

The Fall Colors
of the West Coast

Our RV Adventure to Washington



Our journey began on Saturday October 5th, as Karla and I embarked on an unforgettable road trip to visit Brian and Drew in Puyallup, Washington. This would be my first time seeing the boys' new house and we were both excited to get on the road to enjoy the scenic drive ahead.

Our first major stop was Sequoia National Park. We stayed in Visalia and took the jeep to visit the park. We were hoping that the fall colors would be starting and were not disappointed. The towering giant sequoia trees were a stark contrast to the reds and yellows of the fall leaves. However, most of the early reds were past prime viewing and the yellows had not fully come out. Still, there were pockets where all the colors could be seen.





While there we decided to hike the General Sherman Trail. This is a short, accessible friendly, hike leading to the General Sherman Tree, the largest living tree by volume. The trail is about half a mile long with a slight descent on the way to the tree and an ascent on the return (Uphill, not what Karla was looking forward to.) Along the paved path, we encounter interpretive signs and appreciated the surrounding grove of giant sequoias. The trail offers an up-close experience with the majestic trees, making it a well-traveled spot.



On Monday, we made the short drive (less than 75 miles) to our RV spot just outside of Yosemite National Park. Again, we jumped into the jeep to visit the park. It was about a 30-minute drive to enter the park but then another 45 minutes to get down to Yosemite Valley. The drive along the way was beautiful as the fall colors were much better here.



Yosemite Valley is one of the most iconic and breathtaking natural landscapes in the world, and is known for its dramatic granite cliffs, pristine waterfalls, towering trees, and beautiful scenery.

The valley is framed by towering granite monoliths, with some of the most famous rock formations including El Capitan and Half Dome. El Capitan is a massive vertical rock wall, which rises



over 3,000 feet above the valley floor, and we were lucky enough to spot a few rock climbers during our visit. Half Dome (no we didn't even try to hike to it), with its distinctive curved, dome-shaped summit, is one of the most recognizable features of the park. During our visit we went up to Glacier point which offered a spectacular view of the whole valley including half dome.



Yosemite Valley is home to several stunning waterfalls, most notably Yosemite Falls the tallest waterfall in North America, with a total drop of 2,425 feet. Bridalveil Falls is another iconic waterfall, known for its misty, windblown appearance, while Vernal Falls is a beautiful, cascading waterfall accessible via a hiking trail (more on that during my trip back home).

The valley itself was full of awe-inspiring vistas, especially during the fall when the leaves start to change. We both enjoyed our time in Yosemite but soon it was time to head back to our RV so we could continue our trip up north.

We took another four days of travel (about 4 hours each day) to get to Puyallup, but the drives were very beautiful with the fall colors getting better the farther north we traveled. Then on Sunday afternoon we pulled into Puyallup, where warm hugs awaited us at Brian and Drew's home. It was a joyful reunion, filled with stories and laughter as we caught up on each other's lives.

Fortunately for us their driveway was long and wide enough to park the RV in, so we set up camp in their front yard. However, it was apparent that they did not have the necessary "hookups" all fine RV resorts have. They did have water, and we really didn't need sewer (we have a large holding tank) but electricity for an "all electric" RV is important. The good news is I know how to fix that. One of the items on the "things to do" list that the Boys had for me was to install power for a new fanlight in their living room. So off to Home Depot to buy material for the power upgrades to their home. In no time at all I had the additional power I needed for the RV, and it can also be used by the boys to plug in their camping trailer when we are not there.



That evening we took advantage of the beautiful sunset mixed with the fall colors to take some photos of Mount Ranier. There was a full moon rising at the time which made for some very nice photos.

During our stay there I managed to accomplish just about everything on their list including some plumbing. Anyone who knows me knows how much I hate plumbing. But that turned out to be the easiest task of them all! I also had to have our RV windshield fixed due to a rock hitting it on the way up to Washington. The good news is that it was only a small star pattern that was easily fixed, the bad news was they didn't have a mobile tech, so I had to drive through the city several miles in the RV to get to the repair shop. But it all worked out and it just took a few hours out of the day.

