

Trail Log 2021

Summary

Death of our son, Giles Campbell Rolston, in January, and in August scattered his cremated remains on a trail in Rocky Mountain National Park on which he and I had once done a 30 mile, ten day backpack. Covid 19 vaccinations. Blizzard in March. Wildflowers. Pasqueflower at Easter. Spring birding. June - tornado in Weld County. August - video presentation, Shangdong, China. October - biographical video: "From Shenandoah to the Mountain West," Yosemite. December, wind gusts above 100 mph.

January 27, 2021. Giles died.

I received a call from the police in Salt Lake City on Jan. 27, Wednesday, that Giles had been found dead in his trailer home in Salt Lake City. The preliminary coroner's report found that he had, unknown to anyone, a greatly enlarged heart, which is the likely cause of his death. He never went to see a doctor in recent years, though we tried to get him to go and would have paid his bills. He also had Sciatica, which gave him considerable pain in his back, and he was taking some medications that his friends gave him and he may have overdosed.

He led a rather troubled life. He was once an excellent RV mechanic, but the company he worked for went bankrupt and he lost his job. He was injured on the job and unable to do the heavy duty RV work. He never found another such job. He was treated several times for alcoholism, and, to their credit, the Mormon Hospital treated him and gave him after care that sobered him up. We did not have a lot of evidence that he was drinking recently. He did various work in the trailer park in which he lived on RV repairs in the fifty or so trailer homes there, and he mowed a lot of lawns in season. But I pretty much supported him financially over the last ten years. If he had lived until Feb 2, his birthday, he would have been 49 years old.

Jane and I, my daughter Shonny Vander Vliet and her husband, John, drove to Salt Lake on Sunday, Jan 31. I had to clean up his affairs, and dispose of his trailer and truck. Fortunately a construction worker in the park wanted the trailer so I gave it to him. My son in law decided he wanted the truck, a 2003 Ford 250, has an engine that can pull his trailer, so he drove it back here - with huge Snap on tool box loaded into the truck. He was pulling a small trailer that Giles had somehow acquired behind the truck. We drove as far as Rock Springs on Tuesday, Feb. 2. Stayed in a Hampton In there. We followed him back here Wednesday, Feb. 3.

Excellent day driving over Sunday, but driving the rest of the way back on Wednesday was a challenge, bad weather on I-80. Drove through a lot of snow falling, variously packed onto the road. John in the truck pulling the trailer was sometimes skidding and fishtailing. Visibility was

poor and sometimes we couldn't go more than 30 mph. But we made it safely.

I am sorry he died, but not surprised. I might have predicted he would die of lung cancer from smoking. He was apprehensive about what would happen to him after Jane and I died. I had set up a trust for him, which my daughter Shonny was to administer. But that is all moot.

Giles and Jane would over the phone take turns each reading a paragraph in a devotional book, and then meditate over and discuss what they had read. They did this half a dozen or so times a month, and this seem to have been very meaningful to him. The book they were reading is *Living with Hope*, by John Polkinghorne, a British physicist and Anglican priest. Just before Christmas they finished reading *Hebrews* with a commentary written by N. T. Wright, a New Testament scholar.

I received his cremated remains in the mail on February 11. Some day next summer I will scatter them in the mountains where we once did some backpacking. There is considerable relief to having him gone, and I no longer have to worry about him.

Jane and I got our first Covid-19 vaccination shot on Monday, February 8, the Pfizer vaccine.

February 12. Arctic air mass hits Fort Collins. 4.7°F

February 13. -3°F driving in to Johnson Hall.

February 14, Valentines. -3°F

February 15. -6°F

March 3, first crocus in great bloom near front driveway.

March 14, 2020. Blizzard over the weekend, especially Sunday. The storm brought heavy, wet snow and downed trees and power lines. More than 20,000 customers near Greeley were without power as of early Monday morning, according to Xcel Energy. More than 3,000 people around Fort Collins, about 700 near Loveland and about 600 people in the Denver suburbs were also without power. By early Monday morning, more than 27 inches of snow had fallen at Denver International Airport, making it the fourth biggest snowstorm in Denver weather history dating back to 1881 (National Weather Service).

Fort Collins had received about 24 inches of snow by late Sunday, with more during Sunday night. Cheyenne had 36 inches. I managed to get to the patio and shovel show off the picnic table, fearing it might break from the overload of snow on it.



April 3, 2021. Walk around the oval. Found at Danforth chapel, *Oxalis corniculata*, Creeping Wood Sorrel. A sourgrass. Yellow with reddish purple leaves. Don't recall seeing this before, not here and I have no record of finding it.



photo of *Oxalis corniculata*

April 5. Filaree. Redstem Filaree. Storksbill. *Erodium cicutarium*. Geranium Family. Beside sidewalk on walk to the library. Common weed. In good bloom.

April 7. Henbit. *Lamium amplexicaule*. In good bloom. Monfort quadrangle.

April 9. Pair of mallard ducks, male and female, walking around in the front yard. Brief snow flurry.

