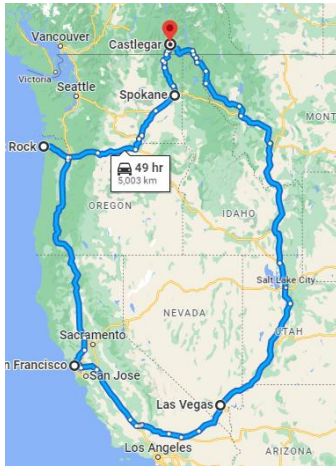


NONA'S VEGAS ROAD TRIP PRIOR TO 60TH BIRTHDAY

Nona Kucher developed the idea that she needed something special for her 60th Birthday Celebration. To this end she promoted the idea to her family and this is a record of the results.

A) Route taken and Nona (the 60th birthday celebration)



B) Dates and Events

Nona started talking about doing "something special" to celebrate her 60th birthday in late 2001 and settled on going to Las Vegas. She put it out there to her family and the response was good and so the dates and events planning started. Nona suggested that Mom and Dad accompany her on a drive to Vegas so that we can include adventures as they may arise.

Mom and Dad never did drive through that part of the country from Canada as neither did Nona, so it was decided that we continue with that idea.

The ensuing adventures unfold in this story.....

1. *Tuesday, April 05, 2022*

We departed at 0922 hours from Castlegar, B.C.

This is finally the day that Nona had planned for, to leave Castlegar for the celebration of her 60th birthday. Her birthday is not till June 27th but Ukrainians celebrate weddings for seven (7) days so why not birthdays?

We took B.C. Highway 22 to Patterson Customs and then US Highway 25 into Washington State via Williams Lake cut-off and then to the Highway 395 junction at Colville.

In the past we had wonderful experiences at Chico's Mexican Restaurant, Colville, Washington. So we had a great lunch there and were not disappointed.

Our travels continued to a junction to Highway I-90 at Spokane and on into Idaho State, just before Coeur d'Alene. Just after Wallace ID, we entered the state of Montana

The planned objective was Butte, MT, but we already had a long day and were tired so we opted for Missoula, MT, the next community on I-90. We turned into the downtown area looking for a Casino / Hotel, but could not see any (Casinos are very important to this group). We were told to go back along I-90 to the first entrance to Missoula as that was where the Casinos were located. We did that but found there was no vacancies and checked into Super 8 instead.

There was no restaurant in the Motel so we drove to one near a Casino, After dinner, Mom and Nona tried their luck.

2. Wednesday, April 06, 2022

We carried on I-90 and decided to have breakfast at Butte MT in a Diner. We found a nice place and noted the large portions served in American Restaurants. It was impossible to eat it all. Coffee just kept coming.....

We took the Junction at Butte to Highway 15 and entered Idaho State at Idaho Falls. The planned objective was Pocatello, Idaho but we kept a lookout for a Casino / Hotel and just before Pocatello, we saw this beautiful resort on the right side of the Highway. It was the Shoshone Bannock Casino Hotel at Fort Hall, Indian reserve.



Nona was able to negotiate a special rate and we checked in. Soon we realized that we need a drink but no alcohol could be purchased on the reserve. We needed to drive to Chubbuck, a small town off reserve. The directions I received were that it is "just up the road to the left". It was just 20 miles later that I found the place. Fantastic prices for Liquor once I got there

The dining room at the hotel was well appointed and the staff more than willing to please. We had an excellent dinner after which Nona and Mom gambled once again and I watched TV.

3. Thursday, April 07, 2022

We continued on to Pocatello and found another Diner to enjoy a nice breakfast. We purchased groceries for that planned picnic down the road. We had brought a special card table from home for those future picnics.

We entered Utah State about 24 miles down Highway 15 and drove through Salt Lake City. It is a large city and took awhile to pass through the urban development. We were getting hungry and started looking for a Rest Stop but we know now why there were none to be found. We finally pulled over at a Truck Stop near Pintura, UT Truck Stop for gas and that picnic. There was a strong wind and everyone walked bent over into that wind. It was difficult to stand straight. The entry doors into the Confectionary faced East as it was impossible to open any door to the West as that was the ferocity of that wind.

Despite the wind, the determined travellers decided to pitch that card table and it was immediately blown over. The decision then was to just use the end gate as our table.

Paper plates blew out to parking lot along with salads. Juice bottles tipped over and got everything else wet. Patience and any or all comments were not a good idea at this time as a Picnic was obviously not a good idea as we were not able to use the special card table we brought from Castlegar nor even make a sandwich. We hurriedly, literally threw, everything, helter-skelter, into that truck box and slammed the end gate shut before anything else flew out.



The silence in our vehicle was deafening and we were not talking to each other for awhile.

