

April 3, 2000

Dear Family,

Sorry you haven't heard much from us lately, but nothing has been going on. It takes a few months to accumulate enough to put in a letter.

Saturday we drove up to Saginaw Bay for a bird watching outing conducted by the Michigan Audubon Society. We drove around to several spots on the Bay and to wetlands near the Bay to see waterfowl. There were about 15 people - mostly retired school teachers - in 5 vehicles, and we were given walkie-talkies to communicate. We were the least-serious watchers. Most of the others had telescopes. We just had binoculars. We saw green wing teals, snowy egrets, a blue goose (which they've decided is just a snow goose variation), canvas backs, ring-necked ducks, bufflehead, pintail, widgeon and shoveler. Also a couple shorebirds - yellowlegs (greater or lesser, we couldn't tell) and pectoral sandpiper. The water level in the Bay is down about 5 feet, so the beaches are wide and the docks are high and dry.

Friday night we met some folks from where Carol works at a local Chi Chi's for karioke night. Some of the performers were very good. One guy did a great Louis Armstrong singing "It's a Wonderful World" and another white guy did a great Stevie Wonder. He even had Stevie's head movement. We decided that there is a lot of talented singers around, but they look too funny for prime time. Great voices, but beer-bellies, etc. There were others that were OK, but just didn't have enough power to really make themselves heard. And there were some who were really bad. It doesn't seem that "Bad, Bad, Leroy Brown" would be hard to sing, but one guy made it unrecognizable. So we enjoyed the good ones and laughed at the bad ones. Neither Carol nor I performed.

Weekend before last we went with another couple to the VanAndel Museum in Grand Rapids. It was the last day for an ancient Egypt exhibit. They have other exhibits there too - a large one on Grand Rapids' furniture industry, one on the Native Americans in Michigan. It is a nice new building, and it is right on the river. It was a cool, sunny day and there was a great view of the river from the museum's cafe, where we had lunch.

Nearby is the Gerald Ford Museum, where they have a Lewis and Clark exhibit. We didn't see it. It will be there through October.

We've seen 3 good movies in the last few weeks. Wonderboys, Erin Brockovich, and High Fidelity. All are funny.

Carol has Shingles, but after the first day, when she thought she had a bladder infection, she hasn't been very sick. She has 2 patches of rash, but they are fading.

I've been reading "Walking with the Wind", by John Lewis. I'm learning a lot about the civil rights movement in the early sixties and the horrible treatment blacks received at the hands of the Southerners. Lewis was a leader of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and now he is a U.S. congressman. I either never knew or forgot much of what went on. Makes

you wonder about the "heritage" the S. Carolinians hold so dear that they feel they must fly the Confederate flag. It's a good book, because it has a lot of Lewis' personal experiences. He was a sharecropper's son, I think from Alabama. He took church seriously as a boy and showed a talent for preaching. He'd practice on his chickens. He went to college in Nashville to learn how to preach, but while he was there, he got introduced to the non-violent protest philosophy and got involved in sit-ins and such. Apparently one of the early successes of the movement was in Nashville.

I also picked up a book called "If God wanted us to Vote, He would have Given Us Candidates" by Jim Hightower of Texas. Haven't started it yet. I usually don't buy books, but I got a \$20 Barnes and Noble gift certificate for Christmas. I've never heard of this book, but it is new and how could you go wrong with a title like that? Having to choose between Bush and Gore makes me wish we could keep Clinton.

Happy birthday, Deb.

Steve