

Juneau, Alaska 7/5/08

Contributed by Jane
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After a long hiatus (from writing, not traveling), we're back! [{rokzoom title=|Kell and Miles at Mendenall Glacier album=|7-5-08| images/stories/7-5-08/IMG5914.jpg {/rokzoom}}](#)

I'm planning on trying to make a few posts between now and the imminent end of our trip. Since I was last on line and posting, we've accomplished a lot. We spent the winter doing what we had originally set out to do – traveling up and down the Rockies checking out the possible towns for relocation. We started out in Taos, and immediately fell in love. We spent a week there skiing in such incredible conditions that the mountain had to be closed one day because of too much snow. We spent some time in Boulder and exploring Miles's old stomping grounds (not really as he was pretty young when he lived there). We went back to Park City for a couple of weeks to hang out with Annette, Jacques and the Franey clan for a week (where Jacques, Stephen and Miles put my skiing skills to the test -- and I hucked my first cornice!), then onto McCall and Sandpoint, Idaho, then over the border to Nelson, BC, then down into Montana to check out Missoula and Bozeman. Finally, we spent a week in Salida, CO. Whew! [{rokzoom title=|Taos Pueblo| album=|7-5-08| images/stories/7-5-08/IMG3936.jpg {/rokzoom}}](#)[{rokzoom title=|Taos Pueblo Doorway| album=|7-5-08| images/stories/7-5-08/IMG3937.jpg {/rokzoom}}](#)[{rokzoom title=|Miles and I at the top of Schweitzer Mountain in Idaho| album=|7-5-08| images/stories/7-5-08/DSCN0081.jpg {/rokzoom}}](#)[{rokzoom title=|Miles's Family's A-frame near Nederland| album=|7-5-08| images/stories/7-5-08/IMG3960.jpg {/rokzoom}}](#)[{rokzoom title=|Glacier National Park| album=|7-5-08| images/stories/7-5-08/IMG3975.jpg {/rokzoom}}](#)[{rokzoom title=|Hiking in Glacier National Park| album=|7-5-08| images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4017.jpg {/rokzoom}}](#)[{rokzoom title=|Ghost Town near Salida, CO| album=|7-5-08| images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4211.jpg {/rokzoom}}](#)[{rokzoom title=|Cimarron Cemetery – As if you had to tell people there was no outlet???\)| album=|7-5-08| images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4227.jpg {/rokzoom}}](#)

After spending time in each place that we thought might be our new home, we actually had a very easy time deciding where to land. In the end, Nelson seemed to be the one place that had the mix of people, landscape, ethos, economic factors, and sustainability that we were looking for. [{rokzoom title=|View of Nelson and Kootenay Lake from the rail trail| album=|7-5-08| images/stories/7-5-08/IMG3968.jpg {/rokzoom}}](#)

It's sort of ridiculous to go looking for the "perfect" place, which we know does not exist, but nevertheless we feel that we're at a crossroads (both as a family and as a culture) where decisions about living have to be very deliberate in order to create a sustainable permanent home and community. So, what does Nelson have? It has good schools, a real, working downtown (complete with a Main St. that has a grocery, a hardware store, pharmacy, etc…), a stable economy, a vibrant demographic mix (though not as diverse as we would have liked), a reasonable (though not cheap) housing market, and outdoor recreational opportunities that will keep us busy year-round. The local ski hill (Whitewater) is a two-lift locals hill that caters not only to families, but also to the very adventuresome skiers and boarders, with many connections from the groomed trails into off-piste and back country territory. The powder was great!

But perhaps the factor that attracted us most to Nelson is that this community has been actively looking at its environmental sustainability for many years now. They are dealing with everything from water resource management (despite the fact that they have an overabundance of it), energy generation (mostly through hydro power), how to support the continued growth of local, sustainable food crops, how to manage their forests responsibly and how to continue the trend of growing local businesses. There's also a really noticeable lack of focus on material accomplishment. While Nelson has BC's highest number of millionaires per capita, you'll never see anything fancier than a Subaru on the local roads and the houses have remained extremely modest affairs – 1500-2500 sq. ft. with three bedrooms and one and half baths is pretty standard there. Trophy homes are nearly non-existent.

Most folks live downtown and do a lot of biking and walking to get to and from school, work and errands. We have been going back and forth between whether to live downtown or out of town in the countryside (you can get a lot of land relatively cheaply here). But I think we're leaning towards downtown now (it's easier to meet folks for one and it makes having only one car a real possibility).

Alas, the immigration front might not be as easy as we had hoped. We've had two lawyers advising us and one is more optimistic than the other. So, we'll go with him! But it will take a few months for us to get work permits and then 16-18 months to get permanent residency. That's a bit nerve racking considering we're getting ready to move much sooner (this August!). But we'll see how it all pans out. If this trip has taught us nothing else, it's to be flexible and willing to make changes on the fly.

