

Autobiography of Richard Thomas (Sharp) Martin

A Pictorial Abridgment

Some events in my life, which have been recorded periodically from 1998 until 2026, including my early challenges, first jobs, conversion, mission, marriage, graduation from the University of Houston, teaching, financial career, births of four children, teaching seminary for five years, tennis, coaching, travel to fifty states and sixty countries, campaign for Utah Governor, promotion of a new Utah flag, Magellan trip around the world, interest in history, astronomy, and physics; my thoughts about life, love for genealogy, and compilation of thirty-five books.



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Introduction

This business of living is an amazing thing, and sometimes it's incomprehensible. Even without consulting the sacred texts, it's obvious to me that there must be a profound purpose for our existence. Evidence of this can be seen in the world around us. There are so many factors that must be perfect for life to take place. In fact, the odds of our being here (because of entropy and other physical laws) are something like a trillion to nothing. As Sir Fred Hoyle wrote, "Random and impersonal chance does not create complexity and design." So, I concluded a long time ago that a supreme creator placed me on earth for a magnificent purpose. I thank him each day for another day to live, and I want to use my time well while I have it.

Today I think we are drowning in trivia. Much of what we concentrate on and give our attention to is not beneficial or important. Thus, being distracted, we waste our time and energy and don't accomplish what we could. People have so much potential, but this is one of the great challenges of life, to decide what existence means, and to do something about it.

My role in this remarkable, human drama is small. I'm just one of eight billion people on earth. Interestingly, worldwide, 140 million people are born each year and about sixty million die during the same period. Is it any wonder then that even the most powerful and famous are soon forgotten? Far less than one percent of the population leave any kind of personal history or autobiography behind when they die. After a few years it becomes as though they never existed.

We live in a beautiful world, and we are meant to enjoy and appreciate our lives. What I have found is that I appreciate life more by recording it. More than twenty-five years ago I began my autobiography. First, I wrote about my childhood years, then college, marriage, children, career, and so forth to the present time. Later, I got into the habit of adding regularly to this account until it is now over 1,800 pages long. From the beginning, I thought it was important to accompany the written word with photographs. In fact, the pictures are my favorite part.

Now I realize that few people will ever read this account of my life, but I wrote it for myself as much as I did for anyone else. When I look through these pages and see when I was a boy, my happy high school days, and so forth, it makes me appreciative because I've been blessed. I see God's hand in bringing me the gospel when I was a teenager, which gave me hope and a wonderful new outlook on life. This led to my service as a missionary, which were the two most meaningful years of my early life. On my return home, I soon met my wife, who was guided to Houston, where we met. After earning my degree, I had good experiences teaching business for two years before being led into a financial career, which was a perfect fit for my interest and personality. We prospered and I enjoyed my independence and what I was doing. Karen and I had four children. I coached for a few years and at times played a lot of tennis. I wrote a book that was published and sold in

bookstores nationwide, and soon thereafter, wrote two major genealogical books for my extended family. I continued my genealogical pursuits with purpose until I had compiled thirty-five books. I ran a serious campaign for governor of Utah, and later, lobbied to get a new state flag. This flag, which was designed by my oldest son, was approved as the official commemorative flag for the state of Utah in 2021; the first such flag created in over a hundred years. (In 2023, the state adopted a new, official state flag, which was also designed by Jonathan Martin, and it became the new state flag of Utah on March 9, 2024.) Six years ago, I completed a trip around the world with my youngest daughter, where we stopped in twelve countries from New Zealand to Iceland and flew for a total of 29,130 miles. (The circumference of the earth at the Equator is 24,901 miles.) I've traveled to all fifty states and to sixty countries.

Of course, there is more to life than what we've done and where we've been. The inner person is rarely revealed in histories of any kind, and that may be the most difficult part to know about an individual. As Einstein once said of himself, "The essential in the being of a man of my type lies precisely in what he thinks and how he thinks, not in what he does or suffers." I've believed for a long time that on the Day of Judgement everyone will be weighed by the intents of their heart. We may have meant well and been misunderstood, but everything will be made right in the end, and that is reassuring. An interesting corollary to this is that often when a person does wrong, they appear to get away with it, but actually, God is just giving them enough rope to hang themselves, if that is what they want. That is why there is so much unnecessary suffering in the world. We ignore our conscience and go down an easy or forbidden path and miss our higher destiny. In the end no one gets away with anything that is wrong.

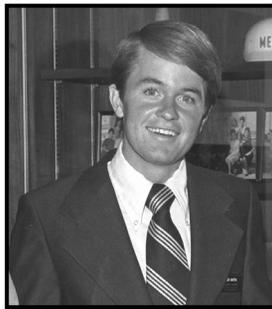
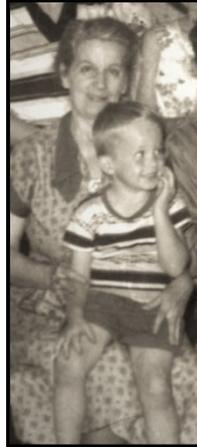
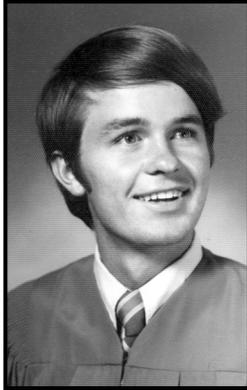
In this history I haven't written my thoughts about life as I have done in my complete, unabridged autobiography (except at the end). This pictorial history is more of an overview with few of my deeper thoughts recorded, but it serves a good purpose, and more people will read this account of my life because the other is so challengingly long. So, even though those things are not recorded here, there isn't a day that goes by that I don't reflect on the meaning of life. I like what an author in the Dead Sea Scrolls wrote: "If you knew what you were before or could see what you are to be hereafter, then you wouldn't worry about anything. Nothing could discourage you at all" (*Thanksgiving Hymns*). This goes along well with what the renowned psychiatrist Carl Jung wrote after his own heart attack and recovery: "What happens after death is so unspeakably glorious that our imaginations and feelings do not suffice to form even an approximate conception of it."

Therefore, I thank God for my life. As a scripture says, "All things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things." He preserves us and is merciful and kind. Our destiny is magnificent. I cannot say enough about the greatness of God, and I will give thanks to him forever.

(As of February 14, 2026, this history is one hundred pages long and has over 1,100 photographs. It is an abridgment of my longer autobiography that is over one thousand eight hundred pages long and has more than 9,000 pictures.)

Autobiography of Richard T. Martin

I was born on the twelfth day of October 1953, in Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas, the youngest child of Marion “Junior” Carlos Sharp, Jr. and Patricia “Pat” Anna Elizabeth Bowles and named Richard Thomas



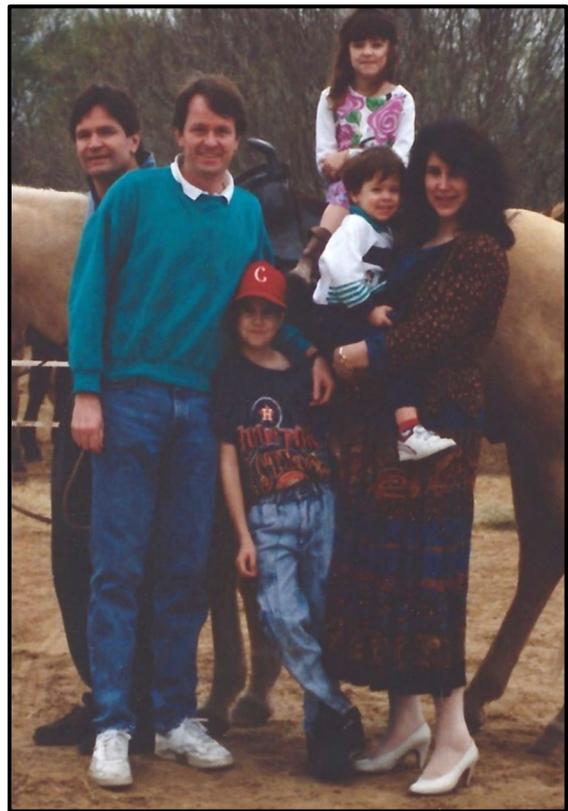
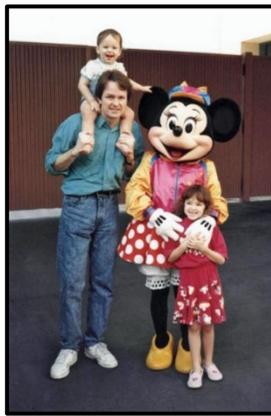
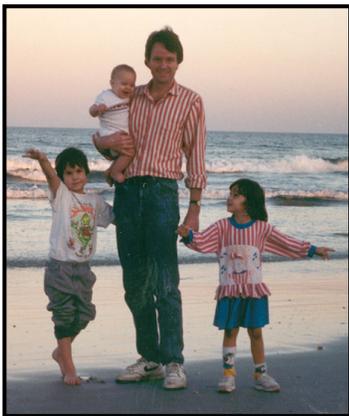
Top, from left: My high school graduation picture taken in 1972. Disneyland in 1961. I'm with my grandmother, Frances Massey Bowles, in 1957. My engagement photograph with Karen Piquet in 1976. Performing on stage—I had a lead role in a major school play. Missionary in 1974. Tournament player on high school tennis team. I'm on the front row, right, with siblings, cousins, and grandparents, in December 1962. High school photograph taken in 1973. I'm with my grandfather, Marion Sharp, Sr., in 1986. Karen with Jonathan and Sarah in 1986.

Sharp. When I was young my parents moved to Houston, Texas, where I grew up and resided until 1998, when I moved with my wife and four children to Provo, Utah. (My mother married Glen Nelson Martin in 1959 who adopted me and my three siblings, changing our surname to Martin.)

In 1968 I met two missionaries for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They were in my parents' home to teach my older sister at her



invitation. Immediately the thought came to me that said, “They are holy men,” and then a second



Top, from left: I'm with my children, Christmas 1992, and with Pres. Spencer W. Kimball; 1977. George Pelkar; 1987. Sarah took this photo of me in 1989. Disneyland in Jan. 1993. Middle: I'm with my kids on Atlantic shore; Nov. 1989. Disneyworld; 1991. Above: I'm In Laredo, Texas, with my family and brother, Ron, in 1992. Left: Holding newborn Rebecca Martin, Aug. 30, 1995. Champion team that I coached—my son, Jonathan, is second from left on front row; 1997. I'm at the Texas Renaissance Festival with my youngest son, Michael, by my side in 1998.

thought, “And they are much better than you.” Such thoughts were remarkable to me because that was not my normal way of thinking. Later my sister joined the church, which caused me to read and study the literature she left around the house. I soon studied

with the missionaries and believed what they taught was true. I was most impressed by the Plan of



Top, from left: I'm holding Rebecca beside the grave of my 8th Great-Grandmother in Massachusetts in 1998. I'm with my children in 1993, and my favorite childhood home 1960-1963. Middle from left: I'm standing next to my sisters Cathy and Nancy and brother, Ron, in 1992. Karen and I in 1976. Karen at BYU in 1973. I'm giving a speech during my campaign for governor: 2010. Festival of Colors in 2011, and a sunflower field in New Zealand; 2010. Above: I'm on top of the Leaning Tower of Pisa in 2009. Right: My children: Sarah (born 1985), Michael (born 1989), Jonathan (born 1982), and Rebecca (born 1995) in 2013.



hell. The missionaries explained that there were different degrees of heaven. This gave me hope and Salvation. I had been taught that there was a heaven and a hell and that I would be going to one or the other when I died, but I knew I wasn't living right so I thought I was going to go to hell. The missionaries explained that there were different degrees of heaven. This gave me hope and

I thought, “I can make it to at least the lowest heaven.” Not only did I believe what they taught me,

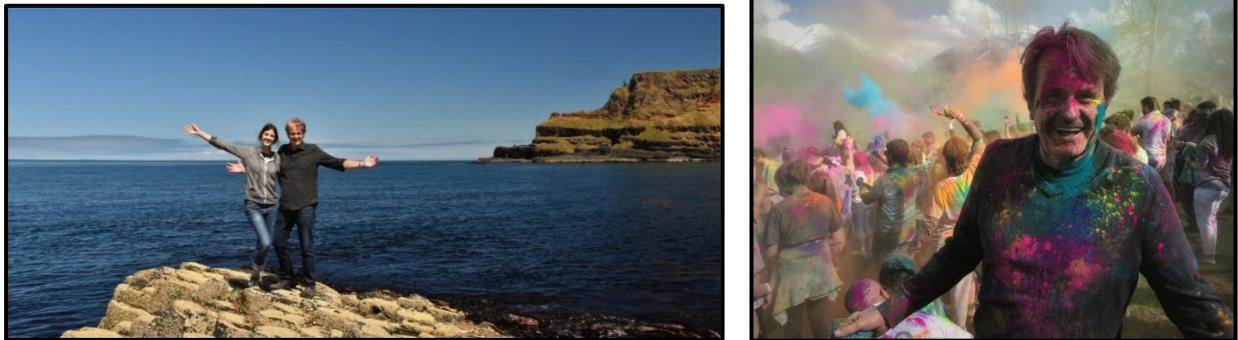
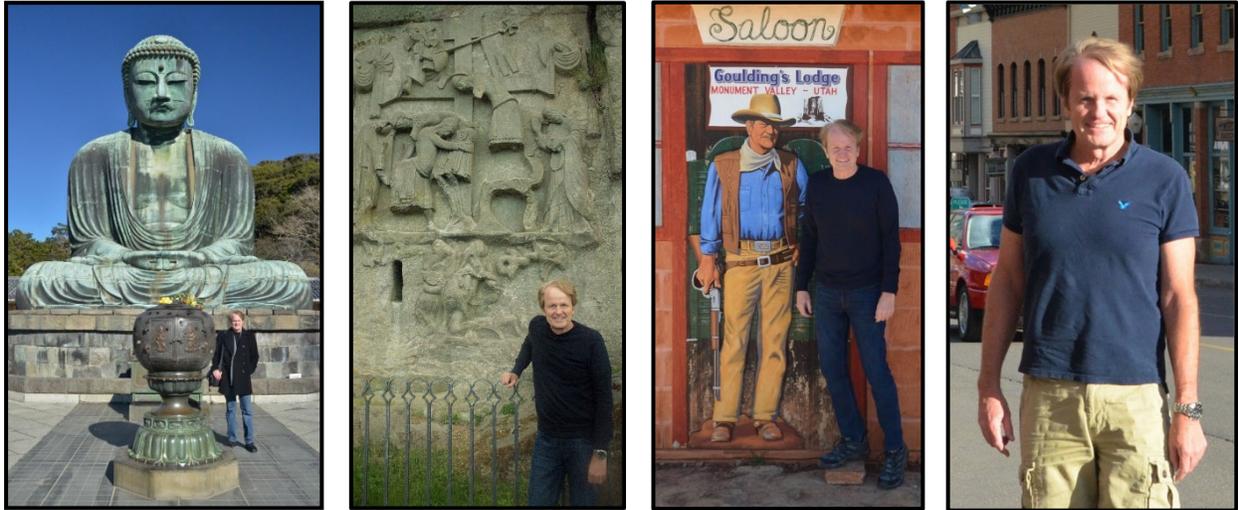


This page from top left: Hartford Cemetery; 1994. Festival of Colors; 2013. London; 2014. Delicate Arch in Moab, Utah. Great Gallery in Southern Utah. Farthest point east in Australia; 2015. Belin, Germany; 2015. I'm on movie set with Jonathan and Becca; 2015. Copenhagen; 2015. Viking Museum in Oslo. Neolithic site in England; 2017. Hobbiton, New Zealand; 2015.

I loved it! It filled my soul with light, and I began to study all the scriptures and church writings earnestly.

When I was sixteen years old, I took to heart the church teaching of salvation for the dead. I enrolled in a class on how to do research, keep records, and sub-

mit work to the church for temple ordinances. At first, I did it because it seemed the right thing to do,



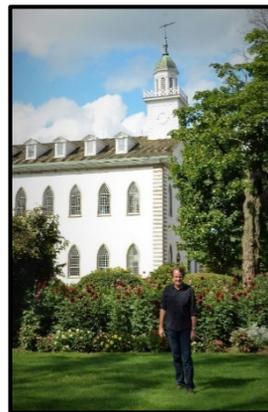
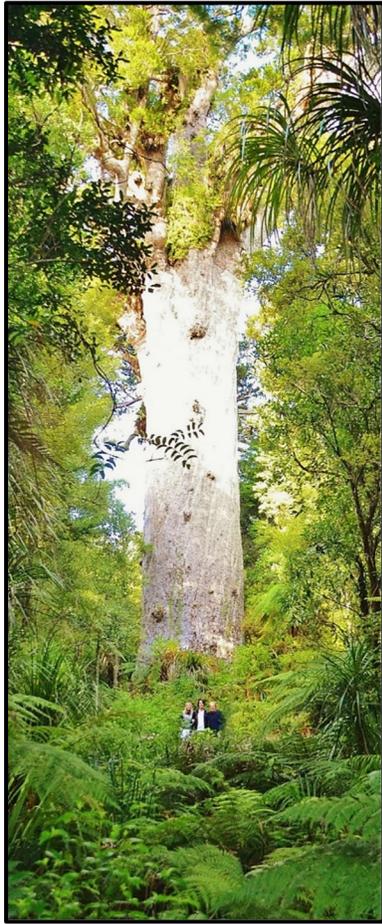
Top, left to right: Great Buddha of Kamakura, Japan; 2013. Oldest rock sculpture in Germany; 2015. I'm with the Duke in Monument Valley, 2014, and in Telluride, Colorado; 2015. Middle, left to right: My home in Utah; tennis has been a part of my life since high school, and wearing my famous screw for Halloween; 2012. Above, left to right: Giant's Causeway, Northern Ireland, 2017, and Festival of Colors; 2019. Right: Southwest Ireland; 2017. Travel is a big deal to me, and I've gone repeatedly to Europe.



but later it took on a deeper meaning, and I began to love to do genealogical work for its own sake. My grandmother, Frances Massey Bowles, also had a passion for genealogy and her research helped me get a good start.

During this time, I was very involved in my large high school, had a lead in a major school play, was pres-

ident of the art club, and was a tournament player on the school tennis team. I didn't realize it at the

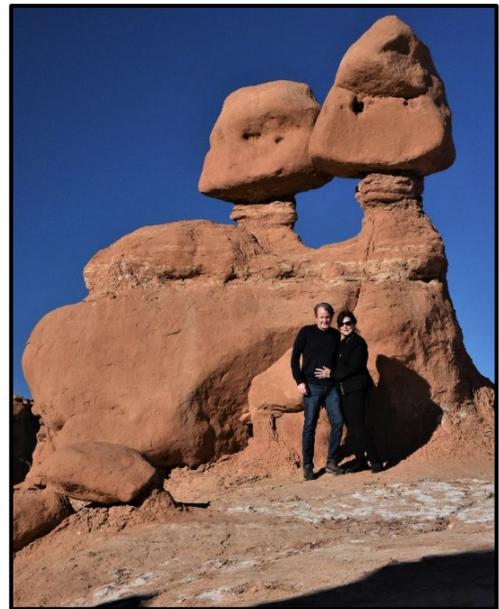


time, but I was popular. I talked with my friends openly about the church and they all knew me as a "Mormon." In fact, when I went to my high school reunion the main question that they asked me was, "Are you still a Mormon?" I answered, "Yes, it's great!" (There were only ten members of the church in my entire high school.)

In 1973 I left my girlfriend behind and served for two years as a missionary in the California Los Angeles Mission. I taught hundreds of people and many of them joined the church. It was the happiest two years of my life. The brotherhood among the missionaries was wonderful and many of us became good friends. It is sometimes a wonder to me

Top left: Tane Mahuta, the largest kauri tree in the world, New Zealand; 2015. Top middle: Rebecca's 1st graduation in 2016. Top right: Sarah holding baby Houston (my first grandson), with Jonathan, on January 6, 2016. Middle: Largest rock art figure in Scandinavia; 2015. Bottom left to right: Medieval bridge in Sweden; 2015. I'm with aliens in Roswell, New Mexico, in 2017. Kirtland, Ohio, 2016, and Rebecca at Disneyland in 2015. (I've gone to Disneyland/world with my family more than 25 times since my first visit in 1959.)

that I actually contacted new people every day and worked in some very dangerous areas, such



Top left: Jonathan and Rebecca at FilmQuest; 2017. Top middle: Rebecca's 2nd graduation in London (MBA); 2017. Top right: At door of collapsing house; 2014. Above: Karen and I in Goblin Valley, 2019, and (far left) in Northern Italy; 2017. Middle: Rebecca and boy Houston; 2018. Left: USA Today article and photograph of our proposed new Utah flag; February 2019. Bottom: Rebecca riding a moose near Yellowstone in summer 2018.



as Watts, which had some serious riots before and after I worked there. At that time, it was considered the most dangerous area in America, but the truth is, we were willing to give our lives for the gospel. (I was robbed there twice, at gunpoint and knifepoint, and hit across my face.)

I returned home in 1975 and soon met this amazing, beautiful girl who had just moved to Houston. She had already graduated from BYU and had come to Houston to get a better paying job. I dated her for five days and knew I was going to marry her. Two weeks later she was in love with me, and this was the beginning of our happy life together. I married Karen Piquet on January

5, 1977, in her hometown of Idaho Falls, Idaho, and then we returned to southwest Houston, where

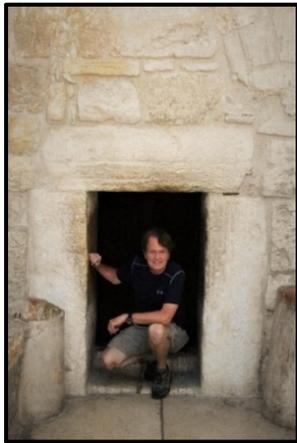
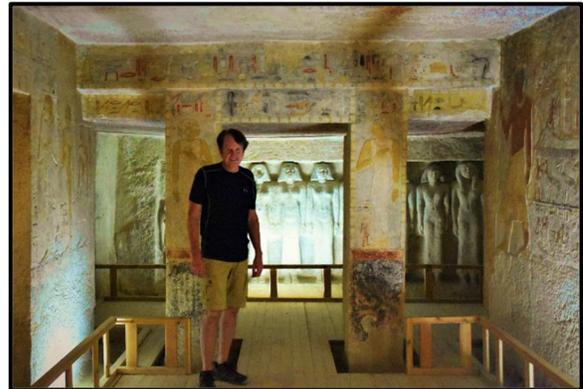
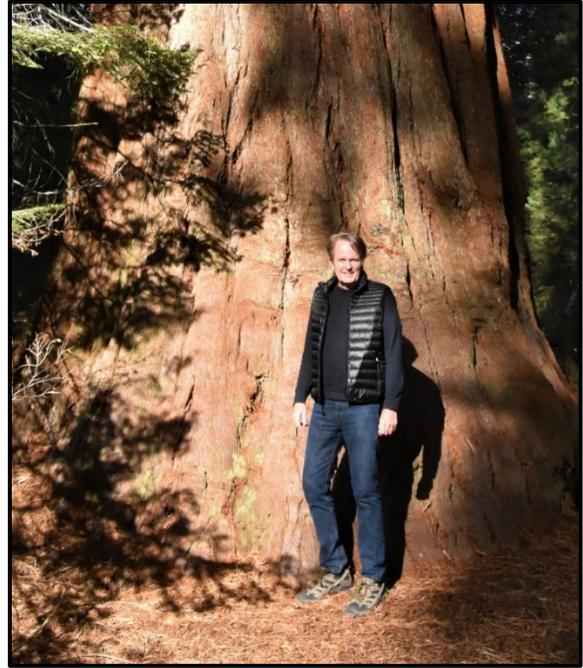


we lived in a small apartment. She worked and I went to school at the University of Houston, while also working part time for McGraw Hill, where I assisted in the production of a daily oil publication. I graduated with a degree in business in May 1979 and immediately got an excellent job at one of the best public schools in the Houston area, teaching business. I did that for two years and then began my career as an independent annuity broker. The way I found this profession is special. One Saturday afternoon I was sitting in the living room of my small home and pondering on what I should do for work. Although I enjoyed teaching, the pay wasn't very good, and I knew I wanted to do more with my life. Six months earlier an acquaintance had proposed

Top left: My family on October 12, 2017. Top right: Rebecca at Halloween in 2011. Middle left: Angkor Wat, Cambodia; 2019. Middle: Medieval bridge in Ireland; 2017. Left: Istanbul, Turkey, in 2019. Above: The Great Pyramid in Giza, Egypt, in 2019. Cambodia, Egypt, and Turkey were three of the 12 countries that we visited during our trip around the world in May and June 2019. It was the greatest trip of our lives and a true adventure.

and I knew I wanted to do more with my life. Six months earlier an acquaintance had proposed

that I become an annuity broker, like himself, but that sounded awful to me. Then as I thought about

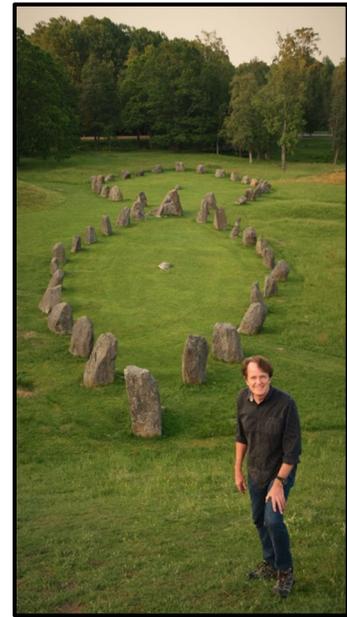


Top right: I'm in Sequoia National Park on October 12, 2018, my 65th birthday. Top left: I'm holding Willow our pet for 12 years in 2014. Top middle: Oldest petroglyphs in North America in Nevada; 2019. Middle, left to right: Egyptian Museum in Cairo, ossuary of Caiaphas, who condemned Jesus, and tomb in Giza; 2019. Above, left to right: Door of Humility in Bethlehem; Jewish Holy of Holies from Tell Arad, lowest place on earth in Israel, and northwestern wall of Jerusalem; 2019.

what he had said, I began to have this wonderful feeling that it was exactly what I should do. It was one of the most spiritual experiences

of my life and because of it, I knew what to do. I completed my contract with the school district

and then began my new career. The first month I made more money than I had ever made before,



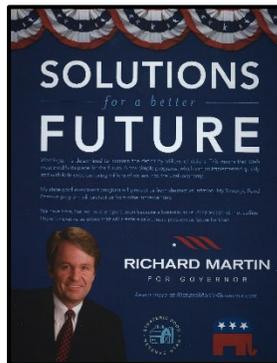
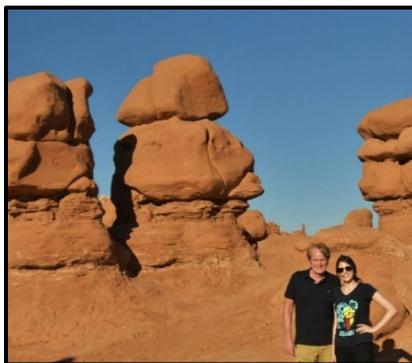
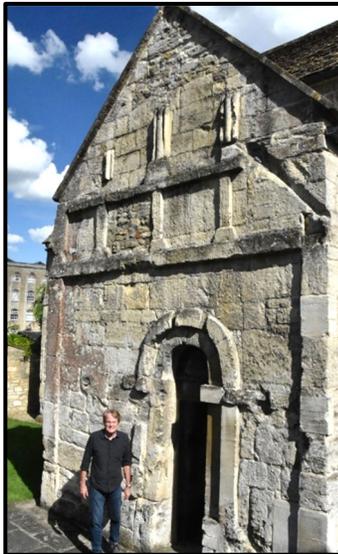
Top left: I took this photograph of a total eclipse of the sun on August 21, 2017. Totality lasted 2 minutes and 21 seconds at our location near Driggs, Idaho. Top middle: Garden Tomb in Jerusalem; 2019. Above right: Viking burial site of Anundshog, Sweden, from 500 A.D. Left: Special elephant in Thailand, holding me with his trunk. Interesting place in Iceland where the North American Plate and Eurasian Plate come together; 2019.

and the second month I almost doubled that. Soon I became one of the top brokers in the country and a few years later I was the number one broker in the nation for

a few different companies. I've always felt grateful to Heavenly Father that he gave me this great career, which allowed me to later invest my time in many other meaningful things in life, such as my family history. It also let me be independent and not under the authority of other people.

Karen and I moved to north Houston in 1982 where we bought a beautiful custom home and had our first child, Jonathan Thomas Martin. Two and a half years later, we had Sarah Ellen Martin, and in 1989, Michael Richard Martin was born. These were happy, productive years. My career continued to grow, and, in the meantime, I taught early morning seminary at 6 a.m., 162 days each year, for four years. I also taught some classes at church and worked each week with the full-time missionaries.

My best friend was George Pekar, and we played tennis together three times each week. In some ways this was a

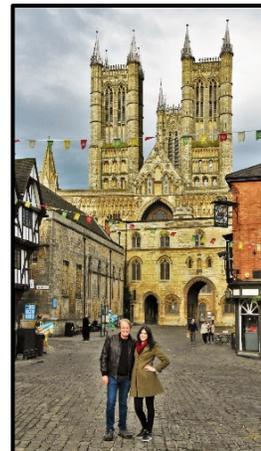


Top right: Borgund Stave Church in Norway; 2019. Right: Vasa, a resurrected 1628 ship, in Stockholm, Sweden; 2019. Top left: Karen and I next to a 1938 truck in Colorado; 2019. Middle: Anglo-Saxon Church in Bradford-on-Avon, England, and Rebecca and I in London; 2017. Above left: Goblin Valley; 2017. Above right: My ad for governor that went to one million people in 2010.

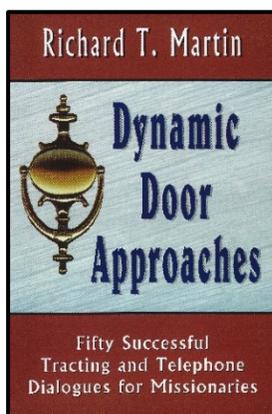
golden time of my life, perhaps because I experienced so many new things that were good.

Late in 1989, we moved to a new home in another part of north Houston. My friend, George Pekar, died

with his wife in a car accident a month later and some of the dynamics of my life changed, but things



Top, from left: Ghostbuster Fire Station in New York City; 2013. I'm next to a circa 5,000-year-old tree in Nevada; 2011. Kamakura, Japan; 2013. Lincoln, England, in 2017. Rebecca and I near the Tower Bridge in London; 2017. I'm next to one of the fourteen monuments that my brother and I placed over the graves of our relatives between 2007 and 2009. I wrote this book that was published nationwide by Horizon Publishers in 1998.

