

Jim Womeldorf's Journal of a Mission Trip to Panama - January 2007

Our group included Sebastian Torres, Pr. Bryan Robertson, Dr. Kevin Sand, Glen Barth, and Jim Womeldorf.

Day 1 (Friday, January 12, 2007)

We met at DLC at 6:45 this AM expecting that two vehicles would be required to transport the 5 of us and our luggage to Minneapolis. As we began stacking the bags in the back of the Villager Kevin said 'Do you suppose we could all get in there?' and the challenge was on. We rearranged things to provide a 'seat' between the rear bucket seats and amidst considerable joviality Kevin, Glen and Seb managed to shoehorn themselves in with Kevin in the center 'seat of honor' between Glen and Seb. Getting seat belts buckled proved to be interesting, but once the proper order was determined it became easier. (Kevin agreed to just 'hang on' to his well anchored sidekicks☺)

We cautiously started moving. I was pretty curious to see how our nine year old van would bear up under its biggest load ever, and to my (and everyone else's delight) it performed flawlessly – assuming that sluggish acceleration is not considered to be a flaw.

We made the mandatory pit stops at Chatfield and Cannon Falls (our vehicles refuse to drive past those places) and arrived at the EZ shuttle parking lot. What a good idea that was! It really IS 'EZ' when coming in from the south. We were immediately met by a shuttle and were whisked off to the airport.

When we arrived at the airport our driver helped us unload our luggage and we entered the terminal where we could *immediately* check our bags in. Pretty handy compared to having to drag them all the way through the terminal like it used to be.

We then went through security and walked about six miles until we found a Chinese restaurant where we ate. The food was great, and well worth the hike. Then on to our gate (six more miles, and then back a bit) where we boarded without incident.

I traded seats with Seb so he could be closer to members of our group and ended up sitting next to a fellow and his four month old and a gal from Idaho. Both very pleasant.

After two and a half hours we were in Atlanta. Airport instructions here are offered in both English and Spanish. We rode the 'train' from the D concourse to the E concourse (short ride but a fun experience) and found our departure gate. Lots of servicemen/women heading for Iraq, I believe. I had struck up a conversation with one in Minneapolis who was on our flight who was headed back there.

We purchased our visitor cards (visas) for Panama and filled them out so they are ready for our entry into Panama. We were told that we could only take one bag on the flight which made me nervous since I had my backpack plus another small bag. I managed to cram everything into my backpack and Seb was able to stuff my empty bag into his pack. I'm still not certain whether it was necessary, but it made me feel better.

I have been successful in bringing my 20 oz Gatorade bottle onto the flights with water in it. I rather expected that it would be confiscated, but for some reason or other it was deemed to be OK. It has been nice having a little extra water on the flights.

We boarded without incident and Seb and I were on aisle seats one row part. The seats in this plane were 2-3-2. We were handed customs declarations cards which we filled out. No big deal as long as we were not bringing fruits, vegetables, or valuable items in. There is a second card we will have to fill out upon our arrival. The flight attendants did not have enough of them for everyone. An oversight on someone's part, I think. I don't see why these forms couldn't be given to passengers at the airport so they could be filled out while you are sitting around waiting, but then, no one asked me ☺.

We experienced some turbulence, not too bad, but the plane had a bit of a jiggle. My seatmate on this flight was a container ship captain from the Philippines. Nice fellow. He had left his previous ship in Cyprus and was on his way to Balboa where he would assume responsibility for a brand new ship that had come from China. His flight from Cyprus to Atlanta had taken 10 or 11 hours. Married 21 years he has a twelve year old daughter in the Philippines.

We experienced some fairly turbulent weather on the flight. We watched 'The Queen', a movie about the British Monarchy at the time of Diana's death while we enjoyed a tasty dinner. Seb had pasta (which he recommended highly) and I had chicken, which was also very good.

Passing through customs in Panama City was smooth. José met us and took us on a long ride to the Hotel Marbella. I believe we arrived there at about 11:00 PM. Since we had eaten on the plane we got ourselves organized for the next day and turned in.

Day 2 (Saturday, January 13, 2007)

Morning arrived early and we left the hotel around 5:30 AM (I think). The trip (courtesy of José) was surprisingly short. It seems we were flying out of a regional airport rather than the international airport we had arrived at. Thank goodness for José!

