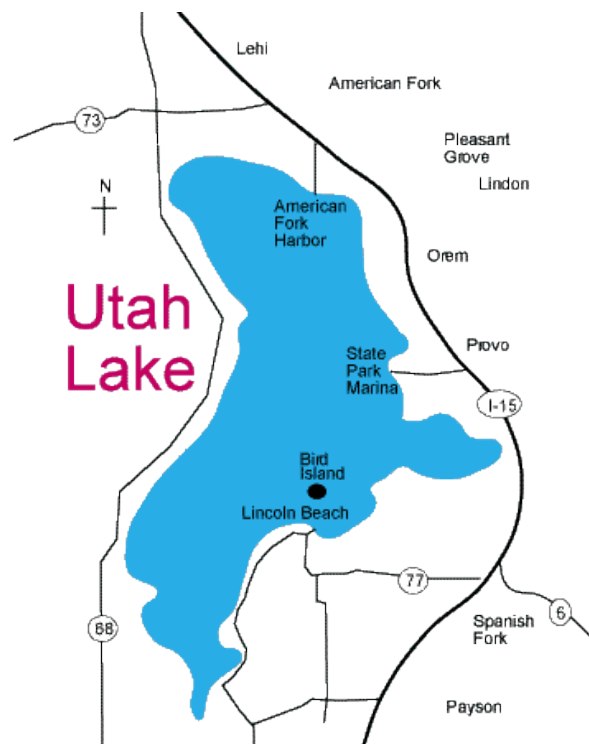
Dee looked good and seems to be in good health at age 88.

After leaving there, we decided to go have some lunch at the Purple Turtle. This is a restaurant in Pleasant Grove that has been around forever. I had a plain cheeseburger and a caramel malt. It was good!



Linda, Dee, and Me

We went back to the condo and played some more games. Soon it was time for them to go back to Spanish Fork. We said our goodbyes and I had to shower and packed up my bag to get ready to leave early in the morning. I wanted to get up at 5am and leave by 5:15 to drive to Salt Lake, turn in my rent-a-car, check in for my flight, get through airport inspection, get a cup of coffee, and be at my gate a few minutes early. I have never set the alarm on my iphone, so I called my daughter Tracy in Erie, PA and asked her to call me at 5am which was 7am there.



Map showing Utah County, Utah Lake, and the towns mentioned above.

What I did each day in Las Vegas

Wednesday, 20 Mar 24 – I got woke up by a phone call at exactly 5am. I got up, finished packing, fed, and said goodbye to Kitty. All went well and I arrived in Las Vegas at 9am and was at the baggage claim by 9:30am. My long-time friend Dave Pfannes was waiting for me there. The plan was to spend the day with Dave and his wife Emmy.

We went back Dave's house in Henderson to pick up Emmy. Then we went to a nearby restaurant for breakfast where we got caught up with the latest things going on in our lives.

I worked with Dave at Fort Shafter in the early 1970's. Dave and Emmy were together back then and were among the few Shafter friends that attended our wedding and knew my wife Patsy. They left Hawaii in the late 1970's when Dave accepted a job at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. They lived in Springfield, Virginia and whenever I was in the Washington DC area (which was often back in those days), I went to their house or we got together for drinks somewhere in the area. Later, Dave went to work in Zweibrücken, Germany. I went TDY there one time with my boss Art Lopkoff. Dave and Emmy had a house out in the country in a beautiful part of southern Germany. They invited me and Art to their house for a barbecue. Also invited was another couple (Andy and Judy) who were my friends in Hawaii. Andy was working in Augsburg, Germany. Dave had a keg of that great German beer, and we had a great time. After Dave retired, they moved to Henderson, Nevada.



Dave, Me, and Emmy at the Golf Clubhouse

Dave and Emmy live in a planned senior (you have to be 55 years old or older to own a house there) community in or near Henderson. It is in a very nice area and they took me for a tour. The Community Center was a large building with many features for the residents. There was an indoor track for people to walk or run. A fitness center with all different kinds of equipment. A large room where people were playing cards. A large auditorium for community events and much more.