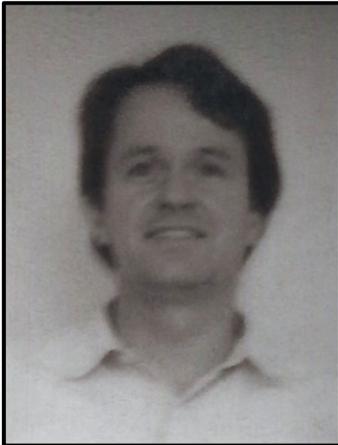
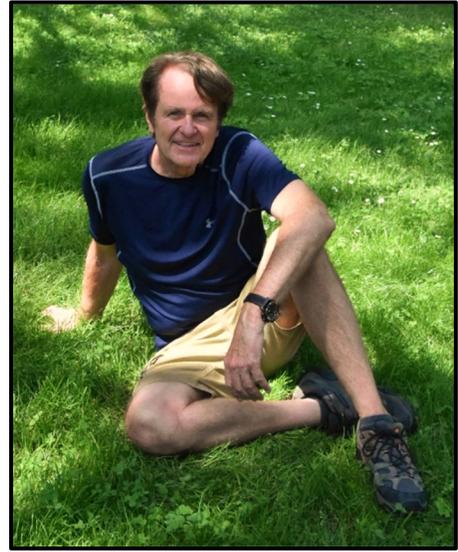
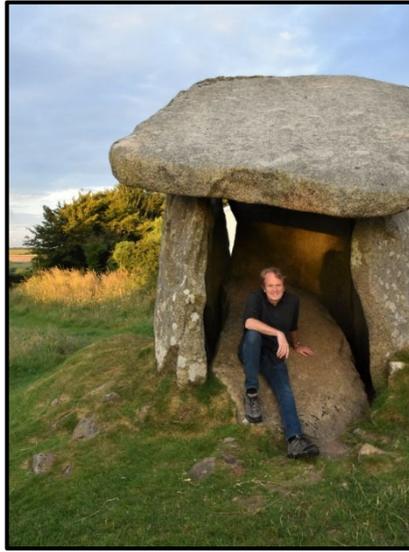


were still very good. In the 1990s I coached one season of baseball and five seasons of basketball. Two of my basketball teams were champions and my son Jonathan was a leading scorer and an all-star. I was even chosen to be an all-star coach, which was a high honor. (What was special about this is that I went from knowing very little about coaching to becoming a top instructor.)

On August 30, 1995, our last child, Rebecca Elise Martin, was born. The next year I wrote a manuscript for a missionary book and in early 1998 it was published by Horizon Publishers, at that time the third largest publisher of its kind in the country. It was distributed nationwide and was on bookshelves for eight years, an unusually long time for any book.

In 1998 I began to ponder on what changes that I should make in my life. I thought about my genealogical work and the idea came to me that I should put all my family history research into book form. I said to myself, "I'm an okay writer, but not a great one." A voice said to me (not a real one),

“You will get better.” So, I began to compile all my records into books and wrote 29 different,



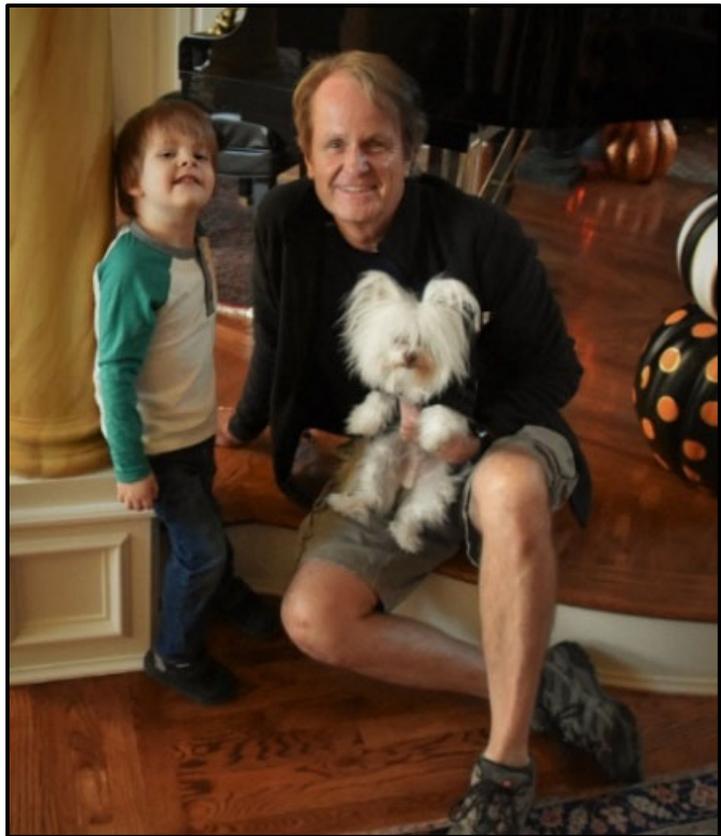
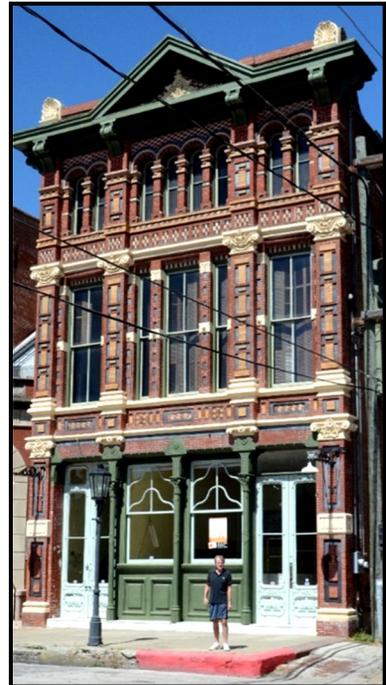
Top left: Dinosaur tracks in Arizona; 2017. Top middle: Neolithic site in Cornwall, England; 2016. Top right: I'm in Istanbul, Turkey; 2019. Above left: Photograph on season pass to AstroWorld in 1992. For three years I took my kids to AstroWorld almost every week. Above middle: Houston and I played in these leaves on a Saturday afternoon in October 2019. Middle right: Main entrance to Auschwitz in southern Poland; 2019. Right: I'm feeding elephants in Thailand in May 2019. In my travels, I like to visit genealogical, historical, and ancient sites more than anything else.

individual family histories. Two years later I compiled all these histories into two books entitled, *The Sharp Family in America* and *The Bowles-*

Massey Families in America. I also interviewed fifteen of my cousins and wrote their biographies, which I placed in these books. In the early 2000s I did research and wrote another book entitled *Seasons to Remember*, which is the family history of my stepfather, Vester Crocker. To complete these books, I traveled (often with my older brother) to most of the important towns associated with my genealogy and did research in the local county libraries and courthouses in the eastern United States.

Although many people expressed admiration for my work, I was not totally satisfied, and after a couple of years began working on new editions. I didn't realize at the time that I would be working on these new publications for many years. At first, I continued to do research the old fashion way, but

soon began to appreciate the immense amount of new information on the Internet—my two favorite

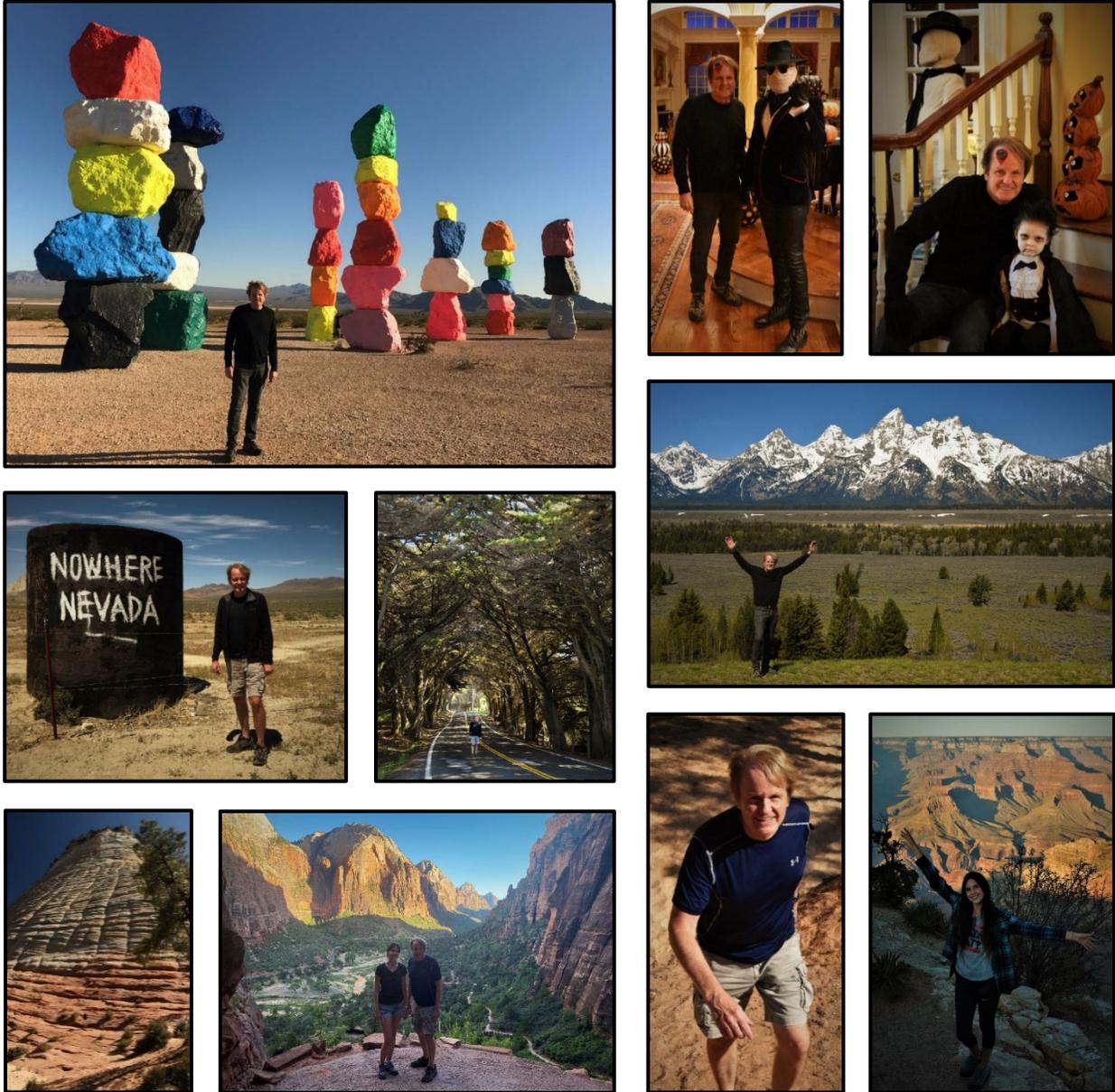


Above: My last day on Earth in Moab, Utah, on October 13, 2019. Top middle: Hearst Castle in California; 2015. Top right: Colorful building in Galveston, Texas; 2015. I usually visit Galveston when I make a business trip to Houston. Right: Houston is standing next to me while I hold Allister, Sarah's amazing dog, on October 25, 2019.

sites being Ancestry.com and Find a Grave. One of the great things my brother and I did during this time was to place fourteen granite monuments over the graves of eighteen great-grandparents, one great-aunt and one great-uncle, who did not previously have any markers.

Finally in 2019 I came to a completion point and placed my research on this Internet site. The new work is much larger than the previous books that I published. The previous publications were 2,278

pages long, but the new ones are 6,758 pages long, not counting the biographies. Including the

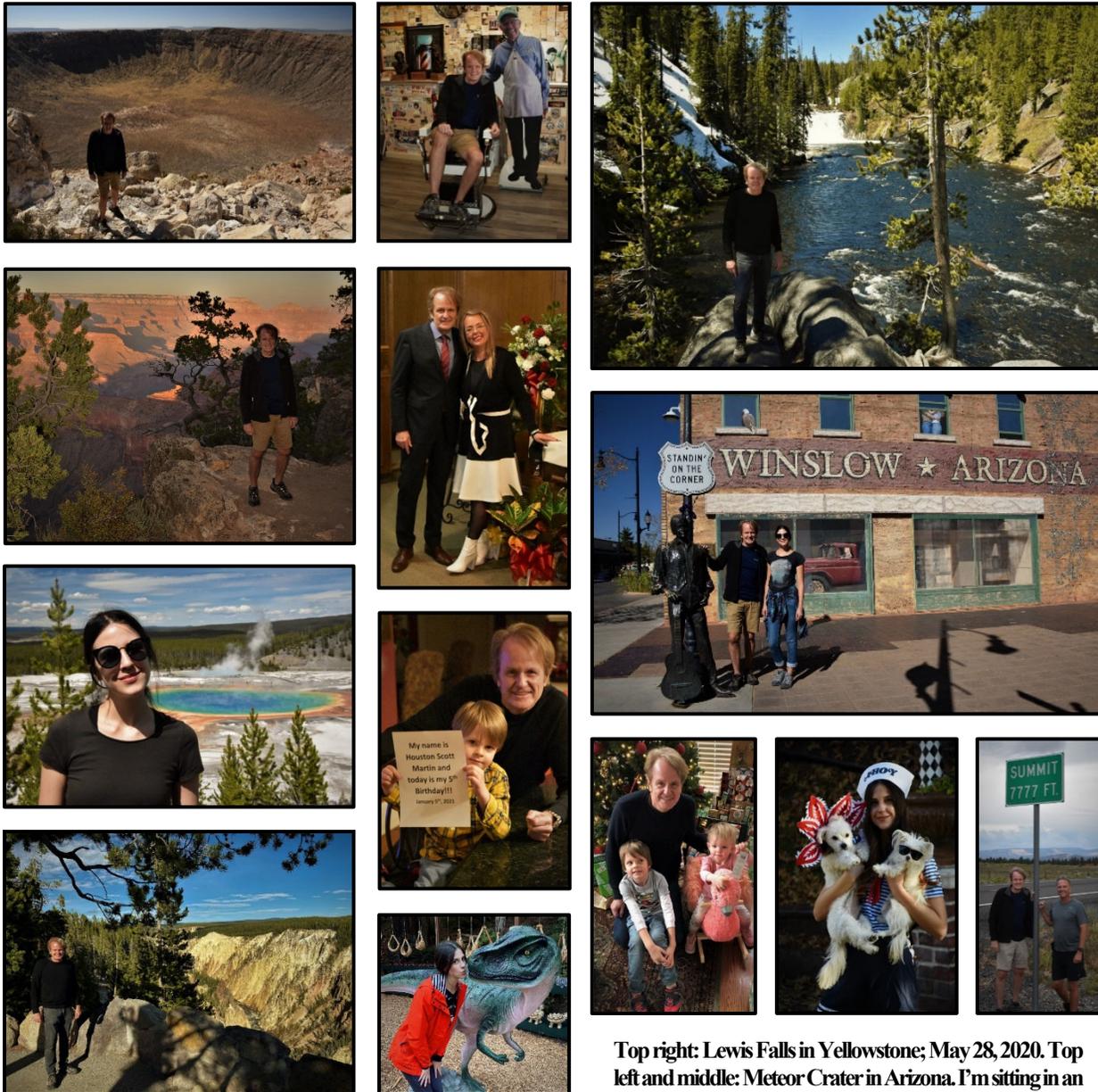


Top right: I'm with my son, Jonathan (*The Invisible Man*), and grandson, Houston (*Dracula*), on Halloween night, 2019. (I'm six feet tall, but my son is taller.) Once again, I have a screw in my head, which looks so real that I get a lot of questions about it. It was another successful Halloween with over 300 visitors, the most ever. Top left: I'm standing at a colorful rock art site in the desert near Las Vegas in 2020. Middle: Nowhere, Nevada, on May 4, 2020. A tunnel of trees on the main highway near Fort Bragg, California, on May 5, 2020. Grand Teton Mountains on May 28, 2020. Above from left: The Checkerboard Mesa in Zion National Park. Angel Landing Trail and me walking from Checkerboard Mesa on June 17, 2020. Above right: Rebecca at the Grand Canyon on October 11, 2020. (My last day to be sixty-six.)

biographies they are over 10,000 pages long. This total does not include the new edition of *Seasons to Remember*. If counted another way, there are over 16,000 pages of my research on this website.

There is much more that I could include in this autobiography, but I have intentionally kept it short to

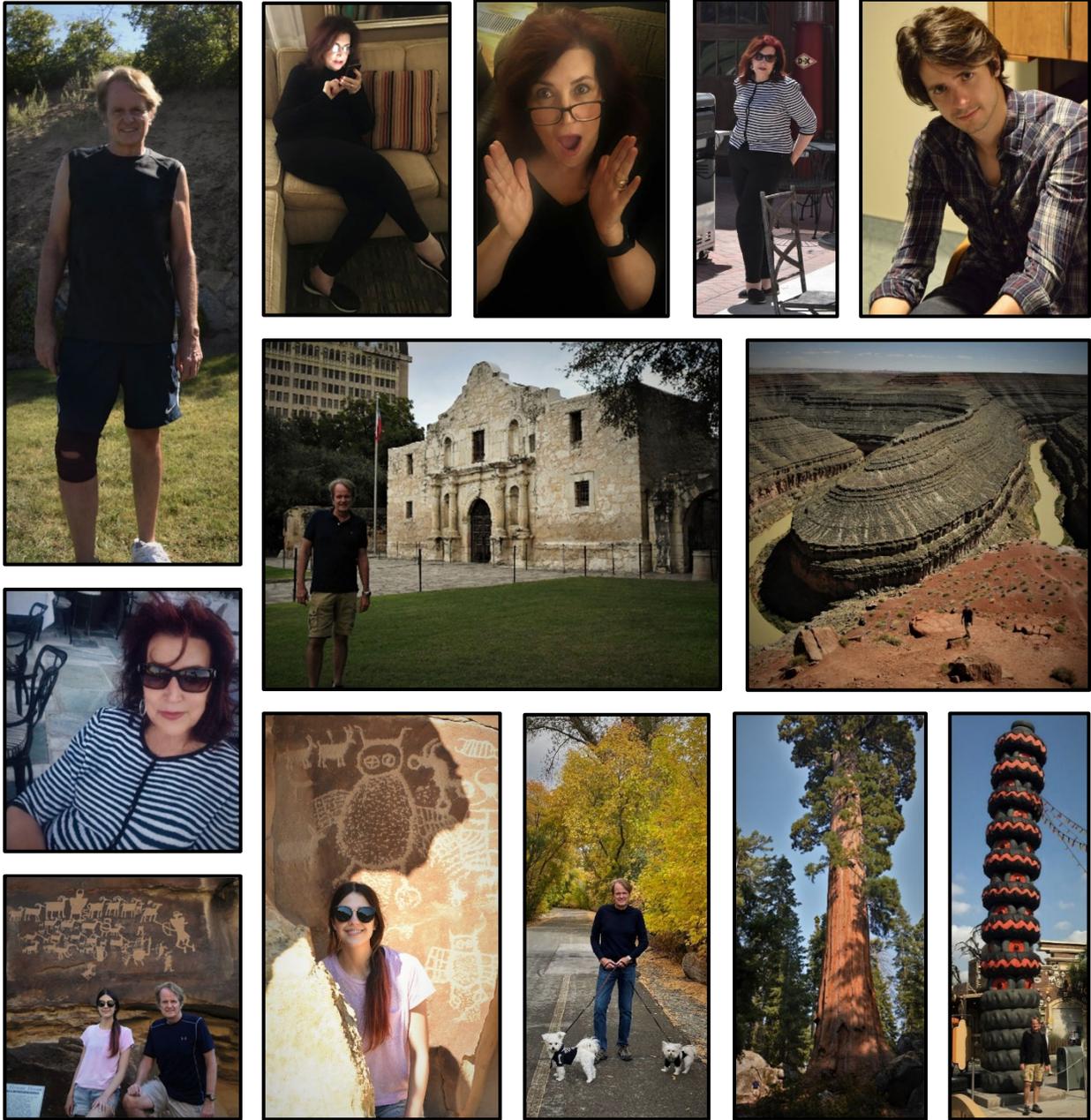
avoid being tedious. I have said very little about my family and, of course, they are the center of my life.



Top right: Lewis Falls in Yellowstone; May 28, 2020. Top left and middle: Meteor Crater in Arizona. I'm sitting in an old barber shop in Seligman, Arizona. Grand Canyon. "Standing on the Corner" in Winslow, Arizona; October 12, 2020. I'm with my stepsister, Vickie Crocker in Rockdale, Texas; November 2020. Left: Rebecca at Grand Prismatic Spring, and I'm at Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone in 2020. Above: I'm with my grandson Houston in 2021. Rebecca getting kissed by a dinosaur; 2021. I'm with Houston and Maddie; Christmas 2021. Becca with her dogs, Captain and Littles, Halloween 2021, and me with Bobbie Pekar near Bryce Canyon in 2021.

Other events in my life include running for governor of Utah in 2010. It was a complete, professional campaign. I had a manager, spoke on eight radio talk shows, had hundreds of radio commercials, and hundreds of prime-time television ads. My magazine ads went out to over a million people. I spoke in 25 counties, was on television several times, and had the endorsement of a former congressman. In America, eighty-five percent of incumbents win and this time it was no different, but what an experience! Later, I was asked to run again by some major organizations but turned down their offers.

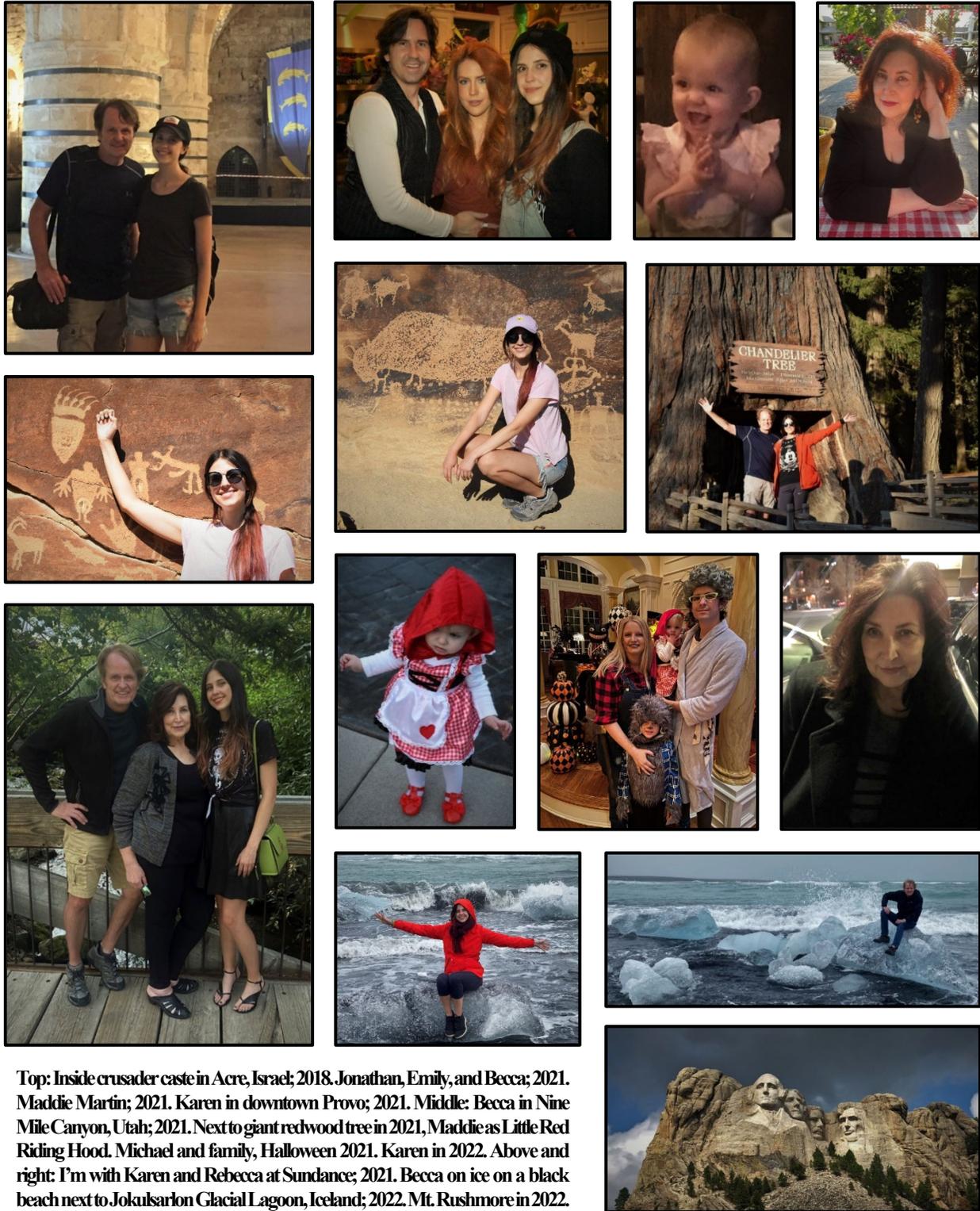
Earlier this year I created Organization for a New State Flag and we promoted a wonderful, handsome new



Top left: Photograph of me taken by Houston, age five, in 2021. Top middle and left: Karen in 2021. Top right: My youngest son, Michael, in 2016. Middle: I'm at the Alamo and at Goosenecks State Park, Utah, in 2017. Above, left to right: Rebecca and I at the Great Hunt and Owl Petroglyphs in Nine Mile Canyon, Utah; 2021. I'm walking the dogs on the Provo Canyon Trail in October 2022. You can barely see me (lower left) next to a giant, ancient sequoia tree in Sequoia National Park, August 21, 2021, and I'm at California Adventure in September 2021.

flag that was designed by my son Jonathan. This campaign for a new flag caught the attention of the entire state and we were front page news on every major newspaper in Utah, and many times were featured on the evening news. A picture of the flag and a complementary news story (that went nationwide) was even in USA Today. I was told that of the 1,600 bills before the legislature in 2019, we were the number one bill! My son and I lobbied for the bill, and we spoke before a House

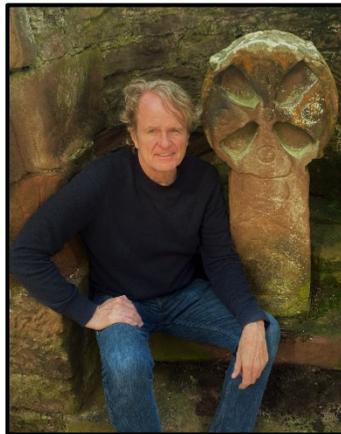
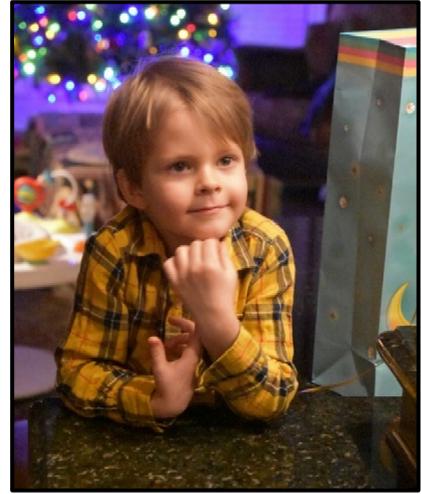
Committee, but for reasons that would take too long to explain, the bill was put on hold by the State



Legislature for 2019 but has a good chance to be voted on in 2021 (an important senator has endorsed the flag).

In the spring of 2019, I went with my daughter, Rebecca, on a trip around the world. We left Salt Lake

City, Utah, on May 7, 2019, and completed our journey on June 17, 2019. We visited New Zealand,



Top left: New flag that my son and I proposed for Utah, which was accepted as the official commemorative flag for the state in March 2021. (It is the first, completely new state flag to be adopted in over 100 years, and my son designed it. See newutahflag.org) Our flag flying over the capitol building in June 2021. Top right: Jonathan and Emily at Disneyland in June 2021; they will probably marry in 2023. Houston Martin on his fifth birthday; 2021. Middle: I'm next to a 1,000-year-old cross, and at a Norman entrance from the 1100s at St. Bees Priory, England, that my 27th Great-Grandfather built. Left: Karen at Monte Alban, Mexico, in 1985. Above: Whitby, England, in 2022.

Australia, Cambodia, Thailand, Dubai, Egypt, Israel, Istanbul, Poland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and Chicago before arriving back in Salt Lake City. In all we took

18 flights and I drove thousands of miles in eight of the countries we visited. It was a magnificent



Top, from left: Effigies of Robert de Ferrers (1100-1162) and Margaret Peveral (1114-1154), my 23rd Great-Grandparents, in Merevale Abbey, which they built. Effigy of King John (1166-1216), my 26th Great-Grandfather, in Worcester Cathedral, England, and Peveril Castle, built by my 25th Great-Grandfather, William Peverel (1040-1115). Middle, from left: Place where Mayflower left Plymouth, England, in 1620 for America. Lighthouse from 1757 in Plymouth. Great Hall of Oakham Castle built by Walkelin de Ferrers, my 26th Great-Grandfather, in 1185 A.D., and Becca next to the effigy of Robert de Vere, her 26th Great-Grandfather, in Hatfield Broad Oak, England. Above: I'm at Arthur's Stone near the border of Wales in May 2022, and reconstruction of home of Eric the Red (950-1003) and Leif Erikson (970-1020) in Iceland. We were able to go inside because the back door had been left open by accident. Right: Jonathan and I with Senators McKay and Bramble after the senate passed our flag bill in 2021. It took three years, but the state legislature finally agreed to adopt our image as a state flag (the first in 100 years).

adventure and we learned a lot. (For example, we learned that people in Cambodia live on \$127 a month. We made many purchases there and even bought an edible scorpion.)

