

It was great meeting many of you at the reunion. I really am sorry to not be able to get around to greeting all of you who I remembered from South High and I really wanted to stay and talk more with those of you I did see. That was my first opportunity to attend one in 50 years and I'm not certain I'll be able to get to another for quite some time. Barb, are we beginning to plan our 75th?

I've really been enjoying the biographies of all the South High graduates who took the time to tell everyone more about their lives. Many of our paths have crossed but not connected over the years. I've been literally minutes away from some of you in some very distant places.

One of my last lines in my bio was that I was planning a Mexico cruise and part of this article will give some details about what happened during that October/November excursion.

John M. Luchau

Adventure Number 1 – 50th Reunion

Year 2013 gave me four distinct adventures starting with the reunion in August. Planning for the time I would be away from Christie and our home in Hawaii was the start of that adventure and a burned out refrigerator was the biggest casualty during that period. Luckily we have great neighbors who were generous enough to loan Christie a small one to get her by until I returned home to help her accept the one that was to be delivered. Of course, on this island everything has to be ordered from somewhere else unless you are extremely lucky to find something within a 100 mile drive. Those of you who attended know all about the reunion and I needn't explain all the fun we had there. The school tour was an appreciated highlight and the Liberty Elementary School tour was a delight. So many good memories and acquaintances were shared. My brother joined in by driving his '51 Chev Panel over from North Salem and those who also drove their classics and vehicles of interest met in the parking lot prior to the reunion dinner. That part of the event was really enjoyable to me. Especially talking with those who share a passion for older vehicles and were willing to stop and talk of their interests. My brother enjoyed it too. Sorry there weren't any photos of that. My camera was another casualty of the trip and gave out during the SSHS High Tour and the Liberty 6th grade reunion the day before. Anyone have any photos of the other cars there?



Adventure Number 2



The second adventure of 2013 was getting underway on the Willamette in a used canoe my brother Wes and I bought through craigslist for just that purpose. Pictured are brother Clark, myself and brother Wes. Wes provided the Evinrude outboard. Clark provided transportation and support and his wife Marlene who took some great photos. Both families provided food and shelter for my stay. Our shakedown cruise was the Thursday following our reunion at about 6PM launching at Wallace Marine park, paddling across the river past the Willamette Queen, encountering the dragon boat and then paddling upstream in the main current just a little and then back to the Park. All the water stayed on the outside of the hull and we had enough freeboard to support a lot more gear so we knew we could spend some hours going down river with no problem. We knew the canoe would make it but weren't certain about ourselves.



Friday we shoved off just after noon leaving the dock using the little Evinrude engine and backed away from the dock at Wallace Marine. Off we went and what sights we saw! Osprey, heron, eagles, fish jumping and beautiful scenery of trees and river were at every twist and turn. Sometimes we found rapids (they found us) but more often it was placid paddling when we'd turned off the engine. We stopped at Keizer Rapids Park to enjoy their really great facilities. It's a wonderful new park with a really nice boat ramp and dock. We were paddling and floating and eating sandwiches, dodging logs and snags and just plain enjoying ourselves. We touched bottom at a shallow rapid once and went crossway over a submerged log but those were the only close encounters with the possibility of capsizing that we had. I was kind of sad to see the Wheatland Ferry crossing the river because I knew our haul out was just beyond the ferry landing. Brother Clark and Marlene came to get one of us to return to the truck and it was just before sunset that we had loaded up the canoe and set out for North Salem. The next day we launched at Wheatland, paddled across the river into Lambert Slough. We meandered on the west side of Wheatland Bar enjoying calm water until rejoining the river then seeing different scenery with the sides of the river becoming steeper at times and the volume of water increasing. There were still as many birds and fish and just gorgeous views. It was very serene with no traffic or city noises and just the sound of paddles in the water except when Wes, again, wanted to start the Evinrude. We passed very close to picnickers and gravel beach revelers on our way and there were only two or three motorized boats the two days we were on the water. Finding the San Salvador boat landing was a bit of an exercise since our GPS and the coordinates given on the river guide were in bit of a different format. It wasn't off by much but just enough to have us question where our haul out would be and whether or not we'd passed it. At the haul out **Ennetta** was waiting to take Wes to get the truck. It was a longer wait with the canoe due to the addition of a bit more distance and traffic that my brother encountered with the truck. I spent the waiting time casting for fish and talking with kayakers. All in all it was two days of fun and something I hope to continue to do each summer until I can't any more. I was pleasantly amazed at the lack of motorized vessel traffic on the river on Labor Day weekend and how nearly deserted the boat ramps were. For those of you who still live in the valley you are truly blessed with such a recreational