We spent a lot of time together when the boys weren't working and I even managed to get in a half marathon distance run up there. The fall colors were spectacular which made my run exceptionally fun. I really enjoyed running on all the "crunchy" leaves that had fallen off some of the trees. I was really amazed at how much change happened in the short time we were there.



On one of the days where Brian was working, Drew took us to see Snoqualmie Falls so we could do some hiking. It was a very nice place, and we enjoyed a few hikes to and around the falls.



On Thursday we took a trip to Friday Harbor which is a charming waterfront town located on San Juan Island in Washington State. Known for its picturesque setting, the town features cobblestone streets, historic buildings, and stunning views of the harbor. It's a popular gateway for visitors exploring the San Juan Islands, offering a variety of activities like whale watching, kayaking, and exploring local shops and restaurants. The harbor itself is bustling with boats and offers a relaxed, laid-back atmosphere.





The ferry ride over was an experience in itself, offering panoramic views of the surrounding waters and we even were lucky enough to see some Orcas along the way.



Upon arrival, we embarked on a hike that led us to a quaint lighthouse which was perched up on a rise that overlooked the coastline. The views were spectacular with grassy hills that overlooked the mostly rocky shoreline. There were tidepools along with sandy coves that were filled with driftwood. Brian and I made it down to one of the beaches and found a perfect place to practice our lessons from Mr. Miyagi.

After our hike, we enjoyed a delicious lunch in a cozy seaside restaurant. Fresh seafood and local delicacies made for a delightful meal, leaving us refreshed and ready for the return ferry back to Seattle. Then the two plus hour drive back home (thank you Brian for driving!)



As planned Karla would fly back to San Diego as she only had 2 weeks of vacation, and I would take the next week driving the RV back. I left on Friday while the boys took Karla to the airport early Saturday morning to catch a 6:00 flight back (thanks to her sister Paula for picking her up at the airport.)

By the time she had landed I was well on my way to doing some hiking and picture taking in Oregon. The hike was over 8 miles with lots of up and down steep hills. And since I had run a half marathon the day before I was extra tired by the end of the day. But it was worth it as there were many waterfalls (some where you could walk behind) and the fall colors were great!





I continued back down south until once again I stopped at Yosemite. My plan was to see how much the fall colors had progressed in the two weeks since I had been there and to do some hiking. The colors had gone from a light red with some yellow to a bright orange with lots of yellow. It was even more beautiful than the first visit.

I decided to hike to Vernal falls which looked like an easy 6-mile hike along a river. The first mile from the parking lot was just that nice flat and a beautifully shaded path along a river. But then the uphill started. Not knowing the path, I just kept going thinking sooner or later the uphill would give way to something flatter. Nope, it just kept going even after crossing a bridge over the river. Finally change ahead! STAIRS, 400 of them up to the falls. But it was worth it. Since it was the fall season, the amount of water in the rivers is drastically reduced until the spring. But that was fine with me as the single stream of water falling gave it a very different look than the pictures I have seen. You would think the trip back down would be

easy, but it was so steep that your legs still felt the hill. However, in half the time it took to get up I was back at the jeep ready for some lunch.



The rest of my time there was taken up with driving around and taking pictures. I tried to take them in the same places I had taken pictures of on the first visit so I could compare the change, and you can really see it in the two pictures below.





All too soon it was time to head home, and after a few days of driving (I took my time getting back) I arrived back on a Sunday afternoon (just over three weeks from when we started.)

Since I am retired, I could just pull the motorhome into the garage, set it up, and plug into the power we have ready for it at the house. I would take care of the unpacking and cleaning later, because it was time to relax and watch some football! It was a very successful trip with lots of good memories.

We had a great time and we both thank Brian and Drew for their hospitality while we were there.



A.I. (Artificial Intelligence) Is (Not Perfect But) Real (Scary)

AI-powered tools like Photoshop and Gigapixel AI are transforming the way I along with photographers and digital artists around the world, enhance and restore low-resolution images. Traditionally, enlarging a photo resulted in pixelation and loss of detail, but AI algorithms now intelligently upscale images, preserving fine details and improving clarity. Tools like Gigapixel AI use deep learning to upscale images while reconstructing textures and details, allowing me to turn low-quality photos into high-resolution works suitable for large prints or digital displays. Photoshop's AI-driven features, such as Generative Fill, allow me to creatively add elements to images, such as animals, or even augment waterfalls, into existing photos with just a few clicks.