We got checked in and, thanks to a conversation between José and one of the ticket agents we were waved through without being charged for our extra baggage. You are only allowed 25#, and are supposed to pay 50 cents/pound for the excess, so this amounted to a rather large savings for us. Kevin got directed to a different agent and got charged \$33 for his 'excess'. Luckily the rest of us stayed in the 'special' line.

Our flight was on a much smaller plane, a turboprop. It was uneventful for a while but the smaller plane made Seb a bit ill. He was anticipating the inevitable (we had located a bag for him) when we hit an air pocket. The plane must have dropped several feet. I managed to retain most of the pear juice in my glass, but I'm not sure why. After that Seb felt better. I think it was like being on a roller coaster and it turned into fun (for him, at least!).

Our 'breakfast' consisted of graham crackers, Ritz crackers with peanut butter, and peanuts. Good enough if you are hungry.

We were met in Bocas Town by David and Joellen. We took a taxi to their apartment and then went to a restaurant on the water. We ate a really good (and inexpensive) breakfast. We suspect that it was prepared on a single hotplate as it was served one plate at a time over a pretty long period of time. Joellen outlined our menu for the week and then we went shopping for any additional food we felt we might need. The menu sounded fine to me so I did not get anything. We also purchased some fishing lures and line.

Then on to the boat near the apartment where we loaded the luggage into a large cayuco, and wrapped it in a plastic tarp. Mauricio left immediately with the luggage and the rest of us waited until it was raining hard. Then we left in the Panga. It gave us a chance to try out our rain gear right away☺. We traveled in an unrelenting rain for 20 or 30 minutes and arrived at the Compound pretty much soaked just as the rain subsided. We carried our luggage to the Mission Cabin and spent some time spreading our money and papers out on the table to dry.

We eventually got ourselves pretty much dried in the next hour or so during which time it rained six more times.

Kevin snorkeled a bit this afternoon. He initially tried to venture into the sea behind the cabin but had sunk into the mud and nearly lost a sandal. Then he went out front and actually made it into the water. He reported that the water was a bit cloudy but he did see some fish and sea urchins.

This afternoon Seb fished off the dock and caught one. It seems that Joellen feeds some fish by the dock so they were 'primed'☺.

I got our fans wired this afternoon and the rest of the guys got the cots and mosquito/gnat netting set up in our room which is defined by some movable panels. A good setup as various rooms can be defined by these wall sections. David and Joellen have an area on the other side of the common center section. We are as ready as we can be for our first night IN the tropics!

Kevin and I are building a 'safe box' in which valuables can be stored when we are away. We would get the sawhorses and plywood and tools carried outside, make a cut, and then scurry to get everything back inside before the rain started again. Then, after a few minutes the rain would subside and we would do it again.

The cabin is an interesting structure. The outside walls are solid up to about the 5 foot level, then open for the next 3 feet. The roof overhangs about 3 or 4 feet so the rain stays outside unless the wind is exceptionally strong. With the coconut palms surrounding the cabin it stays amazingly dry inside. There is a completely open section of wall 8 or 10 feet wide on each side of the common area. There is a heavy plastic tarp that can be pulled across one of these openings. The end with the kitchen in it is open all the time. It is a well planned structure.

We spent a nice evening discussing a variety of issues. The world will be a better place tomorrow now that we have solved some of its problems!

By the way, we counted 53 rain showers today (but we started counting at 25 or 30. Lots of rain regardless.

Day 3 (Sunday, January 14, 2007)

Well, I know that I slept!. I'll have to try to let the others fall asleep before I start my 'motor' tonight. I awoke once during the night, waited for the rain to stop, and then scampered off to the 'facilities'. It started raining again on my way back, of course.

I did not use my fan last night. After my little 'trip' I even covered myself with one of the sheets.

Everyone except Seb arose shortly after daybreak and we had a nice breakfast. We decided to 'pass' on eating from the brand new box of cereal, the contents of which had assumed a life of its own, but there was plenty of good food to eat anyhow. Seb missed it but had some cereal after church. (A different box)

At 9:00 AM (Panama time ☺) church services began. Kendall and Virginia lead a 'Praise Worship' with Virginia on the guitar. I recognized two of the songs but had difficulty matching the Spanish words with the music. After church the adults had a bible study and the kids had Sunday School.

