

FAMILY TALES

Yosemite National Park and Tulare, California

22-24 September 2013

A Time to Heal

Mountains scorched by the recent Rim Fire just outside the entrance to Yosemite National Park.

A time to heal



Sitting down to a feast at the Circle N Ranch in Tulare, clockwise beginning with Emily (black sweater): Nancy, Gary, Nan, Karen, Jim, Charlene, Butch and Beth.

Families inevitably change. Sometimes they heal.

Within the past year, two sisters – Daisy Lee and Mary Hazel – died well into their 90s. They were the last survivors of the four children my Meacham grandparents raised in North Carolina. Brothers, Dan and Joe, died a while back.

Ten cousins – their four children's children – remain: Beth, Butch, Jean, Jody, Julie, Karen, Lee, Mary Wood, Nancy and Nancy Wood.

Half of us have been together this week in California, a reunion over roasted lamb that has its role in determining how the greater Crase-Crowe-Jones-Meacham-Nalbandian-Pleasants-Stallings-Waggoner agglomeration will continue to relate to each other. Who

keeps in touch, who remembers, who gets invited.

As much as we romanticize these things, families in real life do not remain as connected as we thought they did when we were young. Those earlier generations went through the same spreading and breaking apart as ours. They came to their own resolutions, as we will.

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Beth is not the same person today that he was as a boy under the Christmas tree in the 1950s. That's a rare issue for most families to deal with, but given enough time and enough people, all families face challenges that hurt and tear at the fabric that holds them together.

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A time to heal



Cattle roping is not Beth's best sport, but she did lasso the yellow plastic steer on her second try and retired with a .500 record of success.

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She and Nan have been together 17 years, but it's only been in the last 10 that they have gradually reconnected with the rest of us.

Seven years ago they asked me to accompany them to Italy on a trip hosted by the U.S. Army to honor Nan's late mother, who created a support program for the families of troops commanded by her father, a general.

These newsletters began on that trip as a way to create a keepsake of the trip for them and let people back home know what we were doing.

This is the first time Beth and Nan have visited Emily and me. We are introducing them to people we like, places we enjoy and family from whom Beth has been disconnected for 50 years.

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Climbing El Capitan



Yosemite rock climbers have established more than 70 routes up the national park's tallest granite wall, 3,000-foot El Capitan (The Chief). It was first climbed in 1958 by Warren Harding, Wayne Merry and George Whitmore. It took them 47 days of climbing over an 18-month period in which they hammered steel spikes called pitons into the rock to which they attached their protection ropes. The route used by the climbers we saw here is called "The Nose." Today's climbers take 3-5 days to reach the top, stopping at night to sleep on narrow rock ledges or on platforms called porta-ledges, which they haul up behind them on ropes and then suspend from chocks wedged into cracks in the the sheer granite. The climber in the blue square has reached a ledge called El Cap Towers. The two climbers in the red square are ascending a vertical crack called the Stove Legs. They are about a day's climb below El Cap Towers.





A British couple visiting Yosemite volunteered to take a picture of the four of us at the overlook at the end of the Wawona Tunnel.

Karen and her husband Jim competed in a team roping competition in Turlock the weekend before we arrived. She ropes the head and Jim ropes the hind legs.





We had dinner Sunday night in the dining room of the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite Valley.



Nan and Beth at Glacier Point.