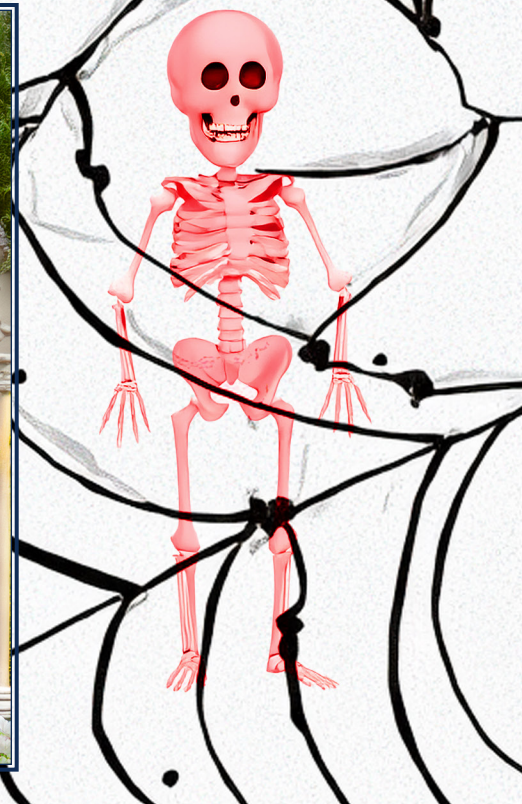
The photos above give you an example of the power AI is bringing to everyone. Most of the changes seen above were done automatically in Gigapixel AI, and the background replacement was done in Photoshop. All that I needed to do was to click a button to remove the background, Then ask Photoshop to replace the background with a pumpkin patch. How many things can you see changed in the photo to the left?

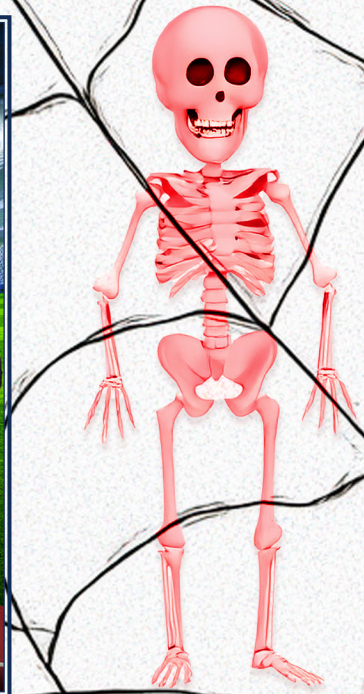


Also, I used Chat GPT to write the first paragraph of this article (I edited it afterwards) and it also helped me with the article about our trip!

You might see some of this magic in the Halloween pictures on the next few pages.

How many pictures do you think have been changed?







OH, CANADA WITH OUR FRIENDS!

By Listy Gillingham



After our hike in Newfoundland, we jumped on a plane to return to Toronto and then rented a car and drove to Collingwood, Canada. We picked up another couple at the airport, our friends Holly and Rex, and from there we became a group of six friendly travelers. We stayed in Collingwood so we could experience more of what Canada on the east coast has to offer while being in proximity to Niagara Falls which was our draw for this part of the vacation.



We enjoyed walking around Collingwood which is a charming town on the shores of the Georgian Bay. It has an old town area that was filled with fun places to eat and places to shop in, so spending an afternoon walking downtown was a perfect way to spend the day.

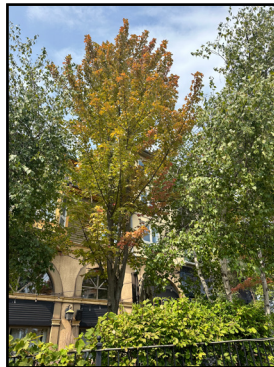




We also found time to visit Wasaga Beach which is a freshwater beach located in Simcoe County, Ontario, Canada and it has the title of being the longest freshwater beach in the world with a length of 14 kilometers (8.6 miles). We set out to walk a good portion of it and enjoyed the easy stroll along the shore.