There is so much more that I would like to write, but I will let this suffice. Every day I want to

accomplish something that is worthwhile. The histories I have compiled on this website are important



Top right: Bewcastle Anglo-Saxon Cross, which is 14.5 feet tall. It has been standing in the churchyard of St. Cuthbert's church at Bewcastle, England, for at least 1,300 years; May 8, 2022. **Top middle:** Arthur's Stone, a five-thousand-year-old site near the border of Wales. It was a magical moment when the sun came out, and a rainbow formed behind us; May 2022. **Top left and below:** Irton Anglo-Saxon Cross, which dates from the early 9th century. **Largest stone at Long Meg and Her Daughters Stone Circle** in northern England. **Viking site in Iceland.** **Statue of William Marshal, my 25th Great-Grandfather, next to his castle in Pembroke, Wales.** The plaque reads: "WILLIAM MARSHAL / 1147-1219 / THE GREATEST KNIGHT." **Above:** Jefferson Memorial in Washington D.C. We are direct descendants of the family of Thomas Jefferson. **Cast of a Megalodon's jaw in Salt Lake Aquarium.** **Right:** I'm kneeling next to what may be one of my ancestor's graves at the Abbey in Whitby, England, in May 2022. The abbey/monastery was first founded in 657.

to me. I care about these people and feel close to them. I believe that I have been guided in my family history research, sometimes in miraculous ways, and feel grateful to God that he has given me the opportunity to do this work. RICHARD T. MARTIN (2019)

Addendum

Today is November 7, 2022, and I thought I would like to update this summary of my life. Since my



Top left: Eleanor of Castile (1241-1290) Cross in Geddington, England, which is the finest of the three remaining crosses (out of 12) erected by Edward I in memory of his beloved wife. Edward I and Elinor are my 23rd Great-Grandparents. Top right from left: Unconditional Surrender statue in San Diego. Salt Flats, and an old town in California; 2021. Middle: I'm with Big Foot in South Dakota, and at Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone; both September 2022. Above, left to right: Michael with Ernie Hudson of Ghostbusters fame in 2014. We are all with Michael's family at the Hogle Zoo in September 2022, and I'm in a log with Maddie and Houston on the same day. Right: I'm with a nightcrawler on Halloween 2022.

last entry I've gone on several trips: Four to San Diego and southern California, two trips to the red-woods of northern California, another excursion to Death Valley, two more trips to Yellowstone,

and a major trip with Rebecca to Iceland, England, and northeast United States. I also went on two



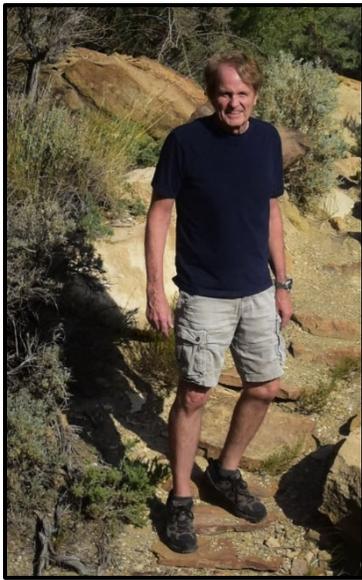
genealogical trips with my nephew, David Moran, to Arkansas and Tennessee. Sand-



Top right: I'm holding Houston with his other grandparent, Rhonda Ford, in January 2020. She died two months later. It's the only photograph of all of us together. Top, from left: Michael Martin next to the tomb of Edward I, his 24th Great-Grandfather, in 2003. Home of Abraham Browne, my 8th Great-Grandfather, in Watertown, Massachusetts. I'm with my nephew David Moran and his daughter, Delaney (age 15), in 2019. Middle: Family reunion at 1820 home of William Phillips in 1994. Michael's family on Halloween night 2022. Michael and Becca at Stonehenge in 2003. Above: Halloween, 2022, and Royal Gorge Bridge in October 2022. Right: Karen and I next to Houston's nightcrawler in 2022.

wiched in-between was also a 2,000-mile trip that I took with my friend, Robert Pekar and his son Alex to the Grand Canyon and other

interesting places. Rebecca and I also went on a separate trip on Route 66 and stood on the corner



Top left: Karen and I at the Cinemark Theater on October 10, 2022. Top right: Rebecca and I in downtown Philadelphia on the Rocky Statue in May 2022. Above, left to right: I'm at Nine Mile Canyon on Father's Day 2022. Treasure Falls in Colorado on October 15, 2022. Rebecca and I at the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C. in May 2022. There are five Richard Martins that died in the war, which are listed on this monument. I've thought: "What if there was a sixth Richard Martin listed. Would the world even notice?" Of course, the answer is "No!" My effect on the world, like most of my fellow travelers, is small and few people know I even exist.

in Winslow, Arizona. Recently, I completed a special trip to Colorado for my birthday. There are some good stories in there, but I will let just mentioning them suffice. One thing I do want to mention is how amazing it was to see Dinosaur Ridge near Denver. Some paleontologists have named it the best dinosaur track site in America, and it is certainly one of the best (see page 27). Also, seeing the ancient Anglo-Saxon monuments, medieval effigies, and Neolithic sites in England was special.

Also, I wrote three new family history books. I completely rewrote Seasons to Remember and doubled

its original size, and wrote two abridgements of all my family histories, which was quite a task, but



very enjoyable. As a result, I found new lines of direct ancestors who were important in the history of England. I visited

Top, left to right: Karen in front of our first apartment in Houston; 1976. When I was a missionary in Culver City, California; 1973. I'm holding my son, Michael, in 1990. I'm with my family at Disneyland in 1959 (me, Ron, Mom, Cathy, and Nancy). I'm at the grave of my grandmother Claire Smith in 2022. Michael when he was four years old in 1993. Another view of my home in Provo, Utah, in 2021. Karen at a market in Morocco in 1972, and at the beach. I'm kneeling next to a monument my brother and I erected to our Nisbett great-grandparents in Jonesboro, Arkansas, in 2022. Jonathan, age four, by a water fountain in 1987. My brother Ron with his nephews: Jonathan (left) and Greg Lamb in 1986.

many of these ancestral sites, including castles, effigies, and monuments when I went this year to England.

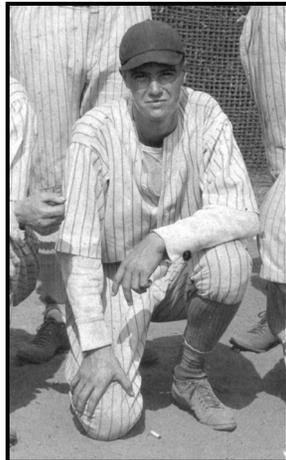
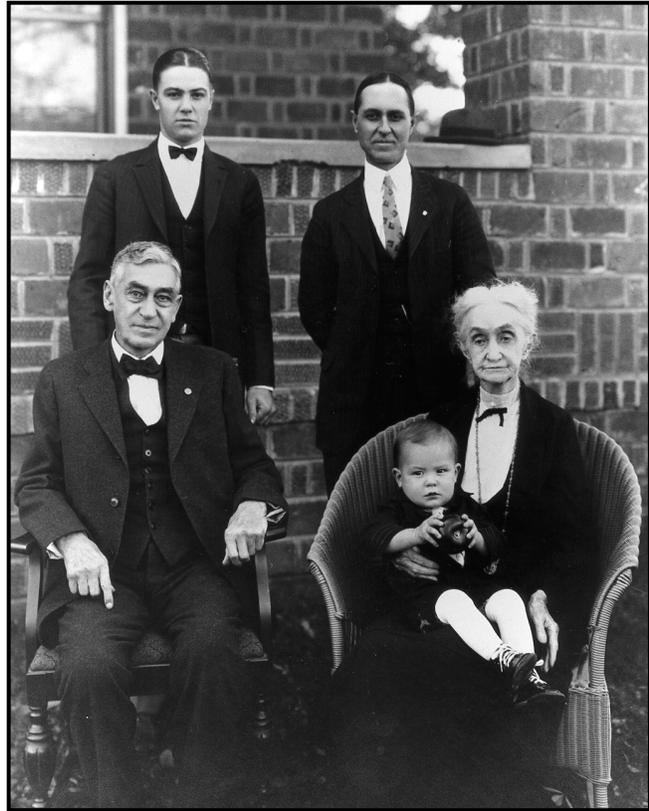
The state legislature of Utah passed our flag bill and the flag that my son designed became the



Top, from left: I'm reclining at San Rafael Canyon, Utah; 2022. Sarah (age 9) and Jonathan (age 11) in Missouri; 1994. Ron Martin next to gravestones of two of our fourth great-grandparents. Dinosaur Ridge, Colorado, October 12, 2022. Rebecca and Michael at Tinker monuments in 2006. Clyde Van Smith, my Great-Grandfather in Arkansas about 1900. I'm with Jonathan in Norwich, Connecticut, in 1996. Malvern Hill in Virginia-Cocke ancestral home. My brother, Ron Martin, in Reklaw, Texas, in 1987. Marion Sharp and Clair Smith, my grandparents. Henry Smith and Maria Sidenbender, my 4th Great-Grandparents. Gravestones of Elizabeth and Richard Cutter, my 9th Great-Grandparents, two of the oldest in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

first new official flag for the state of Utah in over a hundred years. It was made the commemorative

flag for the 125th anniversary of being a state, and flew over the capitol building for most of 2021

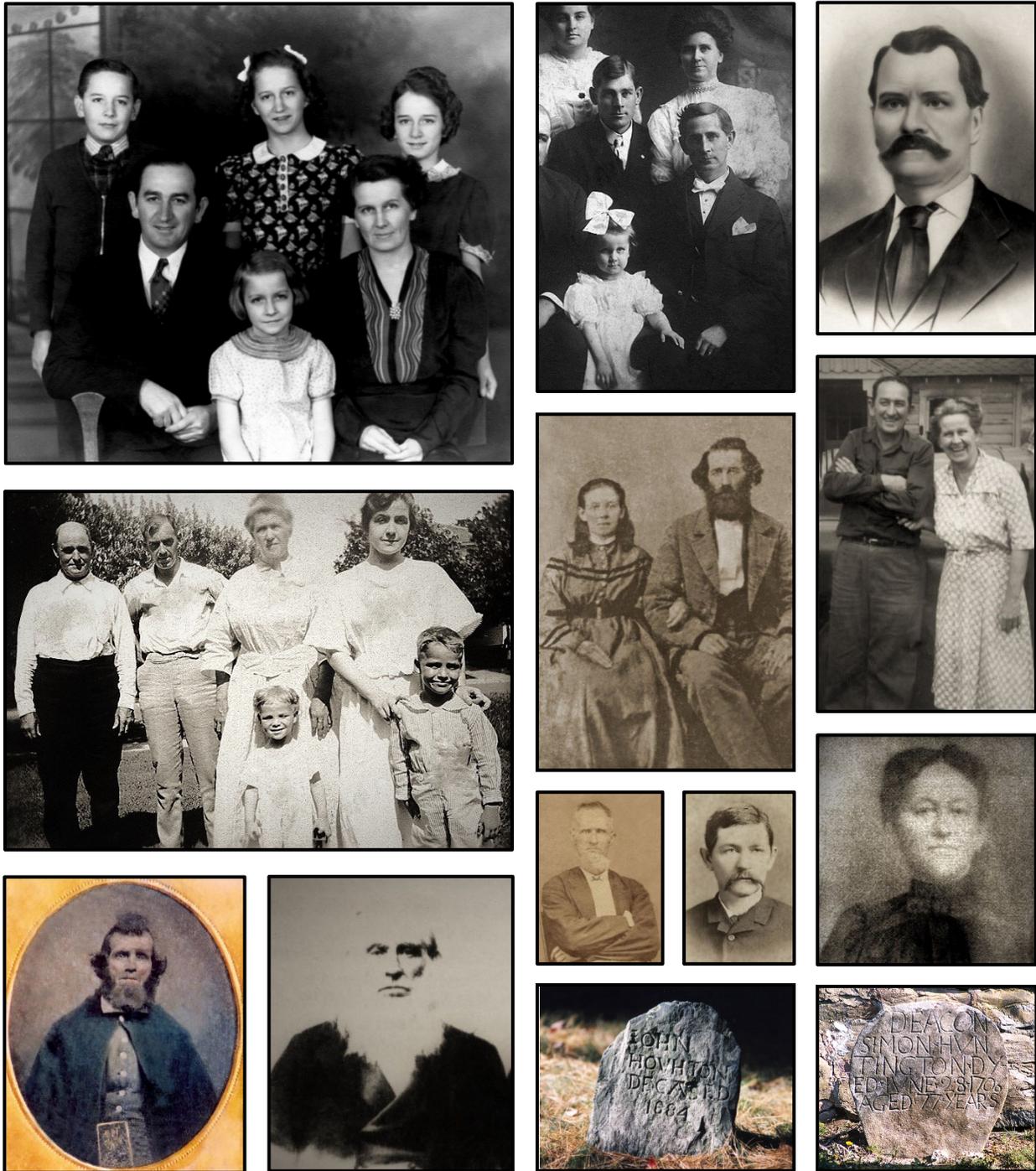


(see photographs on page 19). It was front page news all over the state and a real victory for me and my son.

Top right: Five generations of my Sharp family. **Clockwise:** Marion C. Sharp, Sr. (my grandfather), Carlos Lee Sharp (my great-grandfather), Sarah M. Capps (my great-great-great-grandmother), Marion C. Sharp, Jr. (my father), and James Simpson Sharp (my great-great-grandfather) in 1925. **Top left and middle:** My grandfather, Marion C. Sharp, Sr., played professional baseball for 7 years (second row middle), and worked for the Rock Island Railroad (wearing his uniform). **Above:** Marion C. Sharp, Jr. at Anzio in 1944 (my father) and Pat Bowles (my mother), and effigies, left, of Katherine Mortimer and Earl Thomas Beauchamp, my 20th Great-Grandparents.

We went from having few supporters three years ago when I first lobbied for it, to having the state senate overwhelmingly endorse us by a vote of 25 to 3. In November 2022 it was announced that a vote for a new state flag would take place in January 2023. My son designed this new, proposed flag as well.

I just completed my most successful Halloween ever with over 450 children and youths visiting my



Top, from left: My mother's family in 1940. My grandmother, age three, her uncle (middle) and parents (on right) in 1907. Augustus Burnet Smith, my second great-grandfather in 1890. Family of Louis Barker and Maud Fulk Barker (2nd Great-Grandparents) about 1923. Whit Morgan and Harriet Lay (2nd Great-Grandparents) on their wedding day in 1866. Grandparents: Thomas Bowles and Frances Massey Bowles about 1950. Redmond Rudd Smith (3rd Great-Grandfather, 1794-1881) about 1850. Benjamin Bratton, Sr. (3rd Great-Grandfather) in 1910. William Jackson Bowles (2nd Great-Grandfather). Walter Bowles (Great-Grandfather). Anna Morgan Bowles (Great-Grandmother). Gravestone of John Houghton (8th Great-Grandfather), and gravestone of Simon Huntington (7th Great-Grandfather).

house. We decorated more than ever this year with two twelve feet tall figures. For nine years we have

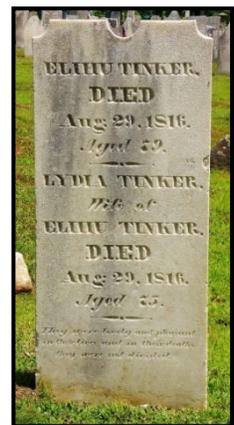
given out full bags of candy, and every year the weather has been nearly perfect. (Often the weather has changed after Halloween to winter weather in just a matter of days.)



Top, from left: Effigy of William Marshal (25th Great-Grandfather, 1147-1219) in London, England. Family of Benjamin Bratton, Jr., my second great-grandfather (Cora Bratton, my great-grandmother, is standing behind him), Benjamin Bratton, Jr. and Mary Redman, my second great-grandparents. Gravestone of Samuel Bennet (7th Great-Grandfather), and monument of Esther Leppingwell Houghton (8th Great-Grandmother), both in Lancaster, Massachusetts. My son and daughter, Michael and Rebecca Martin, at Carthage Jail in Illinois in 2006. My mother's siblings in 1946, left to right: Mildred, John "Buddy," Patricia (Mother), and Nancy Bowles. Gravestone of Alexander and Agnes Nisbett (5th Great-Grandparents) in South Carolina. My brother, Ron Martin, next to gravestone of Whit Morgan, our second great-grandfather, in Arkansas. Top right to bottom (seven small photographs): Jane Young Rogers (4th Great-Grandmother). Ann Van Gundy Sidenbender (3rd Great-Grandmother). Sylvia Barker (Great-Grandmother). Gravestone of Malinda Nevill (5th Great-Granddaughter), who lived to be 111 years old. My daughter, Rebecca Martin, age 16. William Nisbett (3rd Great-Grandfather). William Massey (2nd Great-Grandfather).

I want to write more, but this is meant to only be a summary of my life so I will close here by saying

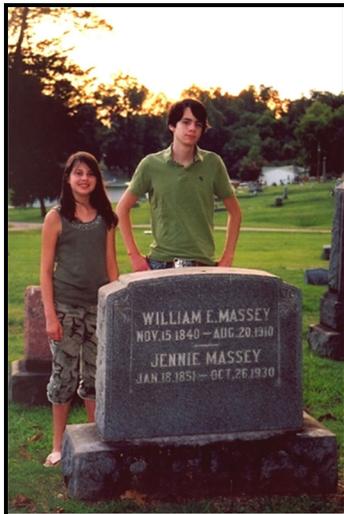
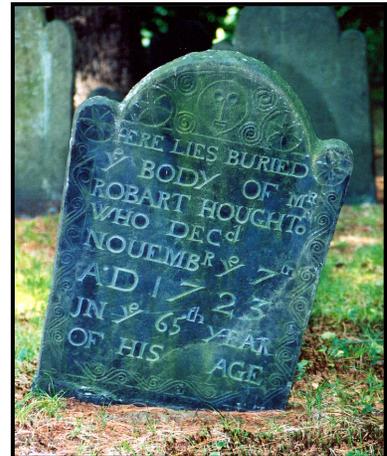
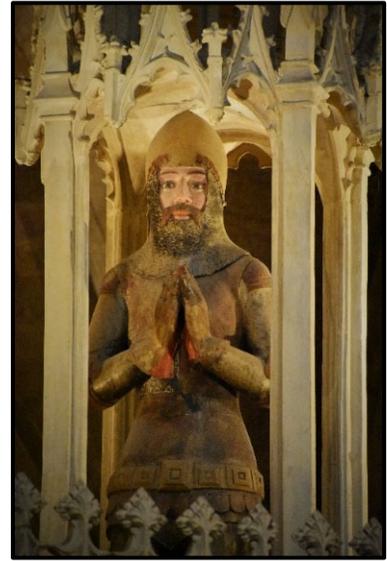
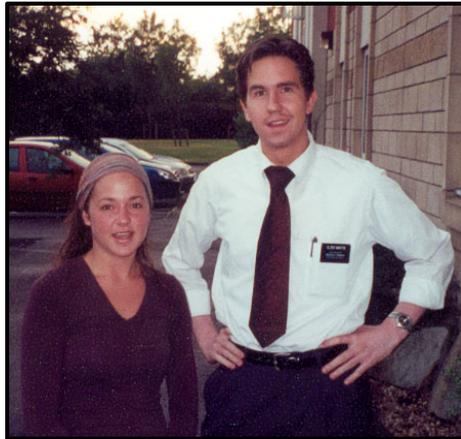
I feel sentimental as I reflect on my life. I see when I was young and my sisters and brother were still alive.



Top, from left: I'm standing with my brother Ron, and sisters, Nancy (center) and Cathy in 1971. I'm at the gravestone of Christian Van Gundy, my fifth great-grandfather, in Ohio in 2005. Karen taking over her high school government class in 1970. Sarah next to the gravestone of Eudie Massey, her 2nd Great-Granduncle, in 1993. My father with his horse about 1950. Karen in a dugout canoe in Mexico City in 1975. Karen in 1979. Monument to Margaret Griswold, my 9th Great-Grandmother, in Connecticut; photograph taken in 1994. Main fireplace and parlor inside the home of Abraham Browne, my 8th Great-Grandfather; this house, built in 1697, is the oldest in Watertown, Massachusetts. My aunt, Mildred Bowles Brooks, took this photograph of me in 1992. It is exactly what I looked like at this time of my life. (This picture was rediscovered just a few years ago.) Gravestone of William Barker (3rd Great-Grandfather) in Illinois, and double monument of Elihu and Lydia Huntington Tinker (5th Great-Grandparents), who died of natural causes on the same day in 1816.

We were close and got along well. My mother was kind and non-judgmental. She set a good example for us and I

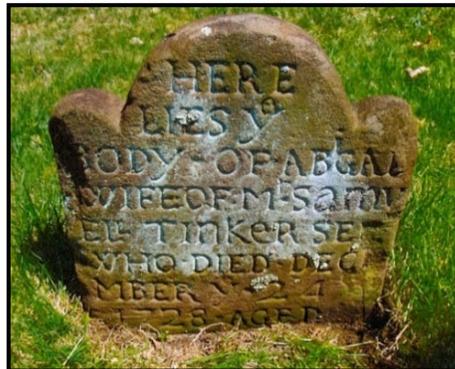
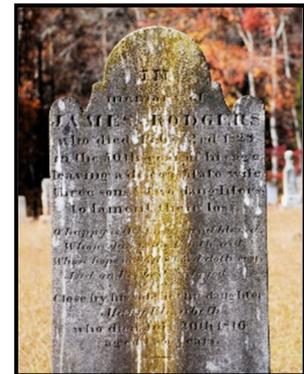
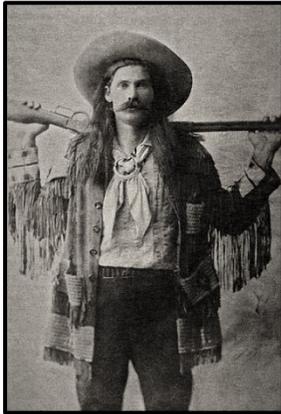
always honored her. From the time I was fourteen years old I tried to follow my conscience—eighth



Top, from left: My father, Marion Sharp, Jr. (age 25), holding my oldest sister, Cathy Sharp, in 1949. Elder Jonathan Martin with his sister, Sarah, who visited him while he was on his mission in Manchester, England, in 2003. The “Praying Knight” (Edward Despenser, 1335-1375, my 19th Great-Grandfather) in Tewkesbury Abbey, England; I took this photograph in 2016. Karen (age 42) in 1994. 14th century stained-glass window in Tewkesbury Abbey, depicting Hugh Despenser the Younger (1286-1326), my 21st Great-Grandfather. Gravestone of George Sharp, a Union soldier and my 3rd Great-Grandfather (1830-1862). Monument of Robert Houghton, my 8th Great-Grandfather, in Lancaster, Massachusetts. My younger children, Michael and Rebecca, at the monument of William Massey (1840-1910), their 3rd Great-Grandfather, in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 2006. I’m with my grandson, Houston Martin, in 2020. Gravestones of George and Sally Johnston Sharp, my 5th Great-Grandparents, in Ellettsville, Indiana (eight miles from the University of Indiana), in 2009.

grade and my junior and senior year of high school were special because I grew so much during that

time. Serving a mission, meeting and marrying Karen, establishing a meaningful career, the birth of



Top, from left: Arizona Charlie (grandson of Ruth Mattix, 5th Great-Grandaunt), was a World Rodeo Champion and a Wild West entertainer. Monuments of Deliverance Ross Houghton and Elizabeth Hastings Whitney (6th Great-Grandmothers) in Marlboro, Vermont. Grave slab of a 13th Great-Grandfather in England. Gravestone of Frances Hosmer (9th Great-Grandmother) from 1675 in Hartford, Connecticut. I'm with my brother at the door of the 1695 home of Simon Huntington, our 7th Great-Granduncle, in Norwich, Connecticut, in 1999. Monuments of James Rodgers (5th Great-Grandfather) in North Carolina, and Samuel Tinker (8th Great-Grandfather) in Old Lyme, Connecticut. Gravestones of Abraham Browne (8th Great-Grandfather) in Waltham, Massachusetts, Abigail Tinker (8th Great-Grandmother) on Long Island, New York, and Isaac Dancy (4th Great-Grandfather) in Dancyville, Tennessee.



each of my children, teaching seminary, playing tennis, coaching basketball, taking dozens of trips

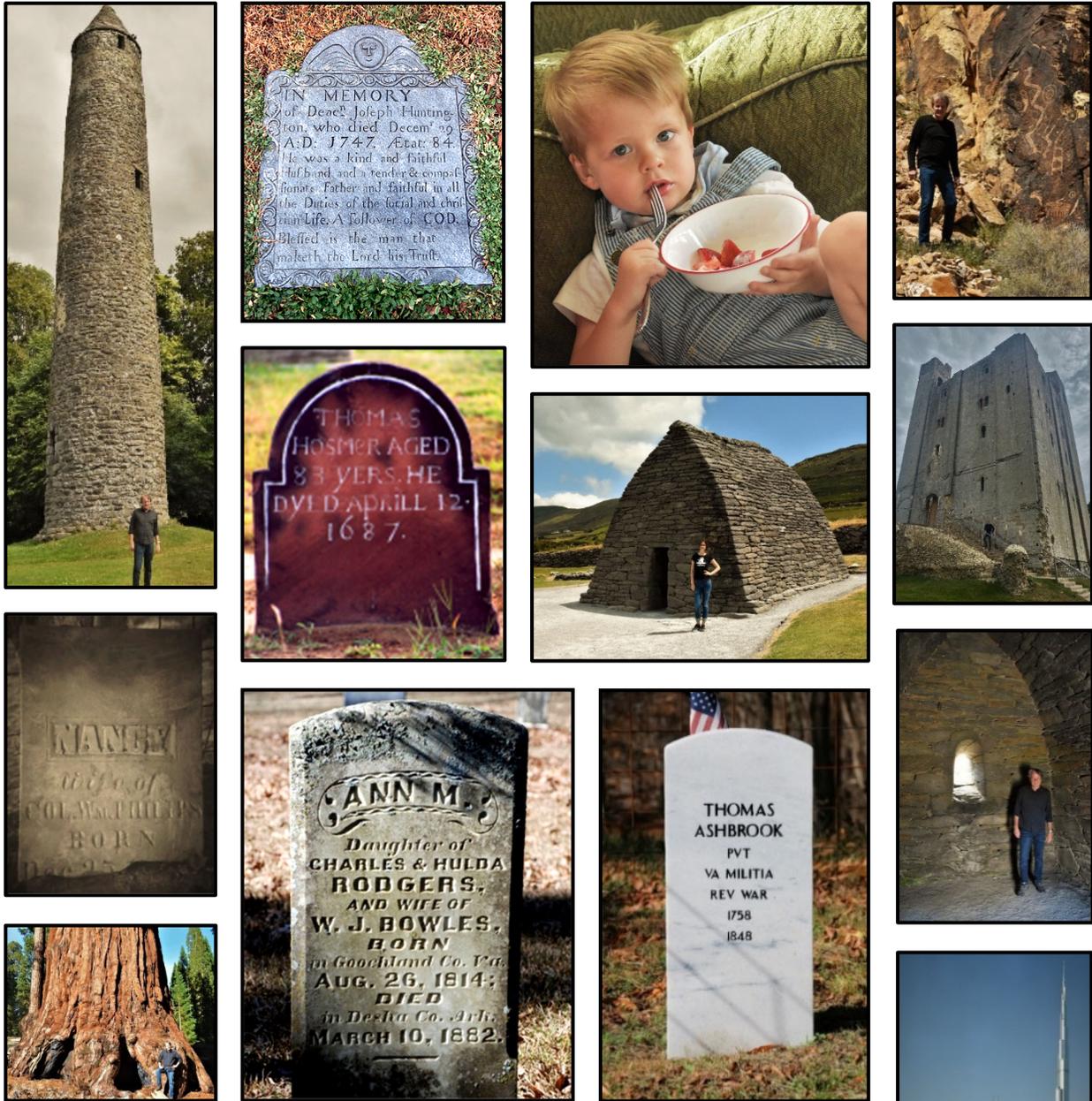
across America and the world and working on my genealogy for many years are special memories.



Top, from left: My family in 1961, left to right: Nancy, Mom, Cathy, me, and Ron. I'm receiving an award from Ralph Durham as one of the top brokers in America in 1987. Monticello, home of my close relative, Thomas Jefferson. I'm at an overlook of Split, Croatia in 2017. High Cross at Monasterboice, Ireland, in 2017. Rebeca in Exeter Cathedral, England, in 2017; the light came through the window and appeared to land only on her. Red Hand Cave in Australia that dates from 400 A.D. Gravestone of Thomas Adgate (9th Great-Grandfather) in Norwich, Connecticut. Oldest stone house in America (1639). Redwood tree in northern California, on October 12, 2018, my sixty-fifth birthday. Gravestone of William Bowles (2nd Great-Grandfather) in Tyro, Arkansas. Mesa Arch in Canyonlands, Utah, 2014. Grave slab of William Onyett (4th Great-Grandfather) in New Orleans. 5,000-year-old Neolithic site of Cairholy in Scotland, in 2018.

I felt compelled to attempt some unusual things like running for governor of Utah and lobbying for

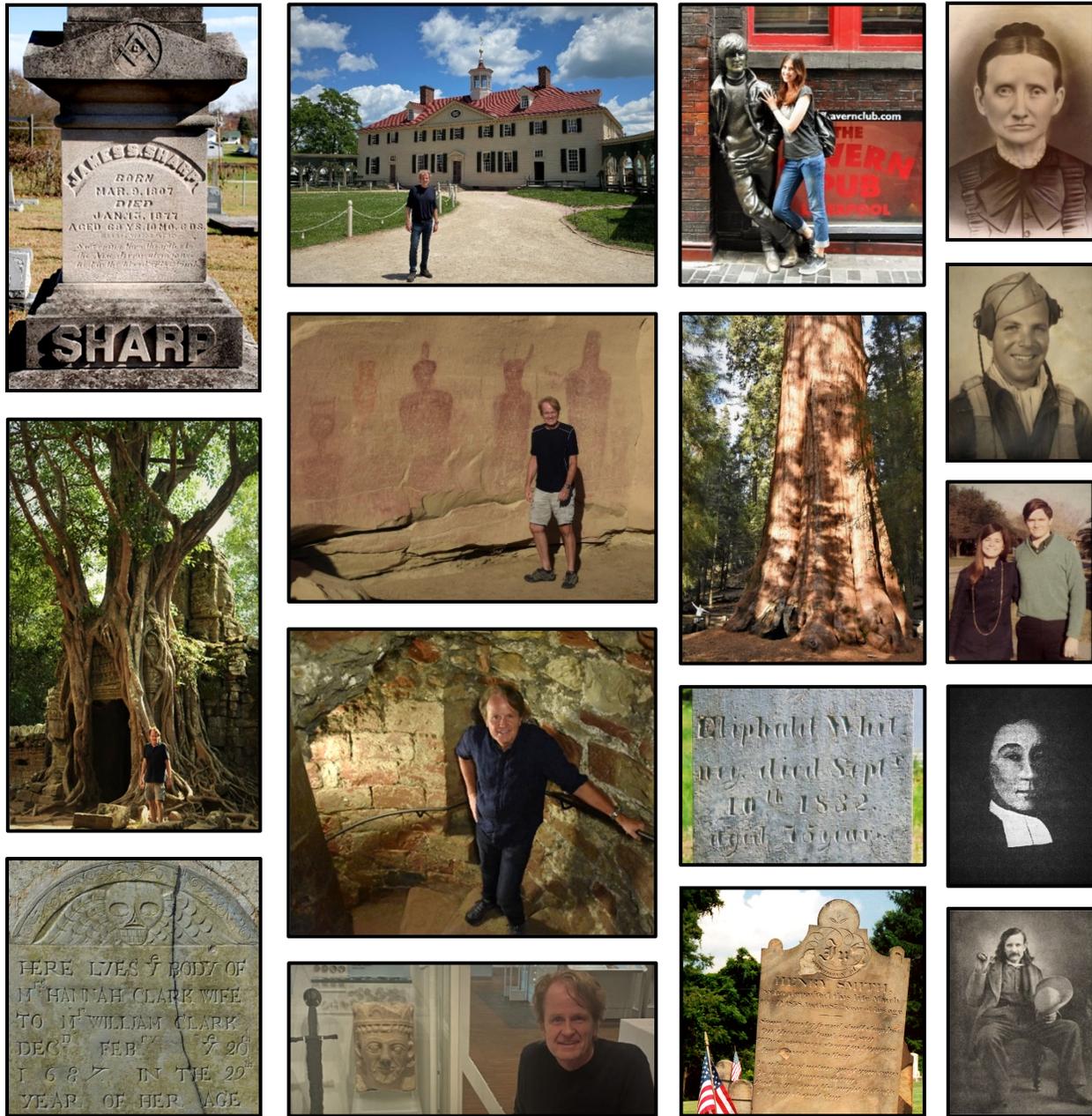
a new state flag, but the gospel has always been the most important thing in my life. I've never forgotten



Top, from left: Antrim Round Tower in Northern Ireland in 2018. Gravestone of Joseph Huntington (7th Great-Grandfather) in Connecticut. Houston Martin (age 2 ½) in 2018. I'm standing next to a rattlesnake petroglyph near Parowan, Utah, in 2018. Monument of Thomas Hosmer (9th Great-Grandfather) in Massachusetts. Gallarus Oratory, which may be the oldest church in Ireland. Hedingham Castle built by Aubrey de Vere (26th Great-Grandfather). Gravestone of Nancy Henderson Phillips (4th Great-Grandmother) in Kentucky. Base of giant sequoia tree in California in 2012. Monument of Ann M. Rogers (2nd Great-Grandmother) in Tyro, Arkansas. Military monument of Thomas Ashbrook (5th Great-Grandfather) in Indiana. I'm inside the Gallarus Oratory in 2018, and the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, the tallest building in the world in 2019.

how lost I felt until I learned the purpose of life and how wonderful it was when I found it! I think that if you are spiritually inclined, the secular, materialistic life can be very unsatisfying, and it was for me.

