

**May 17<sup>th</sup> 2026** – This morning we were moving a little slower and actually slept in a whole 15 minutes. Up at 6:30, we started the packing process, packed our lunches for the journey and had a hodgepodge for breakfast. We were packed and pulling out of the driveway about 8:25. Since we were coming home I26, we decided we'd better get gas in Fairview before we really got settled in for the long drive home.

Got gas at a whopping \$4.149 a gallon. On the way we were. As we came across I26, the bridge that they had worked on from Helene was done and I26 is now back to being a 4 lane highway. We got on I81 for the VERY LONG RIDE home in Tennessee. We stopped in the VA Welcome Center just as Sam was giving the morning announcement for church, so 10:05.

Back in our vehicles, off we went to keep heading north on I81. We decided to break for lunch at a rest stop at around mile marker 108. That was at noon. We were all trying to remember when the heavy traffic began last year as we thought it had begun by this time. Well, don't talk about bad times as we got back on the road and it wasn't long before the heavy traffic began. Peg and I passed the time watching a Charlie Brown movie. We all needed a laugh and that was a good way to get one. The movie was 1 hour and 16 minutes. That's 76 minutes. We went a whopping 40 miles.

We decided it was time to stop for gas and a potty break around mile marker 213. That was 3:00. At that break we all agreed we would be stopping somewhere for dinner. Let's count the number of times WAZE rerouted us to US11 to get us around the heavy traffic....1, 2.....times before dinner. We stopped for dinner at Cracker Barrel in Winchester VA.

Oh for those disbelievers of Alisms, Al orders one of the specials of the day. Our waitress, just as she was coming to our table got word that they had just sold out of that special. A true Alism.

Anyway, back on the road around 6:45 and we have clear sailing in West VA and VA. A quick bathroom stop at the PA Welcome Center and we're back on the rough road. Yep, rough road like construction working rough road. WAZE reroutes us to US11 for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time around Carlisle. Finally back on I81 and we are now done of being on I81, but here we are. As we're coming through Harrisburg, we see a sign Incident mile marker 72. IF YOU REROUTE US AGAIN, you're going out the window. Fortunately, the incident was cleaned up before we got there and we had smooth sailing home.

We finally arrived back to church at 9:30 PM, 13 hours after we left. Let's review, it took us 10 hours to get down....13 hours to come home. If we are doing this trip next year, we will NOT be coming home on Sunday. We will be worshipping in a church down in the Black Mountain/Asheville area, doing some sightseeing in the afternoon and coming home Monday when most people are back to work. 13 hours in a vehicle, we get a little punchy.

Ok, stats for this year's trip.

44 state license plates – missing Alaska, Hawaii, New Mexico, North Dakota, Rhode Island and Wyoming

571 miles travelled home

1271 miles travelled total for the trip

11 dead deer along the road

1 live bald eagle on our drive

39 tires along the road

5 turbine blades being transported (those were pretty cool to see)

1 dead black bear cub along the road

1 live black bear seen on the way to the jobsite (I had just turned my camera off and he was gone before we could get pictures)

105 hours worked

8 dozen chocolate chip cookies eaten

Except for our 13 hour drive home, it was a good trip. We really helped Britlee and Will towards getting back in their home which they were SO appreciative of.

We can't thank you enough for your support. We would not be able to do what we do without the love, prayers, financial support and food/non perishable support.

Signing off for this trip. Catch us again when we leave August 1<sup>st</sup> for our trip to Wilmington North Carolina.

Until then, good night, take care and be good.

**May 16<sup>th</sup> 2026** – Another gorgeous frosty morning. Our last work day. We were all moving very slowly this morning as working in the heat took its toll yesterday. Breakfast this morning was specialized omelets. That gave us the protein and nourishment that we needed for our morning work.

We had some things on our back cow path road way to our jobsite that we wanted to check out, so off we go. This picture was showing the end of a ravine that was made by the rushing water.