Another fun adventure was spent visiting the Blue Mountains that were situated within 8 miles of where we were staying. The Blue Mountains in Canada don't really look blue or make you feel blue when you visit them, and they were noted in an article that they are filled with many "uplifting" activities, making the blue name somewhat a mystery. It turns out that there really isn't one, single 'blue mountain', or any other reason for the name other than it being in the Blue Mountain township



which was formed in 2001. What we found there was a little ski resort area, filled with shops, extravagant restaurants, lots of hotels and places to stay, and a beautiful little lake at the base of the slopes. It was a lot like Beaver Creek in Colorado



without the large Colorado Rockies (they were more "hillish" looking slopes). We ate lunch and walked around the quaint village. We loved noticing the fall colors beginning to come out everywhere we traveled. I think we were a few weeks away from it being officially fall but it was fun to see the signs beginning to show.



But the highlight of the trip turned out to be seeing Niagara Falls up close and personal. Niagara Falls (born around 12,000 years ago) is a set of massive waterfalls located on the Niagara River, on the border between Canada and the United States.

The Falls are comprised of three separate waterfalls: the Horseshoe Falls, the American Falls, and the smaller, adjacent Bridal Veil Falls. The crescent-shaped Horseshoe Falls is also known as the Canadian Falls as it is located mostly on the Canadian side of the border.

We got there right around noon and proceeded to wander around the park viewing the Falls from a distance. We then bought tickets to ride on a very touristy boat that took you right up to the Falls so you could feel the power of the rushing water and they gave us these very lovely pink ponchos (which did keep you from getting soaked by the misty water).



Bob was impressed with the flow rate which averaged 4 million cubic feet of water falling over the crest line every minute. Together, the falls make for the world's biggest waterfalls by flow rate, with an average of 4 million cubic feet (110,000 m³) of water falling over the crest line every minute and up to 6 million cubic feet (168,000 m³) in high flow.





The Canadian side of Niagara Falls offers you the full panoramic view of all the falls. You can walk along a wide sidewalk along the Niagara Falls Parkway right on the rim of the gorge for about a mile and look down into the Niagara River and see the Falls across from you. That part was super cool. The area around the falls was beautiful, but once you left the main part, it changed into a more Las Vegas setting with touristy shops and amusement type activities like this upside-down house.

Our last day, we walked along the Georgian Trail and then met up for a fun meal at the Seaside Restaurant. A great way to celebrate another fun trip with our friends!





KAUAI WITH THE GILLINGHAMS



By Birdy Hartman Hall

As you all know, we love the island of Kauai and are happy to visit it twice a year. On this trip we invited Bob and Listy to be our pals for the week. The BEST part about having them with us is that they have no tourist needs. They are just as happy as we are to sit on the beach, bathe in the sun (or the shade from our cabanas) and read a book! We did some light hiking as well. The Maha'ulepu Heritage Trail is located right on the coast in front of our condo at Poipu Beach. It is a wonderful hike, and you can pick it up and experience it from several locations. We chose to hike along the Poipu Bay golf course on this trip. The nice thing about this was that the golf course is closed down for repairs and so there was no need to dodge wayward golf shots. It made hiking on cliffs so much nicer. Although, the golfer in us missed watching the approach shots on certain holes.



We were happy to discover a new place for breakfast in the town of Koloa. It was called Java Kai Koloa, and they made the absolute best frozen hot chocolate I have ever tried! The food was also quite good, farm fresh variety. I had a breakfast sandwich which filled me up after our long morning hike. There are also some new shops in the area that Listy and I enjoyed exploring.





Lyle and I had three days of golfing. Listy and Bob took advantage of that free time to hike 8 or 9 miles without us! Listy has been nursing a torn rotator cup and so she is off the golf buddy circuit for now. We are hoping that her arm heals quickly, and she is back whacking the heck out of that golf ball!