corridor and opportunity for serenity. Check out the Willamette River Guide.
<http://willamettewatertrail.org/>



Adventure Number 3 – La Paz Mexico



Adventure number three started with plans to meet my friend Martin (pictured here) aboard his Halberg Rassy Rasmus 35 center cockpit sloop in San Diego and help him sail to La Paz, Mexico. Southern Baja in Mexico is some place I'd never sailed or explored. While living in San Diego in the '70s I'd driven to Ensenada for one of my daughter's swim meets and while a Navy instructor there I'd taken many students on cross cultural excursions into Tijuana to various barrios but I'd never gone as far south as Cabo San Lucas on the Baja before. This would be something new! Late October found me flying into San Diego and getting to know this sailboat compared to the many others I'd been aboard. Martin and I had sailed aboard another of his boats in San Francisco so we knew each other and our capabilities. We fitted out with gear and groceries and were underway from Pier 32 Marina on the 30th of October after I'd had a chance to make contact with an old Navy friend and visit with my daughter, Laura, who teaches school in the area plus a trip to the zoo. We had stopped in downtown San Diego for a Mexican fishing license and Martin had gotten insurance and tax papers prepared for entry into Mexico. We'd both gotten papers together and our passports ready for entry as well. We started our journey at noon and motored while in the bay and then sailed past Point Loma then on past the Coronado Islands south of San Diego when the darkness of night closed in.



The wind was favorable for many hours and then it began to lighten up and we had swells from the quarter which made the sails slat and boom swing from side to side so down came the mainsail and on came the engine again and we motored most of the rest of the 85 total miles to Ensenada sometimes rolling out the roller furling genoa (sail) when the wind was cooperative. During the night the boat was rocking way too much to get sleep when we were off watch. All we could do was brace ourselves and let our muscles relax a bit to alleviate the fatigue. Just as we would get used to the rhythm of the wave action it would change just a bit so that sleep wouldn't come. There would be a port roll, a starboard roll, a bit more violent port roll, then a calm and it would start again but the next sequence might throw in a forward pitch or an extra violent roll on one side or the other. The pattern of the swell and the boats reaction to it wasn't consistent so it interrupted dozing. We kept a two hour on and two hour off watch throughout the night so that we could keep a good lookout for other boats and ships and general sea traffic as well as plot our course on charts using the coordinates from our marine GPS. There was a

bit of traffic. Some freighters and some large pleasure craft and a ferry or two appeared. At night all you can see is their lights and it really is tough to tell how far they are away or on which course they might be if their navigation lights are not very visible. Sometimes these vessels would show on our little radar display and often they would not. Our boat, the Joli Elle, has an Autohelm auto pilot system that steers the boat to a course so we were not having to steer the boat but were just keeping an eye on the auto pilot to see that it was doing its job. Martin also has an Aries windvane system that steers the boat relative to the wind when sailing.

