

VIKKI T'S MOST EXCELLENT ADVENTURE (8/2011)

Day 1: a novel experience. No, I mean that “liter”ally! But first, a little background. For years, long time CAC members, the Lawson’s of British Columbia, Canada, had invited Avaton and me to visit their island off Tofino and we’d put it off for one reason or another.



After Avaton passed, it felt like it was time to accept their kind offer. There was no way I was going to drive myself, so I contacted a long time mutual friend, Jack Gunter, who immediately agreed to do the driving. (I was amazed when he didn’t have a moment of hesitation when I asked—I would have had to stop and think about a request like that.)

I’d heard something about some novels Jack had written, but knew nothing about them, so imagine my surprise when the first one took place on Vancouver Island! And even before the island, part of the action took place on the ferry we rode from Port Angeles to Victoria. So all during the trip, he’s pointing out “this spot is the turnout he uses in the car chase” or “down there is where the clock shop is”—and he gave me copies of the 4 books in print. I immediately began reading what I was sort of experiencing, at least in regard to scenery and such. Meanwhile, he was writing his 5th novel whenever we had a break and kept me apprised of progress on it, since I was getting to know the characters, thanks to book one. So basically, I’m reading as fast as I can and he’s writing as fast as he can—sort of surreal.

I very much enjoyed his first two books (finished during the week’s visit) and you might want to check them out. It’s Flying Pig Publications (there’s a story behind that name, of course) and his web site is: www.jackgunterart.com



Day 2: we got to Tofino and enjoyed the rugged surfers and beauty of the rock-strewn beach over fresh-squeezed orange juice. Steve and Susanne collected us in their boat, and our next stop was to a little island to collect water from an artesian-fed stream. There is no running water on their island because it’s solid rock so wells are not an option. One day, Jack accidentally made our coffee out of rain water (instead of the wonderful, freshly collected

supply). It was fine, but I had to tease him about it.

Day 3: I woke up early and made the 1/8th of a mile trail hike to Lawson’s home. I knocked on the door and heard silence, so was leaning against the railing, looking at the birds in her feeders when Susanne opened the door and, laughing, asked me if I’d looked behind me. I hadn’t, and when I did, here were 5 deer, all within 10 feet of me, staring at me with those intense, black eyes. She feeds them every morning, so



they were inspecting this strange human while waiting for breakfast. Steve & Susanne fixed us a hearty breakfast on their propane burning 'stove'. Did I mention there's only electricity when they run the generator? There were lots of things to learn about how stuff worked.



Both the house Jack and I were in and Lawson's are on bluffs facing out onto the Pacific Ocean. We spotted whale spouts, eagles, ravens, and a persistent raccoon

named Drippy. The behavior of a raven that hung around the front deck and flew off with



a bag of Jack's tobacco was so out of character, Susanne said, that she felt it might



be Avaton's spirit. When she and I did the medicine wheel, the raven came again and snapped a twig over our heads to be sure we knew he was there. There was a magnificent tree I know Avaton would have loved. They call it the wolf tree, as the skulls of two wolves who were their friends (and were killed by the powers that be to discourage too close interactions between the species) are placed on its upper limbs. It begins with a huge base trunk, then about 40 feet up, it branches out about 30 feet horizontally and from that platform, seven or so trees continue skyward. It was so big, I couldn't get it all in one frame with my camera. There's a picture in their house of Susanne holding her hand out and the wolf sniffing (or maybe licking?) it. So glad they captured that moment.



Day 4: While most of our time was spent reading, writing and napping, this morning Jack jotted out a map of the cross island trail and after breakfast, we set

out, first to a lovely little beach just NW of Lawson's, then from it, back into the forest and the challenging trail, is it is not your Forest Service National Park kind of affair. Neither was our sense of direction, as we kept ending up back at that same beach. Two hours into our trek, we began to wish we'd carried water, but then remembered that just would have been more weight to haul. Feeling really silly that we seemed lost on such a small island, we found a sign "Cross Island Trail" and headed that way. We ended up meeting some neighbors (not much choice, as the trail went right into their yards) who aimed us back 'home.' We were exhausted and rested the rest of the afternoon.



Back for dinner at Lawson's we found an extra special treat. One of their sons had caught 3 gorgeous salmon. My September letter's picture was me holding one up. I was pleased to be able to do that; (would have been SO seasick had I gone out on the ocean to fish!)