So that is our trip in a wonderful nutshell. I call it "hike or golf, relax on the beach, eat fabulous foods, drink fun cocktails and repeat often." That is our recipe for the perfect vacation, and we loved spending our time with The Gillinghams!





Family Trip to Knott's Berry Farm



By Birdy Hartman Hall

A year ago, we took Lyle Allen, Cindy, Emery, Ryker, Curtis, Lauren and Cora to Legoland. That trip bonded Emery and Cora in such a sweet way that we decided to get the kids together again for a fun trip.

Cora is such a wonderful girl! She took little Emery under her wings and toured her around Knott's Berry Farm like none of us could do. Together they rode some speedy roller coasters. Emery is fearless! She wanted to go on every fast ride that her 42 inches of height would allow. And Cora was happy to be her partner as they sped around and around on each crazy ride. Ryker had a hard time keeping up with the two of them.

There was one airplane ride that Emery was able to take him on. Cindy expertly belted him onto his seat, while Emery took the front with all the controls. She happily soared up in the sky filling the clouds with laughter. But Ryker was not feeling the same joy. As soon as that little plane began to circle, a look of terror and fear began to escape as he cried with each turn of the ride. Emery, not at all upset by his fear, just flew that little plane like a champ. Luckily Ryker survived the trip and only had to endure a few more, much slower paced rides.



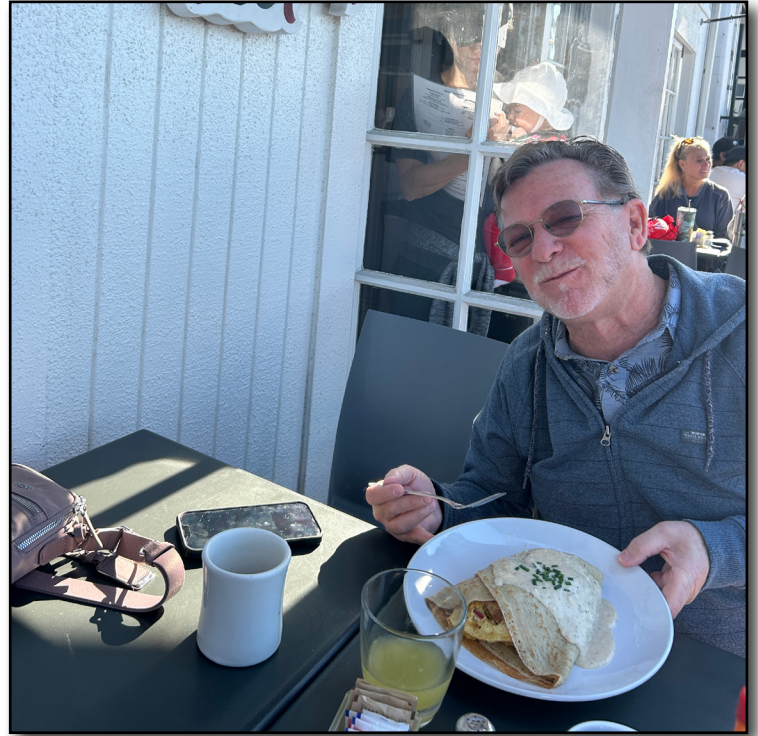


There was a time when I used to be a roller coaster lover but as I aged, the need for speed has slowly evaporated. Not so for my daring husband. He could not wait to run off to a daredevil ride and experience the adrenaline jolt from falling out of the sky at death defying speeds.

However, there was one ride that even Lyle had to admit, got him wondering about his choice of speeding. Hangtime, the first dive coaster in California, towers 150 feet over the Boardwalk area showcasing a beyond vertical drop that is the steepest in California, gravity-defying inversions, and mid-air suspensions. I was shaking just looking at it. No one else wanted to join him for this ride, and so he had to conquer it on his own. But with his fast pass in hand, he bravely climbed the stairs to give it a go! I was impressed and thankful that he was good at going solo!