We had a great lunch and then walked to visit a couple neighbors. We saw the 'wells' they had been using before they got their rainwater catchment systems. The water in them was pretty clear but looked like strong tea. Hard to imagine drinking the stuff.

Then back into the Panga to visit some more remote folks. The rain started right on schedule, but we were a bit more prepared for it this time.

First we visited a family whose patriarch has a sea urchin spine in his only leg. The other leg was amputated some time ago. He was out fishing, since that is how he feeds his family, but other members of the family were there. They live in a thatched-roof house that is in poor shape. The mother was visible and was obviously in respiratory distress. Kevin had brought supplies along to work on the man's leg but had not anticipated this situation. He examined the lady as best he could. She was coughing up blood and he is quite certain that she has TB and that she has had it for some time. He stated that the rest of the family has probably 'converted' which I believe means that they are in imminent danger of contracting the disease. Sad. There are probably a dozen people living in close contact with this woman. We waited around for a while and finally left after suggesting that the woman should go to the hospital and that the man should come to the Compound for treatment of his leg.

The next place we visited was a farm that is managed by the people that live there. They are building a new house and have applied for a water system. They currently get their water from a spring that appears to be surface water that seeps out of the hill. Not much better than the 'wells' we saw earlier. There is concern over the ownership of the catchment system since the residents are not the owners of the property.

They are drying cacao beans in a shed here. They are found in large pods that grow on the cacao tree. These pods may contain several dozen wet, soft items that taste like Sweet Tarts when sucked. These are fermented and then the beans found inside them are dried, the shells are removed, and the nibs found inside are ground into chocolate. Pretty labor intensive.

Upon our return to the Compound Seb decided to try his hand at piloting a small cayuco and reportedly managed to fill it with water 2 or 3 times before the 'magic combination' was discovered. Afterward he and Kevin went fishing with Mauricio. They caught one small tuna, which they gave to Mauricio. Sounds like they had a good time but are soaked to the bone. It sounds like Kevin's camera may have sustained some water damage which is a real shame. The presence of water everywhere presents some real challenges to modern devices.

I attempted to fix the toilets this afternoon. It appears that the flushing mechanisms down here are about the same as what we buy at home. Lots of room for improvement. I suggested an alternate method of controlling the water to David which I think might be more trouble-free. It might also help folks to follow the 'If it's yellow...' rule.

It rained 15 times today.

Day 4 (Monday, January 15, 2007)

The day began with what David calls 'bad, strong coffee'. It really hits the spot, though!

We could see the moon this morning so there is hope that we may see the sun even though it has rained hard twice since the 'moon sighting'. David estimates that we have had 3-4 inches of rain daily since our arrival. Not bad for the 'dry season'!

We found a rather large spider (of the flattened fauna variety) and it has been documented on film. Interesting critter. Straight out of a sci-fi movie.

Since it is raining it has been decided that rather than taking a hike into the jungle today we will set some footings for the Pastor Cabin. ('Rain Day' has a slightly different meaning in Panama ☺).

This morning we cleared a few coconut trees and started laying out the footings. Then we dug the holes for the T footings, set a few of them, and broke for lunch.

In the afternoon we set the last of the 16 footings and erected the four 4x4s that define the wall under the low side of the roof. A few of the footings needed 'adjustment' due to the fact that it is difficult to set them precisely, and once set it is not possible to move them. The coconut roots that form the 'ground' are an interesting medium to say the least. The cabin will be 24 feet square and will eventually have a porch on the bay side, and a dock will be put in.

After we quit for the day David, Kevin, and Seb went snorkeling off the dock by David and Joellen's house (which is currently occupied by Kendall, Virginia, and Baby David). I took some pictures of them, and by the sounds that made their way back to shore I'd say that it was an enjoyable learning experience for Seb.

Another great meal tonight. Pumpkin soup with chicken and some sort of potatoes.

We went out and looked at the stars tonight. It was clear enough to make out some of the constellations. Pretty neat. Clear sky!

As we were star-gazing Mauricio and his wife arrived with their 9 year old boy. Their youngest daughter had tripped and fallen with a kerosene bottle-lamp that had splashed burning kerosene on the boy's eye. The lid had a nasty burn and his cornea also was damaged. Kevin treated it with some antibiotic cream and had them take the boy to the hospital. (The next time Kevin saw the boy the lid was considerably better and his cornea showed no evidence of damage.)