At daybreak we were happy to be just a few miles off the entrance at Ensenada after dodging traffic, islands and small boats (pangas) carrying fishermen. We were happily greeted by porpoise, sea lions and a squadron of pelicans flying in formation as we made our way through San Miguel Bay into the Port of Ensenada. We called the port via VHF radio and were told that we could have a slip. Of course, neither of us knew where that was so after circling the appropriate marina a couple times we found it. Once tied up we could relax a bit, enjoy a coffee, get dressed for town and then head out to take care of paperwork. First the Baja Naval marina office, then the passport office to get our tourist card and do the boat check in for customs and Mexican tax. We found that to be less than a mile walk down the esplanade that went past our marina so it wasn't that hard to find. It was an enjoyable walk past little curio and food stands and our business was taken care of within an hour. We dropped by the local tourist office and got directions to a place where I could exchange dollars for pesos (12.50 to one U.S. dollar) and where Martin could do some banking. We found a relaxing place for breakfast and coffee. Wonderful! Our first day in Mexico and everything was great. Very relaxing and fun trying out Mrs. DeLoretto's Spanish combined with the Latin that I had taken early at Leslie Junior High. Wow! How could I remember any of that? It truly was fun. Since we both were very tired we rested until the next morning. Communication with Christie was good in that the marina had a phone that could access US phone service and was free for 10 minute calls plus we had internet access through Martin's laptop. Neither of our cell phones would work while we were south of the border. We tried to get in contact with Hawaii via HAM radio but never did get a communication link that far west established. We depended on internet communication when it was available in several ports. HAM was good for the Pacific Maritime Nets and weather information.



The next and following days were taken up with shopping for hard to find items and groceries as well as sightseeing and waiting out a tropical storm south of us. While shopping and walking here and there I got some good language lessons from the locals. I sorted out some fishing gear and made up leaders for fishing. Martin made some rigging modifications. We kept an eye on the weather reports and decided it was time to go when the predicted low pressure area had moved into the mainland of Mexico and that the larger swell from the north had dissipated. We had made friends with some other cruisers helping with a boat delivery to Guatemala and were set up to keep in touch with them via HAM radio.



I was very impressed with the economic growth of Ensenada and how it really became a seaside destination for many residents of Mexico. Ensenada is a very nice city that I would enjoy visiting again if the opportunity arose.



We were underway again at 0830 on the 6th of November and motoring south toward Bahia de Tortugas (Turtle Bay) just south and east of Cedros Island. Under beautiful sunny skies we were able to motorsail a bit but the wind only briefly was the strength and direction to keep our sails full so that we could turn the engine off and use only our sails. For a sailor that's a bit frustrating since the engine is a constant drone which you know you could do without with just a bit more wind from a few degrees aft of where it currently is coming from. The different angle of the winds determines whether you sail to your destination or tack back and forth to get there or you just power up the engine and motor your way straight there. In our case it was the lack of strength of the wind and the direction it came from that determined we would motor. The swell was causing us to be rocking and rolling and because the wind would not keep our sails full we were at the mercy of the swell and if our sails were up they would slat back and forth causing the rigging to shake. So, down came the sails and we just motored. This would be a 300 mile journey to our destination so we were destined to be motorsailing through at least 2 full nights so we rested when we could.



I practiced a bit of celestial navigation by doing a meridian passage series of shots with the sextant and then started the calculations. These are ancient “dark arts” that have all been replaced by global positioning systems and chartplotters and all the new electronics that have come of age since my first trans Pacific crossings so many years ago. Just reintroducing myself to the many forms and books needed took up my off watch time. It’s a wonder how I used to be able to calculate our positions in a matter of minutes so many years ago. It would take me many days of practice now to duplicate that efficiency. This trip I decided to just practice but depend on the new ways of GPS. On this trip we still were antiquated since instead of using electronic charts we plotted our positions on paper nautical charts using parallel rules and dividers and recording these plots with a pencil. If you have the new modern chartplotters all that’s needed is the press of a button and those calculations are all completed for you and on your display you see your little boat in the center of the chart moving across the chart of the water. Kind of like you see when you use your GPS in your car. Just imagine a boat instead of your car and moving on a body of water instead of the map of a road and you have the new modern navigational system. The practitioners of the “dark arts” are disappearing and it won’t be long and I’ll unpack my sextant or pull out a paper chart and a new sailor will ask, “What’s that?”



The morning we left Ensenada we saw the largest pod of dolphin I’ve ever seen and it was a joy to see them frolic and play and race with the bow of the boat and each other. Truly a beautiful sight unlike any other of the many thrills you can experience while on the sea. The whales, sea lions and bird antics are nothing to compare with the grace and beauty of these animals and it’s like being at the center and surrounded by a ballet.



I've seen so many different types of porpoise and dolphin and the ones most active are spinner dolphin with their many leaps and spins and more active play but these were graceful and fast just clearing the water with their leaps and not bounding high with a spin as the spinner dolphin do.



