



The Doctor is in

a weekly column by
Dr. Jim Ferguson

Traveling reflections

One of my travel axioms (sayings) is, "Get on a plane, rent a car and you can see the world." Having visited four continents and after a dozen sojourns in Europe, my wanderlust has dissipated, but not gone altogether. The picture above is a view of snow capped Mount Hood on landing approach to Portland, Oregon where we've come to see our newest grandchild, Rita and her family. I promise some new travel pics and reflections in early 2019 because I've talked Becky into an adventurous cruise around the tip of South America. I have asked Mr. Hunley, publisher of The Focus, for a travel budget, but he has yet to get back with me. This morning, Becky asked me about plans for the day ahead with Rita's sister, Cleo, my daughter and son-in-law, Matt. I told her anything is fine because I don't rush to be somewhere any longer, I'm

already there. Perhaps this perspective is why my wanderlust has dissipated.

For a long time, a poem by Edna St. Vincent Miley articulated my traveling/wandering perspective:

"How shall I know, unless I go To Cairo and Cathay, Whether or not this blessed spot is blest in every way? Now it may be, the flower for me is this beneath my nose; How shall I tell, unless I smell The Carthaginian rose?"

I have stood on the ancient ruins of Hannibal's Carthage, but at this stage in my life-journey I don't yearn for Cairo or Cathay. I am blessed to know I'm where I am supposed to be. Through all my travels I have never found any place I wanted to live except in my hometown of Knoxville, Tennessee. The Psalmist spoke of this same perspective of time and place when he said, "This is the day the Lord

hath made, let us rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalms 118:24)

As a result of posting this essay from another world, Becky and I did not watch any midterm election results. We keep a low profile in Portland where you can count the number of conservatives on two hands. Interestingly, east of Mt. Hood and the Cascade Mtn. Range, Oregon is a conservative "red" state. The same situation now exists all over "the divided states of America," where large urban areas (and the media) are "blue" and rural areas and the majority of American counties are "red." We'll see if Trump and Pelosi can work together in the spirit of bipartisanship as they now promise. I hope our leaders can work for America instead of party for a change. I expect nothing but hatred from the media exemplified by CNN's Jim Acosta and the radical left.

Surprisingly, Portland and Knoxville have similar weather, despite different latitudes. This is because the Japan Current warms the coastal areas of the Pacific Northwest. Portland is much larger than Knoxville, but since it is made up of numerous smaller neighborhoods and communities it doesn't feel like a big city

except on the interstate and in the downtown. We try to avoid those areas when we visit.

Travel expands your horizons and often challenges your perspectives. Just because I see the world as a Tennessean doesn't mean that a fellow American from Oregon sees the world similarly. This midterm election proved that Tennessee is a conservative state and Knoxville is an enclave of the same. Tennesseans did their part in the election. At the same time two thirds of Oregonians voted to keep Oregon a sanctuary state. This, despite a terrible homeless problem in Portland with drugs, danger, neighborhood theft and buses which smell of urine. Perhaps on a future visit we'll discover that Portland has become the San Francisco of the Pacific Northwest.

Many predicted that the November midterm election would be about the Kavanaugh hearing, the caravan/illegal immigration issue and the booming economy. Obviously, many Americans see the world differently than me. Several Democrat Senators were defeated as a result of the Kavanaugh debacle, but the economy was not a big issue, perhaps because half of Americans pay no federal

income tax and receive government largess paid for by others. Americans apparently like "free stuff." And illegal immigration/invasion proceeds at a record pace. We'll see if we have the will to build the wall to control our borders and remain a sovereign nation.

Perhaps the midterm elections were more about local issues than a national referendum on the Trump revolution. Midterm elections often swing away from the party in power, and twice as many Republican congressmen than Democrats decided not to run for re-election. I find it disturbing that historically 98% of incumbents are reelected. I am in favor of term limits for Congress and perhaps time appointments for judges. Americans of all stripes are fed up with politicians and their hollow promises. Republicans did not govern as Republicans and have now been turned out. It's only fitting that we have divided power in the Congress because we have a divided nation.