David mentioned tonight that the arrival of funds from Rotary and Dick Moore was a real blessing. It has made hospital visits possible for several folks who needed treatment. Funds for this sort of thing are often not available.

Day 5 (Tuesday, January 16, 2007)

We had a little excitement last night. Minji, the resident cat, spent several minutes protecting us from what was most likely an opossum. It was noisy for a while but she kept us safe!

Seb awoke during the night convinced that there was an invader within his netting. Kevin searched the area and I also looked but we could find nothing.

Today we are going to install a water catchment system at Susana's. We cleaned a bunch of donated 4" PVC using a 'brush' we invented using a rock and a couple tee shirts. We motored over in the White Whale (another cayuco) and the Panga, and carried the supplies up to the house. Several hours (without incident) later we had the system in place. It was a beautiful day - sunny at times but then clouds would shade us so we did not get overheated. As soon as we finished we were treated to some delicious soup that Susana had made. Then some of us purchased Mochilas from her. She is one of the folks featured in Joellen's Mochila video.

After lunch several of the group rode the White Whale home and the rest of us walked over to Wendell's home to determine its suitability for a catchment system.

On the way home we stopped by a school. Several families live in the immediate vicinity and most make use of a common 'well'. The well is near the bottom of a hill near a swampy area. The water in it looked like watery milk. While we were there three children passed by us on their way to the well. I watched as the oldest (probably 7 or 8 years old) dipped water out of the well and gave herself a 'shower'. Since she was standing right by the well most of the water ran right back into it. This is the same water that the next person might use for drinking or cooking.

Kevin and Seb went fishing again this evening. They returned at about 7 o'clock with one small fish and seem to have had a good time. They saw pelicans dive for fish and had seen some frigate birds.

Day 6 (Wednesday, January 17, 2007)

It sounds like everyone slept better last night. Either the others are so exhausted that they no longer hear me or I was actually quieter. Kevin mentioned that he would like to have me tested for sleep apnea. Maybe there is actually a reason for my noisy sleeping! I will get tested as soon as we get home. It would be great for Laurel and me if it is something that can be treated successfully.

Everyone is in good spirits this morning. Breakfast was delicious. Papaya with lime and some great toast and toppings. We have really eaten well.

Today we are going on a 'long, hard hike'. So far the weather looks promising, cloudy but not raining.

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Well, we have returned, and 'long hard hike' hardly seem an adequate description of our day! I rode to the starting point of our hike in the Panga. We worked our way into the mangroves after taking the canopy of the boat down. Since we had the faster of the boats we had arrived first and I found some insects to photograph.

When the cayuco arrived it was reported that they had happened upon the one-legged man with the urchin spine in his leg. It seems that the spine had come out on its out and that his other symptoms are likely related to injuries sustained some time ago.

We started hiking up the hill on a muddy, rocky path, and 3 'short hours' later we were at our destination. We were greeted by a surprise - the catchment system was no longer on the building upon which it had been installed, and it was not installed properly on the one it is now on. It was disappointing. Water would run out of the tank once it reached a height of 2 feet or so.

Kevin and several others hiked a bit further to visit a woman who has not been able to talk or walk unassisted for a couple years. After examining her he said that she must have had a stroke some time ago and that there is nothing that can be done for that. She had a cough and he prescribed medication for it. There were also some children in the home with a fungus on their heads. Kevin prescribed an antibiotic for them.

On the hike we saw quite a variety of plants and animals including several poison dart frogs. Joellen and I both tried to photograph them and our cameras both went dead at the same time. We finally caught one in a sunny area and I finally got several reasonably good pictures of it.

Everyone was happy to see the boats when we got to the bottom of the hill. Mauricio's son had stayed with them to keep them afloat as the tide went out, and had done a good job. We were all tired and thirsty and enthusiastically lapped up the lemonade that had been left in the boats.

Once back at the Compound we dined on pasta carbonera and rice with a sauce made with fiddlehead ferns that had been picked while we were on the hike. Hints of asparagus. Very good as always. Then I was surprised with a birthday cake that David had made. It was a particularly special treat. There was even a candle that represented my 64 years that I was able to extinguish with a single breath! It was a birthday party I will always remember. Thanks folks!