Too, we saw large large floating islands of kelp that was a rest and staging area for flocks of seagulls.



The beaches, mountains and land were many different shades of brown with just hints of blue for those mountains more distant against the shoreward horizon. No hints of greenery which is what I'm used to in Hawaii scenery. As we closed with the coast the Mexican Navy came to investigate.



Our straight course took us seaward of sight of land for more than half the journey so it was on the morning of the third day that we caught sight of land again and were heading for the Island of Cedros. We passed the Pacific side of it then headed for Bahia de Tortugas and 60 hours after leaving Ensenada we were anchored in 16 feet of water amongst the fishing and recreational fleet. Only two other sailing vessels were there when we arrived and we entered the bay at night dodging fishing floats, lobster traps and anchored boats. We were lucky to find good anchorage without going aground or running into anything. It is really recommended that you don't enter an unfamiliar harbor after darkness falls but we were unwilling and too tired to stay out another night.

Our first morning in Bahia de Tortugas we launched the Livingston dinghy and mounted the Tohatsu 6 outboard for a trip to the fuel dock at the end of the pier. We poured two 5 gallon plastic jerry jugs of fuel into the fuel tank then loaded four into the dinghy and set off for the fuel dock. We got those filled then went for a scout out of the town.



We found Antonio's where there was Wi Fi service and then hiked the dusty narrow streets and found a small grocery and made a couple purchases.



We then took off for the boat in the dinghy and came back with Martin's laptop to make connections with the internet while purchasing a couple of sodas. We were able to connect later on the boat since we had the proper codes.



This village has a permanent population of about 1000. It is over 100 miles from the nearest paved highway and more than 300 sea miles from any major port. During the year there is a sailing fleet that arrives once a year and a motoring fleet that arrives once a year. At that time the village swells in population to nearly double its size with most the tourists staying on and cooking aboard their vessels but a goodly portion of them spending time and money ashore.



The people seemed honest and happy and willing to have friendly interaction with us as guests in their beautiful bay. The bay is about two miles by four miles in area so is quite large and able to accommodate many boats at a time. There is a small fishing village to the south on the bay. While there, Martin and I motored around the whole bay in his dinghy and explored the entire area. Beautiful deserted beaches all around with dirt road access but more easily accessed by boat. Each small anchored boat and the fishing boats at anchor were covered with pelicans and pelicans were everywhere fishing and floating and sitting on boats. A pod of porpoise came into the bay each morning and there was also a herd of sea lions that explored the bay each day. We met a couple of guys on a 36 foot sailboat that we spoke with and found out were headed for Cabo San Lucas like we were. The Sunday before we left we made one more trip into the dock and walked into town and up to the church. We were able to see out over the bay and I took a photo of all the powerboats that had arrived late

Saturday and early Sunday. We stopped for some tacos and sodas and were surprised at the high price but then realized that the influx of large yacht owners probably forced the price higher than normal. 250 pesos paid for a meal plus sodas for two. That was for 3 fish tacos, refried beans, rice and a bit of salad. 250 pesos was equivalent to \$20. Not a bargain but not totally out of the realm of sanity. I have to admit the fish tacos were tasty. In Mexico each time we ordered tacos at any of the places we ate we were asked if we wanted flour or corn tortillas. So when you order be ready for the question in Spanish. Maiz is the Spanish word for corn. Tortillas de harina is Spanish for flour tortillas.

Thoroughly rested and ready to sail we set out on Monday early and motored until we had enough wind to sail. Just outside the bay and about half hour after we set the handline we heard a big bang. Martin said, "What's that?" and I replied, "Fish on." So we hauled in our prize and I set to work cleaning a 10lb Skipjack.



His strike had broken the bungee cord on the handline that provided a bit of flexibility as a rod would when a fish would strike a rod and reel. He was pretty easy to reel in once we reduced speed and it is always exciting to see what you've caught after hauling him in for a good distance. Once he surfaced we knew that we'd caught a good one. Once I'd gotten him cleaned he filled up the freezer (small freezer) so we had plenty of fish to eat for the rest of the trip and we had fish for dinner more times than needed.