Sadly across the road, we saw multiple crosses indicating to us that the raging water was responsible for loss of life of an entire family.

We were definitely up in the mountains as we took NC 9. On one of the cow path (and we mean cow path) roads that we took, we had a 4 legged animal in our way. No it was not a deer. Yep, our first sighting this trip of a black bear. He or she, very quickly decided that in the front of the van was not a smart place as it scampered into the woods.

We arrived at our jobsite by 8:30. Our goal for today was to finish the skirting and to build a deck/steps for her. As we pulled in, the garbage from the cans was all over the place. Evidence that bears were in the trailer park overnight.

Paul was already there getting things set up. The skirting crews hopped right into action as we were holding up the post hole digging crew. We had about 25 feet to finish. We guessed it would take us about an hour and a half. And by golly, we were done by 10:00.



The skirting is complete and Mario and Alvin are digging two of the four holes that we needed for the stairs and deck. Down 18 inches and a big concrete block at the bottom to support it. And we can't close up the holes because the inspector must come to inspect it.

Paul's goal was to get the frame in place by lunchtime and that we did. At lunchtime, our homeowner, Britlee stopped by to visit. We had asked her to stop by as we wanted to give her our gift. You see, she is an avid flower person. Unfortunately either the 3 foot of flood water or the installation of her replacement home took out her roses. They were very sentimental to her. We knew that was what our gift was going to be. We won't be showing the group picture that we took here as we promised her the picture would not be on our Facebook page or website, but we will show the roses that we got her.

She specifically said that she loved hybrid roses. Here are the two that hopped on our cart as they touched us when we shopped and we knew they'd touch her as well.



The rose on the left is ketchup and mustard, just a beautiful hybrid rose. The rose on the right is a Peace rose. After all that she and the family have been through with Helene, we felt the Peace rose was the perfect rose. She couldn't have agreed more and was very appreciative of the gift and especially all that we did for she and her husband this week.

Back to work, it was time to install the steps, the deck boards and the railings. Did I mention the weather/temperature? The weather was brilliant sunshine with temperatures in the mid to upper 80s. While we were to do steps, deck boards and railings, we all were sunbeaten after the steps and the deck boards. Paul suggested it was time for us to all get out of the sun and head back to the warehouse for some air conditioning.



Here is as far as we got the project for H&H. Paul said he'd have the railings up lickity split, so not to worry.

We were blessed that Paul and his wife Diane invited us to their house for dinner. We couldn't have had a better ending to the week. They have a beautiful home on top of a mountain, where their view is spectacular. They were showing us the particulars of what we were seeing but what moved us most were the landslides. Just seeing sections of the mountain wiped out and knowing that all of that debris had to go somewhere, perhaps on homes and people is so disheartening. Seeing people still living in tents is disheartening. But we know that God sent us to do our small part in helping people get back in their homes and that's what we did.

Paul asked us why we came to H&H, so I gave him a small evolution of how we got to working with WARM and now H&H. But the main reason was taking donations down to Asheville 18 months ago and the impression that made on us. How can you not go to serve when you see people living in tents, their cars, the streets because everything they had is gone? God sends us where He knows we can help and to Black Mountain, NC is where we could help.

Our evening will be complete by finishing the puzzle, taking our showers and packing for our long trip home. It was a wonderful meaningful experience and one that we very much felt called to do. Look for the closing entry in the blog tomorrow after we arrive home. Who knows, we might see another bear along our way.

Until then take care and we'll do the same.

**May 15<sup>th</sup> 2026** – Today was a gorgeous frosty morning. Morning temps were mid to high 30s. Our daytime temps were to get around 71, so we'll see. Breakfast this morning were our leftovers from Wednesday's breakfast. We left early this morning because truck came home through the mountain last night and suggested we really needed to do that.

