

Southern California (April 26-May 5, 2014)

Leaving home this time was even harder than we'd expected. All the family events surrounding Yoni and Lian's wedding, Lily and Nir's and Marlene's visits, and Passover, just left the taste for more, especially since the granddaughters are getting cuter and more responsive by the day. And preparing the household to leave isn't getting any easier with all our years of travel experience – probably because we are getting older and more stressed by organizational issues. But somehow, we and Marlene got to the airport, all packed and ready to fly – we to Philadelphia, she to Newark.

In NJ, near Philadelphia, we visited with Ray's niece Gail, her partner Mike and daughter Mara and ate at a Vietnamese restaurant with them and sister Marlene before heading on to California. Mike was amused by our improvised electronics shop in Gail's dining room, as we unpacked and got up and running two new kindles and a new computer for Ray to replace the one stolen in China.

And then, we were on to Southern California. We very much enjoyed a short overnight visit with Edie's cousin Debbie and husband Bruno on our way to San Diego. They'll be moving to Palm Springs soon, so we were lucky to catch them while they were still in the midst of selling their home and packing.

Most of the week in San Diego, Ray was busy with the International Conference on Metallurgical Coatings & Thin Films (ICMCTF, but we both took full advantage of the hotel facilities to relax – swimming in an outdoor pool every day, and enjoying the gardens throughout the complex.



Breakfast outside our room



We found two Israeli dance groups in San Diego, and enjoyed very spirited dancing on Monday and Thursday night. These are fairly large groups, led by two different Israeli women (one nicknamed Yoni!) and with lots of Israelis. The repertoire was quite similar to what we were dancing in Tel Aviv a few weeks earlier.

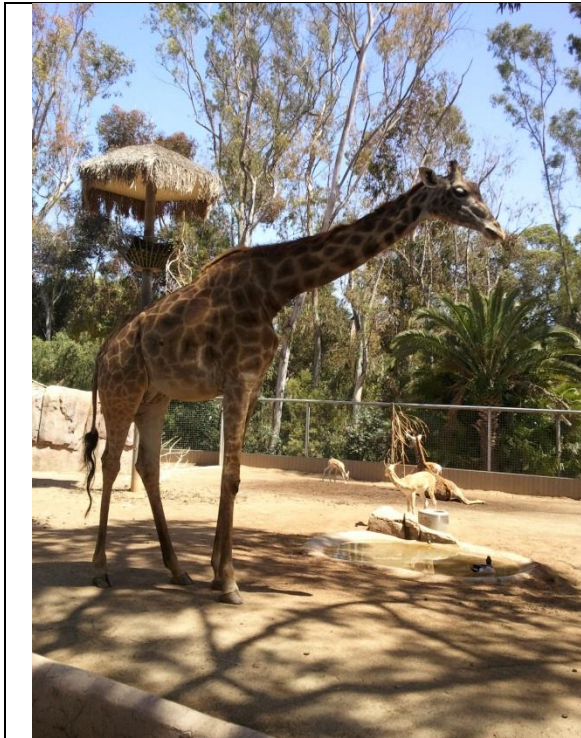
There's a lot to do in San Diego, and Edie didn't accomplish near as much as she'd expected. The first full day, she spent reading, swimming and checking out the huge fashion mall nearby, where she picked up a new pair of dancing sandals. After that, first stop was the San Diego Zoo and given the admission fee (\$41 senior rate – for which she was "carded"), Edie spent the whole day there.



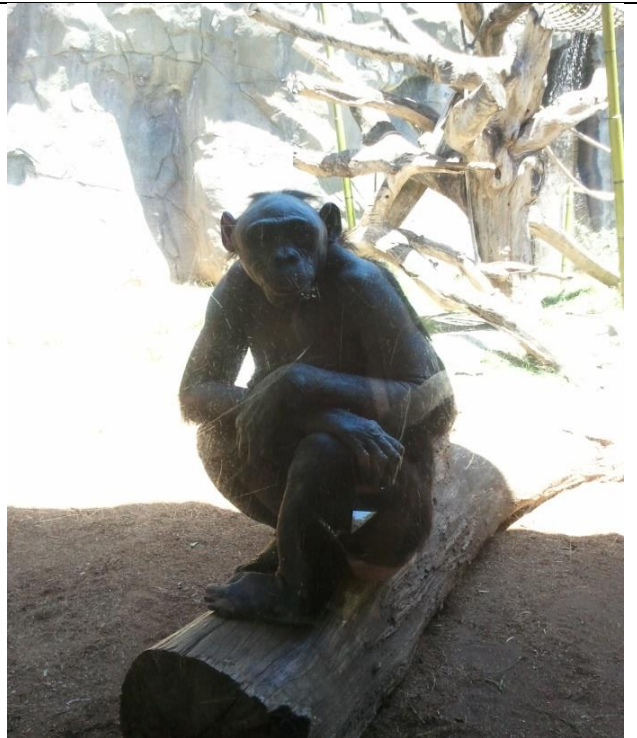
Koala waking up



And why? (Llama?)