As I looked out the window the morning after the election I didn't see anything different. I felt the same as I drove to work the morning after Obama was elected in 2008. The Founders constructed our government with a balance

of powers, where change, either way, is slow. I see the wisdom in this. Obama sought radical changes and now with Trump the pendulum swings back the other way. Life goes on and so does America even as insanity roils on the fringe of the body politic.

In 1517 a priest attached suggestions for reform within the Catholic Church on the door of the Wittenberg cathedral. These suggestions would spark what would later be called the Reformation, and within a decade the order of a 1000 years was torn asunder. The priest's name was Martin Luther and he was put on trial for his life in 1521 at the Imperial Diet in Worms. Arrayed against him was the power of a vast theocracy. In his closing defense he said, "To go against conscience is neither right nor safe."

Luther was principled and wise. I pray that our leaders have the same convictions. If reason and conscience, rather than power and party, are the driving forces behind their decisions and those of citizens and believers, we'll be OK, and we will Make America Great Again.

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Hobo's Tips for Holiday Success

It seems Halloween kicks off the beginning of a season of too much food, too much drink,



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too much spending, and way too much of the "ideal holiday season" dancing in our heads. The holidays have

become a blitz of comfort foods, socializing, shopping, decorating, spinning many of us into a frenzy of uncontrollable spending, social and family commitments / obligations as we race to the finish line on New Year's Day. Hobo's tips for holiday success brings prospective to not only the human element of the

season but also a unique viewpoint from the eyes of our pets.

For most of us, the holiday season brings families and friends together with lots of cheer and good tidings. But, the holidays also fill our homes with stress, excitement, sights, sounds, and personalities often changing the dynamics of our happy homes in an instant. For our pets all the holiday excitement can cause anxiety, stress, fear, and feelings of uncertainty. We often overlook our pet's anxieties during holidays as we are coping and navigating our own nerve-racking adventure. Here are a few ideas from Hobo the Wonder Dog you might find helpful in dealing with holiday stressors:

- Be Realistic: If your dog is not accustomed to traveling outside the home to friends,

family, and public places, then it's probably not a good idea to include Fido at the company Christmas party. Keep your dog's routines as regular as possible. Strange visitors, overnight guests, loud music, laughter, cheer, food, drinks, and a few high-energy children can tax the nerves of Santa Claus and his reindeers. Be realistic and know the limits of your pet. I recommend setting up a safe zone or room for your pet to escape; tack a ribbon across the doorway with signage to ensure safety and integrity of your pet's space. Stress increases a dog's thirst make sure to have plenty of drinking water available. Hobo's holiday escape is equipped with a water bowl, soft lighting, his favorite crate and bed, soft music, a belly rub, a ball, and a few special treats.

- Gifts: You can bet your bottom dollar that Hobo the Wonder Dog and his pack have stockings hanging on the mantle in hopes of squeaky toys and treats filled with Christmas cheer. Remember, it is not about the gifts but more about the time spent together. In reality Hobo couldn't care less about the stocking and more about a hike in the park or a game of fetch. The gift giving is more rewarding for me than the receiving by Hobo. The sharing of time is the best gift of all.

- Routine: I know it is easier said than done—but routine is your best friend during the holidays. Our pets are beasts of habits and keeping their routine as normal as possible will keep the peace, joy, and good will toward all in check. Feeding, walking, and eliminating on their

same schedule will make for a happier holiday season by all.

We might be able to learn something from Hobo the Wonder Dog this holiday season; nothing will take the place of time spent playing fetch or a hike over a hill or through the woods. Our pets are the best examples of the true meaning of Christmas—they do not care about politics, the cost of gifts, nor how ugly our holiday sweater. You see, the greatest gift to them is our presence, affection, time, and the joy and laughter we share.

Hobo's tip for holiday success—love one another and enjoy the season together. Nothing is more important than the time spent with family and friends.

Holidays are better with a dog—Woof!

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