The community also has two golf courses with large clubhouses. We went to one of these for a cold beer. (See the above picture) After that, it was time for me to check in to the Main Street Station Hotel and Casino in downtown Las Vegas.



Downtown Las Vegas

Dave and Emmy played the slot machines while I checked in and took my bag to the room. We had dinner and drinks at the Triple 7 Restaurant and Microbrewery. This is the nicest restaurant in the hotel and we had a good time. We sat at the long bar and ate dinner and drank the draft beer that was made there. There were two bartenders working – the man happened to be from Hawaii and the lady was from Russia – both were very friendly and interesting.

After Dave and Emmy went home, I walked over to the California Hotel to place my basketball bets at the Sports Book. The Main Street Station doesn't have a sports book.



My bet on Purdue to win the NCAA Basketball Tournament

I bet \$300 on Purdue and if they win, I will get \$2100 which I will be split 3 ways - \$700 for me, \$700 for my son Mike, and \$700 for my friend Donna.

I have known Donna for more than 20 years. She was the bartender at Henry Loui's which is a restaurant and bar near Fort Shafter where I worked for more than 40 years. I bowled on Wednesday nights at the Shafter Lanes and usually went to Henry Loui's for drinks before bowling.



Donna (Manager and Bartender)

About two dozen businesses -- including Henry Loui's, which has been in Mapunapuna for 42 years -- closed by July 15, 2022, to make way for another Home Depot.

My grandson Nick Petersen who is a senior at 'Iolani School in Honolulu has been accepted to attend Purdue University. He plans to major in Aviation Management and be a commercial pilot.

Now you know why me and my son Mike are taking Purdue.

Donna thought Zach Edey (the star of the Purdue basketball team) looks oriental. Well, I did some research and Donna is right – Edey grew up in Canada, but his mother is Chinese, and his father is white.



Zach Edey
(Edey is 7 feet 4 inches tall and weighs 300 pounds)

Thursday, 21 Mar 24 – Donna and her husband Andrew were staying at the Gold Coast Hotel and Casino. Andrew liked to hang out in the Sports Book and bet on basketball and the horses. The first March Madness basketball game started at 8:30am so I took Lyft ride share to the Gold Coast and Andrew had a seat saved for me. There were 16 games on Thursday and 16 games on Friday. I did some research and bet \$50 on each game.

Donna came down later and brought us hot dogs and water. We had already had a few beers. A while later Donna said she was going to meet a friend at the Red Zone Sports Bar and wanted to know if we wanted to go. I went with her but Andrew stayed to play the horses. Donna's friend's name was Bunny and she used to live in Hawaii and had worked at the Gold Coast as a bartender for 25 years. Bunny was a lot of fun and a little crazy. She really liked me when she found out that I was a Trump supporter and a conservative. Donna and Bunny were drinking Jameson Irish Whiskey shots and were having a great time. Later, they decided to go somewhere else to get something to eat. I declined and got a Lyft ride back to my hotel. I needed a nap!

After my nap I went down to the main hotel bar to watch the last two games of the day. I played the poker machine at the bar so I could get free beer. I bet on the right teams this time, so I checked all my tickets and I was \$100 up for the day. I was also up \$150 on the poker machine. I felt lucky so I walked over to the \$20 a hand blackjack table and got \$500 worth of chips. One hour later I was broke and back to reality!

It was time to go to my room to read awhile and get some sleep.

Friday, 22 Mar 24 – I woke up early as always and walked over to the California Hotel Market Street Café for breakfast. Had another cup of coffee while I verified my basketball picks for the day. Went to the Sports Book and made my bets and 20 minutes later the first game started. I watched the first two games at the California and then went back to the Main Street Station for a break.