I wanted God in my life even before I knew that he was the answer to everything. In a moment of



Top, from left: Monument of James S. Sharp (5th Great-Grandfather) in Ellettsville, Indiana. Mt. Vernon in 2022. Rebecca with John Lennon in Liverpool, England, in 2018. Mary Phillips (2nd Great-Grandmother). William D. Martin (son of Helen Barker, my Great-Grandaunt), who was a decorated, Mustang fighter pilot during World War II. Angkor Wat ruins in 2019. Sejo Canyon, Utah; 2,000- to 5,000-year-old rock art, October 2022. General Sherman Tree, the largest on earth. Nancy and Ron in 1971. I'm inside Carlisle Castle, England, in 2018. Gravestone of Eliphalet Whitney (5th Great-Grandfather) in Morristown, Vermont. Portrait of Rev. Stephen Buckingham (7th Great-Granduncle; 1682-1752). Gravestone of Hannah Griswold Clark (7th Great-Grandaunt; 1658-1687); she is the oldest female burial in Plymouth, Massachusetts, and, overall, the fifth oldest. I'm next to the image of my relative, Llys Llywedyn, Prince of Wales. Monument of Henry Smith (5th Great-Grandfather; 1752-1838), who was a Revolutionary War soldier. Jack Swilling (1830-1878; grandson of Thomas Farrar, 5th Great-Granduncle), who was the founder of Phoenix, Arizona, in 1868. His large farmhouse became a center of the early settlement. (Note: Swilling is not *a* founder of Phoenix, but *the* founder!)

anguish, I cried out to him, and he answered my call for help. In just a matter of months, everything

changed for the better. It's too personal to go into further, but I give thanks to God for his love and



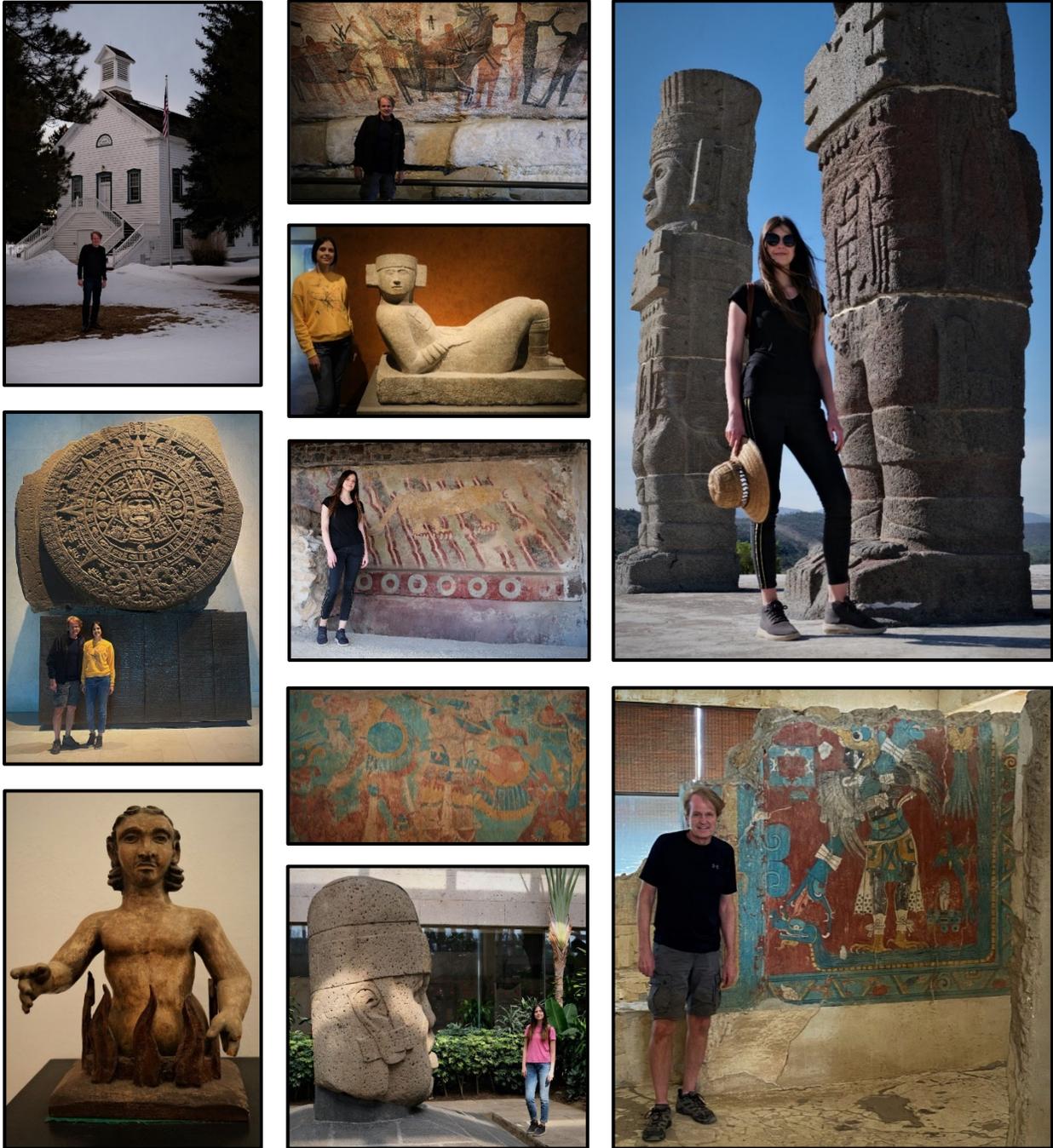
Top row: Rebecca and a Koala Bear in Symbio Wildlife Park, Australia. Rebecca feeding Wallabies and Kangaroos at the same park on May 12, 2019. Jonathan (age 1½) on a canon in Mexico in 1984. Middle: Design for the new Utah state flag as first proposed by my son, Jonathan Martin, and its appearance after he modified it and got it approved by the state flag committee. (Jonathan later got the state to change the star to one with five points.) We think the new flag is good, but we think it comes in second compared to the commemorative design. I'm at Ta Prohm in Angkor Wat, Cambodia, in 2019. Michael and Shaylee on Halloween in 2014; they married the following year. Jonathan, Sarah, and baby Michael in 1990. Ghostbuster Michael Martin in 1994. I'm (age 11) with my aunt, Mildred Bowles Brooks, and on the Battleship Texas with the San Jacinto Monument behind me in January 1965. Rebecca at the Door of Humility in Bethlehem; 2019.

merciful, and I will give thanks to him forever for the life he has given me.

mercy. Who can say enough about his wisdom and his goodness? He is magnif-

(For a more complete history of my life, see my other autobiography that is over 1,800 pages long.)

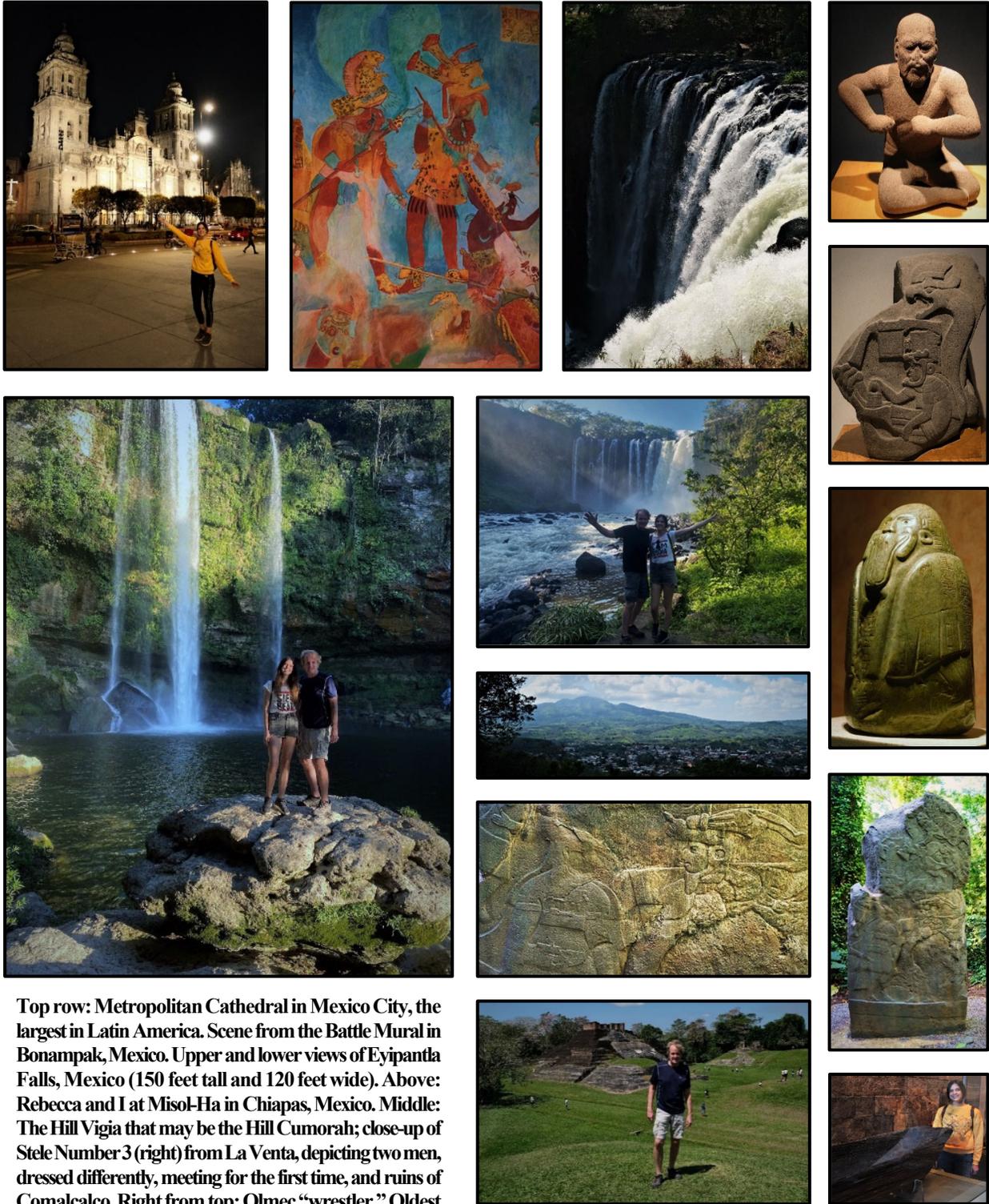
Today is July 14, 2023, and I couldn't resist adding a few more sentences and some new photographs



Top row from left: Pine Valley, Utah, historic church. Cave paintings from Sierra de San Francisco, Mexico. Rebecca on top of the main pyramid in Tula, Mexico, next to the 15-foot-tall stone sculptures, the Atlantes, 900 to 1200 A.D. Middle: The great Aztec Sun Stone. Rebecca next to a sacrificial altar, and by the Jaguar Mural on the Avenue of the Dead, Teotihuacan (100 B.C. to 650 A.D). The Battle Mural in the Cacaxta ruins, Mexico. Above, left to right: Man burning in Purgatory. Giant Olmec sculpture (900 B.C.) in Museo de Antropologia de Xalapa in east Mexico. The Bird Man Mural in Cacaxta. All the photographs on this page were taken in February 2023.

to this summary of my life. On February 21, 2023, I went on a ten-day trip to Mexico where I drove 1,900 miles from Mexico City to the ruins of Teotihuacan and Tula (north of the city), and visited the

Museo Nacional de Antropologia, one of the greatest museums in the world. East of Mexico City, we

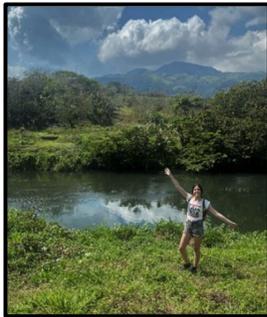


Top row: Metropolitan Cathedral in Mexico City, the largest in Latin America. Scene from the Battle Mural in Bonampak, Mexico. Upper and lower views of Eyipantla Falls, Mexico (150 feet tall and 120 feet wide). Above: Rebecca and I at Miso-Ha in Chiapas, Mexico. Middle: The Hill Vigia that may be the Hill Cumorah; close-up of Stele Number 3 (right) from La Venta, depicting two men, dressed differently, meeting for the first time, and ruins of Comalcalco. Right from top: Olmec "wrestler." Oldest depiction of Quetzalcoatl. The Tuxtla Statuette. Karen's boat in Mexico City (see page 30). All from February 2023.

saw the Hill Vigia that may be the Hill Cumorah, the huge Eyepaint Falls, the Parque-Museo de La

saw the Battle Mural in the ruins of Cacaxta, the Museo de Antropologia de Xalapa, and Vera Cruz. We

Venta in Villahermosa, the ruins of Palenque, and waterfall of Misol-Ha, which is set in a tropical

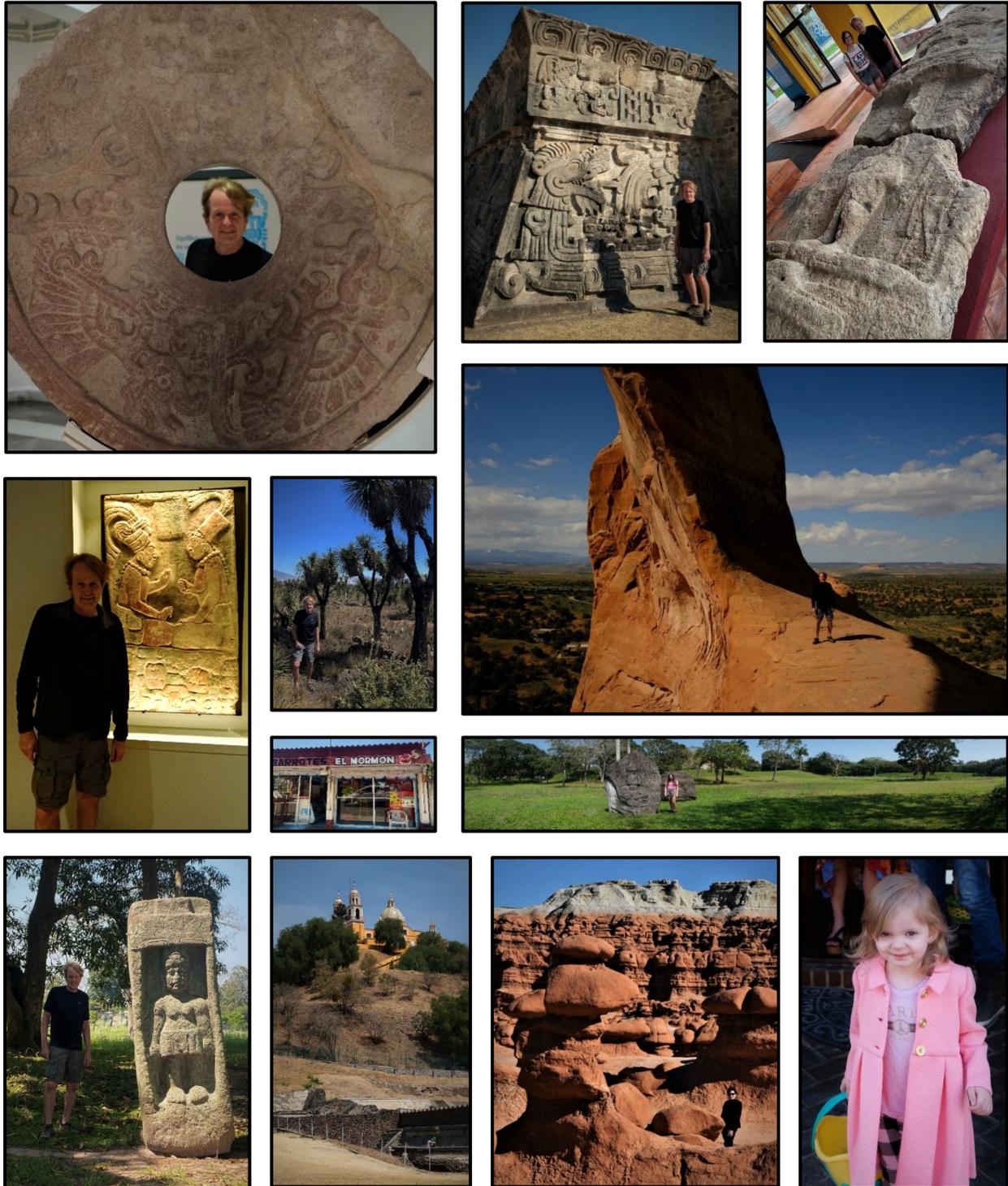


Top: The ruins of Tonina in Chiapas, Mexico. Sculpture from Tonina, showing a skeleton holding the severed head of a ruler from Palenque about 700 A.D. I'm at Misol-Ha Waterfall in Chiapas, Mexico. **Middle:** The Palace in Palenque with its "observation tower" (226 B.C. to 799 A.D.). Rebecca near the Hill Vigia that may be the Hill Cumorah. Agua Azul Cascades in Chiapas, Mexico. **Above and right:** View from main highway of a rain forest in Chiapas. Volcanic mountains of Pico de Orizaba and Popocatepetl (right). Puebla, Mexico; all 2023.

forest. We drove into Chiapas and saw the tallest pyramid in Mexico at the archeo-

logical site of Tonina, and Agua Azul Cascades. We saw other ancient sites as well, including La Venta

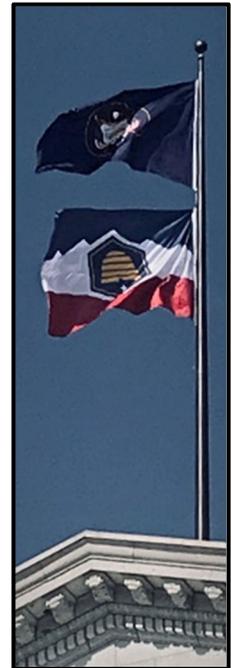
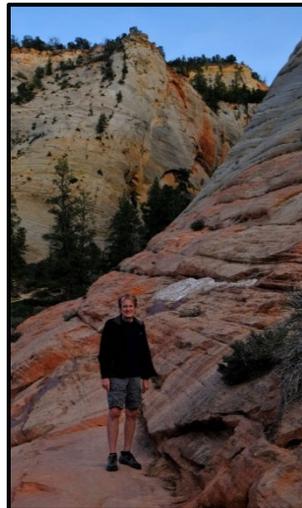
and Xochicalco, and the two highest mountains in Mexico: Pico de Ozizaba and Popocatepel. Puebla



Top: I'm looking through an ancient ball court ring at Xochicalco, Mexico. Pyramid of the Plumed Serpent (Quetzalcoatl) in Xochicalco, and a huge monument at Tres Zapotes (1000 to 400 B.C.). **Middle:** Mayan relief with its color. Joshua tree forest. El Mormon store in town of La Venta, Mexico. I'm standing on Wilson Arch, Utah; 2023. **Above, left to right:** Monument at La Venta (panoramic in middle). Great pyramid at Cholula, Mexico. Karen in Goblin Valley, Utah, in 2019. Maddilyn Martin at Easter in 2023.

was a nice city to visit and is home to one of the best archeological museums in Mexico. This was my eighth

trip to Mexico, but Rebecca’s first. We took some chances, but everything worked out well.



Top, from left: First day our new flag flew over the State Capitol (above) and flag raising ceremony on May 17, 2023—I’m with Senator Dan McCay. Jonathan interviewed by ABC News. Jonathan and his videographer. Sam Houston monument in Houston, and my family at Bombay House on March 16, 2023. Middle: My 50th high school reunion—standing with fellow students as we did together in 1973. Rock formation near Vernal, Utah. Petrified log in National Park. Checkerboard Mesa in Zion, Arches National Park, and Death Valley; 2023.

A week after I got home, I went on another 2,000-mile trip with my friend Bobbie Pekar and his sons,

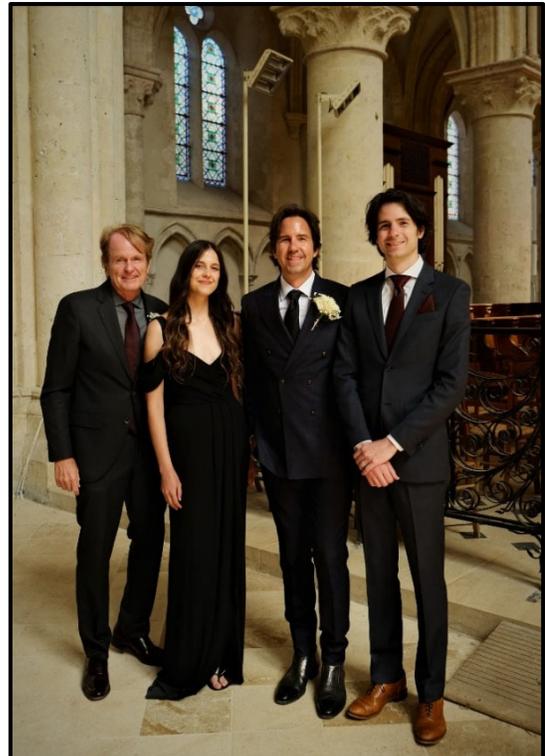
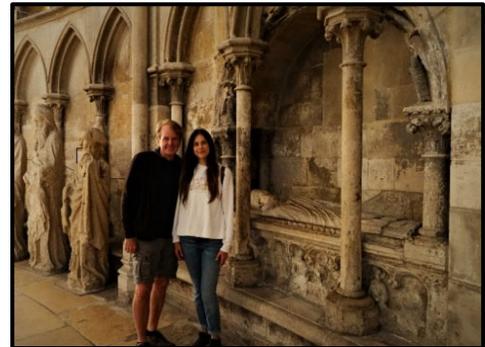
Alex and Jon, and then in May I went with my family to France and Spain where I drove an additional



Top, from left: I'm holding my grandchildren on March 16, 2023. Dolmen in central France. Second tallest menhir in France, and Pointe de Corsen, the farthest point west on mainland France (middle). I'm at Minute Maid Park by a Houston Astros World Series championship billboard. Two scenes on the Bayeux Tapestry, depicting the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Depiction of Geoffrey Plantagenet, my 29th Great-Grandfather, from 1155 in La Mans, France. Interior of Amiens Cathedral, the largest in France. Lascaux IV. Grand Canyon, and Rebecca by a dolmen near Carnac, France. All photographs were taken in 2023.

3,700 miles. I've been to France at least 15 times, but this was one of my best trips ever. In all, Rebecca

and I walked almost 100 miles, visited the farthest point west in France, and the farthest point east in



Top row: I'm at Mount Saint Michel, Normandy, France. Bison and other animals that I saw in situ in Font-de-Gaume, France, and images from the Lascaux cave (17,000 years old). **Middle:** Rebecca at entrance to a Neolithic passage tomb. Table des Marchand, which dates from 5,000 B.C. Recumbent tomb statue of Hugh of Amiens, the oldest in France (1164 A.D.). Karen, Emily Ashby, Jonathan, and Becca in Provins, France, and I'm with my daughter, Rebecca, and sons in Provins in June 2023. (I'm six feet tall, but my sons are taller.) The church dates from 1160. Provins is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Spain. We saw four castles, eleven Neolithic structures/sites, ten cathedrals, three ancient caves, four abbeys, three museums, three battlefields, two palaces,

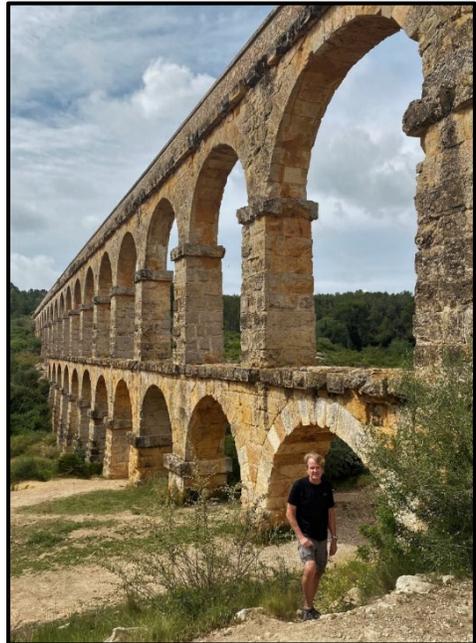
and seven major Roman structures/sites. We even went to Euro Disney and participated in the largest



Top left: Jonathan and Emily in Saint Quiriace Collegiate Church, Provins, France, for their wedding celebration on June 3, 2023. I took this photograph, and it's my favorite of them together. Middle: Jonathan Thomas Martin and Michael Richard Martin, my sons—Emily and Rebecca are good friends. Above: Rebecca holding an owl, and Emily holding a bald eagle—on this day you didn't want to be a mouse—and an elegant photograph of Jonathan and Emily. Left: I took this picture of this magnificent bald eagle in flight; June 2023.

medieval festival in Europe. What was most important though was the marriage celebration of my

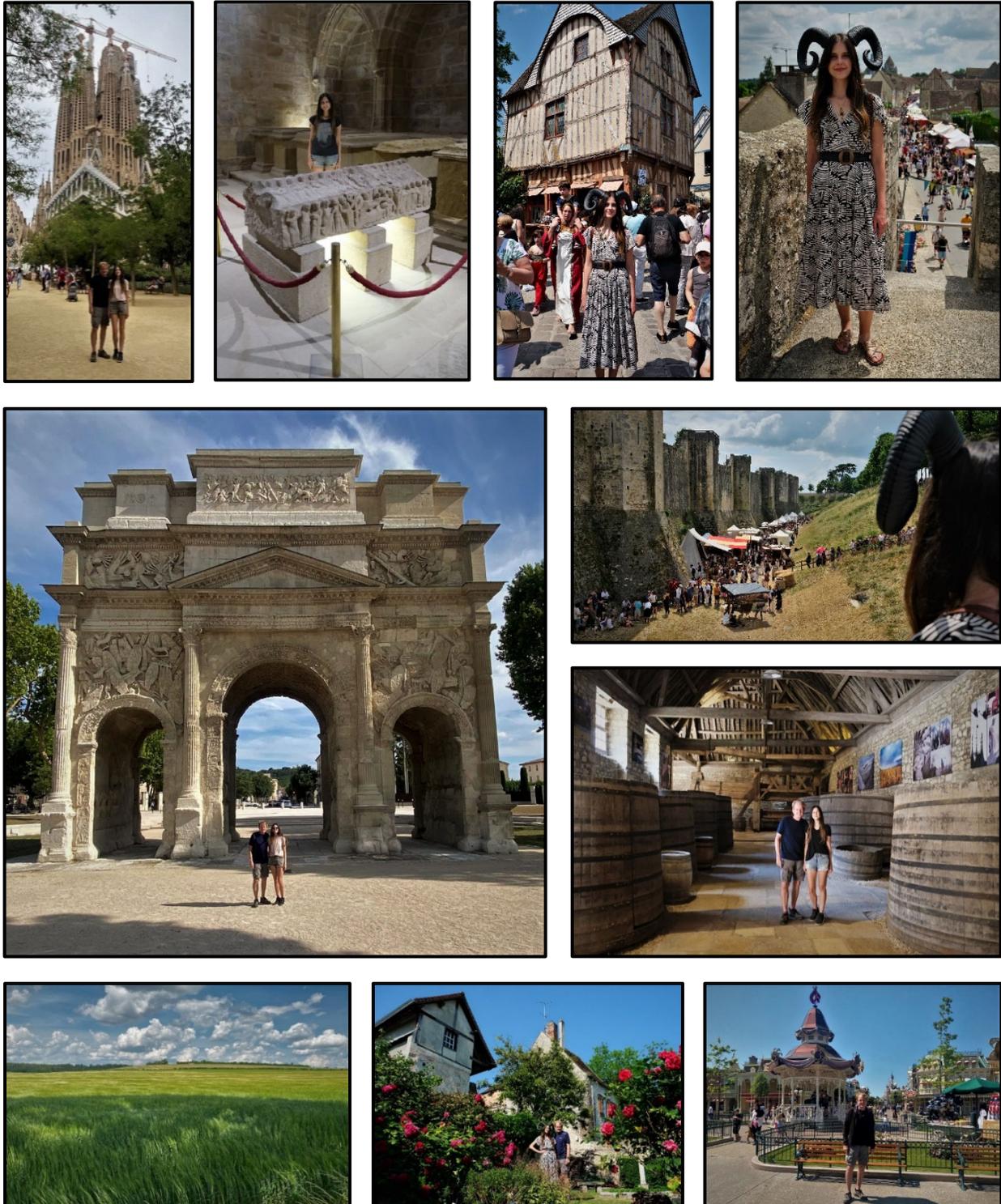
oldest son, Jonathan, to Emily Smith, in the 13th century Cathedral in Provins, France. It was the best



Top: My son Michael is an excellent dancer. Michael and Jonathan in Provins, France, and a staged cutup scene at Jonathan’s wedding. **Middle:** Casket in which El Cid (31st Great-Grandfather; 1041-1099) was buried, in Burgos Cathedral (center). Cap de Creus, the farthest point east on the Spanish mainland. **Middle:** Saint-Jean chapel, which has the best medieval murals in the Pope’s Palace, Avignon, France. Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, Spain, and Les Ferreres Aqueduct (27 B.C. to 14 A.D.). **Left:** Site of Battle of Alesia; 2023.

wedding celebration that I had ever been to, and we are so glad that Jonathan chose Emily. They

have been dating for about three years and she has become a wonderful part of our family. I was



Top: Sagrada Familia. Tomb of Dona Blanca de Navarra (Queen of Castile; 1133-1156; my 28th Great-Grandmother), and Becca, wearing her horns at the Provins Medieval Festival. Middle: Triumphal Arch in Orange France. Walls of Provins, and historic wine vats in Chateau du Clos De Vougeot (1551). Above: A peaceful field in France. Provins, and Euro Disney; 2023.

impressed by how many of Jonathan's friends flew to France to participate in the celebration. It was

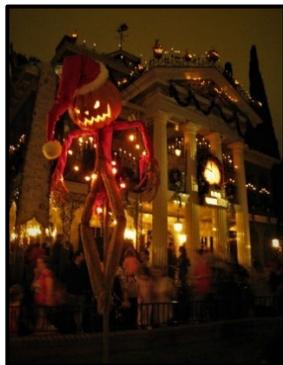
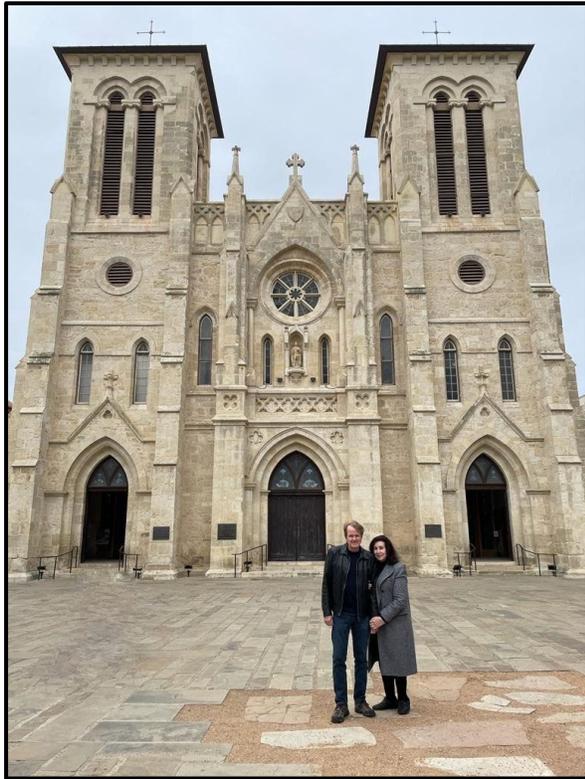
the height of the travel season to Europe, so car rentals and flights were more expensive than normal and yet they still came.