Off we went and through cow paths of roads we went. Here was our first sign of what happened with Hurricane Helene. While most of the country has long forgotten the hurricane, roads and bridges are still being replaced. Here is an example.



Going a little further and we ran into this.



Elevation is around 3,020 feet. Look at the stones on the left and then again on the right. Yep, storm water came rushing down this mountain, wiping out anything in its path. The mountain was “replaced” with huge rocks to prevent the mountain from collapsing.

We are definitely staying in an area that was in the thick of Hurricane Helene and today’s trip to the jobsite was an example of that.

Our job was pretty much the same as yesterday. We finished building the steel frame structure and are about 75% done with skirting.



This is the amount of skirting we need to finish. It looks like a few feet, but it probably is about 25 feet of skirting to finish.

Today was also our supervisor Paul's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. We presented him with birthday cupcakes and Hershey candy/Twizzlers.

Now you ask, how hot was it. HOT!!!! Our phones said it was 72. Our vehicles said it was 84. We kinda side with our vehicles as it was hot in the sun. In the shade it was pleasant. We did quit on time today as well, you could've put a fork in us and it would've said we were done.

If you look at the pic, to Peg's left you'll see a door. Tomorrow's project is to finish the skirting, build a deck and steps so the owner, Britlee, can actually get inside her home. She hasn't seen the inside yet, so she is quite anxious for tomorrow for the steps into the house to be built.

Supper tonight was fish (yep, I had chicken to avoid my allergy), sweet potatoes and salad. We were blessed with being able to sit out on our back deck and enjoy dinner outside. We finish the night out catching up with family and making progress on our 750 piece puzzle.

And I'm sure it will be another night of being to bed on time as these hot days are taking a toll on us.

Until tomorrow, you stay safe, we'll try to do the same and remember the blessings that we have.

**May 14<sup>th</sup> 2026** – This morning was an early morning. We were up at a bright an early 6:15 as we needed to be on the road by 8:00. Our first morning is always a dusting off morning to get our

rhythm for making breakfast and packing lunches. This morning breakfast was French toast and sausage. Thanks to PD and Mario for breakfast.

Here's a picture of our view out our kitchen window. The picture doesn't do the view justice.



Today's temperature was a chilly morning with a plan to be high of 62. However, it was an absolutely gorgeous day.

Of we went to meet Paul at the Hammer & Heart warehouse. They are so happy that they have a warehouse as it gives them so much opportunity for donations and such. Paul gave us a quick tour and then shared our job for the day. We were to put skirting around a mobile home that had seen flood water from Hurricane Helene. To give perspective of how high this skirting is, here is a picture with Al standing along side.



The skirting is between 5 ½ feet and 6 ft depending where we are.

The first thing that needs to be done is to build a steel frame around for the skirting to attach to. The sad thing for us, not for our home owner, was the electricians decided today was the day to put the electric in. Now these electricians are from South Carolina, hired by CORE, and barely speak Spanish. You gotta wonder when they ask our supervisor, how deep should be dig the electric.

We particularly liked that the electric line that was laying in the yard was LIVE line. We all found that out when they moved it and sparks flew. Well, the electric is done, so they should be out of our way for tomorrow.

There were many changes that kept occurring for the day. Paul wanted to get us to a house that he needs to build a deck/bridge pronto and knew we were the team for the project. He actually had his project manager and Russ go shopping for the materials for us to start on the project this afternoon. Sadly, Black Mountain has many, many inspections that are required and they need to get some inspector come before that project can begin. He's hopeful that might come through tomorrow, but no promises.

As a result, we continued on the skirting project. One thing about our home owner, Britlee, she is a person that LOVES plants. Unfortunately, some of her plants were destroyed when her new mobile home was brought in. She lost rose bushes and azalea. We decided that we would replace her rose bushes, so stay tuned on that.

She also had hosta, lilies and iris around the house that is in our way. We offered to dig all her plants out that were impacting us and move them to safer area. From moving plants, the crew became the skirting installers. We aren't used to skirting needing to be 62+ inches. Last year, they were more like 35+ inches.