Donna and Andrew were having some hotel issues and were moving to another hotel today. Here is that story:

Like me, they had made their flight and hotel reservations more than a month before the trip. They had hotel reservations at the Red Rock Hotel and Casino. That is where they wanted to stay. However, about a week before leaving they got a phone call from the Red Rock Hotel saying they were overbooked, and their reservations had been cancelled. Well, they were not too happy about this, and it was a big problem since all the hotels were full for March Madness. Fortunately, Donna has several friends that live and work in Vegas, one of whom worked at the Gold Coast Hotel. This person got them a comp (free) room there for the first two nights. After a few more phone calls they were able to get a room at the Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino for the other three nights.

Donna and Andrew were coming to my hotel that night at 7pm to have dinner at the Triple 7 Restaurant and Microbrewery. In the meantime, I watched a lot of basketball and did some more gambling. That day, I won \$300 on the basketball games so I was up a total of \$400. I also won more than \$300 on the deuces wild poker machine.



I hit a Royal Flush for the first time in my life.

I had a good time at dinner. I ordered a pizza to eat with my beer. Can't remember what Donna and Andrew had to eat but the bartender from Hawaii was working again and it was a fun time.



Main Street Station Triple 7 Restaurant and Microbrewery

Saturday, 23 Mar 24 – My last full day in Vegas – going home tomorrow morning. Got up and went for a walk in the downtown area and then to the California Hotel for breakfast. I went back to my room and watched TV, read my book, and rested until time to go meet Donna and Andrew at their hotel about noon.

Today is hockey game day! The plan was to hangout at the Westgate Sports Book until 3 or 4pm and then get a Lyft ride to the T-Mobile Arena to pick up our tickets. Donna called somebody in the ticket office and got our tickets upgraded. She told them they were coming with an older friend (I wonder who that could be?) and they didn't want to have to walk up and down the steep stairs in the arena.

The Vegas Golden Knights were playing the Columbus Blue Jackets. The game didn't start until 7:30 so we had some time to kill. After getting the tickets, we went to a sports bar in the nearby New York-New York Hotel and Casino and watched more basketball.

It was cold and windy in Vegas that night and even colder in the arena.



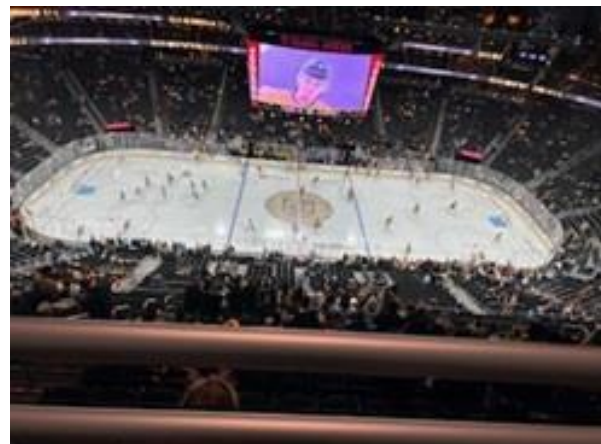
Below are a few pictures of us going and at the hockey game:



Donna and Andrew



Donna and Me



The hockey game was a special event and I really enjoyed it. Our seats were on the concourse level at center ice. We went up two escalators and no stairs. We were near the restrooms and the beer stand. Great seats!

It was cold in the T-Mobile Arena during the hockey game. Me and Andrew were in walking shorts with a light jacket. Donna went to the gift shop and purchased a Golden Knights blanket to help keep us warm.

After the game, I took a taxi back to my hotel. The taxi line was shorter than the ride share line.

I had called my daughter Tracy in Erie earlier to call me in the morning at 5:30am.

Sunday, 24 Mar 24 – Got my wakeup call and finished packing and took Lyft to the airport. Arrived in Honolulu at 12:15pm. My son was waiting somewhere near the airport. He brought me my truck and he went in the Hawaiian Air terminal to catch his flight back Maui. Everything went as planned.

I went home and when I got out of the truck, my dog Apache was surprised and really happy to see me. He almost knocked me down as he jumped up and down and ran around. Time to get back to my normal life.

It was a good trip!!

Bigdrifter44@gmail.com

Bigdrifter.com