We had dragged our handline from Ensenada to Turtle Bay but only had snagged some sea weed and that's probably why the fish weren't interested in the lure. The day before we entered Turtle Bay there was a young sea lion pup who came out to play with the handline and the lure. They are smart enough not to grab a lure but he certainly was interested in slapping the line and the lure with his flipper. He did that a couple times then came up to the side of the boat and looked at us then returned to the lure. He was definitely playing with us. He returned to the side of the boat and I think he wanted us to play with him. Sorry I didn't know his game.

After a couple of days and nights we pulled into Bahia Santa Maria, a bay just north of Bahia Magdalena. These two bays and the estuaries together have been compared in size to San Francisco Bay. A very large natural bay and very underpopulated. We had our choice of locations to anchor and picked a spot in about 25 feet of water and about a half mile from shore.



There are only a few fishing village shacks along this enormous bay and the water is very clear and clean. This was too inviting to not jump in. I launched Martin's plastic kayak and then jumped in the water and did a laundry soap bath and hair wash. The reason for the kayak in the water is to have something buoyant to hang on to while washing. It is somewhat of a struggle to get back aboard even with a ladder down if there isn't enough stuff to push up against. Martin then jumped in after I hauled myself out. He swam and bathed and snorkeled to check the bottom of the boat. All was well. There were just four other boats in this huge body of water four miles by eight miles in area which was just a small part of Bahia Magdalena. Martin and I did saltwater laundry with a freshwater rinse and had laundry hanging on lifelines and rigging during the sunny day. Almost everything was dry by the time the sun started going down. We had one good night's sleep then a full day of relaxing except for laundry and then we left just before midnight. The reason for the early departure is to ensure we arrive in the busy port of Cabo San Lucas during the daylight hours.

We motored and motorsailed all 24 hours of the 15th and at about 1100 on the morning of the 16th we were in Cabo San Lucas tied to the pier. We first caught sight of Cabo at daybreak of the 16th when it was still miles away.



The buildings grew larger on the Cape and we saw more recreational boats as we motored south. We followed a cruise ship around the Cape and were soon on our way into the heavily trafficked channel leading into the bay and marina area.



I'd never seen a busier little port. It was amazing. There were para sailing boats and kites buzzing us from different angles, paddleboarders and jet skis here and there as well as fishing boats going in and out of the harbor all wanting to get somewhere in a hurry and us coming in slowly and not knowing where exactly we were to go. I'd gotten directions over the VHF radio and then we finally saw someone on the end of a pier motioning us in. Wow! What a busy place. We were welcomed and told where we needed to go to check into the marina and as soon as we got cleaned up a bit and had the rest of our coffee off we went. My first impressions of Cabo San Lucas were that it was the Waikiki of Baja except that Cabo San Lucas also has a casino or two. It was apparent even before we entered the port that the area was much richer than the rest of Baja because most boats we saw were larger and newer and there were scads of tourists on beaches. The marina was very high end. It was clean and had well maintained piers with Laundromats and showers very close to wherever your boat was. The promenade at the head of each pier led along large high end stores with fashion jewelry. There were stands where boat excursions were being marketed and time-share condos were being sold as well as people selling all types of things good and bad out of hand. The restaurants were top drawer. Martin and I left that area to find a bank and a good place to eat that wasn't so costly. We found a restaurant called Ajos (Onion) and I had the best chicken enchiladas I've ever had. It was a great meal and at a very reasonable price.



The marina area in which we were located seemed very much to cater to the higher income tourists that come to Cabo San Lucas. Slip fees for the boat were higher than most daily rates and restaurant prices were quite a bit higher than those a few short blocks into the city. The shopping was all very much upscale compared to that further in town. The music and entertainment was non-stop for the Saturday night we were there and since the charter fishing boats get ready for business early there was an opportunity to get some good sound sleep from about 1AM to 4AM. The atmosphere was that of Waikiki year round and Fort Lauderdale during spring break. It was neither Martin's or my "cup of tea" so as soon as we got our replenishment at WalMart done we were ready to quit Cabo San Lucas. Our excursion to WalMart was done by local bus which cost us 22 pesos round trip each. That's about \$1.80. We asked about cab fare and the first quote was \$10 one way so we saved a considerable amount by using the local transportation and it gave us an opportunity to get to know something about the local residents. One fellow bus rider was an employee at Costco. We didn't even know there was a Costco in Cabo. We left the marina after a refuel stop at noon and entered the Sea of Cortez.



