

*Cross-Border Road Trip  
Eastern seaboard of U.S. and Canada  
August 3-21, 2025*

**OUR HOPES FOR THIS ADVENTURE**

- Reconnect with family members and old friends
- Reflect on our common history and future
- Get a sense of how people are surviving Trump
- Enjoy the east coast, rural and urban
- Be inspired by two artist heroines
- Experience new food, art, bike trails
- Learn from New England colonial history
- Take photos and work on memoirs



The Driver



The Documentarian

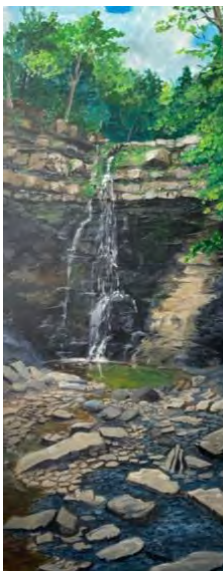
## *Baltimore, Maryland - Susan and Evan Gifford*



Our first stop is the home of my cousin Evan Gifford and his partner Susan in Baltimore. Congruent with his life work as an art teacher at the famous Friends School (and the legacy of our grandmother, a Quaker), Evan is horrified at the attacks on democracy and recognizes that his privilege shields him from the worst impacts.

Both he and Susan digest progressive analyses of the news, and are voracious readers. The house is filled with their art (of the family farm) and playful ceramic pieces. They make fresh bread daily and feed us creative healthy meals.

On a tour of the city, they take us to two museums that feature the abolitionist Frederick Douglass, a key figure in my memoir "Going Underground with Betsey". The city is brimming with the history of slavery and anti-slavery.





## *Annapolis, MD - Camp Horseshoe Camp Counsellors*



After 60 years, I reconnect with fellow counsellors from Camp Horseshoe where I worked for several summers in the 1960s. Their friendships were formative in my love of nature, my collective work ethic, and my consciousness of the poverty in the Appalachian colony of the U.S.

We spent two days along the Annapolis seashore, sharing photos, stories, and chants. One favourite friend brought a book I had given him filled with favourite poems, a reminder (both touching and embarrassing)! of who we were then.

Most are retired educators (communications pros, special education, principals), research scientists, and gardeners. While politics was not a major topic, most friends apologized for their President's behavior. One said he has to keep his mouth shut; an archivist expressed concern about cyber surveillance.



## *Columbus, New Jersey - Laraine Breen*



Laraine Breen and I shared a house when I taught in New Jersey and later an apartment in Canada in the 1970s. We had a lot to reminisce about over lunch in her retirement community near the New Jersey coast. She reports that a group of friends decided not to talk about politics because it would divide them, and we saw flags and signs of Trump supporters in her neighbourhood.

On a happier note, Laraine rocked the date of her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday last year with her friends' wishes offered on painted rocks for her garden.





## *Princeton, New Jersey - Kathy Murtaugh and family*



Our visit with John's sister Kathy in Princeton gave us a chance to share a meal with her partner Tom, her sons Martin and Charlie from Philadelphia, and granddaughter Lucy. Lots of connections around our common passions with plants: Lucy is in the final year of an agricultural high school, and Martin has a big garden that gave master gardener Kathy and John an afternoon of weeding (getting poison ivy along the way!) We were at home politically and had a base for two trips to NYC, and for a long bike ride by John.



## *New York City - Art and Artist Heroines*



I ventured into NYC for a day to reconnect with two of my artist/activist heroines: lunch with [Susan Meiselas](#) and dinner with [Martha Rosler](#), both of whom I knew in the early 1980s. The next day John and I explored the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), where I was most taken by Indigenous “crafts” now finally considered “art”, including a video of the hip-strap weaving that I learned in Guatemala in the 1970s.





## *Times Square*



On our way from Penn Station to the MOMA, we walked through Times Square, always a barometer on the contradictory values and competing messages of the U.S. capitalist empire.