We tried to book into Hotel / Casinos in St George but all were full. It was an American Spring Break and many families were travelling. Reluctantly we decided to carry on to see what the next place might provide for us.

Soon we Crossed into the NW corner of Arizona State for a short distance. We were impressed by the Mountain Range on border Arizona / Nevada. Beautiful Scenery which is part of the chain from Alaska through to Mexico.



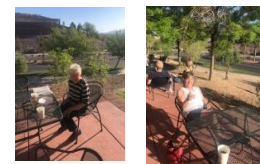
While in these mountains we entered Nevada State and arrived at Mesquite, Nevada. The vacancy challenge was similar to St Georges. The motel no vacancies in Casino / Hotels. We pulled out of the try a Holiday Inn we noticed above the City. Nona went but decided to "bite the bullet" to pay over \$300 to check Inn Express. It was a good choice, after all as can be this photo. We had a great Dinner at Hotel. Then Granny and Nona took a cab to a Casino while Gramps caught up on TV News with CNN.



search found Casino strip to into negotiate in to Holiday appreciated in

4. **Friday, April 08, 2022**

Free Breakfast at Hotel was very good as witnessed by these two ladies on the sunny veranda. There was a variety of choices in the smorg type of breakfast foods with a large assortment of fresh fruit, juices, Ham, Bacon and eggs. Very well supplied. We also had time to relax before the last stint to our destination stop at Las Vegas, NV.



The GPS was set for the MGM Grand and we soon arrived at noon in Las Vegas, Nevada. It was very busy to say the least and would have been very challenging without the assistance of the GPS.

We started the process of checking into MGM Grand.

First of all, we arrived safe and sound at the hotel thanks to GPS and Nona's driving skills. We had been in text communication with Lori and Allie and so we knew they were all waiting for us. Lori instructed that she would meet and they would assist us in the check in process. Of course, the activity at the entrance is basically a "zoo" and watching for signs is a challenge to say the least and so we ended up turning right into the parkade. Next was to find the front door after parking. After instructions from Rick

and Lori, we proceeded to parkade exit and around the hotel and tried again to the left and found this hotel entrance. Challenging, isn't it? The Valets looked after the parking and we made our way slowly to the check in and our prebooked rooms.

Reception party was at the Woodhouse suite which was on our floor but on an adjacent wing. After placing our luggage in our room we proceeded to the Party Room. The view out the window was excellent. Breathtaking was probably a better expression. We just could not stop looking out the window. Amazing that a piece of desert in the Nevada could be developed in the fashion that it is today.

Soon Garrett and Tori came along with Allie and Brenden. Photographs were taken in the room Nona and all the refreshments and the party was in session. The Szmata grandparents were babysitting and brought Nona's grandchildren over.

Here Weston starts in "welcome to Las Vegas" for his Baba. Haden was playing catch in the room somewhere.

5. *Saturday, April 09, 2022*

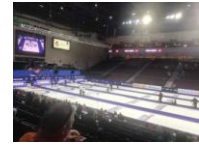
We were able to obtain tickets to the NHL Game Vegas Knights vs. Arizona Coyotes. This was a highlight that Nona wanted to include in her LV celebrations. We were met in the MGM Grand by Brenden's parents who then ushered us from the



MGM through all the passages, through to the Arena. The cheer leaders made the event awesome as they were revelling to incite the fans.

6. **Sunday, April 10, 2022**

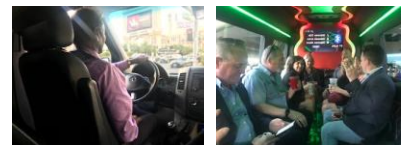
Nona was able to obtain tickets for World Curling Game semi final Canada vs. Scotland. This was another "must see" for Nona. Because we were having the birthday party that night, we could not see the Worlds Final in the afternoon but we did manage to attend the semi final which was in the morning



Nona's Birthday Party was planned with Allie in charge. She made reservations at the Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak Palace. She rented a "Party Van" to take us there. We all met at the MGM Entrance participants in this gala Mom with Kyle Burk at Lori Woodhouse, Nona Szmata, Tori Apostoluik, Garrett Kucher in front of the van. and Stone Crab, located in the Caesar's "Party Van" to take us there. We all met to wait for the van. Here we meet all the event starting from left to right. Dad, the back, Tamara Burk, Rick Woodhouse, (Birthday Girl), Allie Szmata. Brenden



We partied all the way. I am sure the van was sound insulated but the celebration took place as it should. Even the driver participated in the singing and cheering as he made his way to Caesar's Palace.



It was a truly awesome establishment as we were ushered



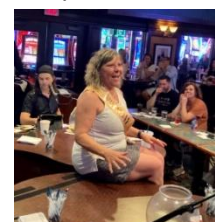
by tables upon tables to our reserved table on the far end. Perhaps the Maitre'd took a precautionary approach and placed us at the rear. This certainly met all the advertizing as the place for special people to go while in Las Vegas. As we were ushered to our reserved table, we noticed that everyone was dressed to the "nines".