Our destination was overnight to Bahia de Los Muertos for a rest stop at anchor to get some sleep then off to a channel between Isla Cerralvo and Point Arenas, a spit of land north in the Sea of Cortez. Bahia de Los Muertos was nearly empty when we arrived and we anchored in 20 feet of beautiful clear water.

Our goal was to gain some rest before getting underway again going north. The Bay is very large with a resort and old cathedral ruins. Beautiful light colored sand beach with folks launching fishing boats and there were 4x4s on the sand. The later we stayed the more boats came in to anchor until there were many large powerboats on all sides of us.



Our original idea was to wait until about 11PM to get underway but my calculations were that the tide generated current would be against us if we waited that long. We both decided to leave earlier heading north to catch the favorable tidal current between Point Arenas and Isla Cerralvo. As it turned out we left too early and once through that pinch point we had favorable tides and currents which brought us to Canal de San Lorenzo too early and before daylight when we could see the buoys marking the channel. The seas and swell were uncomfortable. We sailed (motored really) back out east an hour and then back west an hour and finally followed a ferry through the channel which set us in a southwesterly direction. Neither of us felt comfortable sailing a shallow channel without being able to see the buoys. Once through the channel Martin went below to get some rest and I continued turning in a southerly direction toward La Paz.

We were in our final destination of La Paz and anchored about 1100 on Tuesday the 19th of November. It was good to find a great anchorage and Martin would be moving to a slip on Friday. We took the dinghy into the marina to double check about the slip on Friday and to scout the town to see the lay of the land and for me to find the bus terminal for a ride out for my journey back home. My goal was to return to Hawaii by Thanksgiving.



La Paz is a grand city that is boat and tourist friendly. Smiling faces and beautiful people that were helpful to newcomers. We roamed the major streets with no feeling of insecurity. We took a long walk that passed a tourist information office and an ice cream parlor to find the bus terminal. It was a great place to get a tourist map and find out information. The bus terminal was just a few more blocks down the road and we found it easily. The waterfront road is very well maintained and has docks and a very

large bandstand and a few piers. It's a beautiful esplanade and many people walk up and down it during the day for a pastime and exercise. On our way back we couldn't resist the ice cream parlor. Ice cream is something you just don't get while underway on a boat. The bay at La Paz is a display of boats at anchor. There are several very nice marinas and it's an ideal place for sailors to keep their vessels. I'd recommend it as a tourist destination regardless of your seaworthy status. "The people are friendly and accommodating and we had no trouble navigating the local bus system even though we didn't know where we were going or how to communicate where we needed to go."

We didn't care because it was cheap.



The next day when we told them, "Centro" they let us off at the Central bus station in La Paz. We walked the rest of the way to my bus terminal dragging my wheeled luggage and ate a Subway sandwich before Martin and I parted ways and he returned to the boat and I waited for the bus. Our original idea was for Martin to motor me to the waterfront in front of the bus station. The next idea was to take a taxi to the bus station but since it was a Mexican Holiday taxis were impossible to find. We rode the local city bus. This was another exciting adventure. As I was in the large bus terminal awaiting its departure the holiday parade made its way past the doorway and I was witness to the excitement. A great experience! Martin stayed with Joli Elle in La Paz so that he could get some dental work done and enjoy Mexico and do some further Sea of Cortez exploration.