If we couldn't do Nelson, I think that Sandpoint, Idaho would be a close second. While we loved the towns in the southwest (especially Taos), we realized pretty quickly in looking at properties that water resources really will be an issue there. There have already been instances of wells drying up in dryer seasons and their reliance on snowpack is a bit alarming. Although all communities enjoyed record snowfall this past year, the trend is in the opposite direction. Sandpoint's climate, while not exactly a rainforest, provides it with regular precipitation aside from just snowpack. We also liked the ski mountain in Sandpoint (Schweitzer) though it gives the town a bit more of that resort feel that we are trying to avoid. There was also a beautiful lake (Lake Pend Oreille) that is a focus of summer recreation. Land there was relatively cheap and while the schools are not exactly stellar, there is a great Waldorf school there.

Strangely, all the towns that we looked at seriously have Waldorf schools, with Nelson's being the most developed. We spent a lot of time visiting these schools and learning more about the Waldorf curriculum. I think we'd would try it for Kell for awhile. I really liked the fact that they are not at all test-driven and have an extremely creative curriculum that focuses on maintaining and encouraging the child's creative inclinations while still giving them everything they need from the mainstream curriculum. But again, we'll see. While the schools are relatively inexpensive (from \$2500 to 6,000/year), some of them are limited in terms of space so I'm not sure Kell will be able to get in for his first grade year.

We had a few of great side trips during this winter and spring, including a great end-of-season treat & having David come with us for four days on our journey. He brought Kell back to Salida, Co from New York with him in late April and we spent time at some of the more beautiful spots in Southern Utah & Arches National Park and Goblin Valley State Park. We then drove up to Salt Lake to see him home. I'm not sure he'll ever want to come "a-travelling" with us again, but we loved having him there with us. It gave Miles and I a chance to do some tent camping, which was fun and I think David walked more than he thought he could. Our time in Moab coincided with a car rally that featured all kinds of vintage and other wise "hot" cars. It's apparently the thing to do because the town was packed. It was great to finally have a visitor to our mobile life and we couldn't have asked for a better person to do it with & thanks David! {rokzoom title=|David holding up "Balanced Rock" in Arches| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4259.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|Distant View at Arches| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4264.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|Yes, That's David Climbing at Arches!| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4290.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|David and Kell catching some shade at Arches| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4375.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|Double Arch| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4430.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|Landscape Arch| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4447.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|Kell on a "Goblin"| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4467.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|The Whole Family at Goblin Valley| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4478.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|The Boys at Goblin| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4484.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|A Group of Goblins| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4495.jpg {/rokzoom}

The sadder side trip was the time we spent in Minneapolis with Miles's family. We had originally planned to go to NY for our dear friend Marilyn's 70th birthday bash and to visit with friends in April. But while we were waiting at the gate to fly to NY, we got an email from someone trying to reach Miles to let him know that his father (from whom he was estranged for 20 years or more), was dying. Although it didn't seem likely that we could make it to Minneapolis in time to see him before he died, we decided to go anyway. We re-routed and flew to Minneapolis and went straight to the hospital, where his father (Bob) had just been removed from a ventilator but contrary to the doctors' assumptions had survived the procedure. He wasn't exactly conscious though he seemed to react to some things by squeezing hands and moving his face around. He definitely seemed to react when Miles's half-sister Amanda told him that both of this other children (Miles and Meg) were finally together with him.

It was a very bittersweet time. We stayed with Bob until he died about 4 days later. During that time, we were blessed to learn more about and get to know Amanda and her family. She and her husband Dave, and three children Sylvie (1 yr), Hannah (16) and Emily (10) are such lovely people. It was a real blessing to make a connection with them (even if it was forged in a hospital waiting room). It was also a blessing (I think) for Miles to learn about his father from Amanda and also his partner Debbie. But the knowledge that he wouldn't have the opportunity to get to know him first hand was hard to bear. Miles of course, was the epitome of openness and empathy that he is. Despite years of believing his father didn't want to have much to do with him, Miles was able to be present for Bob in a way that was touching, honest and generous. I'm not sure I could have gotten to that place so quickly! {rokzoom title=|The kids at the Minneapolis Conservatory| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4044.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|Miles, Amanda (holding Izzy) and Emily & Can you see the resemblance?| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4052.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|"New" family reunion| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4114.jpg {/rokzoom}

