

Monday March 12th 2018

Jury Duty Day

Louise had us up at 05:45 (4:45 old time) so that she could make her 09:30 debut at the Jefferson County Court House for Jury Duty. We had cold cereal for breakfast with strawberries and blackberry topping.

Weather: Toronto 28F to 34F part cloud Louisville 33F to 46F sun & cloud

Louise squished the NYTX in 54 seconds while David took a lumbering two minutes and 3 seconds.

At 07:30, before the sun was up, we took Maisie for a chilly meander. The sky was crystal clear with a one eighth crescent moon etched in the inky blue-black sky.

Louise decided to go downtown a bit early. That was a good decision. David walked her out to the Scion that had quite a bit of snow on it. David quickly discovered that the wet snow had frozen into a solid unmovable block. We got plastic lids to use as scrapers. David froze his bare hands and remembered vividly why he prefers to spend winter out of Canada. It took us about ten minutes to clear the windshield.

Louise drove away at 08:43 taking her trusty Scion down to the Jefferson County Court House. She already knew where the jury parking lot was located. What she didn't understand and found out pretty soon is that there is no courtesy parking for people called to jury duty. It costs \$8.00 per day for anything more than three hours. As the judge who came into the room where the prospective jurors were held explained, by the time one parks and buys lunch there is a negative balance on the \$12.50 paid each juror for each day.

Louise was dismissed for this day at about 1pm. She must call in tonight to find out about tomorrow. This could go on for a period of two weeks, unless she is chosen for a murder trial.

David printed out a glossy 8 by 10 print of a single Sandhill Crane in a field. It might well become the next oil painting.

Then there was the arduous task of changing the time to DST on the programmed light switches. The LCD symbols are so tiny that only a teenager can read them.

We recycled the egg salad sandwiches that Louise had taken downtown into our lunch at home. A bit later we had popcorn to make us feel full.

David had a pleasant telephone conversation with a Toronto friend who is taking a March Break in Florida. He confirmed that the Nissan Leaf is a good choice as an all-electric car – he owns one. We were advised to look at the SL trim option. Mention was also made of an On Board Diagnostic plugin that transmits via bluetooth various data to a phone or iPad running the Leaf Spy application.

Due to the uncertainty of today's event, we had bought cheese fondue for supper. When Louise phoned the Jury Office after supper she got the message that all had to be at the courthouse by 08:45 hrs.

After that we started a new series. “Madam Secretary” is an American political drama television series created by Barbara Hall and executive produced by Lori McCreary and Morgan Freeman. It stars Téa Leoni as Elizabeth "Bess" Adams McCord, an ex CIA analyst who becomes the United States Secretary of State. We enjoyed the first episode so much that Louise suggested we try a second. “We” did not make it falling asleep after about ten minutes. David put her to bed.

Tuesday March 13th 2018

The alarms were set for 06:00, but were awake by 05:30 hrs.

Weather: Toronto 28F to 35F cloud Louisville 31F to 44F part cloud

David got stalled by a tricky two axis clue in the NYTX – he did it in three minutes 2 seconds. Louise got stumped by the same two axis clue. Even when “solved”, it did not make sense.

After a fried egg breakfast, we went out at 06:45 to walk Maisie. It was broken cloud and dark. The one eighth moon slice was much lower on the eastern horizon than on Monday. We got a photo.

When we got back the task was to get the frost off the windshield of the Scion. With the temperature just below freezing, a partial solution was to wash the windshield with cold water. That got the worst of it off. Five minutes before driving off, Louise started the Scion and turned on the defrost full blast. When Louise was ready to drive at 07:40 hrs, the windshield wipers took off most of the gunk.

So far jury duty has been a colossal pain for both of us.

CBC: U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday said he had replaced U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson with CIA head Mike Pompeo, and has tapped Gina Haspel to lead the CIA. In a tweet, Trump thanked Tillerson, and said Haspel will become the first woman director of the CIA. Mr Tillerson, a former chief executive of ExxonMobil, was only appointed to the job just over a year ago.

Louise phoned mid-morning to say she was stuck in the holding pattern and would probably spend all day at the courthouse. Louise hoped to get into “voir dire” (jury selection) in the afternoon to get it over with as soon as possible.

David, who had finally figured out that he had too much adipose fat, had an apple for lunch.