Day 7 (Thursday, January 18, 2007)

When I arose during the night for my trip to the 'shower' building I was greeted by a pretty large scorpion near the toilet. With Bryan's help I managed to get a rather poor picture of it. (I just HAVE to learn how to run my camera!)

Early this morning David, Kevin and Glen headed for Bocas to do some shopping. Glen picked up a couple toilet paper holders and Kevin visited the local pharmacy to check out what drugs they have available. He also replenished our supply of Coca Cola ☺ and bought some fish hooks which Mauricio used to catch some mud fish in a ditch by the shower building. Finding fish in this shallow ditch was a complete surprise to us. They really must be 'mud' fish.

This morning we toured the property that David and Joellen and some other folks are developing. It is quite stunning. There are 20 lots available. We saw several workers clearing areas and cleaning up the debris. They are on the verge of advertising the lots. Paths have been constructed and clearing has been done so the properties can actually be seen, and hiking about is pretty 'civilized'. If the buyers want their lot to resemble the jungle all they will have to do is wait a few months and the undergrowth will reappear. Stuff really grows quickly down here. I'm sure they will sell 'lots'.

Seb set up a website for PanAm Partners on freewebs.com today. It looks pretty neat. Perhaps it will provide a way to word to get 'out' to the rest of the world.

Back for lunch, and then off we went to visit 'Chocolate Dave'. There are lots of 'Daves' around here and each has been assigned a 'proceeding adjective' so you immediately know who is being referred to.

Chocolate Dave and his wife Linda are delightful. They moved to Panama about 10 years ago and bought a cacao plantation. They have since become quite the chocolate experts. They harvest the cacao pods and then process them by hand. The pods are opened and the soft, squishy seeds (which taste like Sweet Tarts when you suck on them) are fermented. Then the beans are removed and dried after which they are cracked, and the nibs (the actual chocolate) is saved. These nibs are ground a number of times until they form chocolate which is then formed into bars. 100 pods yield about 8# of chocolate. If white chocolate is desired the chocolate is forced through a very fine filter and the white chocolate is exuded. The pulp remaining is cocoa. Dave has not been able to get the mechanics of this process figured out yet.

See this site for more information regarding the cacao <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cacao>.

We walked all around the plantation to a running commentary by Dave and Linda. They have an ocelot who had run off into the jungle upon our arrival. We never saw it, but it did reappear later when another visitor was there and it apparently had shown some aggression toward the visitor. We probably did not need that, although it would have been neat to have seen it. Seb did see some sloths high up in the trees, and I saw two toucans. No photo ops on either of these sightings. We discovered that toucans are carnivores, which surprised me.

After our walk we were treated to chocolate (of course ☺) pudding cones by Linda. Particularly delicious since we now personally knew the 'manufacturers'.

Seb and Kevin fished for a while late this afternoon with memories of the experience as the only product. From all reports they enjoyed their nautical adventures with Mauricio.

Glen installed the TP holders he had picked up in Bocas. Nice to have it 'handy'!

Day 8 (Friday, January 19, 2007) This is it (:

Everyone was up at daybreak. We breakfasted on pancakes, 'homegrown' bananas, and conversation between new friends. It doesn't get any better than this!

It was dry this morning which lulled us into working in the cabin getting things back in order. Then it started sprinkling so we went out to cut the 4x4s of the new cabin down. Fortunately it did not rain too hard and within a short time we had them shortened and back up. David seemed happy with our progress. The things we got done today were easier done with 'many hands'. We will be interested in seeing photos of the subsequent progress on this important building (hint, hint ☺)

We then attacked our cabin and within a short time had things put away and cleaned up. We moved our things to the church, and after a bit Chocolate Dave arrived as promised with our freshly made chocolate. It will be interesting to try some of the recipes in the cookbooks some of us bought from Dave and Linda, using the 'real thing'.

At departure time I decided to ride with Kevin, Mauricio, and the luggage in the cayuco. Kevin and I sat in the front and as we got underway we could hear the outboard periodically revving up. We were front-heavy to the point that the prop was coming out of the water. Some rearrangement of the load would be necessary and I decided that the easiest 'rearrangement' would be for me to ride in the Panga.

We departed shortly after Mauricio and Kevin and passed them on our way. The ride was a bit rough and I finally (on our *last* boat ride, of course) figured out what to do to avoid being pounded when the front of the boat dropped back into the water.