Adventure Number 4 – Bus Trip to Tijuana



The fourth and final adventure chronicled here is the bus trip from La Paz to Tijuana and the border crossing into San Ysidro. The EcoBaja Tours bus station in La Paz is located on the road fronting the Bay and overlooking the harbor. I had gotten to the terminal early as recommended by the agents to make certain I had a seat on the bus. The two first class bus accommodations are ABC and Aquila. A bus ticket from La Paz to Tijuana was 2040 pesos which equates to about \$165 depending on your exchange rate. The bus station was clean and had a bathroom with a turnstyle entrance which required deposit of 6 pesos which was a little less than \$.50. Luckily I only needed it once. It was a little hard to get myself and bags through one click of the turnstyle all at once and I had no one else there to keep an eye on my luggage. There was a snack bar at the station and also less than a block away was a Subway sandwich shop. My bus was to depart at 1PM and by 1:15 my bags and I were loaded aboard. It took a few stops within La Paz itself to be finally on our way and the views through the city were eye-opening. It seems we went through every economic level that might be experienced in just that 45 minutes or so of bus travel then finally we started leaving the city and there were fewer and fewer residences and shops and stores and finally we broke away and the vistas opened.

We drove a well maintained two lane road and the motion of the bus was much easier than the motion of the boat which I had been experiencing. The view was miles and miles of saguaro cactus with mountains in the distance. Parched desert opened up with more cactus, valleys and mountains. This went on for hours and we stopped at several small villages to pick up more passengers. As we drove along we were treated to luxurious reclining seats with plenty of space to stretch out. There were TV monitors on the bus and I was treated to several late movies and, of course, all in Spanish. Most of these were action films so it hardly mattered which language the movies were in. It was something to watch other than the miles of cactus, valleys and mountains. I believe I saw every variety of cactus there could ever be in this one bus ride.



I tried to keep my eyes on the scenery and watch the other passengers but after darkness fell on the road and there wasn't anything else to watch it was back to the movies and dozing.



During the ride we stopped at numerous villages to let off and gather more passengers. It was working class men and mothers with families coming and going. If one needed to use bathroom facilities during the ride there was a clean onboard bathroom. It was about the same size as an airline lavatory and not at all uncomfortable unless you are uncomfortable in an airline lavatory. I had to climb over the legs of a couple sleeping passengers and excuse myself to get to and from but other than that it was not an unpleasant jaunt to use the facilities.

The very strangest event was the crossing from one military zone to the other and this was an event that occurred four times in the more than 1100 mile journey. At each crossing the bus was required to stop and the passengers were required to disembark. Luggage in the baggage compartment was brought out and searched with the owner present. Carry on items were searched as well. There were no pat downs or x-rays, just soldiers going through your luggage and asking questions in very broken English for us Americans. There was one other American, a Doctor's wife, traveling part way. I didn't even try to use Spanish at this time because I was feeling a bit resentful especially the third time my luggage had been gone through and I'd just gotten into a restful sleep. I'm certain they were looking for contraband, drugs, weapons, etc. The fourth and last inspection we were not required to get off the bus and a German shepherd was run through the baggage compartment which was much easier for us and I did appreciate that.

Villages where we stopped included Ciudad Constitucion, Ciudad Insurgentes, Loreto, El Tiburon, Santa Rosalio, Guerrero Negro, Santa Ana, San Quintin, Ensenada and Rosarito before we came to Tijuana. The bus arrived in Tijuana at about 2PM after driving along including sometimes bumpily on a few detours for a total of 25 hours. There was a time zone change in there somewhere and I set my watch an hour ahead. Once in Tijuana it was up to me to find the border. Luckily I found the taxi stand at the bus station and there was a \$15 charge to drive me and my luggage to the pedestrian crossing. \$2 tip and I was on my own with a backpack and a small rolling suitcase. About a ¼ mile walk past stands set

to sell souvenirs and other folks hawking their wares and along a bumpy sidewalk I was closing in on the border. There were several offers to help carry my gear for 50, then 40, then 30 pesos but I felt up to the task and entered the underground border crossing, showed my passport, was asked about anything to declare for customs and allowed to enter the U. S. I was now in San Ysidro, CA and just a trolley ride from a Denny's restaurant that I was familiar with in Chula Vista near one of my old residences from the early '70s. I had a grand slam Denny's breakfast at 3 in the afternoon, called my daughter and she was willing to put me up for a few days to catch a flight to Hawaii. Last photo is of John and daughter Laura.



This marks the end of my adventures for 2013 unless there will be a surprise in store sometime this month of December.