About 14:00 the electrician from Corrigan arrived to check out the smoke detectors. David had already checked out all the seven smoke detectors so he guessed that the fault was in the upstairs hallway. The electrician found that the hot wire had been sliced and then taped back together with electrician's tape – just a simple side-by-side wrap rather than a wire nut. He guessed that the drywall installers had messed up the electrician's work as not professional electrician would have left it in that state. Once that wire was correctly tied in the detectors in the basement and garage came on. That left the downstairs hallway and the master bedroom. A loose connection in the hallway lit up the last two circuits. Louise may well have been without protection in the downstairs of the house since 2004. Now all David has to do is replace all seven detectors that are more than ten years old.

Louise phoned just before 17:00 saying that she had been put on the jury of a civil case and that the

jurors had already heard opening arguments by both the prosecution and the defense. They had a fifteen minute break and then they would hear more arguments. Louise did not expect to be home before 18:30 hrs. David drove the van out of the garage and parked it outside so that Louise could put the Scion in her nice warm, snow-less garage,

David fed Maisie so that she did not die of jury malnutrition. Louise got home about 18:15 and was pretty tired. She was not allowed to discuss the case.

Fortunately, we had pizza in the freezer so supper was not hard to whistle up. Combined with a green salad and a splash of red wine, it was the perfect way to unwind after a day at the courthouse.

We re-watched the episode of Madam Secretary that one of us missed the evening before.

Since the judge wanted Louise in court by 09:30 the next day we set the alarm for 06:30 hrs.

Wednesday March 14th 2018

Pi (3.1416) Day

Alarm notwithstanding, we were awake by 05:30 hrs. There was snow on the ground so it was a good thing that we had parked the van outside so that the Scion would be clean and warm.

Weather: Toronto 29F to 34F cloud Louisville 25F to 43F sun & cloud

David cracked the NYTX in three minutes and 16 seconds. Louise could not get the app to launch.

We walked Maisie at 07:15 hrs. It was crisp and there was fresh snow on the ground. We walked cautiously as there were patches of black ice. The sky was clear and the moon had reduced to just a thin sliver. We got some nice photos.

BBC: World renowned physicist Stephen Hawking has died at the age of 76. All 'Toys R Us' stores in the UK are expected to close in the next six weeks following the chain's collapse into administration.

CBC: British Prime Minister Theresa May says Britain will expel 23 Russian diplomats, giving them one week to leave, in response to the poisoning of a former Russian spy and his daughter in southwest England.

CBC: Young people in the U.S. walked out of school to demand action on gun violence Wednesday in what activists hoped would be the biggest demonstration of student activism yet in response to last month's massacre in Florida. More than 3,000 walkouts were planned around the world, organizers said. Students were urged to leave class at 10 a.m. local time for 17 minutes — one minute for each victim in the Feb. 14 attack at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland.

Thousands of students gathered on Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House, holding colourful signs and cheering in support of gun control. The students chanted, "Hey, hey, ho, ho. The NRA has got to go!" and "What do we want? Gun control! When do we want it? Now!"

Louise drove the Scion downtown at 08:25 hrs, not wanting to expose her lovely Jeep to the downtown uncertainties of the parking garage.

David installed four new smoke detectors. He had to put the old ones out on the porch as they kept emitting dead battery pulses of irritating noise.

Louise phoned home about 11:10 to tell David that she could not tell him anything.

David, watching his waistline, and being too lazy to cook, had an apple for lunch.

Then David discovered that his new hot AC wire detector was not working. This was the second set of AAA batteries so he suspected the auto switch off was not working. After playing around with his multi-meter he found that both sets of batteries were just fine. The fault was the detector. There was a strip of metal in the base cap that had to contact the negative battery lead. The solution was to really crank the cap on hard and then it worked. David took a knife and pried the contact out a bit so that the fit was not super critical.

He decided to take some photos with the Nikon D7100. Error message. It took a search on the Web to realize that the 32 gig SD memory card had lost its brains and needed to be reformatted. Fortunately, all the photos had been downloaded before this error occurred. But, in the middle of an overseas trip?

Louise phoned home about 16:00 to say that she would be home late. Things appeared to be going slowly.