Top: Rebecca and I at the Trocadero in Paris on June 12, 2023. Forge of Fontenay (1220 A.D.), the first metallurgical factory in Europe. **Middle:** The Saere-Coeur (Sacred Heart Basilica) in Paris. **Left:** A tired Karen Martin. Jack's Beanstalk, and the Runaway Train (above) in Euro Disney. **Above right:** I'm walking down an alleyway between half-timbered buildings from the 16th century in Troyes, France (also top right); June 2023. (Henry V of England married Catherine of France in Troyes in 1420.)

I'm grateful that I got to see Europe again. On these journeys I always meet some nice people. In general, I've been blessed to see much of the world and to visit many ancient sites; of course, travel is an important part of my life. Karen loves it too and is a brave adventurer. She has been that way ever since she took out a loan when she was 23 years old to explore Central and

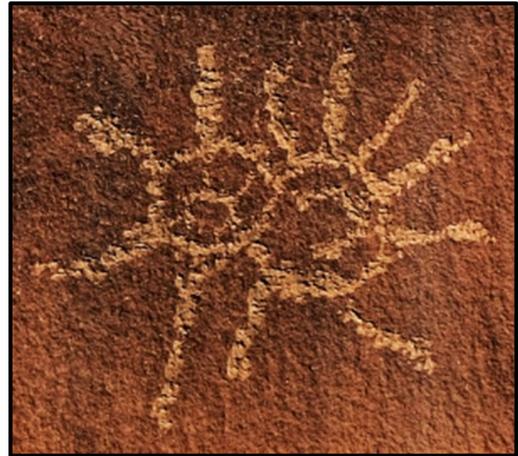
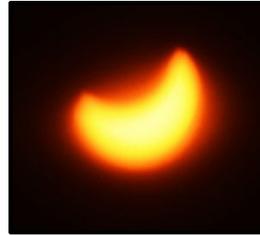
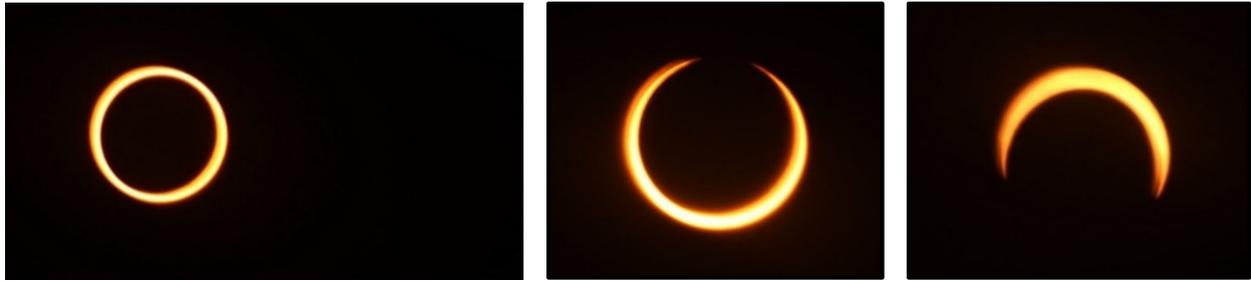
South America for three months. She went by herself and I've always admired her for having the courage to actively pursue her dreams.



Top: I'm with Karen at the Cathedral of San Fernando (the oldest cathedral in the United States, founded in 1731) in downtown San Antonio, Texas, on December 18, 2022, and Karen kissing a dinosaur (should I be jealous?) in Moab, Utah, in 2019. **Middle:** Two Haunted Mansion scenes in October 2010. Original first scene of the Bayeux Tapestry and Karen's exact copy that she sewed in 2005. **Above:** I'm in Palmyra, New York, in 1983, and by a redwood tree in 2012. **Left:** Mission San Jose (1720) near San Antonio; 2023.

Okay, today is January 8, 2026, and I feel compelled to once again add something to my abbreviated history. The most newsworthy story, and the one that affected everyone living in Utah, was the official adoption of a new state flag on March 9, 2024. Jonathan designed the flag, but

even today, few people know this because to get the bill passed, we had to make it appear that the State

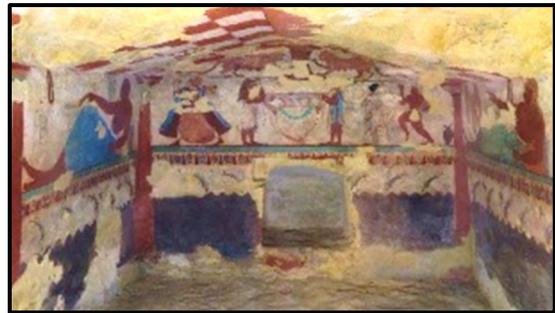


Flag Committee was responsible for the change; such is politics.

Top: I took these photographs of a complete annular (i.e. ring shaped) eclipse October 14, 2023, near Delta, Utah—top middle the moon is coming and on right it is going. Second row: Total eclipse of sun at Dierks, Arkansas (near Hope)—middle the moon is coming, second going, and third a total eclipse; April 8, 2024. Becca with her great-aunt Lee Ann Sharp Heard, and with her cousin, Valerie Kestersen during the total eclipse. Newspaper Rock (Utah) image depicting an eclipse (2,000-years-old). Rebecca at her ancestor’s graves in Little Rock; 2024. Sheriff Joel Kesterson (Valerie’s husband), and the Old Mill in North Little Rock; 2024.

(Mark Brooks and Senator Daniel McCay gave input to Jonathan for the final design, but as can be

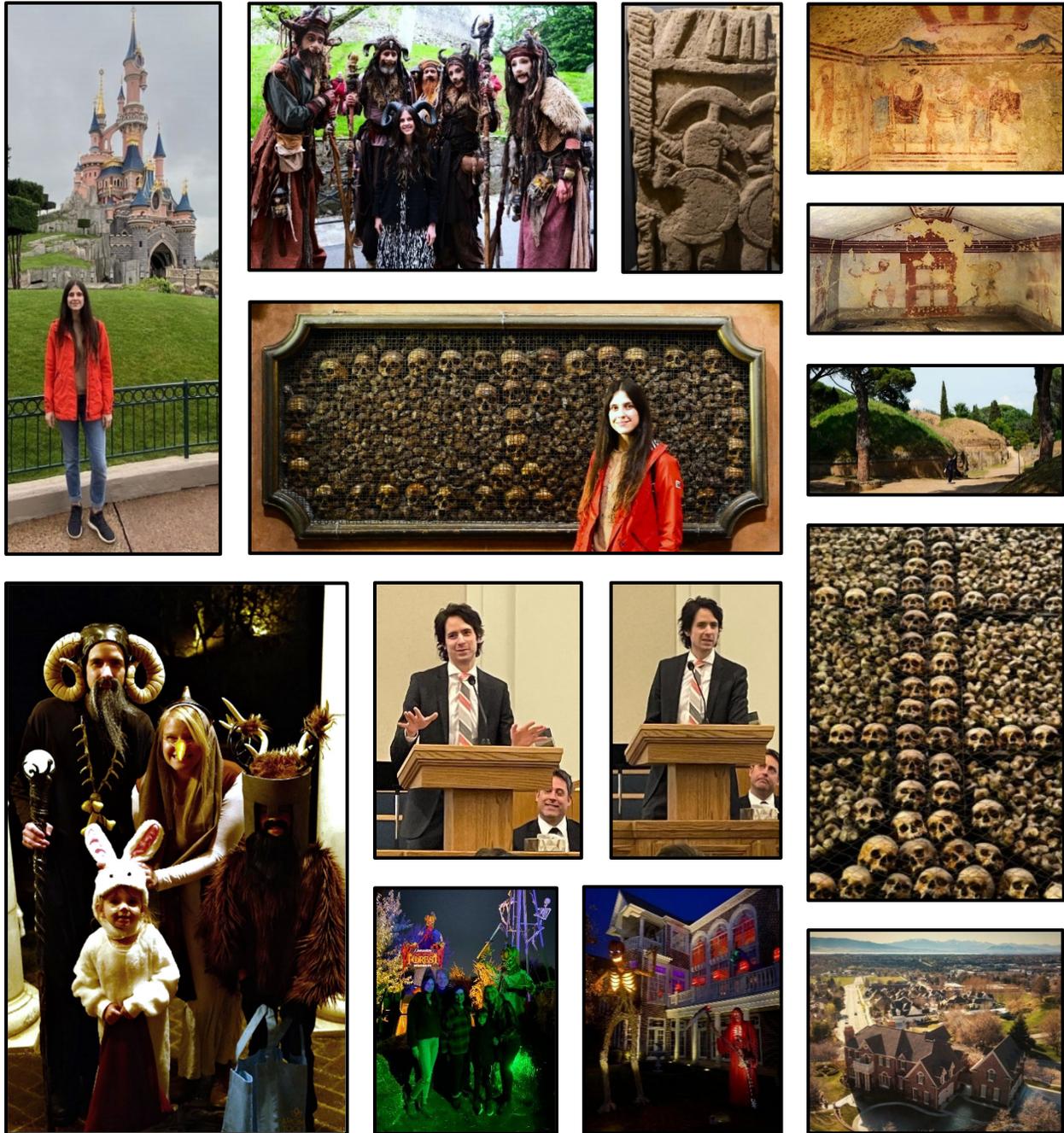
seen on page 36, the new flag is overwhelmingly Jonathan's design.) Our victory gave us a special



This page from top left: I'm with Karen, Rebecca, Jonathan, and Emily at church on Christmas Eve 2023. Two close-ups of Karen; December 31, 2023. Karen and I at the Cinemark theater; January 5, 2024, our 47th anniversary. I'm sitting on a sleigh in Riverwoods; December 2023. Greek temple in Paestum, Italy (450 B.C.); 2024. Interior of two Etruscan tombs in Tarquinia (6th century B.C. to 3rd century B.C.). Rebecca and I after the Festival of Colors; March 2024. City-like Etruscan tombs in Cerveteri, Italy; June 2024.

feeling of accomplishment. I was the first person in the state to formally lobby for a new flag, the first

to propose a specific design and submit a bill based on that design, and the first to create an organization



Top, from left: Rebecca at Euro Disney and among mystical creatures at Provins, France; 2024. Etruscan carving and tombs in Tarquinia and Cerveteri; Italy; June 2024. Five thousand people are buried in the “Bone Chapel” in Milan, Italy; 2024. Michael, Shaylee, Maddilyn, and Houston (Monte Python), Halloween 2023. Michael speaking in church; February 25, 2024. I’m with Rebecca, Karen, Shaylee and Houston in the Haunted Forest on October 24, 2023, and the street view of my house on Halloween night in 2023 (we had over 600 visitors this evening). Aerial view of my house in 2021. We have great views of the valley.

and to spend my own money for the change (see pages 17-18). It took five years, but we succeeded, and my own son designed the flag that now waves over every corner of the state! Most people will never

know our role in all of this, but both Senator Dan McCay and Senator Curt Bramble honored us by



Top, from left: I'm taking a photograph at FilmQuest; November 5, 2023. Leaning Tower of Pisa. Milan Cathedral. A bakery and an amphitheater at Ostia Antica, Rome's port city; June 5, 2024. Two villas in Herculaneum (center). Important street in Pompeii that leads to the House of Mysteries (red rooms). Cast of man who died in the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius on August 24, 79 A.D. Karen and I at the base of Mt. Vesuvius (which is still considered an active volcano). A rich man's villa, and a two-story brothel and one of its rooms in Pompeii. The brothel was one of the most popular attractions in the ruins of the famous city; June 6, 2024. (Pompeii had dozens of other brothels as well.) It is no exaggeration to say that Pompeii and Herculaneum are among the best ancient sites to visit in the world.

saying that this never would have happened without us. The flag is now ranked by some organizations as one of the five best-looking state flags in America! (Before, we were ranked thirtieth.)

On October 16, 2023, Rebecca and I saw a total annular eclipse of the sun. We drove down to near

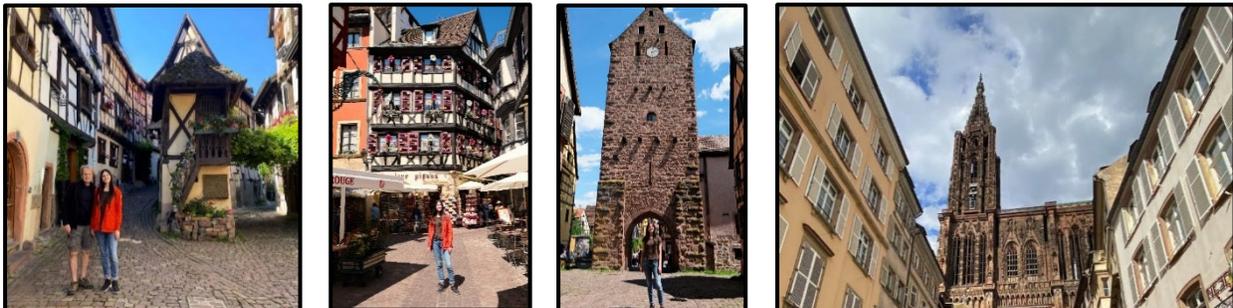


Delta, Utah, and I got many perfect photographs. It is the next best thing to seeing a total eclipse, which I saw for the first time on August 17, 2017, in Idaho (see page 10) and again on April 8, 2024, in Arkansas (see page 49). Rebecca was going to school in England in 2017, so she missed the first one, but we made it a point to drive to Arkansas to see

Top, from left: Trajan's Column (completed in 113 A.D.) that shows men rowing ships, castles, town walls, two heads on pikes, and Trajan addressing his soldiers. The famous Colosseum of Rome (built 70-80 A.D.). The Arch of Constantine (315 A.D.), which is the largest surviving Roman triumphal arch. The Arch of Titus and its depiction of the sack of the Jerusalem temple in 70 A.D. (note the Jewish menorah). The Sistine Chapel ceiling (1508-1512) and The Last Judgment (1536-1541) both by Michelangelo. The Pantheon (126 A.D.) and Column of Marcus Aurelius (193 A.D.); see detail. All in Rome; 2024.

the second one. The clouds went away just minutes before totality, so we were able to get some good

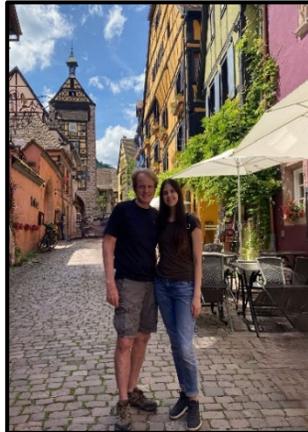
views of the eclipse. Rebecca was able to meet her great-aunt, Lee Ann Sharp Heard (1934-2025), and



Top, from left: Main square in Siena, Italy. Sienna Cathedra. Monteriggioni, Italy (which is completely surrounded by walls built 1214-1219). Towers in San Gimignano, Italy. Medieval fresco. Florence Italy. UNESCO rock art from Capo di Ponte in northern Italy. Main square and street (above) in Eguisheim, France. Colmar, France. Riquewihir, France, and the cathedral in Strasbourg, France, that was the tallest building in the world for 227 years (1647-1874). All June 2024. (Hitler visited the Strasbourg cathedral after he defeated France in 1940.)

her cousin Valerie Heard Kestersen (born 1963) (see pages 49). Along the way, we saw one of the best parts of Route 66 that goes through the corner of Kansas and spent a day visiting the homes and cemeteries where our

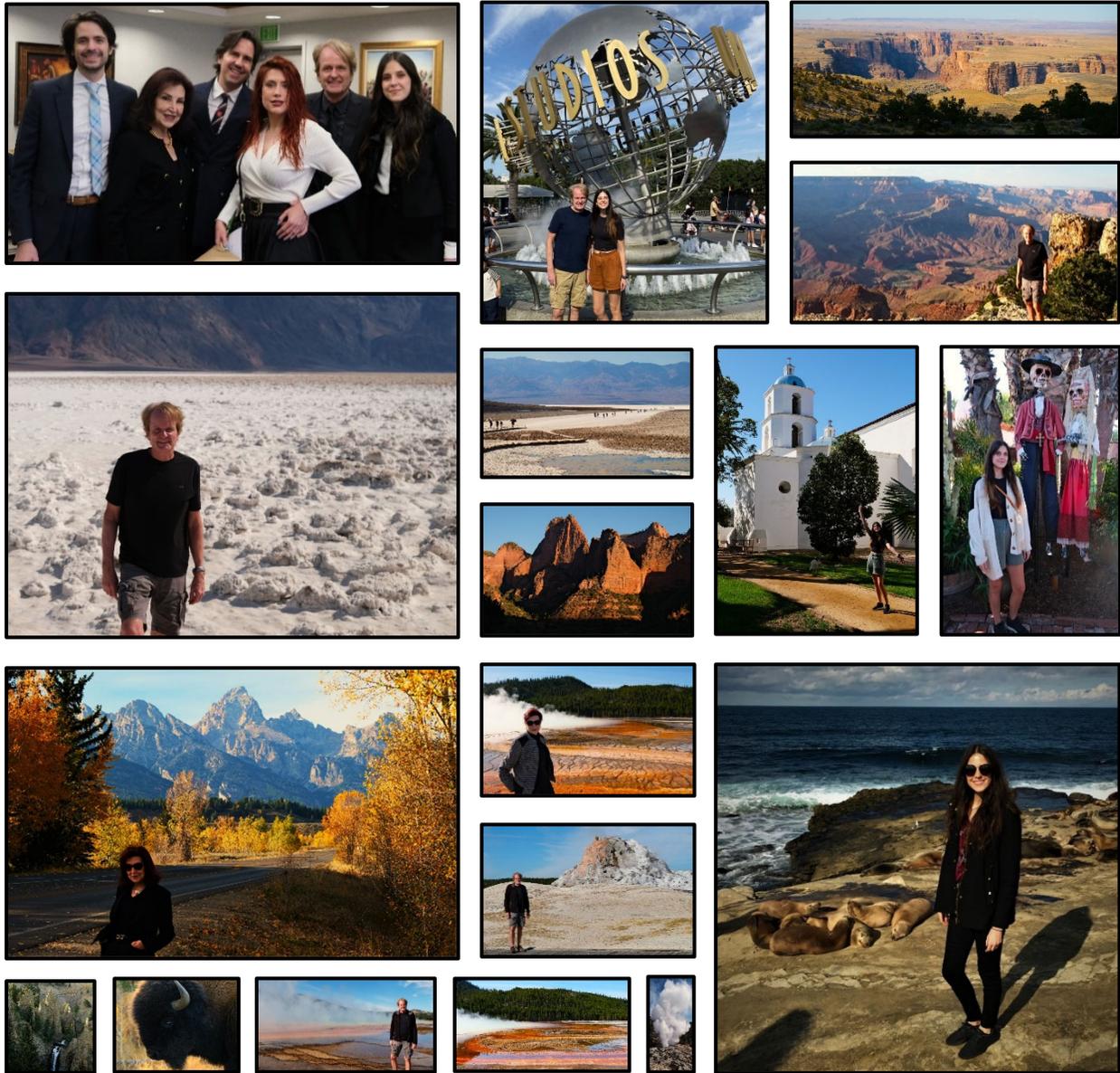
relatives lived and are buried in Little Rock. We also saw the Old Mill in North Little Rock that my brother always loved to visit.



Top, from left: The Chatel Gate and World War I monument at Verdun (the battle lasted 11 months in 1916, the longest of the war). The Douaumont Ossuary at Verdun (130,000 unidentified French and German soldiers are buried here). Rebecca at entrance to secret passageway of wall in Provins, France. Actual World War I trenches (1914 to 1918) at La Main de Massiges that have been restored to their original appearance. Rebecca and I in Riluewühr, Alsace, France. Trench in Verdun and Fort Douaumont (Verdun), which fell and then cost the lives of 100,000 French soldiers to retake it. All in June 2024.

We had successful Halloween nights in 2023-2025 with more than 700 children and over a hundred adults coming to our door, and we gave out over 900 bags of candy. I purchased more giant figures and had

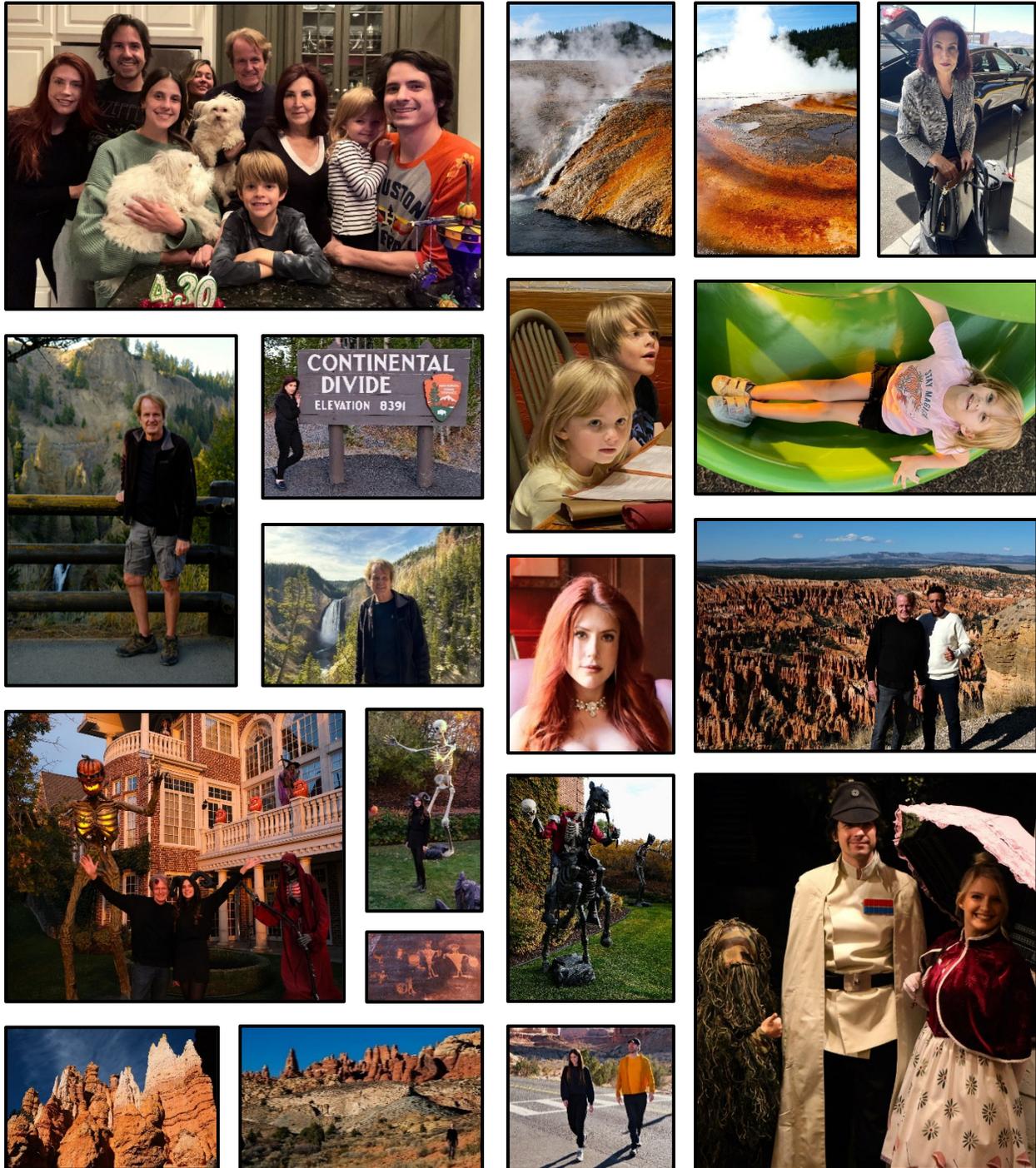
fourteen on display: Pumpkinhead, Grim Reaper, Wolfman, Giant Spider, Flying Witch, Giant Clown,



Top, from left: Michael, Karen, Jonathan, Emily, me, and Rebecca after Emily's baptism on March 15, 2024. It was a happy occasion (Rick Macy took this picture). Rebecca and I at Universal Studios for the first time on October 7, 2024. Little Colorado River Canyon and the Grand Canyon (which is up to 18 miles wide, over 270 miles long and has a maximum depth of 6,093 feet) on October 4, 2024. The Devil's Golf Course in Death Valley and Badwater Basin the lowest point in North America; October 6, 2024. Kolob Canyon, Utah. Mission San Luis Rey, California; 2024. Day of Dead characters in Old Town San Diego; October 2024. Karen at Grand Teton National Park and Grand Prismatic Spring, and me at White Dome Geyser. Rebecca by the sea lions in La Jolla Cove, California. Five additional scenes from Yellowstone in October 2024: Tower Falls, a buffalo walking five feet from my car, Grand Prismatic Spring, and Steamboat Geyser, the tallest (300-foot) geyser in the world.

Giant Woodman, two Giant Skeletons, Grave Robber, Headless Horseman, Nightcrawler, Plague Doctor, and a fifteen-foot-tall scary Scarecrow; the kids loved it. Dozens of children and adults said we were their favorite house. (Our house is situated on a rise next to a main road, making it easy for literally thousands of people to see our figures as they drive by.)

In the summer of 2024 Rebecca, Karen and I traveled through southeast France and saw Vezelay Abbey,



Top, from left: My family celebrating my 70th birthday on October 15, 2023. Grand Prismatic Spring. Karen at Salt Lake City Airport; September 2024. I'm at Tower Fall on my 71st birthday; 2024. Continental Divide in Yellowstone. Maddie and Houston at Bombay House in Provo on August 30, 2024. Maddilyn on slide at park near my home; September 2024. Emily Martin as character in film; 2024. I'm with Francesco Straziota at Bryce Point in Bryce Canyon, Utah, on October 28, 2024. Lower Falls in Yellowstone. Halloween; 2024. Houston, Michael, and Shaylee on Halloween 2024. Bryce Canyon formation, and Devil's Garden in Arches; 2024.