Upon our arrival in Bocas we went to the apartment and waited for M. and K. When they arrived we brought our bags upstairs and then carried a propane refrigerator down to the dock. The cayuco was not situated very well with relation to the dock, and I was very apprehensive regarding the possibility of loading the refrigerator into it. But, miracles DO happen, and thanks largely to Bryan and Kevin the deed got done without incident.

We bought some sandwiches at the grocery store and ate them in the apartment while we settled up with David and Joellen. It was a bit sad knowing that this was the last meal we would share with our new friends.

Our taxi ride to the airport made me nervous. It seems that pedestrians do not have the right-of-way. They just get honked at and it is their responsibility to get out of the way. The drivers go at least twice as fast as seems prudent and weave all over the place avoiding each other and the pedestrians. Fortunately our trip did not result in the elimination of any folks or animals.

We buzzed through our check-in and were again not charged for excess baggage. I think the folks at the airlines must know D&J and appreciate what they are doing.

I sat next to a Panamanian gentleman who, it seems, is a helicopter pilot from David. He was there to fly folks (cameramen and such) to an island for the filming of 'Survivor Bocas'. We will have to watch for it to be aired. (We have already 'survived'!)

The flight to Panama City was uneventful. Smoother than the flight down had been. As we were gaining altitude I could see lots of small islands. I took a picture of them and a couple behind me got all excited and, pointing to the 'no cell phone use' sign told me in Spanish that photography was not permitted. I never thought of cameras as being 'electronic devices' but I suppose they are. I apologized as best I could and put the camera away.

We were met by our faithful contact José who took us to the Hotel Marbella again. I was really beat so at my request we went out to eat immediately. We went to a steak house about a block from the hotel where Steaks and pork chops were consumed. We had to pass on the salad bar since it did not meet the 'cooked and still hot' rule, but everyone had enough to eat anyhow.

It really felt good to get cleaned up and then stay dry. I guess I'm pretty 'citified'. Air conditioning is my FRIEND!

Day 9 (Saturday, January 18, 2007) This is REALLY it!

We awoke early and had really dry clothes to put on. A sort of bittersweet treat.

José was right on time as always and we were whisked off to the airport where there was already a long line. Fortunately it moved right along and we made it through all the levels of security without a hitch. We got in line for boarding, and after changing lines several times finally found the correct one. Understanding instructions in Spanish in a room that echoes is not our forte.

We had seen vending machines on the 'unsecure' side of the world but could not find any on the 'secure' side. A bit of a bummer as some of us had not had anything to drink yet today. (We did not feel the water in Panama City was safe to drink.)

Our flight to Atlanta was complete with a good breakfast and went without incident. I chatted with my seatmate (a young fellow from Holland) which made the trip seem shorter.

When we arrived in Atlanta we headed for the food area where everyone had pizza. (Seb had an Arby's sandwich for desert ☺)

We had a rather long wait for our plane to Minneapolis and we all sat around reading/visiting/napping until boarding time neared. In Minneapolis waiting for our return flight a flight attendant approached Glen and asked if he was traveling alone. He said that no there were four others traveling with him. The attendant said that he had matched the "Profile" of a "gray headed elderly man" and wanted to have him follow him to the ticket counter. After getting to the desk Glen was told that he had been upgraded to First Class. It appears that a service man was on Standby and needed a seat and there was an empty seat in First Class. So to give the service man a seat Glen was upgraded to First Class and was instructed not to tell the rest of us until boarding. Glen was seated in First Class when we arrive on the plane. He tells us after we arrived in Minneapolis that he had a substantial "hot meal" on the plane with wine offered if he wanted, while we had a cheese and cracker box. Glen says it was a GREAT TRIP. It seems he decided to abandon the rest of us for the 'good life'! The rest of us stayed in 'steerage' and arrived in Minneapolis only seconds after Glen did.

We arrived 'home' a bit early, got our bags and found the EZ bus. Within a few minutes we were headed toward the EZ parking lot. It was about 20 degrees and calm, so getting out and opening the van without a jacket was tolerable. I had a bit of trouble unlocking the driver's side door. I think the recent storm had iced the lock up a bit, but fortunately it opened with a bit of convincing we were 'in'.

We headed south and made the 'mandatory' stop in Cannon Falls for Mountain Dew. I drove as far as Chatfield (the 'other mandatory stop'), and then Bryan assumed the 'pilot position' and got us home.