

## Trip 2 – Episode # 12 – A Boxing Day Like No Other

As many of you know, for literally decades, Boxing Day has been celebrated with the traditional Boxing Day Bash, during which we welcome dozens of friends and family in our home, for food, drink, much laughter, reunions of people who only see each other once a year, and more food.

Obviously, the 2021 Bash would've been impossible, even if we'd been in Toronto. So, we knew Boxing Day would be non-traditional. But we had no idea how extremely different it would be.

We started off by leaving South Padre Island and its beautiful beach and heading north, toward San Antonio.

We drove through a bit of Corpus Christi on the way, just to say we'd been there.

There were some huge houses along the waterfront.



But what was more extraordinary was the Corpus Christi campus of Texas A&M University. They have an entire island to themselves, with fantastic modern buildings, what looks like great student residences and this beautiful Performing Arts Center.

That in itself was pretty impressive. Then we discovered that the "A&M" stands for "Agricultural and Mechanical"!

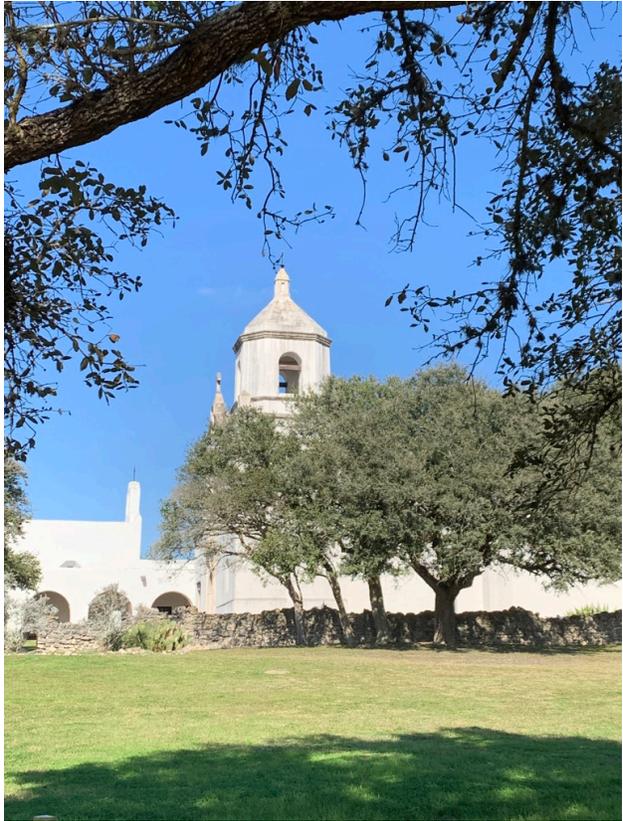
Apparently, along with "serving the students and faculty", the center is offered to non-profit performing groups in the area for a reduced rate. Wow!



And speaking of wow – look at the height this kite-surfer got out on the bay. He's almost as high as the other guy's kite!



North of Corpus, we needed a pit stop and turned into the driveway of what turned out to be the Goliad State Park & Historic Site. So we went to explore a bit.



The information on this stone was startling to say the least.



But the pure white mission against the brilliant blue sky made for good photos.



And we met a somewhat eccentric guide who gave us a brief but colourful history of the mission and the presidio (fortress) nearby. (She rivalled Jim in her pointing technique.) We later found out that Goliad was the site of an even more horrific battle than the Alamo.



We got back into Charles and continued heading north. Our plan was to find a place to stay in San Antonio overnight, and the next day, we had tickets to see the Alamo.

Well, you know what they say about plans...

At about 3:15, with another 40 kms to San Antonio, Jim said, "Oh no!"

The "Check Engine" light had gone on. And suddenly, when he put his foot on the gas, nothing happened. We coasted to a stop on the shoulder of highway 181. (Thank goodness there was a shoulder!)

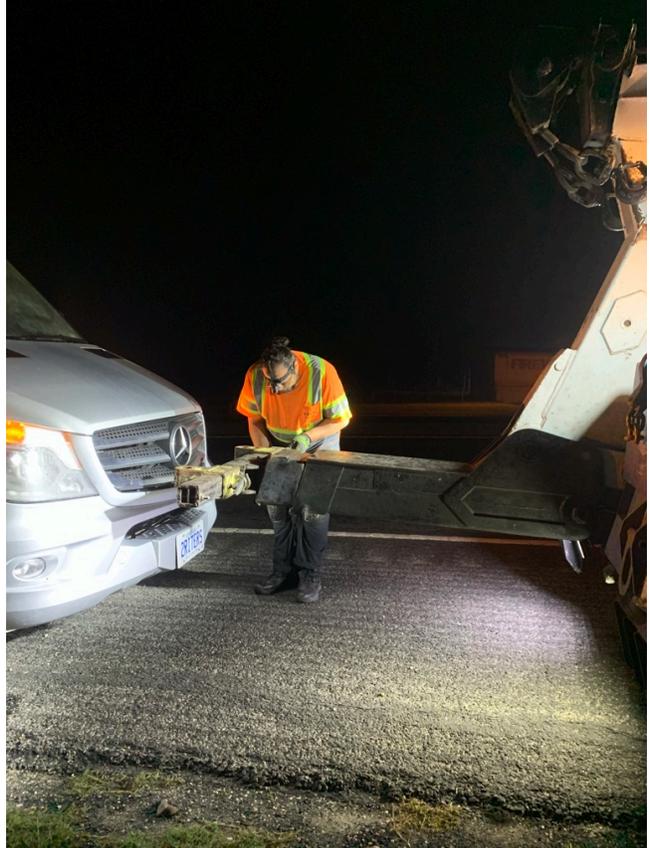
We looked underneath Charles and there was fluid that seemed to have leaked. But we didn't know what.