The eater



The thinker (no, not a statue)

The zoo is huge. It was more than time to rest by mid-afternoon. On a cool bench in one of the aviaries, Edie spent an hour talking to another “young senior”, a local public health nurse who had strong views on Obama and immigration policy.



The view from the bench



A catnap. Is it Che?

The next day, Edie spent exploring Balboa Park. The Zoo is at the northern tip of the extensive park grounds, which extend into downtown San Diego and cross town. There are innumerable hiking and jogging trails, many beautiful gardens, and quite a number of interesting museums. Early morning was a great time to wander.



From the desert....



...to the rose garden

Midday, Edie spent several hours in the Museum of Contemporary Photography and in the Model Railroad Museum. The latter was especially interesting because many of the hobbyist exhibitors were there, fixing one bit of track or another, or just hanging around chatting with each other and the visitors about the historical background, technical challenges or whatever behind their models. The most elaborate exhibits are generally a project of various local model railroad clubs. A HO (1/87 scale) model of the Southern Pacific-Santa Fe Tehachapi Pass was particularly impressive. A quick visit to the Timken Museum of Art was followed by a quiet half an hour exploring the historic botanical building overlooking the lily pond, features of the 1915-16 San Diego Exposition. The building itself is one of the largest lathe structures in the world.



The Botanical Building



Reflecting lily pond



Edie had great plans for walking to the harbor, and perhaps visiting the USS Midway, but by mid-afternoon it had gotten quite hot, and she ended up crossing the Cabrillo Bridge, looking around a bit, and heading back through the park to the car.

There was a mid-day lecture by an Elsevier rep on scientific writing the following day which both of us wanted to attend, and Friday was a half day, so that was the end of the sightseeing in San Diego – at least for this trip. A big group of Victorian punkers was checking into the hotel as our group checked

out, and Edie much enjoyed hearing about their hobby and viewing them showing off their home made costumes. Despite leaving San Diego soon after one pm, we experienced the southern California traffic jams with a 2 hour drive stretching to a five hour standstill once we entered Orange County. We got to Pasadena to find Aunt Lois Lackman in her senior citizens' home just after supper and had a very pleasant visit. Aunt Lois has good memories of her extensive travel, especially in the early years following her retirement, and seemed very interested in our tales. We spent the weekend with cousin Fay Little in nearby La Crescenta. The delay in our arrival meant that we only got to say hello and goodbye to Fay's oldest daughter JJ and her four young kids – but at least we had a glimpse!

The following day, we travelled with Fay to their "beach house" in Carpinteria, just south of Santa Barbara. Cousin Meredith Sedgewick (Dorothy Selina and Herb Fredlund's youngest daughter) joined us for the day, and later, Fay's son Jeff, his wife and their new baby stopped in for a brief visit.

With Fay and Meredith, we walked the Carpinteria Beach Trail to the Harbor Seal Preserve. From the bluffs, we saw the Harbor seals on their own private beach below – the beach is closed to humans from December-May when the seals are nesting. We also saw some remnants of the Carpinteria Tar Pits, a series of natural asphalt lakes and picked up a bit of tar on our bare feet. The pits were apparently used by the local Native American Chumash people who mined the asphalt and used it as a sealant for waterproofing their boats.



Meredith, Edie and Fay



Fossils and tar on the beach



Pelicans coexisting with the seals



Harbor Seals from above

Fay's husband Rick returned from a business trip late Saturday evening, and the four of us spent Sunday morning/early afternoon walking through some of the pricier nearby neighborhoods and visiting the Huntington Museum and gardens. The Huntington was founded in 1919 by Henry Huntington, and his wife, Arabella. Henry was a Southern California businessman who built a financial empire that included railroad companies, utilities, and real estate holdings. At the same time he was a man of diversified leisure interests. During his lifetime, he amassed the core of an extensive research library, established a wide ranging art collection, and created botanical gardens with plants from all over the world. The museum and gardens combine all three.



View of Los Angeles from the hill above Fay's home



Fay and Rick at Huntington Museum Gardens



Edie and Fay enjoying a quiet moment overlooking



the Chinese Gardens at Huntington

Late afternoon, we returned our car to LAX, and were off to Chicago for the next conference!