Once the day was done and Lyle had his fill of roller coasters we headed towards home. Lyle and I stopped over in San Clemente for one night of romance at a cute Boutique hotel called Casa Tropicana. We got to the top floor that overlooked the San Clemente pier and spoiled us with an amazing sunset. We also went to Fisherman's for an excellent seafood dinner, and to La Galette for some amazing crepes for breakfast! I sure look forward to the days when Lyle is retired, and we can stay more than the weekend.

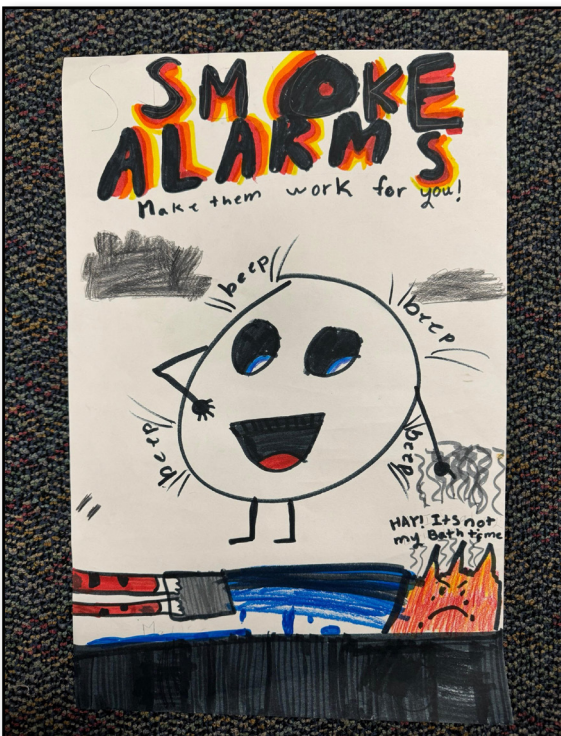


Hill Creek School Fire Prevention Contest

By Carol Benesch

Madeline's school, Hill Creek Elementary, holds a Fire Prevention Poster contest every year. This year the poster's theme was Fire Detectors Save Lives. The top posters selected from each class as finalists were recognized at a special recognition reception held at Santee Fire Station #4. Students selected as finalists received a certificate of appreciation and a special event swag.

Madeline's poster was selected as a finalist from her class. She and her family got to have dinner at the fire station and then she was recognized as a finalist. Her poster is hanging at the station, and she was very happy to have been selected!



Runny Nose Section....

Fooling the Body into Healing Itself

By Margaret Riel

Many people will tell you that the bane of getting older is the annoying refusal of limbs to do the work they were designed to do. The joints don't want to bend back and forth with grace. Instead, they crack and creak and try to resist the work of holding up the core of the body. When you stand up or go downstairs, they threaten not to work, although it is generally a bluff. For the last few years, I have developed a problem with my right knee not wanting to bend, and it was particularly noticeable when I played pickleball or golf.

My first approach was a sequence of physical therapy sessions that put my knee back into good working condition. But then the pain returned. This time, therapy was less successful, sometimes making it worse. An MRI showed a torn meniscus, lack of cartilage, and bone pain from friction. Not hearing ABOUT good outcomes from knee operations, I was intrigued to hear about a sports medicine procedure-- Platelet Rich Plasma infusion. Insurance companies need to be convinced about its effectiveness and most currently decline to cover the cost. The procedure uses the body's own repair mechanism: platelets, which are contained in the blood. When there is a cut in the skin, the platelets rush in to create new cells to heal the injury and restore blood flow. While they don't completely understand what happens when they inject billions of platelets into joints, there does seem to be some evidence that it leads to cartilage repair. Here is the medical description:

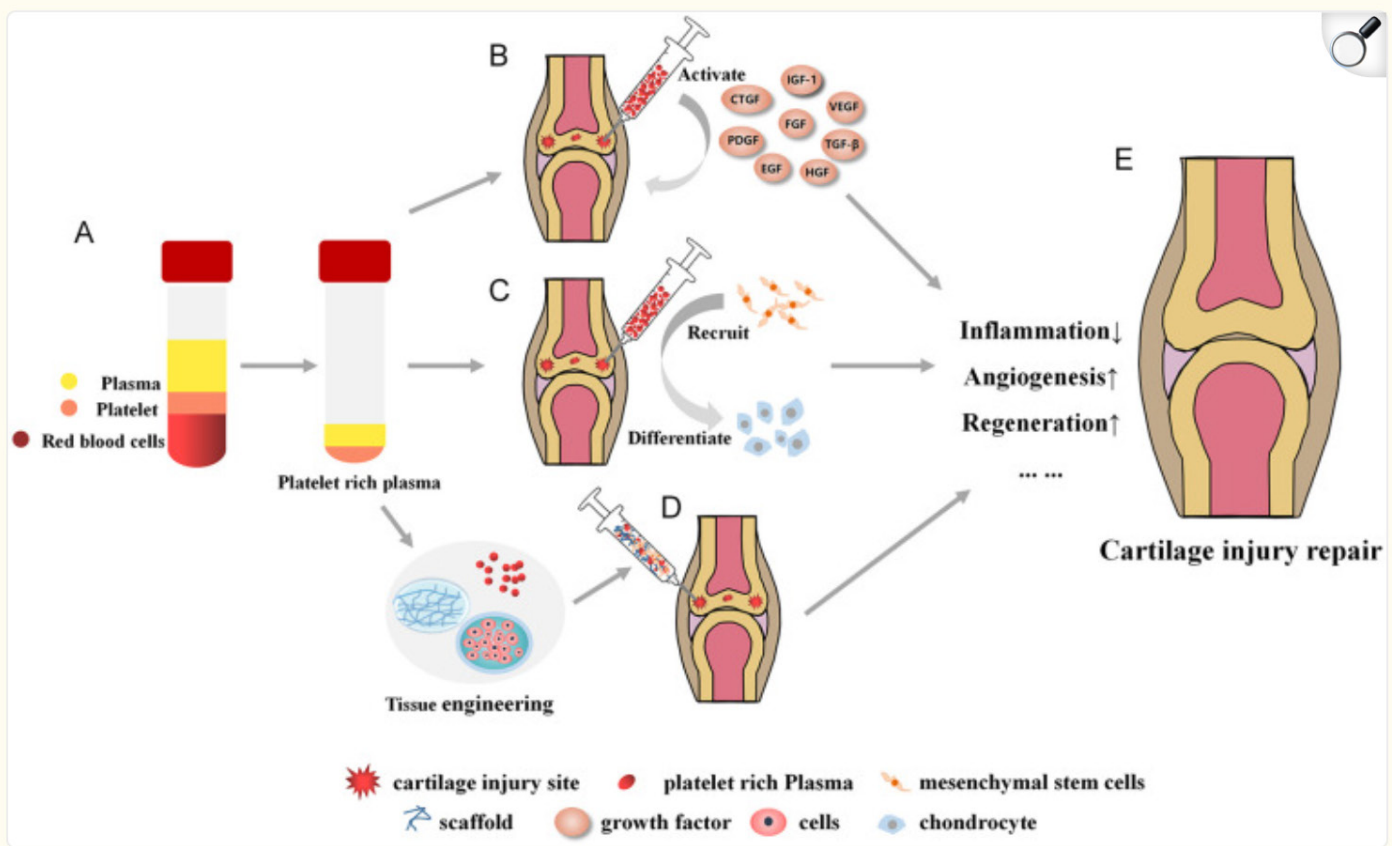
Platelet-rich plasma (PRP) is a platelet concentrate obtained by whole blood centrifugation. Its platelet concentration is higher than that of normal whole blood and contains a variety of growth factors. PRP can reduce the occurrence of inflammation, improve angiogenesis, and promote the proliferation and differentiation of chondrocytes by secreting a huge number of cytokines, chemokines, and growth factors so as to promote the healing of bone and cartilage injuries.



PRP is being used as a potential therapeutic strategy for relieving knee pain. One advantage of this treatment is a minimum of adverse reactions. As long as the blood is removed, the platelets are separated from the red and white blood cells, and the plasma is shot in the knee without introducing any infections, there are no side effects. Basically, the injection creates a noninjury injury. The body does not repair cartilage, but when you bring a concentrated army of bodily defenses in the form of billions of platelet cells to one location, well, they seem to spring into action to fix whatever seems to need fixing. There is growing evidence that platelets can repair and regenerate cartilage, reducing inflammation and pain.