Alesia battlefield (52 B.C), the source of the Seine River, and the city of Dijon. We went to Disney

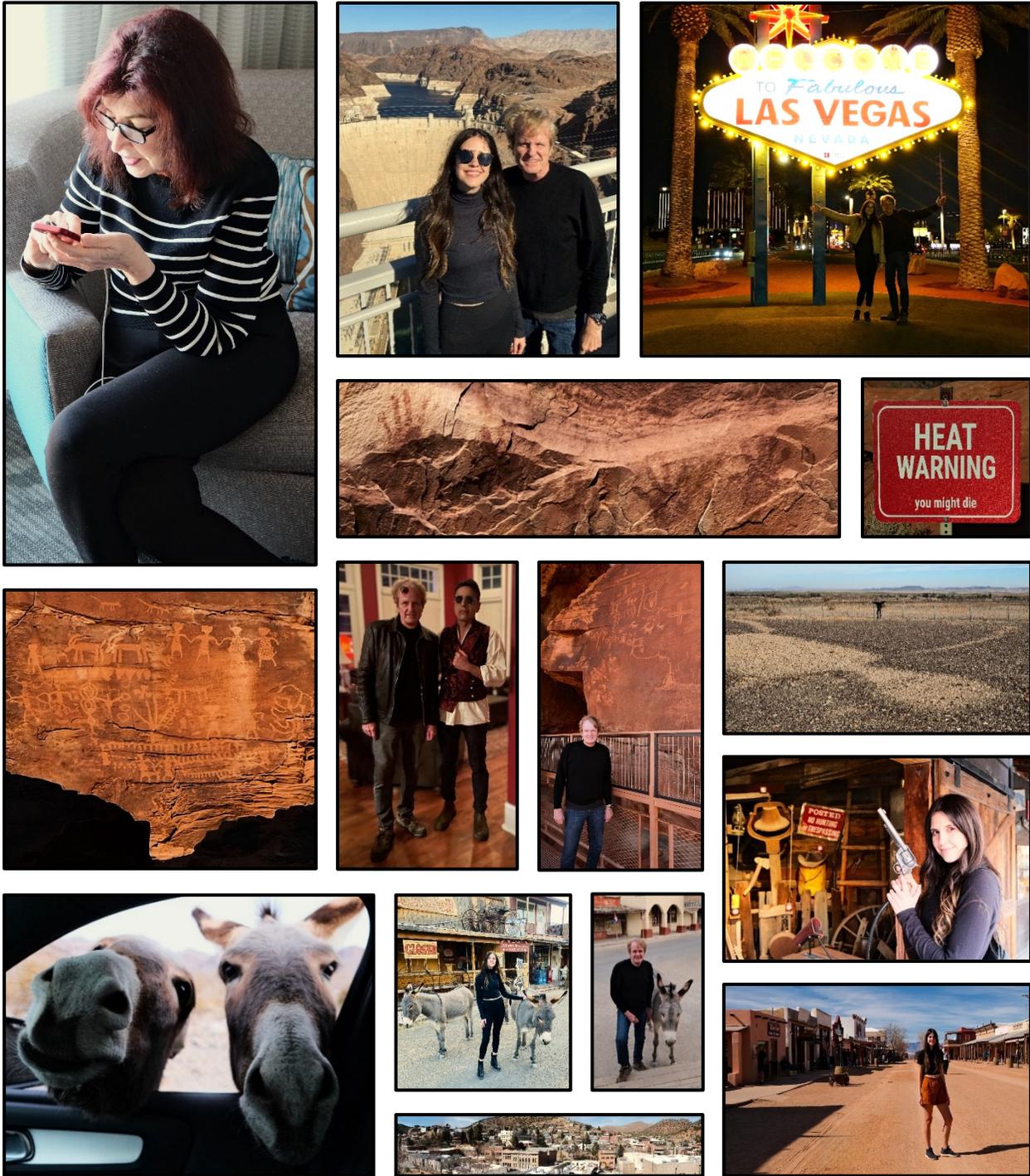
Paris and the largest medieval festival in Europe in Provins, France, and then drove pass Mt. Blanc



Top, from left: I'm with Gary Reimer and Rebecca at Delicate Arch. Bear petroglyph on Colorado River near Moab. Close-up picture of bear feet and hand image. Newspaper Rock in southern Utah. Karen at Parowan Gap Petroglyphs, Utah, January 5, 2025. Emily at FilmQuest 2024. My family on Thanksgiving Day 2024. Another view of Newspaper Rock. Shaylee holding Houston. Michael and Shaylee, Thanksgiving 2024. I'm in Lion's Mouth Cave, near Cedar City; January 5, 2025. Alister at Texas Renaissance Festival; 2024. I'm 10,400 feet up at Cedar Breaks, Utah, on January 4, 2025.

(the tallest mountain in Europe) into Italy and visited the "bone chapel," where the bones of over 5,000

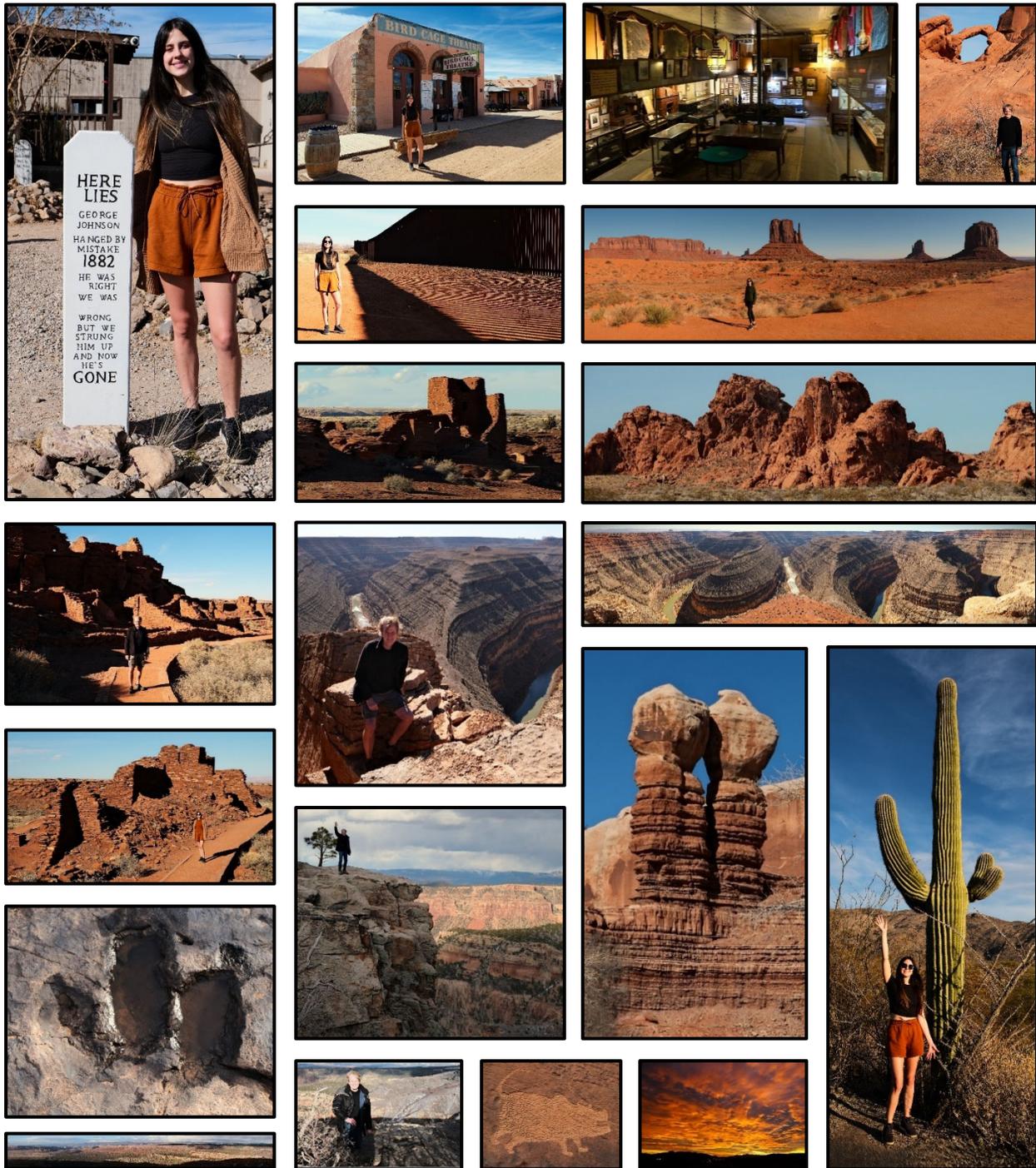
individuals are displayed, and Milan Cathedral. We saw Pisa again and for the first time visited the



Top, from left: Karen on cellphone. Rebecca and I at Hoover Dam, and in front of the famous “Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas” sign. Five red painted handprints in Red Rock Canyon, and a warning sign in Valley of Fire State Park, Nevada (it was 104 degrees at dusk). Petroglyphs in Valley of Fire. Francesco Straziota and I, Halloween night, 2024. Giant human figure near Blythe, California, that measures 105.6 feet tall and 91.8 feet wide (perhaps 2,900 years old). Donkey invasion in Oatman, Arizona, and Becca at a shooting range in Oatman, Bisbee, Arizona. Becca in historic downtown Tombstone, Arizona; February 2025.

Etruscan tombs in Tarquinia (6th century B.C. to 3rd century B.C.) and the city-like Etruscan tombs in

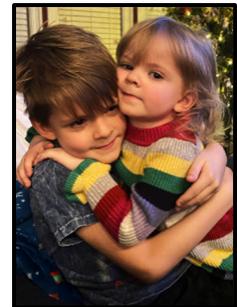
Cerveteri, Italy. The next day we walked through the ruins of Ostia Antica, Rome's port city, the ruins



Top, from left: Rebecca at Boot Hill Cemetery and historic Bird Cage Theater in Tombstone. Arch in Valley of Fire. Wall at Naco, Arizona, separating USA from Mexico. Monument Valley, Utah/Arizona. Ruins of Wupatki National Monument that date from 1040 A.D. Red Rock Canyon, Nevada. Goosenecks State Park, Utah. Dinosaur footprint at Bull Canyon overlook, Utah. Navajo Twin Rocks. Image from Rochester Panel, Utah. Rebecca with giant saguaro cactus in Arizona. All in February 2025.

of Herculaneum and Pompeii that were destroyed by Mount Vesuvius in 79 A.D, and saw the city of

Paestum, with its three great Greek temples from 560 to 480 B.C. We went to the excellent museum



in Naples, Italy, and then visited famous sites in Rome, including the Colosseum, the Arch of Constantine, Trajan’s Column, the Arch of Titus, the Sistine Chapel, the Pantheon, the Column of Marcus Aurelius, and the Vatican. The next day we

Top, from left: I’m with Karen, Jonathan, Emily, and Becca after church on December 22, 2024. Rochester Rock Art Panel (Utah) and Becca at Festival of Colors (2025). Molen Reef Petroglyphs. Karen in Castle Valley, Utah. I’m next to a dinosaur footprint above Castle Valley at 8,500 feet high; March 15 and 16, 2025. Michael’s 36th birthday and Maddilyn’s fifth birthday; May 14 and 15, 2025. Intestine Man pictograph (2000 to 6000 years old) near Moab; 2025. Houston hugging his sister (2023).

visited Siena Cathedral, saw Monteriggioni and its encompassing walls, climbed up the tallest tower

in San Gimignano, and walked many miles through Florence, Italy, where we saw the sun set over the Arno River.

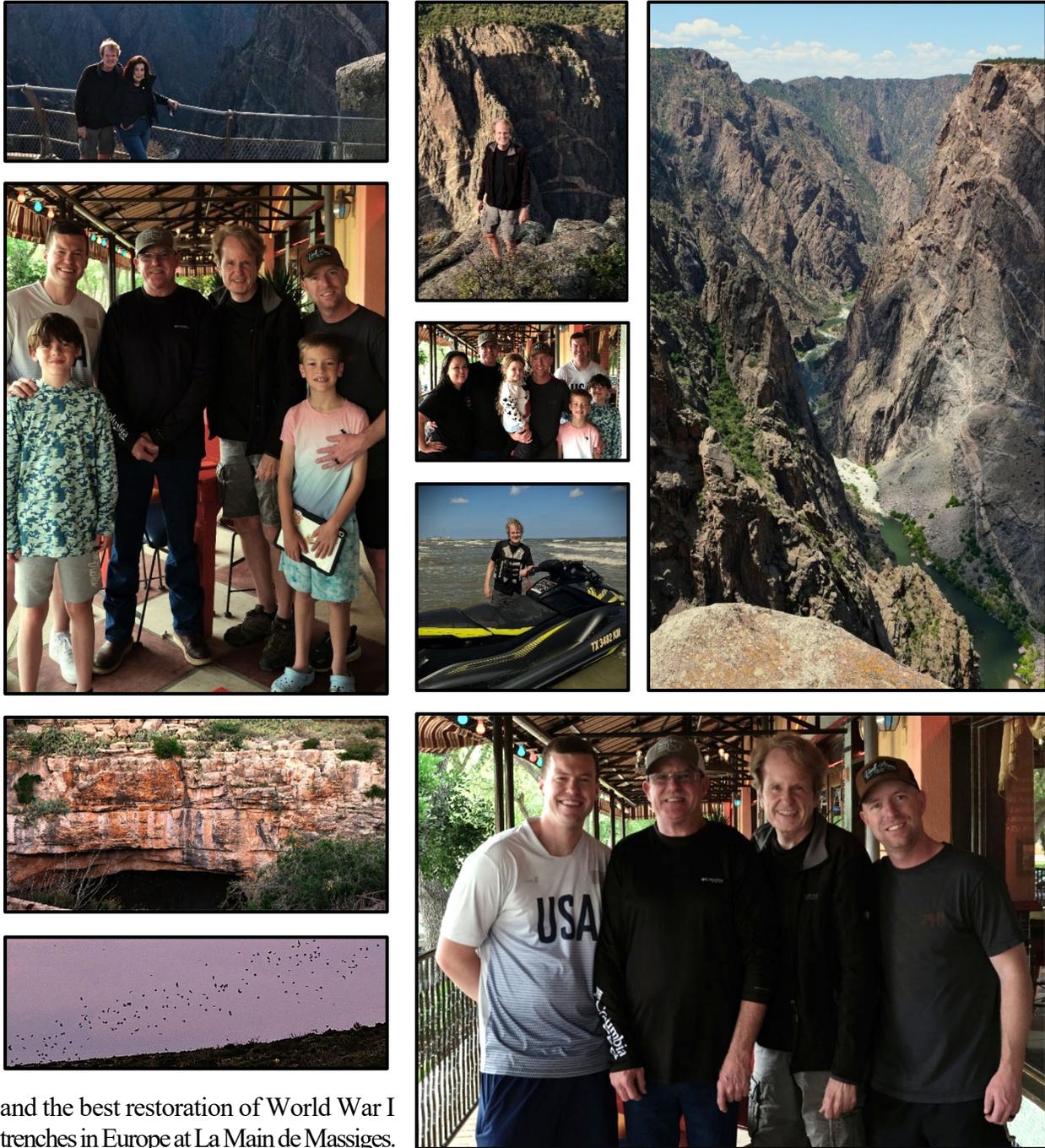


We saw rock art at the UNESCO World Heritage Site near Capo di Ponte in

Top, from left: Celebration of Utah's new state flag at the Capitol building on March 9, 2024. Jonathan designed the flag with some input from Mark Brooks and Senator Daniel McCay (right). It's interesting to think that what Jonathan and I have done will affect the image of the state for years to come, but most people will never know it. Michael and his family on April 10, 2025, just before leaving on a Mexican cruise. Karen next to a snake petroglyph in the San Rafael Swell, Utah, on her 73rd birthday. Dinosaur tracks at Clayton Lake, New Mexico; May 31, 2025. Head of Sinbad pictograph (at least 3000 years old), Utah; October 10, 2023.

northern Italy that is 9,000 years old, before crossing over the Swiss Alps and spending the night in Alsace, France.

The next days we saw several colorful villages in Alsace, Strasbourg, France, the battlefields around Verdun,

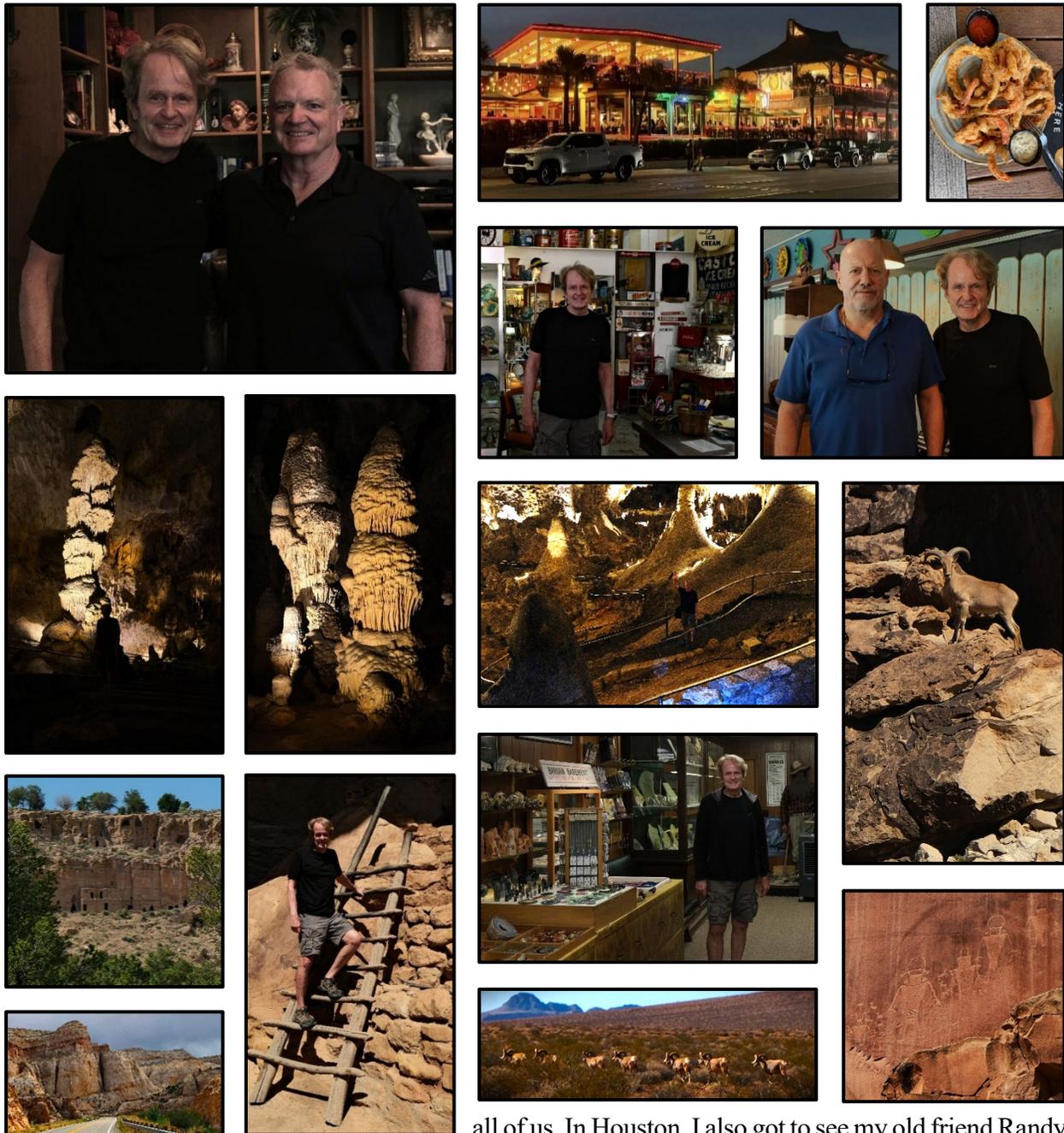


and the best restoration of World War I trenches in Europe at La Main de Massiges.

Top, from left: Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Colorado, on May 30 and October 11, 2025. I'm with my nephews, Hunter (left; wearing USA shirt) and Dustin Sharp (right; born June 6, 1988), my half-brother, Jody Sharp (born September 5, 1966), and Luke Tyler Sharp (Dustin's son on left, born February 2, 2014) and Brooks Willoughby (son of Dustin's sister) on June 1, 2025. It was the first time that we had met and only my second time to see Jody Sharp. I rode a Jet Ski at Galveston on June 2, 2025. I saw half a million bats leave the entrance of Carlsbad Caverns on June 6, 2025 (above left), which is a magical sight.

In June 2025 I was inspired to take a driving trip to Houston instead of flying. This motivated me to locate my half-brother, Jody Sharp. I succeeded in finding him and arranged to meet him and two of

his sons, Hunter and Dustin Sharp, in Dallas. We had a great reunion, and it was a happy experience for



all of us. In Houston, I also got to see my old friend Randy

Top, from left: I'm with my old friend Randy Miller in Houston. The Spot and my favorite meal in Galveston. I'm in an antique store in downtown Galveston and with my cousin, Lincoln Davis, in west Texas. Formations in Carlsbad Caverns and a Mountain Goat in Hueco Tanks State Park, Texas. Puye Cliff Dwellings in northern New Mexico. Highway 24 that goes through Capitol Reef National Park. Step House ruins in Mesa Verde National Park. Rock shop in Ouray, Colorado, where I purchased my Father's Day gift. Line of seven Big Horn Sheep in Valley of Fire State Park, Nevada. Petroglyphs in Fruita, Capitol Reef National Park. All these photographs were taken in June 2025. In fourteen days, I drove 5,000 miles from Provo to Houston and back again.

Miller, my nephew David Moran, and my cousin, Lincoln Davis (in west Texas). I did some business and then spent three days, off and on, in Galveston where I ate shrimp and onion rings at the Spot, my

favorite seafood restaurant. During this trip I stopped in northeast New Mexico and saw one of the best



Top, from left: I'm at San Miquel Church in Santa Fe, New Mexico, the "Oldest church structure in the USA" (1610). View of Prague from Charles Bridge. Priest's hands on gravestone in Jewish Cemetery, where over 100,000 persons are buried under 12,000 visible tombstones. Lennon wall. Main square in Prague. Close-ups of two Viking picture stones in the National Museum of Sweden in Stockholm. Nyhavn Pier in Copenhagen, Denmark. Viking runestone. All from July 2025.

dinosaur track sites in America at Clayton Lake State Park, and saw Carlsbad Caverns National Park, where I arrived in time to see half a million bats fly out of the main entrance at dusk on June 6, 2025. Also, I saw "the oldest church structure in America" (1610) in Santa Fe, New Mexico, visited antique shops in downtown Las Vegas, New Mexico, saw

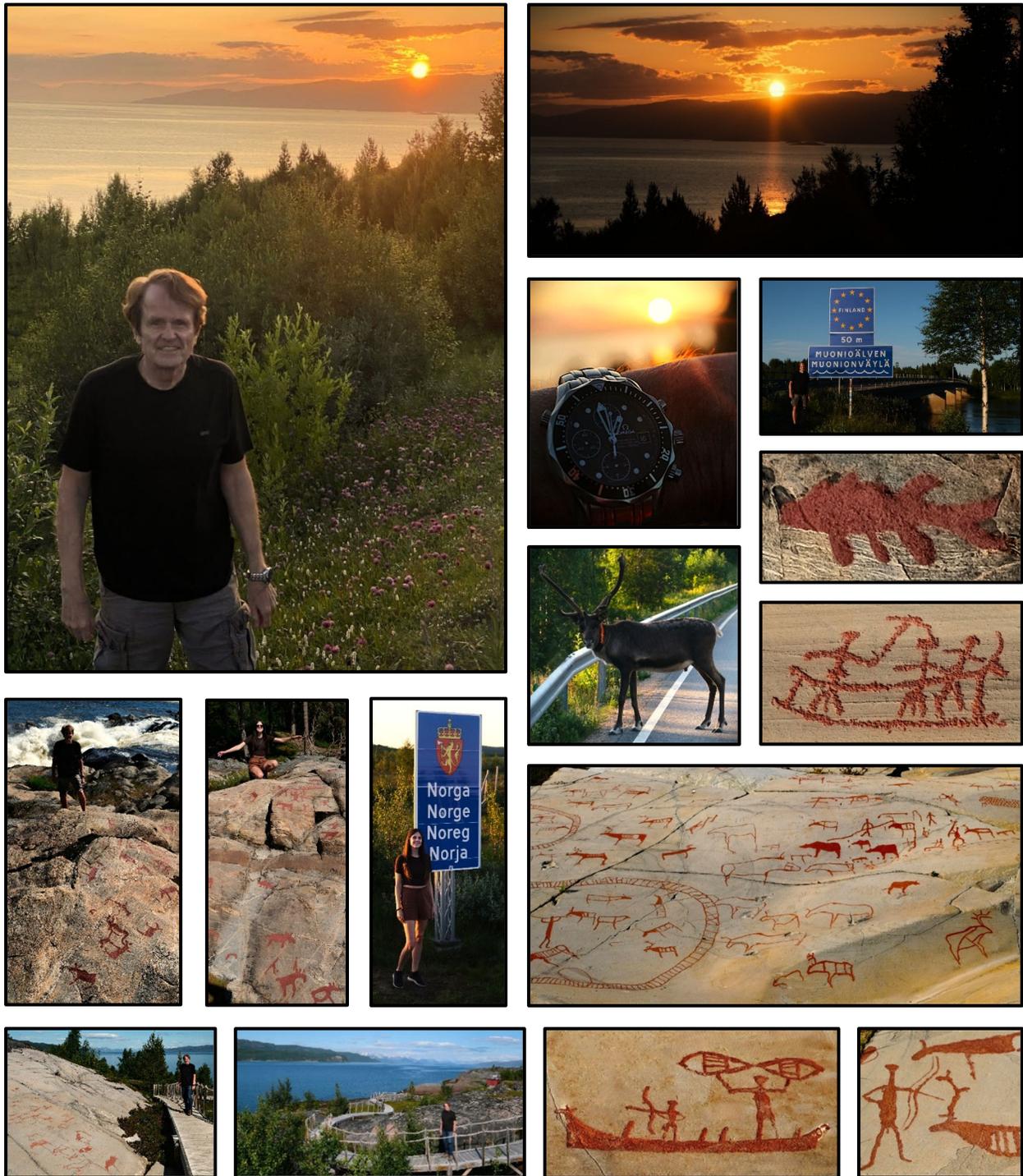
Black Canyon of the Gunnison and drove through Capitol Reef National Park on the way home. In all I drove 5,000 miles.



Top, from left: The 9th century Rok runestone (Sweden), which has “the longest runic inscription in stone.” The 11th century Ledberg Runestone, which depicts soldiers wearing Norman-like helmets. The Volund Stone (700 A.D.), and the “Woman with Drinking Horn” stone (700’s A.D.) in the Swedish National Museum. Remains of a 60-year-old man and a young child from 4800 B.C. found in Skateholm, Sweden. Becca at the Viking king’s burial mounds in Uppsala, Sweden. Namforsen rock art in Nasaker, Northern Sweden, which are at least 4,000 years old; July 16, 2025. Moose, ships, warriors, hunters, fishermen, and fish, are depicted among the old images.

Soon after my trip to Houston, I flew with Rebecca to Prague, Czech Republic, in July 2025. We saw

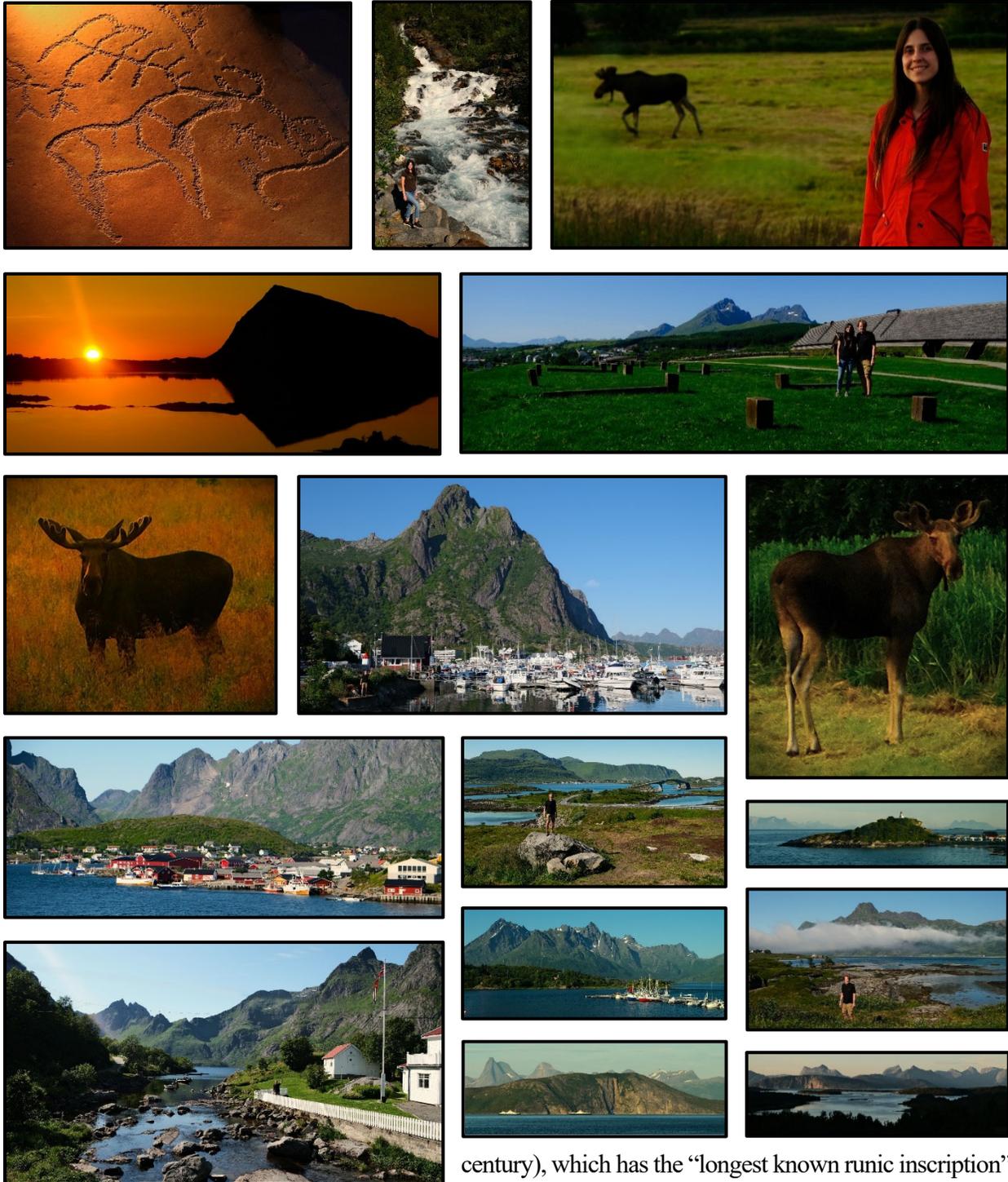
the great sites in Prague such as Charles Bridge, Old Town Hall, and the Jewish Quarter and then took



Top, from left: I'm in Alta, Norway, the most northern city in the world at 12:59 p.m. with the midnight sun (never sets) behind me; in fact, it went sideways (left to right). It has a population of 16,000 and is on a beautiful fjord. Finish border. Reindeer in Finland. We had four encounters with reindeer and only saw them in Finland. Namforsen rock art in Nasaker, Sweden. Norwegian border. Rock Art of Alta, Norway, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The rock carvings date from 4200 B.C. to 500 B.C.

a train to Berlin and drove north to Copenhagen, where Rebecca saw Nyhavn Pier for the first time.