The menu was well outstanding (as were all the prices). We cautiously made our selections. I



will not provide the tab amounts as most of our hearts cannot handle all that. We enjoyed the moment as we knew that this Nona would not be celebrating another 60th birthday.

Nona's special evening at the MGM Grand was at the Piano bar with all her family exception Mom & Dad who slept through it all. Someone knew about this and about midnight, they all drifted down and gave the secret away about Nona's 60th birthday and that she was from Canada



There were leisure times by the pool that were enjoyed by most of the enthusiasts that needed a tan. Here, sister Lori displays her love to the birthday girl in public. It was definitely a family event.



7. Monday, April 11, 2022

We checked out from MGM Grand early without breakfast as we wanted to visit with Haden and Weston Szmata, at Brenden's parents condo.

We left Las Vegas at 1000 hours to begin our next stage of our experience and continued on Highway 15 We entered California near Clarke mountain (7,929 ft ASL), The Highway is definitely devoid of vegetation. We soon experienced the desert with this sand storm essentially challenging vision of the highway like a winter prairie storm in Saskatchewan. Overhead neon signs warned about visibility which was obviously a common event in those areas



We stopped to have Breakfast at Casino just before Barstow, CA. There was an IHOP outlet within the Casino and Dad finally had his IHOP pancakes. It was an excellent meal. we took the Junction to Highway 58 at Barstow to San Francisco. We drove through Bakersfield on Highway 58 and took a Junction past Bakersfield to meet Highway 5.

We drove by irrigation ditches that was the mainstay need for Fruit and Nut Orchards. I took a self note to investigate where the irrigation ditches came from. Many of the areas were sprinkled and so perhaps the source may be underground piping or wells. There certainly is an abundance of Sun and good growing weather.



We took the Junction to Highway 205 and which led into Highway 580 into Oakland, CA. This is when it got exciting as we were now in the darkness of evening and on an eight (8) lane plus highway through Oakland when we had a GPS failure. Just as we entered Bay Bridge, Nona was able to partner her cell with the truck GPS. (She was being challenged by heavy traffic at the same time).

We arrived in San Francisco, CA. The GPS directed us safely to the Holiday Inn Express on Fisherman's Wharf, 550 N Point Street, San Francisco, CA. We let the Valets handle parking the pickup. The room was facing the end wall of the next hotel so no view of the Wharf but we were too tired to care at that point. We sat down and had a well deserved drink. We ate at the Hotel with a limited menu.

8. Tuesday, April 12, 2022

We set out in the morning to have a "San Francisco Breakfast" and passed on free hotel voucher and took a walk down to Fisherman's Wharf.

We noticed the Boudin Bakery with a number of people around it and decided to try it. The fresh bread fragrances were consuming. We had breakfast sandwiches. Nona ordered clam chowder since we were in San Francisco after all.



When you go to San Francisco, a "must do" is to take a ride on their famous Rail Street Car. We wound our way up to the "Turn around" where the Street Cars get redirected to down town. This is Nona's first ride on a track and we knew she was in for an experience.



We had to wait in line for our tickets but the ride was adventurous to say the least. Photos start with the base Turnaround and then views from the Street Car and then Nona's expression after we just came down one of the sharp and hilly street. The expression on Nona's face says it all.

We decided to shop downtown on Market Square. The railcar dropped us downtown unto Market Square on Market Street.

We walked about six (6) blocks along Market Street to the large store. Nona and Mom walked in to conduct their shopping while I struck up a conversation with this SF Policeman. I found the Officer pleasant to talk to. We talked about the Russia / Ukraine War and his fears that it may become a Global Conflict. He is a normal father and is concerns about his sons being conscripted.



We returned from downtown and decided to taste the Irish Coffees at the famous Bar above the Street Car Turnaround at Wharf. The Bartender entertained us with how he "mass produced" the Irish Coffees. Yes, it was worth the taste.

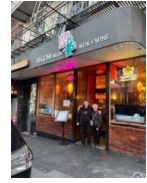
We next went shopping at Fisherman's Wharf which was a short walk down the Wharf I found a bench to sit on to watch people which Mom and Nona challenged the many shops there. I had a great time people watching. Soon two women sat down beside me just as Mom and Nona arrived. Oh well, they were nice ladies that needed to conduct more exercise.



We had Lunch on Fisherman's Wharf at Sabella and LaTorre. Crab sandwiches and Beer and Absolut over ice for the birthday girl.