This picture shows PRP combined with stem cells (a process that was not offered to me).

Figure 2.



The process takes place over 12 weeks. I am halfway through it, and I can report that the pain in my right knee is almost gone. However, all is not good. For some reason, my left knee now hurts much the same way the right did and together they seem weaker this past week. I begin a sequence of physical therapy tomorrow, and I am hopeful that some structured exercises will make both my legs stronger and that soon they will be pain free.

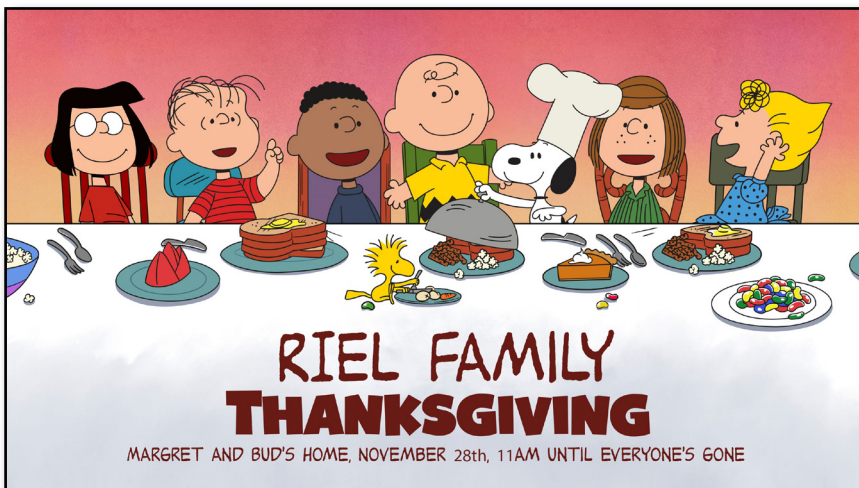
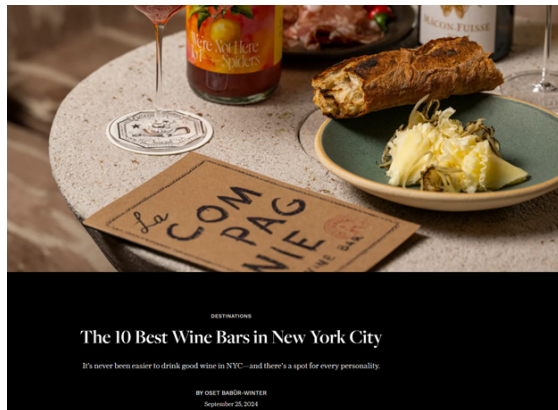
FAMILY SHORTS

One of the 10 best Wine Bars in New York City

For Riesling and Comfort food: Terroir – Chef Bryce Sorem

Making your way through the binder-sized menu at Terroir feels like reading a hand-scrawled letter from a good friend who cannot stay focused on a single topic if their life depended on it, but in the best way possible. Owner Paul Greico is known for his obsession with Riesling—“Rudolf Steiner urged us to become aware of one’s humanity. By drinking Riesling, you become a better person,” reads one page.

You can dive into the terroir-verse by snagging a ticket for The Summer of Riesling, an iconic, three-hour booze cruise Greico organizes every year, or just sidle up to the bar and ask the staff about their favorite pours. While Riesling certainly is the main attraction, there’s also plenty of variety from France, Germany, Spain, and beyond, as well as an impressive vermouth list. Not one for the usual wine bar charcuterie and tinned fish spread? The food menu offers more substantial fare like smashburgers, Tteokbukki, and a stellar shaved Brussels sprouts salad.



Jeff and I spent the afternoon in Balboa Park. I've lived here all my life and finally got around to climbing the California Tower in the Museum of Us. Beautiful day and learned all about the Tower. Ended the day with a walk through the Japanese Garden.