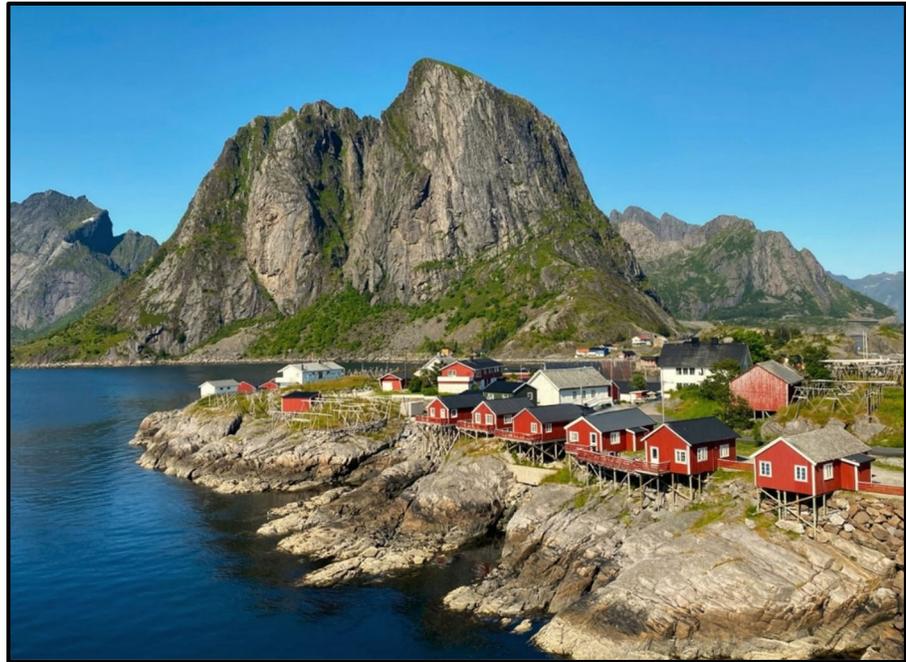
We then crossed the most expensive toll bridge in the world to Sweden and saw the Rok runestone (9th



century), which has the “longest known runic inscription”

Top, from left: Rock carvings in Alta, Norway, and nearby waterfall. Rebecca and our two-midnight moose. Midnight sun over fjord. Rebecca and I at the largest Viking long house (272 feet long) ever built in Lofotr, Norway. A replica stands next to the actual site. Various scenes on the Lofoten Islands, Norway (above). It is considered by some people as the greatest drive in the world; July 17 and 18, 2025. These islands are covered by darkness for about 35 days a year in the world. We also saw the excellent Ledberg Runestone before seeing more runestones in the Swedish

National Museum in Stockholm. We saw Viking burials in Uppsala, Sweden, and then continued north



Top, from left: Rare porpoise we saw in a fjord. My favorite scene in the Lofoten Islands: Hamnøy, Norway. The weather was perfect; July 18, 2025. Another town in the Lofoten Islands. It was about midnight when we saw this moose, who stood still and watched us. Our road after we left the Lofoten Islands. Rebecca and I at the Arctic Circle in Norway. Another coastal town in the Lofoten Islands and colorful buildings along the River Nidelva in Trondheim, Norway. Rebecca beside a beautiful river north of the Arctic Circle in Norway; July 2025.

for a long drive. The next day we saw the rock art at Namfossen, which is at least 4,000 years old. It is situated next to rapids on a major river. Then we continued our long drive north, stopped at the Arctic Circle, went into Finland, where we had four encounters with reindeer, including a large herd, and finally arrived after midnight in Alta, Norway, the farthest

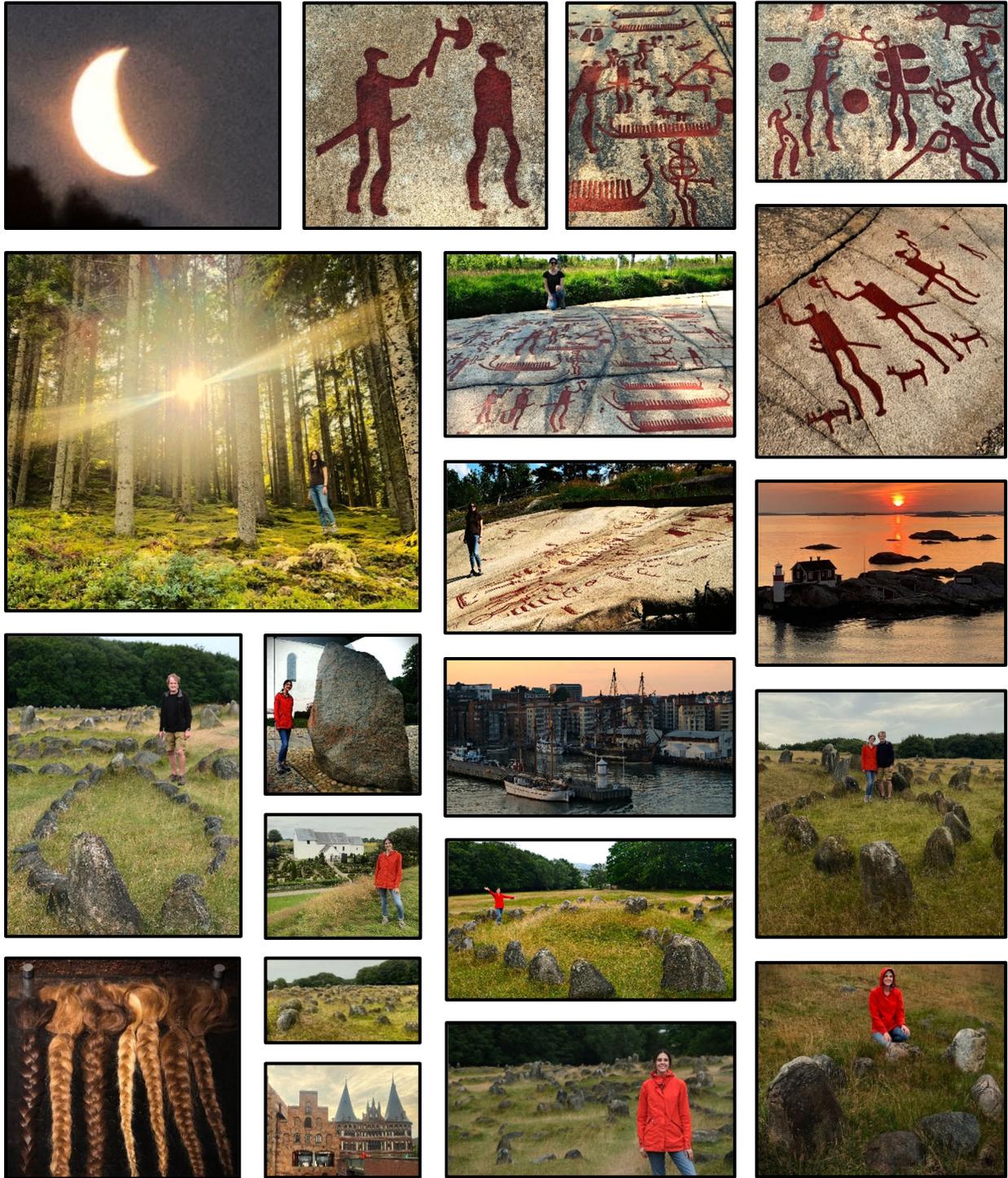
city north in the world. Rebecca took a photograph of me at 12:59 a.m. with a golden sun in the background.



Top, from left: Ringebu Stave Church in Norway at 2 a.m. on July 20, 2025. It dates from the early 1200's according to dendrochronological dating of the logs used in its construction. The Bohus Fortress, which was built in 1308. It was Norway's strongest fortress but ceded to Sweden in 1658. I discovered this thousand-year-old standing stone in a remote Norwegian valley. Downtown Oslo, Norway. Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim, Norway (built 1070 to 1300), which was built over the burial site of King Olay II (995-1030). Stone figures on cathedral. Old Bishop's Palace next to cathedral in Trondheim. Rest of page: Interesting rock art in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Tanum, Sweden; July 20, 2025.

What was even more interesting is that we saw the sun go sideways! We had a great view of the fjord

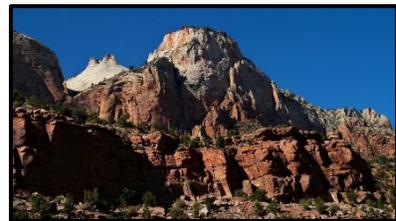
from our hotel room and in the morning, we saw the Rock Art of Alta (dated from 4200 B.C. to 500



Top, from left: Moon over Norway. Sun shining through Tanum forest in Sweden. Rock art in Tunum, Sweden. Kabel Light house at the entrance to Gothenburg harbor, Sweden. View of Viking grave site of Lindholm Hoje in northern Denmark (500 to 1000 A.D.). Many burials are in the shape of ships. Gothenburg from our ferry to Denmark. Braids of seven women from the Bronze Age in perfect condition. Jelling runestones (10th century), church, and pagan mounds, Denmark, and Lubeck, Germany; July 2025.

B.C.), a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We stopped at a Sami shop, saw many waterfalls and fjords,

harbors of the Lofoten Islands. Some people consider this the greatest drive in the world! My favorite



photographs are the ones we took from a bridge overlooking Hamnoy, Norway, on July 18, 2025.

Top, from left: Nebra Sky Disc that was discovered near Nebra, Germany, in 1999. It dates from around 1600 B.C. and “features the oldest concrete depiction of astronomical phenomena known from anywhere in the world.” Swords and items found with the disc. Ezra T. Benson gristmill (erected 1854) in Tooele County, Utah. Rebeca holding Captain with Emily on their common birthday, August 30, 2025. Grave of a German warrior who is still grasping his sword (State Museum of Prehistory in Halle, Germany). Rebecca in Quedinburg, Germany, a UNESCO town with 2,000 half-timbered buildings; July 2025. I’m in Cathedral Gorge, Nevada; October 2025. Red Rock Canyon, Nevada, Mountains in Zion National Park, and a formation near Cedar Breaks; October 2025.



The red, stilted houses and interesting granite mountains rising from the water, with the perfect weather,

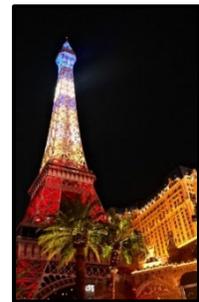
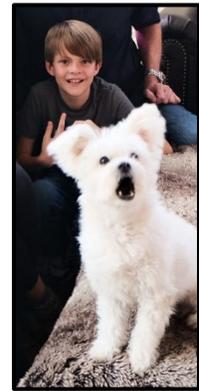
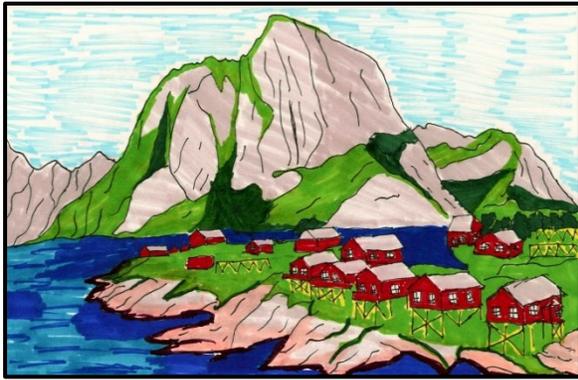
were magnificent! We drove to the end of the road and then backtracked to a ferry that took us to the



Top, from left: I'm 10,350 feet high overlooking Cedar Breaks National Monument on October 9, 2025. Mountain in Capitol Reef National Park. Rebecca in fall colors near Cedar Breaks. Karen and I in our kitchen; August 30, 2025. Karen at the stone cabin built by Elijah Behunin (1847-1933) in 1882. The Nielsen Grist Mill that was constructed about 1893 at the foot of Thousand Lake Mountain, off Highway 24 near Bicknell, Utah. Aladdin theater in Parowan, Utah, on October 9, 2025. I had a lead in this play during my junior year of high school in November 1971. (Later, I was runner-up to be the Music Man, after I sang a solo in front of a full school auditorium and received a standing ovation.) Sego Canyon petroglyphs. My family celebrating my 72nd birthday. Another mountain in Capitol Reef; 2025.

mainland, where we saw porpoises in a fjord and soon a lone moose that was just as curious about us

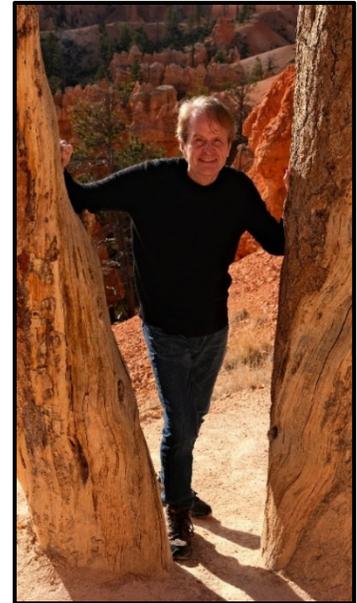
as we were him. The next day we drove across the Arctic Circle again, stopped for pizza in a Norweg-



Top, from left: Homemade card that Rebecca made for me on October 12, 2025, my 72nd birthday. She drew this from our visit to Hamnoy, Norway, on July 18, 2025 (see page 69). She wrote: "It is hard to put into words how much you mean to me... Thank you for your constant belief in me, encouraging my ideas, and supporting me as I work hard to be an entrepreneur... I am so grateful for every conversation, every mile, every sunset that I've gotten to share with you. You are one of my greatest inspirations and my best friend... Happy birthday! Becca Baby 2025." Cedar Breaks. Sejo Canyon pictographs; October 2025. Houston with Captain; October 2025. The Paris Las Vegas' Eiffel Tower; October 2025. Highway 24 going through Capitol Reef. Michael and his family on Halloween night 2025. Rebecca (Lois Lane) and me with Captain (Crypto) and Littles, Halloween 2025. Becca and Ben at FilmQuest; 2025.

ian town, saw the Nidaros Cathedral, old bridge, and colorful houses along the River Nidelva in Trondheim, Norway, discovered a thousand-year-old standing stone, and at 2 a.m. visited Ringebu Stave Church,

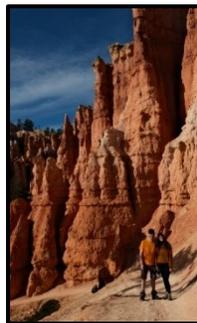
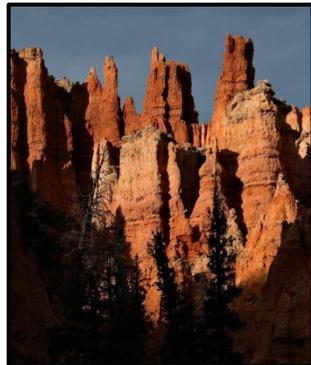
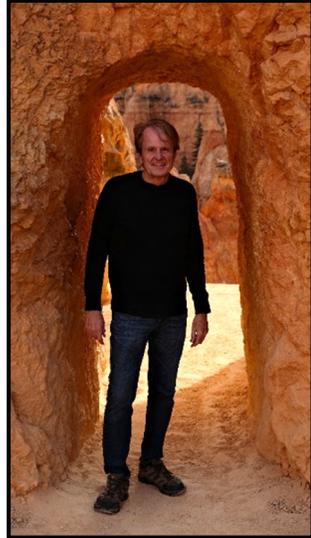
which was built circa 1220 (see page 70). On July 20, 2025, we visited Oslo, the Bohus Fortress, and



Top, from left: I'm standing next to my new fifteen-foot-tall scarecrow, Halloween 2025. I now have fourteen tall figures that surround my house each Halloween. The formations along the Queen's Garden Trail (shown on this page) are among the best in Bryce Canyon National Park. We took our English friend Gary Raimer to see the park for the first time on November 11, 2025. Karen in October 2025. Four of the thirty-one handprints in One Hundred Hands Cave in Fremont Indian State Park, Utah, December 28, 2025. Gary Reimar is hanging on a fence at Bryce Point hundreds of feet above the hoodoos. He is a very confident climber. Gary has been a friend of the family for over twenty years. Red Canyon, Utah, really is this red!

many rock art sites in Tanum, Sweden, before taking a ferry from Gothenburg to Denmark. The next

day we walked through the Viking burial site of Lindholm Hoje in northern Denmark that has many



Top, from left: I'm pointing to some of the best petroglyphs in Fremont Indian State Park (see close-up), December 28, 2025. A good passageway on the Queen's Garden Trail in Bryce Canyon. I'm with my nephew, Alex Lamb, and his family on December 14, 2025; left to right back row: Alex Lamb and me, Richard Martin; front row: Emery, Eli, Sakari, and Asher Lamb. Close-up of my cousin Elder Will Smith from his California Mission photograph taken in June 1962, and a picture of us together on December 13, 2025. Coincidentally, we served in the same mission; Will from 1961 to 1963, and I from 1973 to 1975. My home at 4617 Foothill Drive in Provo, Utah, as drawn by my daughter, Rebecca Martin, in December 2025. It is a unique, freehand digital drawing that took her over twenty hours to complete. More of Bryce Canyon; November 11, 2025.

stone burials in the shape of ships, saw the famous Jelling Runestones, and then drove to Lubeck, Germany,

where we saw the old town and its Medieval gate. Thereafter, we drove to Krakow, Poland, and then



saw many of the Lemko villages in southern Poland, such as Mochnaczka Nizna with its picturesque, red

Top, from left: Houston is reading the card from me on his tenth birthday, January 5, 2026. Rebecca and I, Christmas 2024. Houston and werewolf, Halloween 2024. Zion; 2025. I'm by pumpkin head in photograph taken by Houston; 2023. Rebecca and Emily at FilmQuest; 2023. Houston jumping, December 31, 2023. Houston's tenth birthday. Sarah rented this sign to honor our fortieth anniversary; 2017. Pictographs near my home in Provo. Horse on shoulder (Utah) and Crab Nebula (New Mexico) depictions. Warriors from Italy. World War II B26 Bomber, France; 2012. Michael and Shaylee; 2013.

the famous Nebra Sky Disc in the excellent Museum of Prehistory in Halle, Germany, the UNESCO

wooden church. During the last days of our trip, we saw

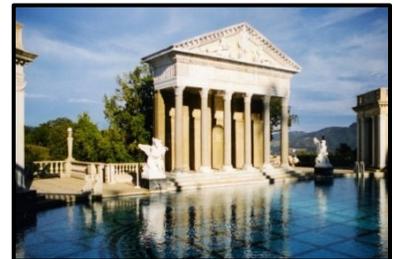
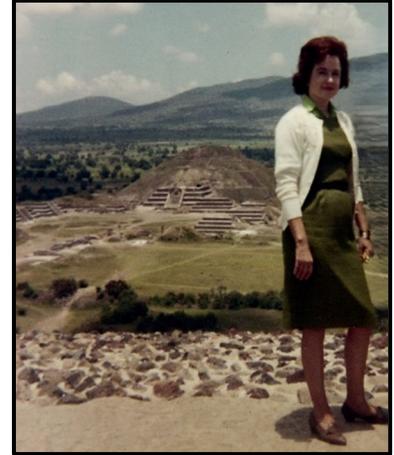
town of Quedinburg, Germany, and the Nazi Gestapo building, the Brandenburg Gate, Hitler's bunker,



Top, from left: Our new state flag. Karen in Chichen Itza; 1981. Karen at Castle Howard; 1994. Mom, me, Cathy, and Ron at Nancy wedding; 1975. My grandparents, Claire Smith and Marion Sharp, in 1922. Ron and Mom; 1987. My sister, Cathy Martin; 1993. Mother and snowman during record snow; 1960. Me in 1995. Dead Sea cave in Israel; 1984.

and the Berlin Wall in Berlin, Germany before taking the train back to Prague where we flew back to

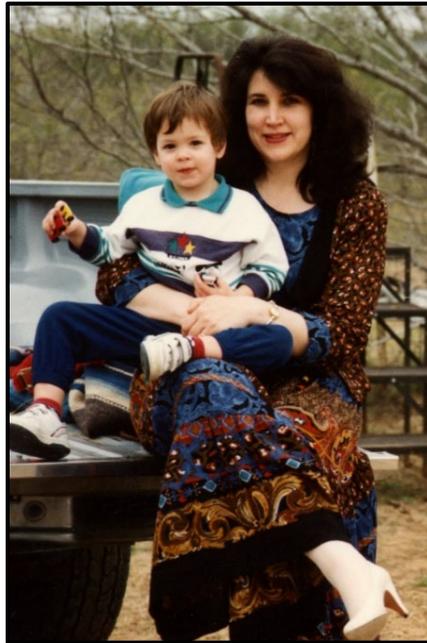
America the next day. We drove 6,300 miles in eight countries and walked over seventy-five miles.



Top, from left: Mom in 1967. Nancy in 1970. Mom in Teotihuacan, Mexico; 1963. My brother, Ron Martin, about 1995. My grandfather's home in Norfolk, Arkansas; 1988. Sarah, Ron, Mom, me, Aunt Millie, and Cousin Johnny; 1993. One of the six biggest ammonite fossils in the world; 2023. Sarah as the Bride of Frankenstein; 1993. One of the classes I taught in 1980. Row of half-buried Cadillacs in Amarillo, Texas; 1998. Real Roman temple at Hearst Castle pool; 2010.

In between these major trips I also took several trips to Colorado, Moab, Utah, Brice Canyon, Zion,

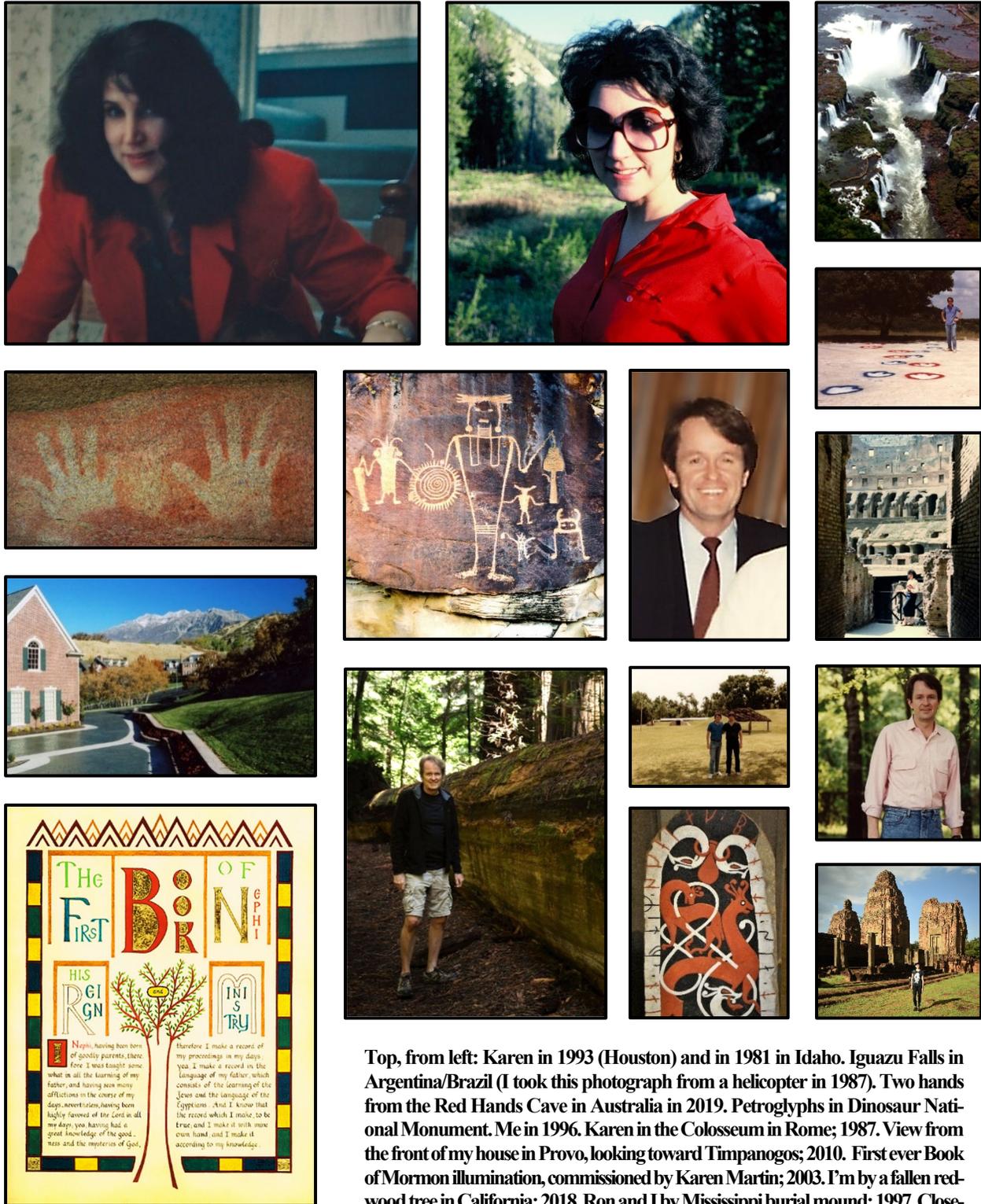
Death Valley, Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, and other National and State parks in Utah, Nevada, Cali-



Top, from left: Karen at a Venezuelan refinery in 1981. Karen holding Michael (age three) in 1992. Karen at the door of our condominium in Houston in 1980. Karen is standing with five of her engineers in Egypt; 2024. I'm with Jonathan (age fourteen) next to the grave of William Penn (the founder of Pennsylvania) in England; 1996. My home at 17318 Klee Circle in Spring, Texas, in 1997. Sarah, age four took this picture of me running. Conway Castle in Wales; 2017. Galveston pier; 2020.

ifornia, and Arizona. Rebecca and I even went to Universal Studios in Burbank, California, for the first

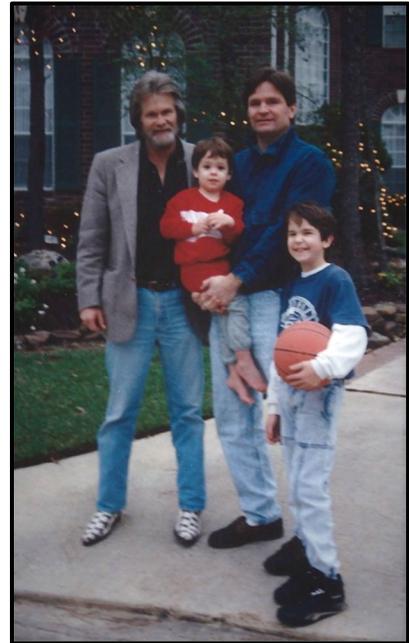
time on October 7, 2024. Although I have not written much about these secondary trips, I have included



Top, from left: Karen in 1993 (Houston) and in 1981 in Idaho. Iguazu Falls in Argentina/Brazil (I took this photograph from a helicopter in 1987). Two hands from the Red Hands Cave in Australia in 2019. Petroglyphs in Dinosaur National Monument. Me in 1996. Karen in the Colosseum in Rome; 1987. View from the front of my house in Provo, looking toward Timpanogos; 2010. First ever Book of Mormon illumination, commissioned by Karen Martin; 2010. I'm by a fallen redwood tree in California; 2018. Ron and I by Mississippi burial mound; 1997. Close-up of Swedish runestone. Me in 1998. Rebecca in Angkor Wat, Cambodia; 2019.

many photographs from these adventures in this history. On many of these journeys I traveled over two thousand miles. I like driving espec-

ially on the open road when there isn't much traffic. I find it interesting how some of my acquaintances

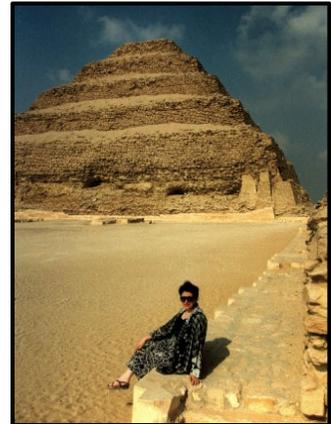


travel so little, yet to me it is one of the best enjoyments of life—to

Top, from left: My uncle, Lincoln Davis, meeting his mother and sister for the first time in 1981. I'm with Cathy in Provo in December 1975. Cousin Johnny Vaught with Ron (holding Michael) and Jonathan in December 1990. I'm holding Karen in 1976 before we married. Sarah and Michael at Williamsburg, Virginia; 1996. My grandaunt, Lee Ann Sharp (1934–2025), and her husband, Robert D. Heard in 1955. Wisconsin lighthouse; 2019. Zion National Park; 2021. Conway Castle in Wales; 2003. Tikal in Guatemala in 1988. View of St. Mark's Square in Venice, Italy, from the ship I was on in 2017.

see magnificent scenery and ancient places awakens a part of us that otherwise remains dormant. Our

Viking ancestors would think of us as soft or even wimpy for not getting out more, especially when all

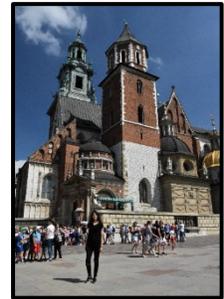
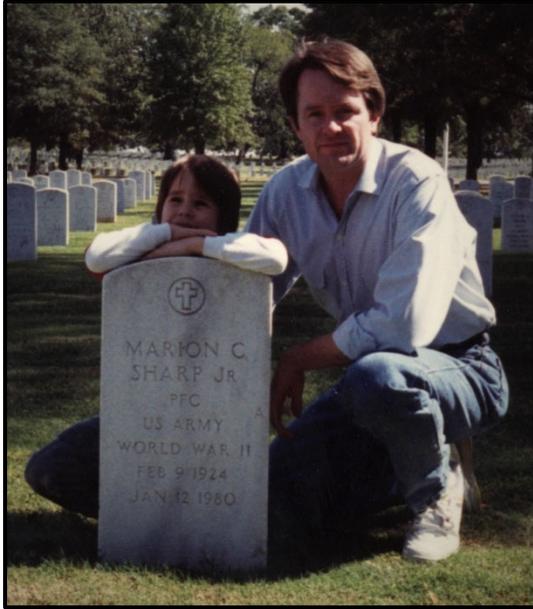


Top, from left: I'm with Karen, Lillian (wife of my grandfather, Marion Sharp, Sr.), baby Rebecca, and Jonathan in Norfolk, Arkansas, in 1985. Mom, Ron, and me with snowman in heavy snow in 1960. Karen in Whistler, Canada. Ward Charcoal Ovens. My grandfather is holding Sarah, his great-granddaughter. My grandfather, Thomas Bowles, with his brother, Preston Bowles, about 1914. Karen at the Step Pyramid in Egypt in 1992. Zion National Park in 2024.



we must do is get into a car and drive over a carpet of concrete or asphalt to our destination. The highways,

bridges, and hotels have already been built; all we have to do is have a will to make it happen. I had an