We wanted to do something different on our last day in SF. We decided on going to Dine in China Town. Begoni Bistro Wok & Wine was an accidental find when we were dropped off by

taxi in the middle of China Town. His last comment was that "you will have a difficult time getting a cab back from here". We asked two Chinese ladies whether they could recommend a restaurant and all they said "you are in the right area". We walked by this place and "Quantum Physics" stopped us right here and in we went. We had excellent rapport with Owner who asked us about Chinatown in Vancouver. Food was exceptional and the Owner gladly called a cab for us.

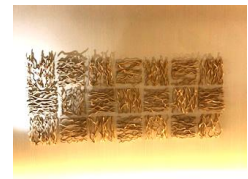


9. Wednesday, April 13, 2022

We left San Francisco after the free breakfast in the Holiday Express and paying over \$170 parking tab for two nights (don't take your vehicle to SF). We crossed Golden Gate Bridge *unto* Highway 101 going North.

It was a long drive with heavy rains and finally at Bandon, Oregon. Nona had prebooked Windermere on the Beach which was recommended to us by Garret and Tori who had enjoyed it very much. Here Granny collapsed to well deserved rest in the chair upon entry into the room, The hanging on the wall reminded Gramps of his pine needle tapestry.

We took Garrett and Tori's advice and dined at Edgewater's Restaurant that evening and enjoyed Lobster Tail, crispy fried Oysters and Salads. The prices were very reasonable.

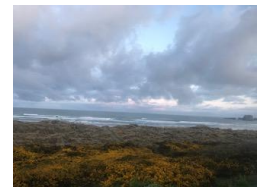


10. Thursday, April 14, 2022

Upon waking the beach attracted our immediate attention, as the view from the Edgewater Motel was stunning. We explored the beach before breakfast and collected Seashells



We had an excellent breakfast in a quaint Restaurant just before



exiting Bandon and back on Highway 101 to complete our experience.

After Leaving Bandon, OR, we travelled along Pacific Coast on Highway 101. We viewed the Redwoods. It was a mind boggling sight to appreciate trees growing to that size. There was a tree where the trunk was cut out to allow a car to drive through. So good that the government decided to preserve these to be seen by future generations.

Nona kept saying how she wanted to see Haystack Rock. The traffic was challenging and the rain never stopped so our progress was slow. We finally arrived at Cannon Beach OR., on Highway 101.

Try as we would, it was difficult to reach the Beach near the site, every street was parked solid until we found a side street where we could park and walk out. Just when we got our cameras going, a vehicle was trying to exit and we needed to move.

Nona got upset and we unceremoniously drove away but we noted she was weeping. I asked why and she never did tell me until I asked her a few days ago.

"...My friend was Katrina Weir, She passed away September 28, 2007. She was 45.

Earlier that month, the family took a vacation to the Oregon Coast and visited Haystack Rock. I have their family photo standing in front of this rock.



I always wanted to visit the Rock to say a few words to her as this was the last time she was alive with her family enjoying each other. I wanted to honour her and thank her for that....."

At that time I was not aware of this fact but I insisted then that we turn back and visit the Rock. Nona was adamant that we were late going home and she would specially return to do her thing.

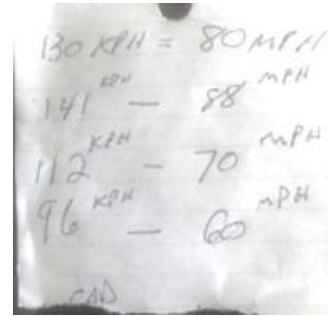
We carried on and took a junction to Highway 8 heading to Portland, OR. We drove through Portland and took Highway 84 heading to Spokane. We travelled along Columbia River in OR and arrived at Umatilla OR, choosing just any motel as we were tired. We ended up at Quality Inn.

After a strange set of circumstances we ate Meat Loaf (the only entree left on the menu) for late dinner.

11. Friday, April 15, 2022

We Left Umatilla and ate breakfast at Pancake House, down the road.

Nona had an experience with State Trooper, just before Spokane who noticed that Nona "may have been speeding". In my rear view mirror, I noticed this sports car weaving in the traffic behind us and started his flashing multi-colored light. He was a handsome young man and politely walked up to the passenger side to ask Nona, "are you familiar with the conversions from metric to English units". Nona blubbered that she was not sure. So the Trooper went back to his car and produced this calculation with a suggestion that, "I believe you were doing over 80 mph and I would like you to slow down". He must have known that Nona was celebrating her 60th birthday and gave a gift of over \$270 which would likely have been the fine.



We arrived in Spokane, Washington and ate lunch at the Golden Corral in Spokane. At Colville, WA, Nona decided we should take the opportunity to purchase discount liquor at Colville, our last stop before the Border.

We returned home at to Castlegar, B.C., at 1700 hours. Aggregate total travelled distance was 5,003 km.

I enjoyed the trip and thank you Nona for inviting Mom and lo go with you.

I asked Nona whether she was satisfied with her Las Vegas Adventure and she agreed that it was a success!

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