David had started his book on Churchill with the title “The Last Lion”. It is revealing sides of the great man that were not known before. Panning the years 1940 to 1965, *The Last Lion: Defender of the Realm* begins shortly after Winston Churchill became prime minister in 1940 (age 65) - when Great Britain stood alone against the overwhelming might of Nazi Germany. In brilliant prose and informed by decades of research, William Manchester and Paul Reid recount how Churchill organized his nation’s military response and defense, convinced FDR to support the cause, and personified the “never surrender” ethos that helped win the war.

In July, 1945 we witness Churchill, driven from office, warning the world of the coming Soviet menace. And after his triumphant return to 10 Downing Street from October 1951 to April 1955, we follow him as he pursues his final policy goal: a summit with President Dwight Eisenhower and Soviet leaders. And in the end, we experience Churchill’s last years, when he faces the end of his life with the same courage he brought to every battle he ever fought. He died in January, 1951

Unexpectedly, Louise was home shortly after 17:00 – the judge had given the jury time off for good behavior.

We did a whole bunch of loaf slicing using the electric machine and then baked Melba toast. Maisie loves Melba toast.

Supper was warmed up quiche that Louise had made several days ago. With a green salad and bubbly jury juice it was more than nice.

We watched two episodes of Madam Secretary. In its attempt to intertwine the home and office lives of the Secretary one is left with a lump of mushy stuff that takes away from the serious side of the story. It is not as focused as “West Wing” and lacks a lot of punch.

Thursday March 15th 2018

Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC

We were awake by 05:00 but managed to snooze until 06:00 hrs. We were having a scrambled egg breakfast when the alarm went off at 06:30 hours. We walked Maisie so early that not even the moon was up.

Weather: Toronto 26F to 38F part cloud Louisville 40F to 60F sun

David did the NYTX in a very slow three minutes and 48 seconds. Louise, thanks to her background in the humanities, knew the goddess Gaia, the primal Greek goddess of the Earth. Known as the great mother of all and often referred to as “Mother Earth”, Louise got it in one minute 29 seconds. David was educated.

The US student protests against gun violence carried a simple, but effective message

“We Vote in 2020”

Louise took the Scion downtown to jury duty departing about 08:15 hrs.

David took the opportunity to visit Home Depot to buy two more smoke detectors and a combo smoke and carbon monoxide detector. He also looked at a light sensing light switch for the front porch light to give the house a more lived-in look while we are away – they had no such switch. Then he dropped into Michael' s to look for frames for two 8 by 10 photos.

On the way back he noticed a dead doe just outside the entrance to Asbury Park. This is deer country and you have to be very careful at night.

Back home David framed the two photos. Then he installed the combo smoke CO detector in the basement. As soon as the 110 volts hit it there were dire warnings on carbon monoxide presence.

He took a step back and read the instructions. Do not install withing five feet of a source of burning gas. OK, so it was 5.5 feet from the furnace flue. So, the combo got moved to the lower hallway where CO coming up the basement stairs would be detected. That put it just outside the master bedroom door.

Democrat Connor Lamb, a 33 year old ex-Marine, won a special Pennsylvania House of Representatives election to beat the incumbent Republican Rick Saccone. The 18th Congressional District is in the heart of Rust Belt Trump territory. David does not word associate Democrat and Marine.

Louise phoned David during her jury duty courthouse lunch break. Things were going VERY slowly

downtown. Since it was Louise's turn to get the apple, David got instruction on how to heat up a slice of quiche in the portable oven. He was reminded that he had to pay the tax to Maisie of a small portion. Maisie might never have put tax and taxidermy together.

After lunch David installed the sixth smoke detector, leaving only the one in the garage. This seventh one is about fifteen feet off the ground and it will take both David & Louise to swap out the old detector.

CBC: With the April 30 filing date approaching, Canadians everywhere are getting their tax slips and financial records in order to meet the 2017 tax return filing deadline.

Sex workers face the same obligation as every worker in this country which is why Vancouver's PACE Society, a sex workers' rights organization, ran its second annual Sex Workers' Tax Workshop.

CBC: The leaders of the United States, France and Germany joined Britain in blaming Russia for poisoning a former spy with a powerful nerve agent, calling the attack "the first offensive use of a nerve agent in Europe since the Second World War."

We had a later supper of warmed up pizza as Louise got home quite late. Louise has decided that she does not want to become a lawyer - "Boring Beyond Belief".