April 10. Went to Lory State Park and found two Pasqueflowers in good bloom. This is Saturday after Easter, last Sunday, so that is almost Pasqueflowers at Easter. Nice day good sun, decent temperature, a bit cool. I am pretty wobbly, unsteady on the trail, and even more so when I am off the trail on that slope looking for them. Couldn't do it without my walking sticks.

Pasqueflower photo by Fred Johnson, Apr 8, 2021



April 17, 2021. Prince Philip died. Jane and I watched his funeral live on CNN. Lots of pomp and circumstance, despite Covid 19 restrictions. Buried at St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, though his casket will be moved to be placed beside Queen Elizabeth's when she dies. He gave me the Templeton Prize in Buckingham Palace on May 7, 2003.

May 1, 2021. Watched Kentucky Derby. Medina Spirit pulled off an upset, holding the lead for the majority of Saturday's race on the way to victory, odds figured 12-1 against him. Bob Baffert, the trainer set a Kentucky Derby record with his seventh career win at Churchill Downs. Even he appeared stunned with the result during a postrace interview.

May 2. Hundreds of violets in good bloom a few feet away from the back fence.

May 6, 2021. Dust from Halley's Comet visible as meteors in early morning sky. Halley's Comet made its last pass through the inner solar system in 1986 and is not due back until the summer of 2061. Nonetheless, each time Halley sweeps around the sun, it leaves behind a dusty trail — call it "cosmic litter" — that ends up trailing behind the comet. The orbit of Halley's Comet closely approaches the Earth's orbit at two places. One point is in the middle to latter part

of October, producing a meteor display known as the Orionids. The other point comes in the early part of May, producing the Eta Aquarids. The sky is to bright to see this from in town.

May 9. Birding with Phil Cafaro. Especially looking for warblers. He picked me up at 6.45 a.m. Decent weather. We began at Dixon Reservoir, north end. Birds by sight and sound, often heard before seen.

crow
collared dove
mourning dove
redwing blackbird
starling
4 gulls in the sky
rufous sided towhee = spotted towhee
orange crowned warbler
flicker
violet green swallow
yellow rumped warbler - Myrtle variety
red-winged blackbird
yellow warbler
raven

returned and drove up to overlook

vireo - probably solitary
meadowlark
Western kingbird

drove to Trilby Road and Fossil Creek
shovelers - lots of them
harrier
mallard
red-necked grebe
grackle
blue winged teal

returned for Mother's Day. Gave Shonny her tricycle with flower pot in the evening.

June 7, 2021. Tornado in Weld County. Platteville, Colorado. A tornado touched down north of Firestone and traveled to an area three miles northwest of Platteville in Weld County Monday evening. Around 5:15 p.m., AirTracker7 captured video of the land spout tornado west of Platteville as it remained on the ground for several minutes.

Weld County authorities said the tornado traveled between Highway 66 and Weld County Road 42, between WCR 17 and 13. The tornado dissipated around 5:45 p.m.

The National Weather Service said power poles and lines were taken down near Highway 66 and County Road 21. One home was damaged after a downed power line caused a fire. Officials said at least two other homes, a feed lot and a dairy lot were reported damaged in the tornado. The Weld County Office of Emergency Management has identified potentially six damaged or destroyed structures as of Monday evening. Damage assessments will continue Tuesday morning. No injuries have been reported, however, there have been reports of lost livestock, according to the Platteville Gilcrest Fire District.

The storms that produced the tornado caused disruptions at Denver International Airport. The airport reported several departure and arrival delays. The most tornado-prone county in Colorado and the entire country is Weld County, which has seen 268 tornadoes since 1950.



August 15, 2021. A Sunday. Took Giles cremated remains and scattered his ashes on the North Boundary Trail.

The four Vander Vliets, Jane and I, and Alex Pace (Giles' son) and Alex' girl friend, Allie, in a separate car. Left home about 9.30 a.m. Hard to get park entrance permits, but Shonny had managed to get an entrance access pass between 11.00 a.m. and 1.00 p. m., and we were permitted to remain in the park as long as we wished that day. Drove up in good weather to the Estes Park Visitor Center.

Found the Devil's Gulch Road and took it East . This is County Road 43. Seemed further than I thought, but we found the McGraw Ranch Road, Indian Head Ranch, now all dirt, but good dirt, with lots of warnings to stay off private property but you did have park access on this road.

Reached the National Park Boundary, and parking lot, which is mostly permitted parking roadside for maybe 6-8 cars on either side, which was full. Drove down across the river, and I got out with Rolston to scout the trailhead, while the two cars went back to grab any parking space that opened up. Rolston and I walked ten minutes, first on the Cow Creek Trail (with now perhaps a dozen guest cabins operated by the park). Found the North Park Boundary Trial clearly

marked. Rolston and I returned and the others had, luckily, grabbed two parking spaces.