Day 5: A boat ride back to Tofino for supplies. I discovered organic wine really is better than non-organic, and I now totally recommend it! Now I'm not going to be mistaken for a gazelle as I traipse over uneven rocks and getting into boats, etc, but I must share--as we docked this day, I grokked it and climbed smoothly out of the boat. Steve commented on how agile I was and I intend to bask in that "agile"ation for as long as possible.

After shopping, back to the little island with the good water, where Steve cut portions off a fallen alder and he, Susanne and Jack hauled it back to the boat (I guarded the boat and tried to stay out of their way). Meanwhile, the salmon was soaking in brine for a day.



Day 6: The smoke house was going when I walked over the next morning. Susanne said this was called Indian Candy because it had more sugar in the brine than straight smoked salmon. They were busy with a couple (hundred) other things as well, so it was lucky that Jack and I were there together

because we could entertain each other. For some reason, Jack is so easy to tease, I couldn't resist. For instance, he's getting ready to pour wine for dinner and we've had wine the last few nights and the glasses are stored right over the sink, and he asks "What glasses would you like me to use, Susanne?" (I just couldn't contain myself) and piped up with "How about the wine glasses, Jack?"

An aside here in case you've never heard the joke about the farmer who has a smart aleck government agent show up at his door with a warrant or some piece of paper giving him rights to go anywhere on this man's property he wants to check out. The farmer looks at the document and says, "well, all that's well and good, but you can't go in that particular field over there". Of course government guy retorts with "I can go anywhere I want" and starts walking around. In due course, he climbs over the fence into 'that' field, only to find himself being chased by a wild-eyed huge, fast-charging bull. The farmer calls out, "Show him the paper, son. Show him the paper." (You have to wait for it a bit, but there IS a reason for me to include this joke).

We were joined by the closest neighbors for dinner that night (which was nice timing, as Lawson's boat was beached the next day and we had to borrow theirs—and going a little further back, this was the first steel boat Steve built for the family, so he was kind of borrowing his own boat. He'd gone on to build bigger ones, including the beached one). Fresh salmon, good wine and conversation, and I'd made a fire that was nice and warm to return to. I felt very proud of myself that it stayed lit. Weather was very cool till....



Day 7: Gorgeous sun and actual warmth that didn't make covering my ears while in the boat necessary! Steve and Susanne were using their knives (they each carry one all the time) to scrape the salmon from the drying screen shelves when I got there in the morning. She, Jack and I cleaned up the house while Steve vacuum packed the salmon and portioned out gifts to send home with us and to Susanne's mom, who lives near Jack.



One last boat ride back to Tofino and pictures of me in an oversized chair (what a surprise, eh?) then Jack and I started home. A different ferry ride delivered us to



Twawwassen, where we found what I believe was the only hotel in town (and what good luck, a restaurant next door that was still open—it was after 10 PM).

The boy from Brazil. As you may have gathered, Jack is a very friendly person and is happy to chat with folks he encounters. An example was the nice young fellow checking

us into the hotel. Brilliant white hair, nice tan and soft spoken, he was quietly efficient until Jack got him talking and it turned out he was from Brazil. Well, it also turned out that Jack's second novel took place in Brazil, so in moments, they were sharing stories and comparing cities, and that may have had something to do with the room upgrade at no added charge—who's to say? The short and long of it, we got food and rest.



Day 8: Going through customs: Jack is also an antiques dealer and artist, and has gone over the US/Canadian Border often, so on this trip, he'd say he's an author and pull out one or two of his books for them to see. He said it made him look much more legit than before, and we got through smoothly and quickly.

The drive down I-5 to Camano Island was pleasant, and I enjoyed seeing his antiques store (where I found a 5 foot beaded iguana I couldn't live without) and his galleries. He had promised me my pick in the gallery of his originals, but left his keys in his pickup, parked in Olympia. We ordered lunch and he explored options. Refreshed after the repast, he approached the nail salon which butted up against the back of this gallery. The woman working there didn't know him and was NOT going to grant access to some stranger. As we walked back out, I said "show her your book, Jack!"

Back at his antiques shop, I heard a woman saying she wanted to see his originals, too. It turns out she's the curator at one of Seattle's art museums. Long story short, she and I both walked out with our chosen originals about an hour later. I absolutely LOVE my choice. When he gets back from Europe, he intends to put the collection it is from on his web site as well... the 'black birds in the snow' collection. (He and his lady will be there till late September.)



So this was quite possibly, the perfect adventure; I came back refreshed and renewed and (I was told) looking radiant. To Steve, Susanne and Jack—thank you all so much!

Love,
Vikki T,
Happily back at CAC,
and all the better for my excellent adventure!!