We elected to try a movie and chose the 1961 Breakfast at Tiffany's. The video had barely started when 'The End' flashed onto the screen. A bunch of editors turned Holly Golightly into Holly Goquickly. Henry Mancini barely had time to fit in "Moon River". We were very disappointed so we went to bed.

Friday March 16th 2018

Louise got us up at 05:55, had the oatmeal breakfast ready in minutes and we were walking Maisie by 07:00 hrs. David was unable to do the NYTX due to brain freeze but Louise got it in one minute 31 seconds.

Weather: Toronto 23F to 32F sun Louisville 38F to 49F sun

The Scion drove away at 08:00 leaving David with ten hours to fill. He started by watching a video on the construction of the Suez Canal, opened in 1869. It seems only right that the Egyptians own it since they put up half the original money and all the labor.

In the front hall Louise has a four place light switch panel. One switch did not seem to do anything. So, his curiosity aroused, David dismantled it and found that one switch was not electrically connected.

Louise phoned at 09:50 to say that nothing had happened to that point even though the judge had asked the jurors to report for 09:00 rather than 09:30 hrs. David guessed that plea bargaining was taking place. Louise signed off when the bailiff marshaled the troops.

David decided to use the whetstone to resharpen four kitchen utility knives. He watched a video to get the technique, but was unable to give the knives a razor-sharp edge.

Louise phoned during a break at 11:20 but could tell me nothing except that she was looking forward to

her cheese sandwich for lunch.

BBC: There are 1.3 billion people alive today without electricity. But, remember that before 1900 not much was electrified.

Did you know that flight attendants' hourly rates are generally calculated from the time the aircraft door closes until the time it's reopened (often called "block time")? Therefore, all time spent in the terminal prior to the flight, time spent getting the aircraft ready, doing security and safety checks and, of course, boarding and deplaning is all unpaid.

David watched a 45 minute video on the development of the Messerschmidt Me 262 jet fighter. The American F-86 and the MIG-15 were the post-war offspring.

About 13:00 Louise phoned during the trail break. By then David had copied her Dave's Killer Bread sandwich with sharp Costco cheddar cheese, cherry tomatoes and lettuce. Maisie liked the cheese and the tomato.

David was deep into the Churchill book. Dunkirk was done and France falling.

Louise phoned about 15:00 to say that she might be home by 18:00 hrs. It was suggested that David should pull a Maisie and have a nap.

Instead David watched a video on U-110 "The Most Important Submarine Capture in World War Two". The British blew the submarine to the surface after depth charge attacks in the Atlantic. The Germans abandoned ship and left behind all their codes, including an Enigma machine.

About 16:30 Louise phoned with bad news. Two of the alternate jurors had dropped out leaving only twelve. The judge had warned that the trial would go on all of next week and that each day would go long. We were not amused.

Louise did not get home until 18:45 and was understandably tired and fed up. David was equally warped as he does not do "nothing" well.

We had tacos for supper and some more jury juice.

We tried two episodes of "Grace and Frankie", an American comedy-drama web television series created by Marta Kauffman and Howard J. Morris for Netflix. The series stars Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin in the title roles of Grace and Frankie, two unlikely friends who are brought together after their husbands announce that they are in love and plan to get married. The juror conked out halfway through the second episode.

Saturday March 17th 2018

St Patrick's Day

Weather: Toronto 26F to 37F sun Louisville 43F to 55F cloud & showers & sun

David did the big Saturday NYTX in five minutes flat. Louise did not even take two minutes.

We had taco scrambled eggs for breakfast and did a nice walk with Maisie in full daylight. There were lots of new buds and even some new blossoms. Maisie & Ginger played their normal game with Ginger fleeing down the sewer opening. After a while Ginger poked his head out to see if the coast was clear and we got a good photo.

Louise drove the Scion over to Costco to get some gas. The week's to & from the courthouse had emptied the tank. David picked up some sandals and a polo shirt, while Louise, showing remarkable restraint, bought no clothing at all. We got some coffee and other food useful for next week's jury ordeal.

Back home we switched from Jessica the Scion to Roxie the Jeep. Louise had to pick up her custom lamp from the 'Lampmaker'. But first we dropped into "Colonial Designs" to buy some silk Gloriosa lilies" for one of Louise's hand-built porcelain pots. On the way back we dropped into Kroger's for mundane things, like food.