So we packed up, fighting some rain, and walked back and up the North Boundary Trail maybe a quarter mile, to a suitable site where we could get in high grass 30-40 feet off the trail. I had a bit of funeral service trying to keep my book out of the rain, and we began scattering ashes. John filled a tin can with ashes and I scattered them, half a dozen times, half or more of the ashes. Then Alex scattered some and Jane scattered some. Alex wanted a few saved for him in the container.



Weather was co-operating though there was light rain off and on. Various photos taken. Tears about good times and hard times passed, a life cut too short, ending in tragedy. Saw only one hiker coming down the trail just after we had finished and we let him pass.

Walked out, with some loud thunder, maybe getting a bit too close. I am thankful we got it done. But we had peace and sufficient privacy to make it work. I had worried that a Park Ranger might stop us because access might be closed or not let us in because the parking lot was full, and we might have to take the ashes to Dunraven Glade (where Giles and I finished the backpack).

Returned to the cars and returned to Estes Park Visitor Center in off and on rain, where we ate a fine lunch Jane (with help from Shonny) sitting on benches under a roof along a walkway entrance to the center (and toilets). Afterwards, walked across the bridge to a floral area with big rocks to sit on where Jane read passages that she and Giles had read together over the phone, some from John Polkinghorne (who himself just died), some from N. T. Wright. More tears.

Drove home, reaching home about 3.30 p.m. Amen.

August 28-29, 2021. I spoke in China!! I was invited to deliver a video presentation to the International Symposium on the Development of Ecological Aesthetics in the Post Epidemic Era, held at Shangdong University, Shangdong, China. The largest and most threatening pandemic in human history has humbled arrogant humans, locked us up. The upsetting surprise is that this tiny bit of nothing, not even alive, is upsetting our local and our global ecologies. Can viruses have their place in a wonderland biosphere? Earthen natural history might be called the evolution of suffering, or, equally, the evolution of caring. We must embrace nature and culture on Earth as it is and as it is becoming. Online at: <https://hdl.handle.net/10217/233885>

Sept. 28, 2021. Gorgeous aspen

Left home about 9.30 a.m., having first to check whether Shonny needed Jane to pick up Ellie, who has been sick. Drove south to Lyons, and started up the St. Vrain Canyon road to discover that it was closed 15 miles up. So we had to return to Lyons, and, confusedly, found two locals that could help. I had to drive up the road to Estes Park, long but slow, and sometimes pretty. Then in Estes Park we took Route 7 South. There was a good deal of good color aspen. By noon we were at Highlands Camp, where we ate our lunch on the outside porch of the big conference room. Pretty, and rather calm.

Drove on south and got on the road we wanted, with gorgeous aspen, especially from Peaceful Valley south. Lots of sun and spectacular aspen dazzling as if on fire in big mountain views and lots right at roadside – we think maybe the best we have ever seen. Also some clouds and aspen in shadows which added to the effect.

Reach the Brainard Lake road and drove up it perhaps a mile and a half, with continuing excellent aspen. Started the return drive to Estes, and took naps back at Highlands Camp.

Reached Estes and went into Moraine Park hoping for elk bugling. Lots of elk visible and heard 3-4 quite good bugles, and another 3-4 further off. Saw hundreds of elk.

Drove home, and home about 6.00 p.m., nicely before dark.

October 22, 2021. On request I gave a presentation at the Yosemite/Zoom Author Symposium, on Virtues, Vice, and Ecoflourishing: Multidisciplinary Christian Perspectives, held near Yosemite National Park I recalled, as requested my life story founding environmental ethics. “From Shenandoah to the Mountain West” I was born in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, with mountains on my skyline and fields, creeks, and rivers as my playground. My elders loved gospel and landscape, gifts of God. I became the father of environmental ethics at Colorado State University. Earth is a promised land, a wonderland planet, in which one can glimpse divinity. This is online and you can watch it at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10217/234031>. This is a big file and you will have to download it, takes several minutes, and then you can watch it. All you need to watch is the first half.

Nov. 6, 2021. In the big bathroom, I fell backwards into the tub, wobbly old man that I have become. That was a Saturday night and couldn't get any help until Monday. Fractured my collarbone. Family clinic had me x-rayed and sent me to OCR. Shonny rigged it thru Rocci Trumper that I could see Michael Rusnak there. Saw his medical assistant, named Amber Vance, on Thursday, Nov. 11. She says it will heal naturally, with six weeks of arm in a sling.

December 15, 2021, Wednesday. 12:45 PM

100 MPH Wind Gusts Reported During Severe Weather in Colorado

Wind gusts in excess of 100 mph were reported in parts of Colorado on Wednesday, December 15, as severe weather created dangerous conditions in the region.

The National Weather Service (NWS) reported a gust of 100 mph at the United States Air Force Academy Airfield in Colorado Springs.

In Lamar, Colorado, wind gusts of 107 mph were reported, with flying dust and debris drastically reducing visibility.

In the Denver area, close to 50,000 customers were impacted by power outages, the *Denver Post* reported.

end 2021