

The Independent

July 4, 2020

California National Parks

Happy Fourth of July



June 29, 2013
Yosemite National Park

Usually I take a hike in a national park to shoot pictures for my annual Fourth of July newsletter. This year that's impossible. So, this newsletter is comprised of images from the previous 11 newsletters dating back to 2009. Some you may have seen before; some you haven't. This one is of a wedding at Glacier Point in Yosemite with Half Dome across the valley. It was the start of a hike along the 8.5-mile / 13.7-km Panorama Trail to the valley floor with Emily.



June 19, 2015
Sequoia-Kings Canyon
National Parks

Emily has just reached a point on the Pear Lake Trail where we broke out of the pine forest at the Watchtower. That's where she gets her first look at the glacier carved Tokopah Valley below. To see her vantage point from the valley floor, turn the page to the hike we did five years earlier on the Tokopah Falls Trail.



July 3, 2010
Sequoia-Kings Canyon
National Parks

One of Emily's colleagues, Rayyan Khan, accompanied us to the Sierra for this hike on the Tokopah Falls Trail. The rest of Rayyan's family was on a summer trip to visit relatives in Pakistan.



**July 5, 2009
Lassen Volcanic
National Park**

Ken Henry, then pastor of our church and a serious hiker, agreed to drag me up Lassen Peak, a 10,457 ft / 3,187 m mountain. It's California's second-tallest volcano and the most recent one to erupt, exploding in 1914. He got this picture of me heading down.



June 14, 2014
Lassen Volcanic
National Park

Emily went with me the second time I climbed Lassen. Here's the Queen of the Hill at the top with the black-scorched rocks around the volcanic crater behind her. Beyond the crater is Mount Shasta's volcanic cone, 14,179 ft / 4,322 m.



June 25, 2016
Yosemite National Park

The evening after hiking with Stephen and Lynn Stock on the Four-Mile Trail, we had dinner in Yosemite Valley at the Ahwahnee Hotel. Wine was involved.



**June 30, 2012
Marin Headlands,
Golden Gate
National Recreation Area**

For whatever reason, I didn't stray far from home for this hike.



June 29, 2019
Redwood National
and State Parks

Dense ferns in California's wettest region, the northwest coast in Del Norte County around Crescent City, swallow up Emily in her walk among the redwoods.



July 3, 2011
Yosemite National Park

Yosemite Falls plunges into the valley from the north rim while I cruise along down the Four-Mile Trail on the south side.



June 21, 2018
Yosemite National Park

That's the Cathedral Range beyond the far shore of Middle Gaylor Lake, a puddle left from the Ice Age, on this solo hike to an abandoned mining town at 11,000 ft / 3,350 m. That's my highest hike. Emily was visiting her mother in North Carolina. I also did a 5-minute video of this hike you can see at <https://youtu.be/z2KogoK-2r8>. The National Park Service also did a video of this area, which includes a ghost town I did not visit. It's at <https://youtu.be/rCpq-o7egVc>.

A Fourth of July Declaration

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for a nation to pause and assess just what the hell it's doing, that nation has come to a point in its history where the United States of America finds itself today. It is self-evident that we are wandering in the woods.

We got here by veering off the path to human equality proclaimed by the Declaration of Independence, which was signed 244 years ago today.

This is not the first time the United States has lost its way. Just 13 years after the Declaration, we denied its ideal of equality in our new Constitution. We found the path again in a national war, only to abandon it to Jim Crow. These are only a few of our failures in a history with many chapters.

Donald Trump did not lead us off the path. We have been lost for a while, piling extra burdens on the unfortunate while comforting the comfortable. Rules always benefit their writers.

Trump's role in our American story has been that of the Confederate monument in the town square. He obscures the truth and assuages the guilt of those of us who have plotted the nation's course away from its founding ideal by concocting the comforting myth of our nobility.

Americans will pick up the pen November 3 to continue writing our story. Our choice is whether we continue lying to ourselves that we remain on the path set before us on July 4, 1776.



June 25, 2017
Bridgeport
Mono County

This is not actually in a national park, although the 12,000 ft / 3,660 m ridge line behind the barn forms the eastern boundary of Yosemite. Emily and I spent the night in this town of nearly 600 people on a trip to visit Yosemite's much less visited eastern entrance at Tioga Pass.