CBC: Fuelled by technological breakthroughs and cuts to taxes and regulation, the United States is on target to become the world's biggest producer of crude oil in the next five years. The U.S will be bigger than Russia and Saudi Arabia. It could clear the way for America to redefine its relationship with the world, minus a reliance on overseas oil.

BBC: Russia is to expel 23 British diplomats in a row over the nerve agent attack on an-ex spy and his daughter in the UK. The Russian foreign ministry said the UK staff would be expelled from Moscow within a week in response to Britain's decision to expel 23 Russian diplomats.

Lunch was rolled sliced turkey and Swiss cheese thingies from Costco – really tasted great with Dijon mustard.

Louise did the Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy with her vacuum cleaner while David cowered in the corner.

Mid-afternoon we walked Maisie again at 54F with a stiff breeze to prevent overheating. The sun had popped out more evidence that Spring was advancing. Maisie was disappointed that Ginger did not show up for a return bout.

Chez Louise we started marinating steak for dinner and popped a white potato into the small oven to start the twice-baked recipe.

We had steak, cauliflower hash, asparagus and twice baked potato with candlelight – rather nice.

We watched another episode of Grace and Frankie. Well frankly, it was a dud. With four accomplished actors, it is hard to believe they could have such clunky material to work with. So, we switched to a formulaic western sheriff story set in Wyoming called "Longmire". It was your typical white hats against black hats. However, the scenery was magnificent.

Sunday March 18th 2018

For some reason we got up at 06:00 when we could have lounged leisurely. If we had been younger ...
Weather: Toronto 26F to 38F cloud Louisville 41F to 58F Sunday

NYTX: David four minutes 13 seconds. Louise 1 minute 13 seconds. See only three minutes difference.

We had waffles and the last of the Florida maple syrup.

Then we tackled the seventh smoke detector – the one mounted on the fifteen foot ceiling of the garage. We eased the Jeep up underneath it and put the back legs of the step ladder on the top step of stairs into the house and the front legs on the massive front bumper of Mrs Patton's Jeep. By reaching way over his head, David was able to switch out the old sensor.

Reuters: Ten years after the start of the financial crisis that erased \$16.4 trillion in assets from U.S. households, Americans have yet to embrace the U.S. stock market with the same fervor as before, holding fewer individual stocks and putting less money into equities overall despite an uninterrupted 9-year bull market that has pushed the S&P 500 up nearly 310 percent from its 2009 lows.

BBC: A clean-up campaign has begun at Mount Everest, aiming to airlift 100 tonnes of rubbish left behind by tourists and climbers of the world's highest mountain.

It was nice and sunny for a morning walk. We met a fellow dog walker. While we chatted, showing terrible manners, Maisie turned her back on the other dog and steadfastly refused to participate.

We had the same lunch as yesterday.

Once the sun was hitting the back yard, we put the dog-faced bird feeder we had bought in Florida up in a tall shrub looking into the porch. If any birds take up residence, they will drive Maisie crazy as her indoor perch looks out at that shrub.

Louise drove off to the 'Hair Twister' as she was not certain that her jury duty would be over in time for her previously booked appointment.

BBC: Vladimir Putin will lead Russia for another six years, after securing an expected victory in the presidential election. A Russian state exit poll gave him 73.9% of the vote, easily defeating his closest competitor. The main opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, was barred from the race.

David had taken a break from his Churchill book to skim read “Hiroshima” by John Hersey. Hersey recounts what happened on August 6th, 1945 and beyond through the memories of survivors. It is not an easy book to read. We have both been to Hiroshima.

We tried an experiment with Costco pre-built stuffed peppers. They were really tasty with salad and baguettes.

On Netflix we tried to watch “Marseille”. It was dubbed and we just could not get into it. We

recognized a lot of shots in the harbor as we had been there in March, 2015. We gave up and tried "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy - In October 1973, "Control", head of British intelligence (referred to as "The Circus"), sends agent Jim Prideaux to Budapest to meet a Hungarian general wishing to defect.

Like so much of John Le Carré, it took forever to get going, and with a very disjointed timeline caused by too many flashbacks, we found ourselves getting frustrated and gave up.