We also finally got a chance to visit with our friends, Jeannie and Terry and their kids Carson and Gerrit at their ranch in Montana. We had a great time just hanging out and Kell had much-needed boy time which included a celebration of his 6th birthday! I was so happy to be able to share that with them and for Kell to have a real birthday party despite our travels. For me, it was a reminder that sometimes it's good just to settle down and do not much at all & just

soaking up the sky and stars there was enough to keep me going for awhile. The Airstream was soaked with red dirt from the road into the ranch (and we're still finding it in cracks here and there) but it was nice to have it there with us. We were there at the tail end of their calving season so we got to see lots of little new calves and we got to see them being branded, tagged, inoculated, etc. It was an amazing thing to watch Jeannie, Terry and her Dad Irv (a classic Montana cowboy still riding high in his 80s!) work through the calves, performing these acts that aren't so pretty to look at but are necessary and doing it with the most minimal effort and humane touch possible. It was a real treat just to share some meals with them for a few nights. {rokzoom title=|The Airstream at the ranch| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4552.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|A newly tagged calf| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4545.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|Kell, Gerrit and Carson in calf branding pasture| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4571.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|Jeannie and Irv after the round-up| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4639.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|Sparky Getting Saddled Up| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4646.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|Kell riding Sparky – Look Mom, no leader!| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4654.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|Kell and Gerrit Get up Close and Personal with the Birthday Cake| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4680.jpg {/rokzoom}

We were graced by Geoff's presence a couple of nights at the ranch and for an extra day back in Sheridan, WY when we left the ranch. For Kell's birthday, Geoff showed him how to cast using the rod he had gotten from Bill for Christmas. We hiked up Tongue River Canyon which was yet another gorgeous spot to add to our list of gorgeous spots. Kell was rapt by the process of casting his line out and bringing it in, learning how to reel it in along the line of the rapids. {rokzoom title=|Geoff Showing Kell the Cast| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4684.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|Kell Getting the hang of it| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4710.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|Tongue River Canyon| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4712.jpg {/rokzoom}{rokzoom title=|Kell Gets a tractor ride in Sheridan| album=|7-5-08|} images/stories/7-5-08/IMG4727.jpg {/rokzoom}

Another side trip (well it was definitely a trip though not necessarily in the traveling sense) was our work over two months on helping to organize the first trip to the U.S. of an important and revered Tibetan teacher and leader, the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa. He is a young man of 22, who is the embodiment of the Buddha while being completely attuned to the issues and stories we confront day to day in the west. After escaping from Tibet over 8 years ago and living in Dharamsala, where he studies with the leaders of his lineage and others, he finally received a Visa from the Indian government (over Chinese protest – or so we understand) to visit the U.S (New York, Boulder and Seattle).

Our dear friend Belinda was responsible for the fundraising efforts required to bring a teacher of his stature to the U.S. In part because of our fondness for Belinda but also because we were both very interested in helping to make His Holiness's visit possible, we volunteered to help out. While we thought we'd be serving as low-level volunteers (cleaning bathrooms maybe?) at the events in Seattle, we ended up co-directing two of the Special Events teams for the Seattle visit. Miles was in charge of the Welcoming and Farewell ceremonies and I was working on communications.

That meant that we spent the better part of May in Seattle and spent many hours and days in meetings, organizing events and interfacing with the many sangha members who had joined together to make this visit happen. When it came, it was quite incredible. Despite his youth, this monk had the ability to convey such unconditional love for his students and a frankness about his life that made even the most mundane dharma teachings accessible and transformative. We also had a rare opportunity to see devotion in practice as Ponlop Rinpoche, Belinda's teacher and someone that I had received teachings from in December, guided His Holiness through the teachings and other events. Many people said that it was Ponlop Rinpoche's devotional attitude towards His Holiness that transformed His Holiness into the living Buddha for those privileged to see that relationship. Since so much of Tibetan Buddhism is about devotion to one's teacher, it was so uplifting to see it practiced by such a high lama as Ponlop Rinpoche. Check out this short PBS interview if you're interested … <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week1145/profile.html>

I had already begun to feel that I might want to become a student of Rinpoche's and this experience made that feeling a reality for me. Of course, I still have to ask him, and Miles will too. We will try to attend the Ponlop Rinpoche's teachings in Texas in August if all goes well and go from there. If we really do end up in Nelson, we'll be within a day's drive of Seattle and hopefully able to attend more teachings with Rinpoche on an on-going basis.

More than anything though, this experience brought us together with sangha again and reminded us how important the dharma has been in both of our lives, and how that sense has faded with the rigors of traveling on this trip. We (Miles more than me) have begun to try to renew our practice and will hopefully continue that as we get ready to settle down again.

Whew – that's six months in a few paragraphs…. I hope to be a bit more regular about keeping the blog going so check back and complain if I don't. It makes me feel useful!