Top, from left: I'm with Jonathan at my father's grave in the National Cemetery in Little Rock; 1988. Grandmother Frances Bowles, Cathy, Debbie Crocker, me, Mom, Nancy, Vester Crocker, Vickie Crocker, and my brother, Ron; 1971. Mom (center) with her sister Nancy (left) and mother (right); 1966. Krakow, Poland. I'm with my sisters and brother, along with Greg Lamb, Sarah Martin, and Alex Lamb in 1986. Tall ship in Venice, Italy, 2017. I took this photograph in a boat below the Golden Gate Bridge; 2010. Karen laughing; 2019. Bridge and lighthouse in Denmark; 2016. Largest stave church in Norway; 2019. Ron in Zion; 2008. My home in Spring, Texas (northern Houston), from 1989 to 1997.

uncle that told me he planned to travel when he retired, but when he did retire, he said he didn't have

the inclination. He said, “Richard, you’ve done it right. You’re doing it now and I wish I had done it

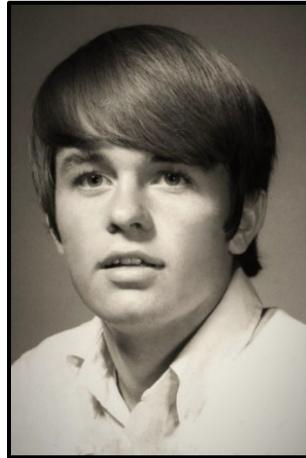
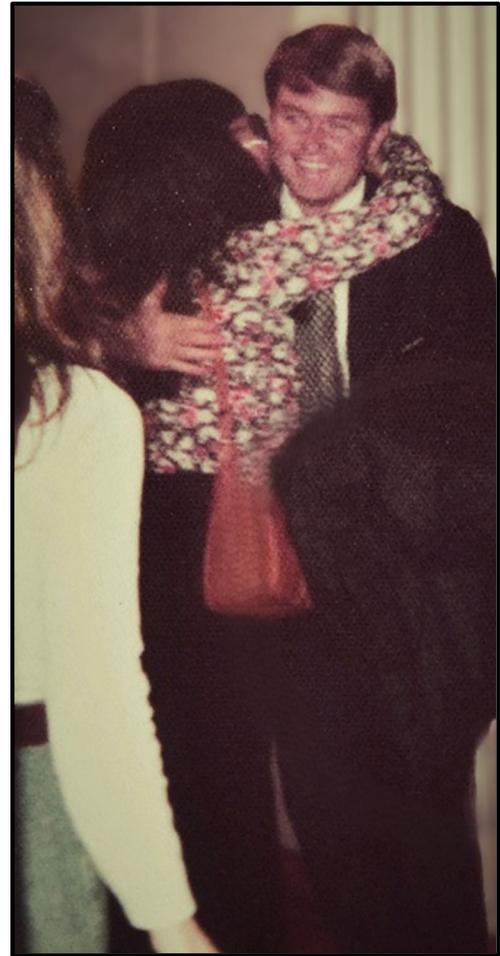


Top, from left: Vester, Mom, Ron, Nancy, and Cathy; 1974. Fall 2010 near Cedar Breaks, Utah. Nancy and I at Grandma’s in 1961. Astros won the World Series four hours later. Zeplin, Michael’s dog. Jonathan, me, Rebecca, and Jonna Jackson at Disneyland in 2016. Scottish Neolithic mound. John Massey, my great-grandfather, next to his new car.



when I was young.” In fact, I rank my around-the-world trip in 2019 as one of my great accomplish-

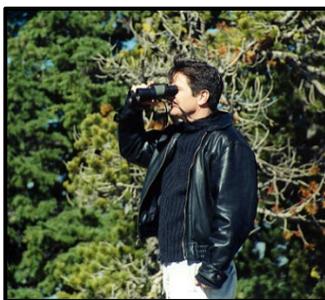
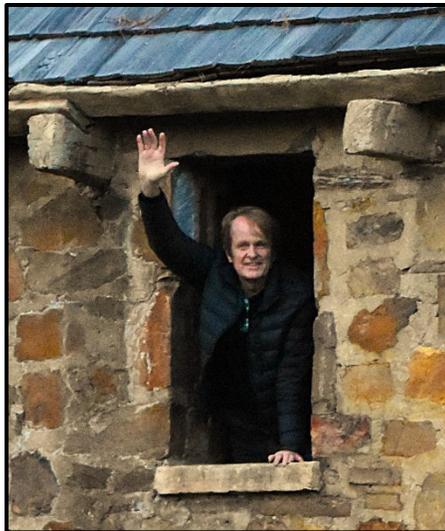
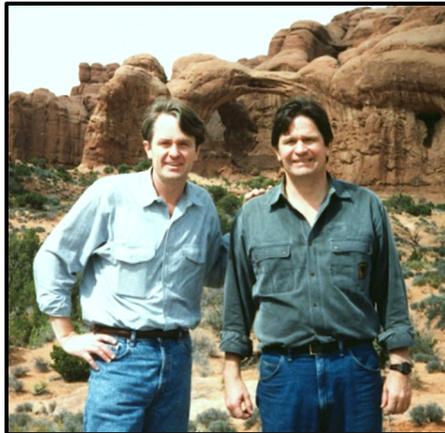
ments. It happened because it had been in my heart to compete such a trip for many years. Our timing



Top, from left: Connie McBride (1955-2001), Mom (1927-2006), Cathy (1947-2002), and Ed Kuchack (Cathy's boyfriend) on September 28, 1973, the day I left for my mission. It was the last time I ever saw Connie. On September 27, 1975, I returned home to Houston after completing my mission in southern California, and there to greet me were my sisters Cathy and Nancy. Mom was also there and she was very proud of me and even cried. My friend, Kendell Stout Lewis, took this photograph, which I didn't know existed until just a few years ago. I'm next to an abandoned house that is about to fall near Delta, Utah; 2015. School photograph of me when I was sixteen. Rebecca (8) and Michael (14) at Caernarfon Castle in Wales; 2003. Michael and Houston watching television in 2020. Karen in Washington D.C. area in 1988. Jonathan in front of his home in Houston from 1982 until 1989 (2006). At that time the house looked the same as it did when we lived there. I now cherish those years.

was excellent because we went before Covid made such a journey impossible. We both agree that

Cambodia was the most exotic country of the twelve that we visited, but it was an amazing journey



Top, from left: Karen by her yellow car in 1973. I'm with Ron in Arches National Park in 1999. Karen in front of our apartment in 1981. I'm waving from the Old Mill in North Little Rock, Arkansas; 2020. Anglo-Saxon Church in England. Jonathan on a tire swing in 1988. Ron looking through his binoculars in Oregon. I'm standing next to the real skull of Sue the T-Rex in the Field Museum in Chicago; 2019. Photograph of Ron Martin that I took in 1988 that I used for his gravestone. My sisters and brother; 1998. Jonathan and Rebecca at Christmastime in 2020.

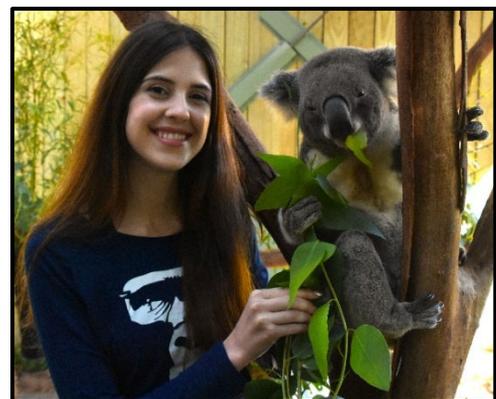


that went from the northern hemisphere to the southern hemisphere and back again. We visited the

most northern point of New Zealand, saw the aboriginal Red Hands Cave (400 A.D.) in Australia, walked

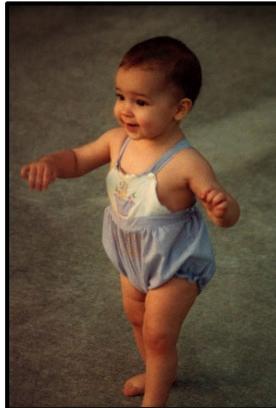
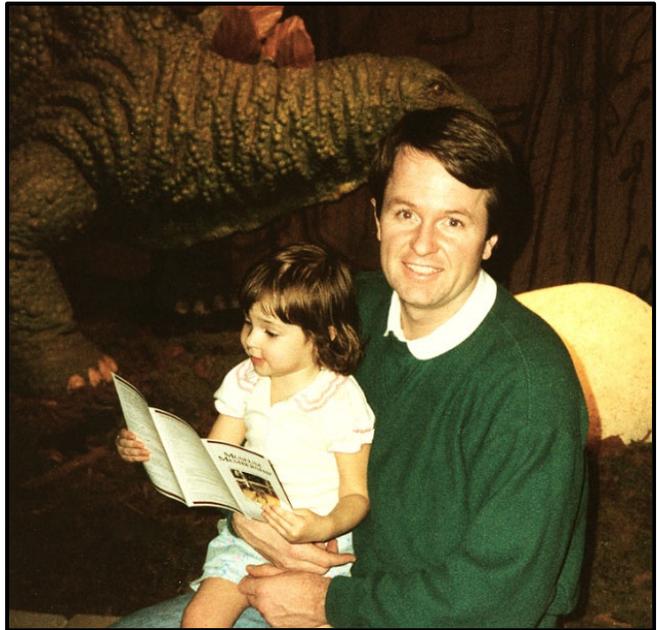


Top, from left: Rebecca in Yosemite National Park; 2020. Houston holding Rebecca's dog, Littles; 2020. My father, Marion Carlos Sharp, Jr. (always called Junior) at a fountain in Rome on its liberation, June 4, 1944. Rebecca's tenth birthday present on August 30, 2005; Willow was our family dog for twelve years, 2005 to 2017. Ron, me, Nancy, and Cathy after church in 1963. Rebecca dancing in a school festival in 2020 when she was in fourth grade. I took this photograph of the Brooklyn Bridge in New York on a perfect day in October 2003. I'm in the water with Jonathan and Sarah in 1988. A rare Roman monument with its original colors in Trier, Germany, which is considered Germany's oldest city. Karen in Spain about 1972. I took this photograph of Rebecca with a koala bear, which is native to Australia, in 2019.



through the jungles and saw the largest religious complex in the world in Cambodia (800 to 1150 A.D.),

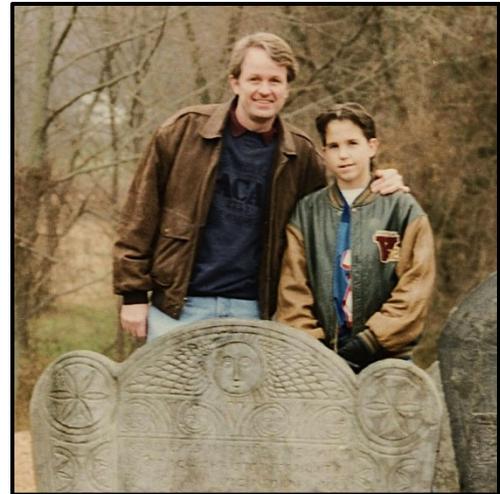
got embraced by a 5,000-pound elephant in Thailand, went up the tallest building in the world in Dubai



Top, from left: Dancing with Michele Lockard; 1973 (yearbook picture). Dinamation and Sarah; 1988. Karen in 1975 and in fifth grade. Majestic redwood; 2010. Sarah on April 4, 2005. Becca and dinosaur bone; 2020. Me in third grade; 1962. Baby Sarah. Sarah and Dorothy; 2020.

(built in 2009), visited once forbidden tombs next to the pyramids of Egypt, walked through the towns of

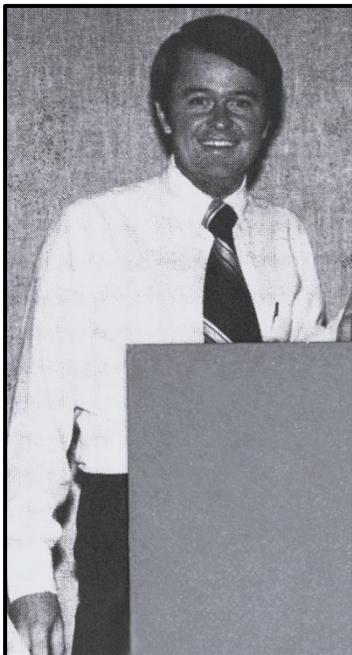
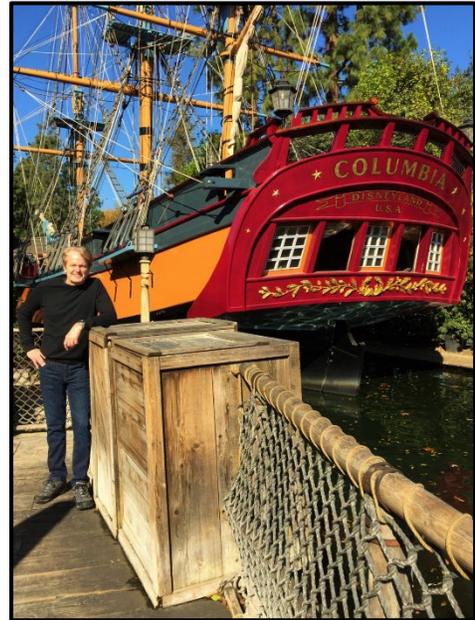
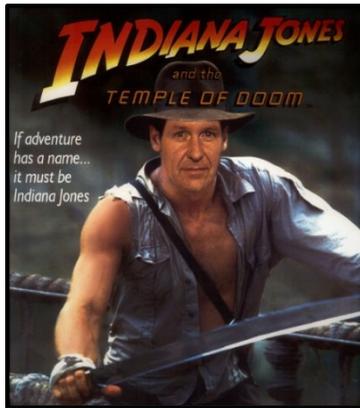
Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, Israel, that Jesus denounced, saw the building with the largest interior



Top, from left: My family in our home in north Houston in 1997: Karen holding Rebecca, me, Jonathan, Sarah, and Michael. Karen in Mexico in 1979. Jonathan with Cathy on her horse in Laredo, Texas; 1992. I'm with Marco Villarreal from Houston in Salt Lake City; 2001. Rebecca in a school concert in 2009. Karen at my sister Nancy's wedding reception in January 1976. Home of William Phillips, my fourth great-grandfather, built in 1820 in LaRue County, Kentucky (1998). I'm with Jonathan at the grave of a great-granduncle in Norwich, Connecticut, in 1996. My young family in 1986.

in the world for over a thousand years in Istanbul (537 A.D.), walked through Auschwitz and Birkenau the

most notorious concentration camps in Poland (1940 to 1945), saw the *Vasa*, a massive Swedish warship



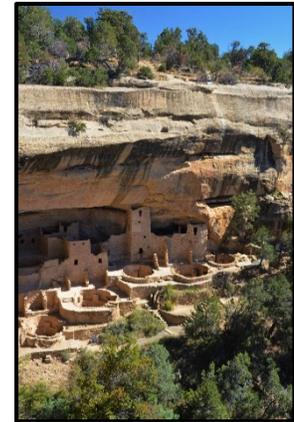
Top, from left: Karen at home in Houston on a Sunday afternoon in 1987. I'm pretending to be Harrison Ford as Indiana Jones in 1999. I'm next to the tall ship in Disneyland in 2016. Photograph taken of me at age 26 when I was a teacher for the 1980 Dulles high school yearbook, page 81. (I didn't know it existed until February 12, 2026.) My great-aunt, Alice Pearl Sharp (1907-1938), in overalls, and standing next to her brother, Marion Sharp, Sr. (1905-1988), my grandfather about 1918. Mayan wheeled toy in Houston Museum of Art, which was made by people who supposedly didn't know anything about wheels; 2005. Home built in 1820 by William Phillips, my fourth great-grandfather, in Larue County, Kentucky; 1998. He once lived next to Andrew Jackson in Tennessee and served as a colonel in the War of 1812.

built in 1628 in Stockholm, saw the best-preserved Viking ships in the world (circa 800 A.D.) in Oslo,

and the best stave church in Borgund, Norway (1200 A.D.), visited the original Geyser in Iceland, and



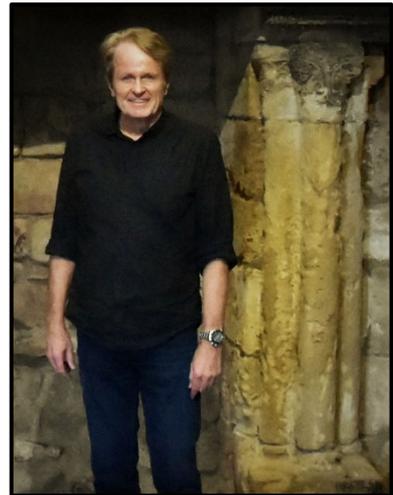
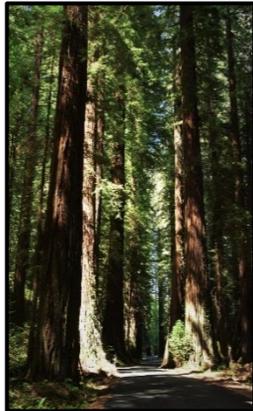
Top, from left: Me (born 1953), Cathy (1947-2002), Mom (1927-2006), Vester (1930-2020), Nancy (1949-2014), and Ron (1948-2012) at the Reklaw farm in northeast Texas in 1994. I'm at the Killer's concert at UVU in 2013. Jonathan, Rebecca, and I with the Seals in San Diego, California, December 24, 2019. My beautiful wife, Karen Martin, in our Gulfton apartment in southwest Houston in 1981. Gravestones of Alexander Nisbett, his wife, Agnes Ramsey (fifth great-grandparents) and other relatives in Waxhaw Cemetery in Lancaster County, South Carolina; 2003. Voodoo man, Marie Antoinette, and Pokémon trainer at Halloween in 2020. The Cliff Palace in Mesa Verde National Park; 2017.



saw Sue, the famous T-Rex in Chicago. Of course, these are just highlights of the many amazing things we saw on this wonderful adventure.

The meaning of life

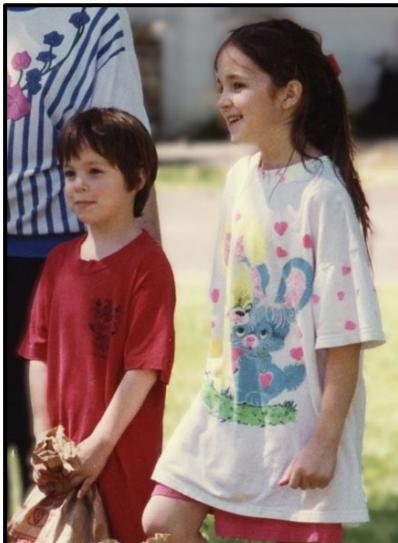
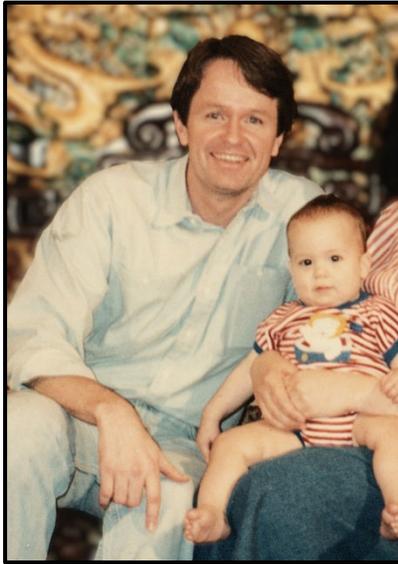
Why are we here? Where did we come from and where are we going? What is the purpose of life?



Top, from left: I took my friend, Kendell Stout, to her prom in 1970. Grandpa Bowles 80th birthday celebration in 1982. Mom at 18. Ellen (age 5; died of cancer soon after this picture was taken), daughter of my cousin Jane Bowles (left) with her sister, Julia Bowles, about 1986. Our family with Elder Barlow in 1970 at the time Vester joined the church. Baby Rebecca with spaghetti everywhere; 1996. California Redwoods in 2007. Rebecca with her ancestors, kings and queens of England; 2022. I'm in an English castle built by a distant great-grandfather in 2017.

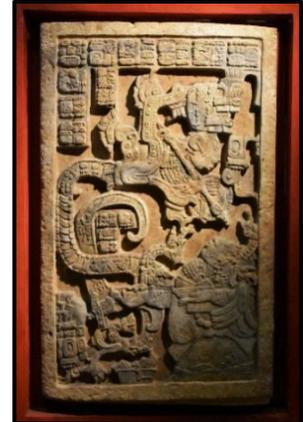
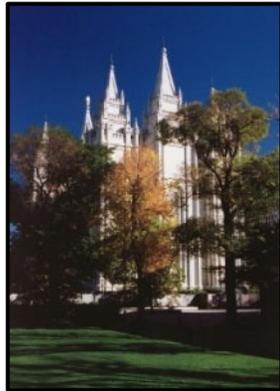
How we answer or don't answer these questions defines much of what we do with our life. I've heard people say,

“Well, we will just find out when we get there.” That’s not a good answer because it’s possible that we’re supposed



Top, from left: I’m with Michael (8 months old) in Hong Kong. Michael and Shaylee in 2013. Michael age 24. Michael and Sarah; Easter 1995. Gravestone of my father. My nephew, David Moran, and his family in 2020. Jackson Square in New Orleans; 2000. Woolworth Building in New York City; 2003. My great-aunt, Lee Ann Sharp. Rebecca at Guillermo Del Toro’s exhibit in Los Angeles, featuring Frankenstein in 2018. USS Cavalia, a WWII submarine in Galveston; 2020. to do something important while we are alive and miss our opportunity. Here are my answers to these questions.

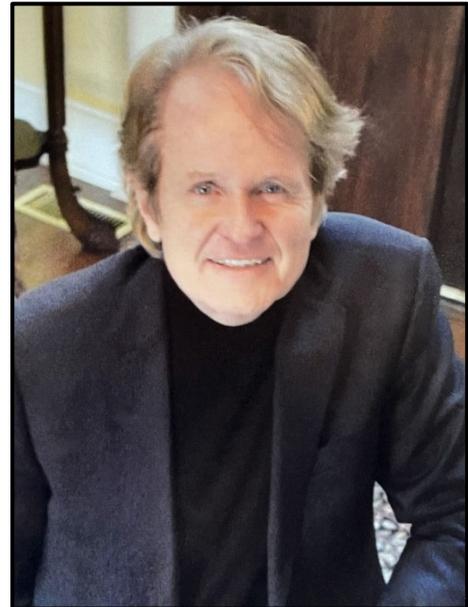
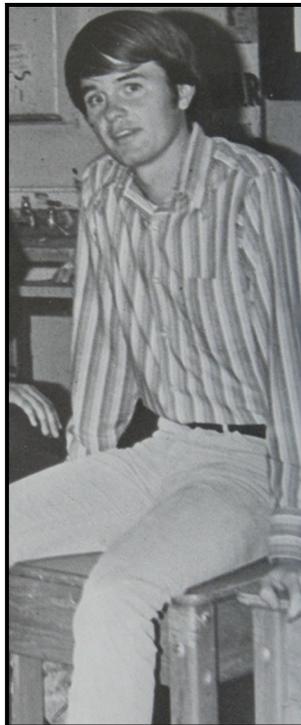
Before we were born, we lived with our Father in Heaven, who is a personal being and the literal



Top, from left: Jonathan wearing his metal for completing the Spartan Race in Utah; 2012. I'm with friends at a Christmas party in 1970, and a close-up of me next to Becky Ward. Karen by dinosaur footprint near Moab in 2018. Salt Lake Temple in 1998. Two drawings by Rebecca in the third and ninth grade. Wall painting in Egyptian tomb; 2019. Chambord, France, in 2005. Mayan hieroglyphics from Yaxchilan, Mexico (Lintel 25; circa 725 A.D.), now in the British Museum. Mont-Saint-Michel Abbey, France; founded in 709 A.D.; 2005.

father of everyone on earth. We are his offspring. Therefore, like any child, our destiny is to become

like our father. We look like him and he has a glorious, resurrected body. He has placed us on earth



Top, from left: This is me, Richard Thomas (Sharp) Martin, in 1988 when I was thirty-five years old. A good view of the Shard from the south side of the Thames River in 2017. The Seven Magic Mountains (erected in 2016) near Las Vegas, Nevada, in 2019. Karen is still a beautiful woman; 2025. This photograph was taken of me when I was president of the Westbury Art Club and printed in the 1972 Westbury Citadel (high school yearbook), page 176. Michael and Sarah next to a scarecrow family in front of our house; Halloween 1995. This is Karen's favorite, recent photograph of me taken in 2024.

to be tried and tested and if we are faithful in this life we shall receive a body like his full of power, intelligence, and glory. A fullness of joy can only be obtained by "spirit and element being inseparably

connected.” If we attain to the highest level of glory we shall be made like unto the father and in eternity do as he does, which is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” In eternity there are different levels, but to achieve the highest we must have faith in Jesus Christ, repent of our sins, be baptized, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and endure, always growing in knowledge, forgiving and repenting to the end.

In general, our test in life is to see if we can be wise enough to seek God and accept his plan for our life. This means following the gospel teachings and rejecting that “cunning plan of the evil one,” who seeks to deceive us so that we may become miserable “like unto himself.” (See he has a plan, also.) We are tempted mainly through our physical desires and pride, but we are made capable by reading the scriptures and revelations from God and by praying. To love God and to help others in their difficulties (for everyone is having a hard time in life) matters most. Realizing that God is everything and that we are not wise or strong enough to make it without his help is the beginning of wisdom.

The gospel is profound, and by desiring to know the truth and continually seeking, a person can learn wonderful things that will fill their hearts with joy and dispel all their darkness and fears. As a scripture says: “Believe in God, believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend.” (Mosiah 4:9)

Belief is a key to understanding the deeper things of God. Jesus emphasized that we must believe in him to be saved, but this is just the beginning. After we believe that he is the way, we must do what he taught, which is sometimes difficult. For this reason, many people seek easier interpretations of God’s teachings, which has led to a multitude of manmade religions in his name. Without direct revelation from God, we can never be sure we are on the right path, but that is where we often fail. We don’t want to have to work so hard, and why is it so narrow? Well, it must be narrow to be on target. Everything in the universe is finely tuned, otherwise life would be impossible. Just a little further from the sun and we would freeze; just a little closer and we would burn up. The commandments are part of this fine tuning and necessary for us to return to God.

The test of life is perfect. It is long enough to make us feel like we will be here forever, but short enough for us to realize it will end. We can easily get distracted here and forget about God and what matters most. For example, if you want to, you can get riches here, but if they take up too much of your time you may not complete your higher purposes. That is one of the tests of life, to decide how we will use the time that is given us. The scriptures emphasize that these teachings are real and that we need to shake ourselves and wake up before it is too late. If we are wise, it is all good news (after all, God has promised to give us everything and make us equal to him). As the scripture says: “Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life.” (2 Nephi 10:23)

(I love these thoughts about the meaning of life, but they are just the first steps of the journey. I have found that the more I try to live by these principles, the more certain I am that they are true. Each day I think about the greatness of God and my own nothingness, and I remember his goodness and patience towards me. If I fail along the way, it’s my own fault. Ammon said it well: “Behold, who can glory too much in the Lord? Yea, who can say too much of his great power, and of his mercy and of his long-suffering towards the children of men? Behold. I say unto you, I cannot say the smallest part which I feel.”—Alma 26:16)

Conclusion

How do you write a good conclusion to your life? Usually, if anyone writes anything at all, they write it as an obituary, which, according to the dictionary, is “a notice of a death, especially in a newspaper, typically including a brief biography of the deceased person.” Wikipedia adds that they “tend to focus on the positive aspects of a subject’s life.” That’s so true! Most of my ancestors didn’t have an obituary, but more of a simple death notice, if anything at all. It’s actually sad—you come, you go, and few notice, or know you well enough to care. Such is the fate of almost everyone.

Okay, I can live with that. My goal in life was never to be famous or powerful, but I did want to make enough money so that I wouldn’t be at the mercy of other men, and, for the most part, I accomplished that goal. I learned at an early age that I didn’t do well under the authority of others, and I needed money so I wouldn’t have to be accountable to them. I wanted to be able to have time for my favorite things, such as genealogy, and travel. God blessed me with the right career, so I was able to do both.

I wanted to be someone who possessed knowledge and had insights into the deeper mysteries of life. I felt I might be able to achieve this by studying three things well: The scriptures, Hugh Nibley’s writings, and astronomy or physics. (Of course, I also read many other books along the way.) I think this kind of study helped me to achieve a more mature understanding of many things, but without revelation some things can never be known.

Soon after I joined the church, I learned that at death everyone goes into the spirit world where they can continue to progress until the Day of Judgement. There the gospel is preached in its fullness, and anyone who desires it can accept it. Baptism and other ordinances are performed by proxy in the temple, but to complete this, genealogical research is necessary to tie all the lines together. I took this teaching seriously, at first as a duty, but later I caught a higher vision of it and enjoyed the research and compiling of my records as a joy in and of itself. For this reason, I’ve spent a huge amount of time compiling my family history, organizing this research into books, and submitting my work into the temple. Many thousands of hours were spent on these activities, which became an obsession, but I think a worthy passion.

Even my autobiography is a result of teachings that I received in the church. Beginning in the mid-1970s, President Spencer W. Kimball encouraged all members to keep a journal and to write a personal history. Of course, I had no idea that my full, unabridged account would grow to be over 1,800 pages long. This has helped me to appreciate my life more, and, hopefully, will be a blessing to some of my descendants in years to come.

It’s interesting how life goes. You’re young, you make a few decisions, set some goals, the years go by and before you know it, you’re middle aged. My mother used to say that life goes faster as you get older, and I found that to be true.

Some of my favorite memories are of my junior and senior years of high school and the years I served on my mission (1971-1975). These were years of solid growth. I got home from California and decided that I liked the beautiful brunette who had recently moved into my ward. (Karen was guided to Houston—one proof of this is how she met my sister, Nancy before she knew anything about me.) Eventually, we dated and a year later married. During this time, I was working downtown for McGraw

Hill and went to the University of Houston, where I got my degree in business in three years. Then I taught distributive education for two years before beginning my career as an annuity broker for the next forty-four years.

Now I'm 72 years old. I read the scriptures or other worthy books every day, work out regularly, often walk on a nearby trail with my youngest daughter and our dogs, and play tennis each week. I continue to compile family histories, and to do my annuity business. Every few months I go on a major trip, usually with Rebecca. I've been blessed.

When I think about things, it's easy to see that one day all of this will end. My brother died of an unexpected heart attack thirteen years ago at the age of sixty-three. He had no idea that he was about to suddenly leave this world. I'm sure he was disappointed that he didn't get more time. So, my goal is to live well, but I realize that I'm not achieving my potential. I'm still hoping to accomplish something wonderful, but if that doesn't happen, I'm grateful for the life God has given me. In every way he has blessed me.

(As mentioned before, for a more complete history of my life, see my unabridged autobiography that is over 1,800 pages long.)