

The Bainbridge Blabber

Holiday Edition

December 2004

Merry Christmas

A time for friends and family to reconnect and renew our relationships



Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all. As we reflect on 2004, we are thankful for the blessings of the year, and continue to grow in the experiences of life.

Move it! Pack it! Clean it! Fix it! Throw it out!

For those of you who follow our escapades, you will recall that we moved ourselves and Sandy's Dad down to Arkansas last December. After the first of the year, it was necessary to return to Minnesota to tie up loose ends, get the last load of "good stuff" and prepare our house and Sandy's Dad's house for resale. We were greeted in Minnesota with -35 below zero temps and seriously wondered if we had lost our minds as we loaded smoker wood and rose quartz rocks for landscaping into our trailer. All Sandy could say was – I want to go home to Arkansas where it's warm! After we finished up with the final cleaning at our house in Pequot Lakes, we sent to Sandy's Dad's house in Minneapolis. Sandy cleaned and worked in the house while Bob tackled the garage and outside in the bitter cold and snow. About the second day, Bob declared "I think we should have a garage sale this weekend". Sandy thought he had frozen his brains for sure. "Who will come in the middle of January? And how can we possibly be ready in time?" she wailed. Bob was persuasive; an ad was placed and signs were posted. Friday morning people were waiting to get in - proving that Minnesotans are either hardy folks, nuts or needed a "garage sale fix". Surprisingly, the sale was heavily attended and went well. In the midst of all of this, Bob was contacting realtors and potential buyers to sell the home. Even some people at the sale were interested in the possibility of buying the house. Believe it or not, by the time we left – two weeks after we got to Minneapolis, the house was cleaned out, all contents were either packed in the trailer or sold, and we had a signed purchase agreement on Dad's house!

The unpacking problem

After we finally got all of our stuff to Arkansas, the problem was where to put it. The garage was stuffed front to back with boxes as were most of the rooms in the house. Bob grumbled, started calculating and announced that "we have lost 3300 sq ft of storage and 500 sq feet of living area – we need to build!!" So we put on an addition to the garage and then we put up a metal building to house our camping trailer, boat trailers, and other "good stuff". Wanting to have even more fun, we re-painted the interior of the house completely, and then re-stained the non-brick exterior of the home. Most of the year we were under construction of one sort or another. We had trailers, metal shelving and other large items stacked all over the yard for several months. We finally got the last of it put away in August when the garage got finished. We could almost hear the neighbors breathe a collective sigh of relief that the mess was gone!



Hogg Heaven

Last Spring, Sandy told Bob he deserved to upgrade his motorcycle. Bob protested – "but it's practically brand new". Sandy reminded him that a 1982 model was 22 years old and perhaps an upgrade was in order. Reluctantly, he agreed to at least look. He found nearly new Honda Gold Wing on E-bay Arkansas and sprang for it. We went to our first motorcycle rally in Fayetteville in October with some new friends. Unfortunately, we had a minor accident there on the freeway when a torrential rainstorm came up from seemingly nowhere. We were not hurt, but the bike was damaged. Instead of having it repaired, we decided to use the opportunity to convert it to a "trike" (three-wheeled motorcycle). We should enjoy the added stability – especially on so many gravel roads down here – but it does make us feel a bit "old" to have gone to the three wheel model!



Arkansas – the Natural State

No Christmas letter would be complete without a mention of the Bainbridge's coexisting with nature. Sandy has been "ga ga" over all of the beautiful flowers, trees and shrubs that will grow here, and so this fall, she took the

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course and became a certified Master Gardener. Now she has all kinds of gardening resources and new friends with which to share her gardening passion. All Bob can see is the challenge of trying to dig a hole in all of this rock and clay. (We now know why they call the capital Little Rock – there are big ones everywhere else!). Bob, of course, decided to solve part of the problem by getting a large tractor for those little landscaping projects that Sandy will dream up. No point in doing something half way!!

The Wildlife Report

Arkansas has plenty of wildlife of course, and lots of bugs, spiders and snakes. We have adopted a policy of détente' with the critters. If they don't bother us, we won't bother them. Sandy has taken to naming the lizards that sun themselves on our front porch railing in the summer. Mosquitoes are virtually non-existent in this part of Arkansas which means we can be out on our deck at night and actually enjoy it! Chiggers, meanwhile, are another story – especially since you can't see them. Consequently, insect repellent is a staple down here if you want to do anything in your yard or garden. But hey, no place is perfect!

Another new experience is seeing vultures gliding on the wind currents over the lake. We often see as many as a dozen vultures at a time perched in large oak trees in our yard. They are well received down here since they clean up the plentiful road kill that seems to abound. Lately, we have been going rounds with raccoons that climb up on the deck to go after the birdfeeders. One has met an untimely demise, and hopefully the rest will take the hint.



Bob keeps hoping that “someday” he will be able to get out on the lake and fish. In addition to good lake fishing, there is good trout fishing in the White River on the downside of Bull Shoals Dam which is nearby. Bob just won a day's guided trout fishing trip which he hopes to do this spring. There are also an abundance of wild turkeys around and plenty of deer. The turkeys are bigger and the deer are smaller than in Minnesota, and both are a menace on the road. Bob didn't do much hunting this November, but is ready for the Christmas hunting season.

Odds and Ends

There seems to be no shortage of things to do in this community. Sandy has joined the church, county home extension group and the Master Gardener group. Additionally, she recently joined a Red Hat Society Chapter and performed in a skit at a local theatre as a benefit for the local food shelf. Bob has joined the local volunteer fire department and is busy learning how to be a fireman, drive big trucks, etc. He has even started to do some computer consulting which will be fine as long as it doesn't interfere with other fun activities.

On a more somber note, Sandy's Dad was in a car accident in June. Miraculously, he suffered only minor injuries. He had made the move down here just fine and was enjoying living in his senior's apartment – planting in the gardens there, filling birdfeeders on the grounds and playing cards with some of the ladies. We had a nice party for him on his 90th birthday and he received lots of cards from family and friends – new and old. But, the accident really set him back. After 2 ½ weeks in the hospital, he went to the nursing home attached to his apartment, for rehabilitation. He was doing well – walking with a walker, and was ready to be released when he fell, and has gone downhill. His mental condition has deteriorated over the last couple of months and he is much less aware than he was. It is sad to see him decline like this, but he is getting good care and is in a beautiful and comfortable facility and is fortunately only a few minutes away.

All in all it's been a busy year. Sandy's cousins from Cleveland, Ohio and Nashville, TN both came to visit. On the fourth of July we drove our pontoon boat down to the dam to watch the fireworks with a few thousand other people. In September, we went to the Arkansas State Championship “Hillbilly Chili Cook-off” (as spectators only). And a couple of weeks ago we went to a Christmas choral concert held in Blanchard Springs Cavern – 210 feet underground! There are so many places to go and new things to explore. We are happy to be here and thankful for the many new friends that we are finding here.

We hope y'all will consider coming to see us sometime. They's viddles is on the stove & the welcome mat is out!

Bob and Sandy Bainbridge



May this Christmas Season be one filled with love and joy for all of you, and may you find the New Year filled with blessings and all good things for you and your loved ones.