Jim called AAA (we have CAA coverage for the RV which is recognized by AAA) and they assured us that a tow truck would be there in 90 minutes.

We watched the sun set behind the Fireworks outlet across the street, and still no tow truck.



**Nine** hours after our first call (with many calls in between), Samuel arrived with his tow truck. The wait was more than a little frustrating and stressful, but we realized many times during that long period how lucky we were that we were in Charles – with food and water and a bathroom! Also that it was warm and dry, so we didn't have to worry about freezing to death.





It took Samuel over an hour to properly secure Charles to his truck. He actually had to crawl underneath to remove the drive shaft! – which ended up inside Charles.



By the time Samuel towed us to a Walmart parking lot in San Antonio, and unhooked us, it was 2:30 a.m. (the time I usually finish cleaning up after the Boxing Day Bash!). It was the first time we'd overnighted in a Walmart parking lot, and we were very happy to know that we had a safe place to sleep overnight.

Early the next morning, we had to contact a Mercedes dealer to see if they could look at Charles and find out what happened. It turns out there are three Mercedes dealers in the area and only one of them services Sprinters. Fortunately, they said could look at Charles that day (which was miraculous. We'd heard of people having to wait weeks for an appointment in some places.)

So we had to call AAA again, to get another tow to the Mercedes dealer.

About an hour later, Reuben showed up. He was happy that he didn't have to remove the drive shaft, and it took him much less time to get Charles ready to tow again. He also got to do it in daylight.



An hour later, we were at the Mercedes dealership in Boerne (pronounced like Bernie, apparently).



We waited in the lounge. And because it was a Mercedes lounge, there were Christmas decorations and coffee and TV and wifi and computers we could use! Really tough.



As comfortable as it was, we went through a very stressful period when our service guy, Ivan, suggested that the problem might be that we had put gas in the tank instead of diesel.

Yikes! That's bad. Like REALLY bad! Like thousands of dollars bad!

Jim was very worried, because ever since I broke my ankle getting out of the van to fuel up, he always does that job. We were sure he wouldn't have made that mistake. Unless...

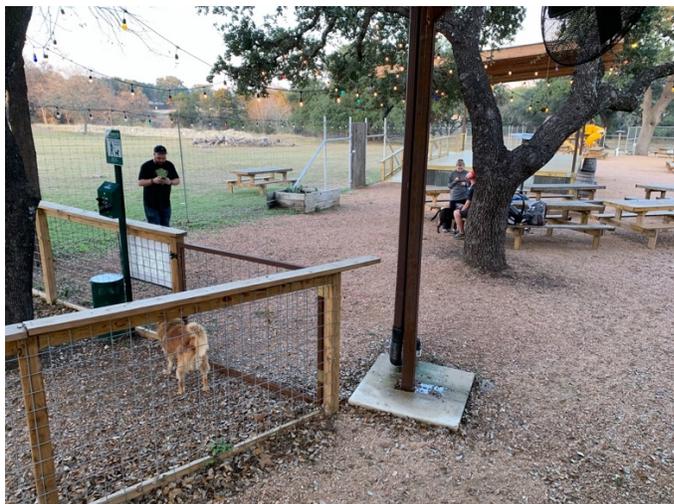
After about four hours, Ivan came and told us it was all fixed. Apparently one of the gas lines, which was probably jerry-rigged by Charles' previous owner, had come apart, so when Jim was hitting the gas pedal, it was just spewing diesel (not gas!) onto the road.

We were relieved that it got fixed relatively easily. And for around \$700 US. But thanks to having AAA, the tows, which would have cost \$600 each instead cost us \$100 each.

We were exhausted. We found a campground to stay in, and the perfect place to have a quick, easy dinner.



It was a fun restaurant where you could sit outside, and your dogs and kids could run around and play in a safe, fenced playground! Perfect!



It was fun and easy and tasty. And they made a very fine Margarita!



So in the end, so much could've been much worse. And we were thankful about so much that happened, instead of so much that *could* have happened.

But, I think next year for Boxing Day, we'll go back to the old tradition.