While we didn't get done what we were hoping, when we reflected on the why, it was because of all the start/stop that occurred, having to work around the electricians and learning the steel structure building. We finished work for the day around 4:45.

We built a strategy of what each of the vehicles were doing. We had the truck crew that were on dinner duty head home for showers and start dinner. The van crew headed to Jesse Israel Garden center to buy two new rose plants for Britlee. The first rose bush is called ketchup and mustard and just hopped on the cart as we passed it as it is so beautiful. Then the second rose bush is called Peace. We thought after all Britlee has gone through, that having a Peace rose bush would be a good welcome home present.

Dinner this evening was grilled chicken, rice and broccoli. We are pooped from the day so it will be working on a puzzle and then off to bed.

Tomorrow is another long day for us. You stay safe and we hope to do the same. Until tomorrow, we will sing our self to sleep with our new song.....I'm under the house, bend over so I don't hit my head.

**May 13<sup>th</sup> 2026** – Alarms went off early today as most of us were moving by 5:00, some earlier than that. We were at church to do our packing by 6:00. We were a tight fit between Glenn's truck and Kathy's van but it finally all fit. We thank Deb and Todd Ryland and Cindy Klahr for taking care of breakfast to get us on our way. Thanks for getting up at that early hour to save us the time and money from a restaurant. We told Todd that we hoped to be in Fairview, NC by 7, so we'll see.

After our morning pictures, we were on the road. We were thrilled, on the road by 7:05. It was an absolute beautiful day to travel. The skies were bright and there was no rain in our forecast. Our first stop was at the Virginia Welcome Center. But with 6 people, stops go pretty quick. Nothing too exciting at this stop. Driving down 81 further, we needed another stop around 11:30. We stopped at a rest stop for a bathroom stop and decided it was a good time to eat our DiNunzio's subs for lunch. Thanks Anita for dessert.

Back on the road we ran into a slight problem. Let's remember Alvin is riding shotgun in the van. Our communication between the two vehicles were two way radios. They were working fine up to this point, but now the first one died, needing to be charged. Ok, let's get the backup out to use that. Really, that one that was just charged over the weekend, died. ALVIN!!!! We put both of the radios in the charger and notified the truck that we were radioless. Good that we had just stopped so it gave the radios time to charge.

During this time, we passed this dead animal on the left shoulder. Alvin and Kathy thought it looked like a dead bear cub. We couldn't radio to the truck to see what they thought since the radios were on the charger.

A couple hours pass and the phone rings. Truck is suggesting a stop for gas and bathroom, so we stop just North of I77 intersection of I81. It's sad when you get excited to see gas at \$3.99. At this Love's stop we had a woman inquire where we were coming from and where we were heading. Short conversation so we were back on the road. We decided to take I77 across to I40 to get to Fairview.

We were back in Statesville where we were 18 months ago when we were down to drop off the supplies with Beloved Asheville. I77 was rather boring as traffic was light. However, we were surprised with some of the oversized loads on the highway. We had 5 wind turbine blades pass us.

As we headed west on I-40, we took our last rest stop. As Pastor Dave and Kathy were looking at the North Carolina map, we had a gentleman ask where we were heading. We quickly responded but kept trying to figure out which way we wanted to go to get to our AirBnb. With our shirts, it's hard for anyone to hide, so the gentleman found Peg and Alvin. He wanted to know what the shirts were all about as he knows about mission work. That got us a 20 minute chat at that rest area.

We finally are heading down our very narrow road to our AirBnb. Let's just say Google Maps painted a very different picture of what the area would look like. On there it looked like we were in a neighborhood, like a walking neighborhood. Nope, I wouldn't walk along this road so no exercising by walking the neighborhood.