## *Little Compton, RI - Mika Seeger*



Mika Seeger and her partner Joe welcomed us to their new home with lamb roast served on her home-made pottery. I joined them at a Quaker Meeting where Mika got people [singing into the silence](#), carrying on the legacy of her late father, Pete. I was moved by the actions of peace activists, not only protests but vigils and support of migrant workers threatened with deportation. John and I both got to beat the heat with a dip in the Atlantic.





## *Dresden, Maine - Mari and Bob*



John's sister Mari and her partner Bob live in southern Maine, where they fish on the coast and trap wild game in the forests. We tasted their beaver and venison and feasted on fresh seafood. Bob showed us the skins and shared [stories of animals](#) he has trapped, a skill Mari has picked up since they met in 2015.

On the walls are Mari's paintings and Bob's ink drawings and cartoons. He's also writes and edits articles for trapping magazines.

The morning news about Trump's militarization of the D.C. police force upset both Mari and Bob, who bemoan the brutal actions of the administration.



## *Currie Cove, Nova Scotia - Aly and Adam*



My mother's brother, Uncle Van, a Washington Post reporter, spent summers and retirement on the south shore of Nova Scotia, where I visited him and Aunt Bet in the 1980s. Their first granddaughter Aly (formerly Rachel) spent many summers there and recently bought a home right on the water, close to another home on Hirtle island, alternating with homes in the U.K. and Guanajuato, Mexico (where we've often visited them!)

While our politics aren't aligned, we share common passions for good food (Aly is an alchemist in the kitchen!), cycling and DIY projects. She's hoping to initiate a Makery Workshop in their small coastal town, encouraging handiwork like knitting, woodwork, repurposing old clothes and furniture.





## *Halifax, Nova Scotia - Nina and Shosh*



John's niece, Nina Harris, recently completed her medical studies, and has begun a residency in Halifax, which is also the home territory of her partner, Shosh, who's working on a PhD in theoretical astrophysics. We were welcomed to their new home and took them out for dinner in downtown Halifax, where we were joined by my old friend, photographer and educator Kathleen Flanagan and her partner David Roback. It was fun to introduce our young relatives to our older friends, and to engender a lively conversation about Maritime history, global politics, genetics and ethics.





## *New Carlisle, Quebec - Anna, Adam and Family*



Our final destination was New Carlisle, Quebec, where John's daughter Anna lives with her partner Adam and our three wonderful grandchildren Katherine (11), Theo (9), and Ameila (6). We settled into their blue guest house, but often hung out with the family in their home up the hill.







We were greeted by a [dance performance](#) choreographed by Katherine, and challenged to a long monopoly game; we read books about nature and applauded art projects (six-year-old Ameila is an abstract expressionist!)

During our beach walk, we collected favourite stones and got a lesson from [Theo on rock skipping](#). Another day we formed teams at a mini-put course, where John and I were beaten by Anna and Adam.

As usual, food was a favourite focus – visiting Anna's herb garden and a new vegetable garden, learning from Adam how to [crack the lobster](#) with a rolling pin, enjoying a lamb he prepared and the sheep skin he's curing.

We got to meet Adam's relatives at a happy hour with his parents Dave and Dale. Katherine was thrilled to be with her cousin Noame and Amelia hung out with cousin Nelly.

It was the last week of summer before school starts in Quebec, so we relished our hanging out time with the kids and longer conversations with their parents.



## STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF OUR 18-DAY ADVENTURE

- 5,200 kilometres covered
- 2, 3 cars before us when crossing the U.S. Canada border
- 3 wrong turns made and quickly corrected
- 4 bike trails explored
- 7 beds we slept in
- 1 hotel booked
- 18 relatives visited
- 6 friends visited
- 17 former camp counsellors met
- 6 restaurant meals eaten
- 8 books added (gifted or bought)
- 9 species of animals and fish eaten
- 10 fresh salads eaten
- 6 new kinds of craft beer tasted
- 2,000 photos taken
- 20 hours to compose this photo essay
- 5 million times our hearts beat faster with love for our family and friends

### *Epilogue*

It was also lovely to come home....to our overgrown gardens and our local family....! Joshua welcomed me back with a sunset dinner on his houseboat on the Toronto Islands, a five-minute ferry boat ride from the city.



*Photos in this essay by Deborah and John*