We arrived about 5:15, which was much ahead of our goal. We figured out the difference between last year and this year. Last year, we had rain much of the drive, so it was much slower driving. This was all dry roads, so things moved along quite well. We unpacked our vehicles and put dinner of shepherd's pie in the oven. It is so nice to arrive and just pop dinner in the oven. We have a great deck to sit out and have our meals. I'll take a picture later this week to share. The house is a 4 bedroom, 3.5 bath, so very much accommodates our group.

After dinner, Pastor Dave, Peg and Kathy went grocery shopping while the rest cleaned up from dinner. The rest of the evening was spent chatting, blogging and doing necessary paperwork to get us started for the week.

Miles travelled today were 575.3. Number of license plates seen so far is 40. We actually saw Montana before we left Harrisburg.

Well, that's it for tonight. It's time to get ready for tomorrow. Stay tuned for tomorrow's updates. Stay safe and we'll try to do the same.

**May 12<sup>th</sup> – 2026** – Wow, here we are the night before departure. The journey to get here has been very bumpy. When we started this journey back in October 2025, we had 8-9 people that were interested. However, one by one Murphy struck as we have 3 on the Injured Reserve list. We discussed many options. Do we still go in May? Do we defer to September to see if the injured are healed? But we determined our reality is, every trip there are going to be those that are unable to go for whatever reason. Therefore, we made the decision about 4 weeks ago, it was a go and we'd go with who we had.

Paul at Hammer and Heart was very gracious and understanding with our bumpy ride. He was willing to find work if those in the IR list needed light duty and he was willing to find work no matter who was in our group. Til it was said and done, I told him, it's your ramp crew from last year and we exchanged a person who had knee replacement last year with a person who had back surgery this year. He said we are the walking wounded and that we are.

We met on Sunday to make sure with all the bumps, we all knew what road the ducks are walking. As our luck would have it, Paul sent us our job Saturday night, so I was able to share with the group. It seems as a result of Hurricane Helene, they are raising the height of the mobile homes in hopes of reducing the damage if flooding were to happen again. Our job is to put a steel structure around the base so that we can follow behind with skirting. Then the mobile home needs access points, so we'll be building decks and ramps as well.

The exciting news about H&H. They now have a huge warehouse. This allows them to provide groups an option if the weather is bad versus us having to find our own rainy day work detail. This is HUGE and very much appreciated on our side.

The last look at the weather, sunshine all 3 workdays, so we are stoked about that.

Tomorrow we have about 577 miles to travel. We'll be leaving church around 7:00 in hopes on the other end to arrive at our AirBnb in Fairview around 6pm. Why Fairview versus Asheville? For one, the AirBnb we had last year wasn't available. But since we're working for H&H who is stationed in Black Mountain, we tried to find something closer, therefore Fairview.

We appreciate your prayers for safe travels and safe job site. If you could pray a little extra this time, we'd appreciate it. If you've travelled with us when Alvin was along, you know that he can have things happen that have never happened before. Let's go back to the year, we returned from our off day to find a posting on our door that we'd have no electric between 6-8 AM, prime time for us to get up and have breakfast. Our the time that our ovens went out with the chicken in them. Well, Alvin is in a particularly challenging black cloud time right now. Between having both of their cars break down when he was driving, having the lawn mower break, the vacuum cleaner break, his phone break not once but twice and him having his glasses break, you see why we could use a little extra prayer this time. To be clear, Alvin doesn't break things, things break in his presence.

We also would appreciate prayers for Vickie. She wasn't able to join us due to back surgery that she had a little over a month ago. Unfortunately, she is back in the hospital and will have surgery again this week to fix an issue from the original surgery. Vickie our prayers are with you for quick healing so you can join us in August.

Ok, it's time to start heading to bed. Look for the post somewhere around 9ish each night (I hope). Until then, enjoy the weather and we will enjoy the beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains.



**HAMMER  
& HEART**  

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**Home Repairs For  
Neighbors in Need**