

The Bainbridge Blabber

Holiday Edition

December 2005

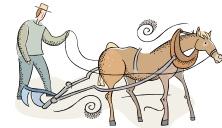
Merry Christmas

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

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all. As we reflect on 2005, we are thankful for the blessings of the year, and continue to grow in the experiences of life. This year has been another exciting one for the Bainbridges!

Travel Report

Much to Sandy's relief, Bob, after much grumbling, hedging, and denial has agreed that he is now retired. Whoopee, we can now travel said Sandy!! We finally took off in April for a few days in Nashville, TN. In addition to a long overdue reconnection with family there, we toured the TN botanical gardens (for Sandy), a couple of plantations and a *Mule Museum!* To Sandy's disappointment, there were no mules, but lots of old mule-pulled farm equipment and a couple of old guys who actually remembered using the stuff. Curious Bob got lots of questions answered and learned a lot. Never know when you might want to get a mule and plow up those extra acres!



This trip was followed with shopping excursions to Little Rock and Memphis where we got to see the National Metal Museum (talk about finding obscure museums)! There, working apprentice blacksmiths re-create wrought iron gates & specialty pieces for historic restorations. Bob enjoyed it, since he enjoys working with metal. Sandy was polite.

For our 23rd anniversary in August, we went to Eureka Springs, AR which is sort of an odd combination of Greenwich Village and the Pocono's, with Christian overtones. They have a Christian village where they portray the Passion Play, a sizeable gay population, and counterculture artists from the 60's who have shops and studios. E.S. is also a favorite spot for weddings and honeymoons. Every hotel/motel has its suites with heart shaped tubs! We had fun exploring the town and people watching.

This Fall, we decided that it would be "cool" to spend Thanksgiving in Key West, FL. Neither of us had ever been to south Florida or the "Keys" and Bob wanted to see the Everglades and pet the alligators. On the way, we stopped in Huntsville, AL and saw the US Rocket and Space museum. This took all day after which Bob declared he was "all spaced out". Going down the Gulf Coast of Florida, we hoped to see the ocean, but all we saw were miles of strip malls. We saw the Ringling home and circus museum in Sarasota, among other attractions. Décor was a bit too gaudy for Sandy, but after all, the guy did make a good part of his fortune from the circus! Sandy saw a great rose garden. Bob was polite. Going south we saw lots of Everglades and Bob did indeed get to pet a wild alligator on an airboat ride. The alligator swam up to the boat and the captain just reached into the water and lifted up its head and tail (Bob petted the tail). Going down to the Keys was interesting and sobering. There was still evidence of damage from Hurricane Wilma with lots of roofs covered with blue tarp along with piles of debris and appliances alongside the road. Key West was an interesting place and we did indeed sit on the beach on Thanksgiving Day. As we had thought, it was "cool", but literally— temps only in the mid 70's – hardly bikini weather, but fun and beautiful on the beach anyway.



Sandy went shopping on Duval Street while Bob went on a catamaran to snorkel. Does it get any better than that? Coming up the Atlantic side we did finally get a great view of the Atlantic – a dramatic difference from the calm gulf waters! Stopped in St. Augustine to see some historical sites, and made our way up to Asheville, NC as Sandy wanted to stop and see the Biltmore Estate. We camped in our fifth-wheel on the top of a mountain where the temperature dropped to 26 degrees with a 40 MPH wind – brrrr. Biltmore Estate was most impressive and took all day to tour it and the grounds. Sandy wants to go back some spring to see the gardens. Bob will be polite.



Wildlife Report

As we reported last year we have adopted a policy of détente' with the critters. If they don't bother us, we won't bother them. Last spring, however, we did go rounds with the raccoons and possum which decided that scaling

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our second story deck to raid the birdfeeders at night was really no big deal. After finding their “calling cards” on the deck rail, Sandy declared war and authorized Bob to take action. Traps and guns took care of some of the issue, but Sandy decided it would just be better to take the feeders in at night after the birds went to bed. Since we have no vegetable garden yet, there were no other temptations for the critters and Sandy has decided to plant only those flowers and landscaping plants which the deer don't like. Stay tuned – the fun will start as more gardens and landscaping are done.



Sandy's Doings

Sandy became a Master Gardener last year and so this spring she volunteered to help them develop a web site. Following that, she found herself appointed to the position of first Vice President of the organization, in charge of the monthly programs which kept her busy. She also spent the spring planting new raised gardens that Bob built in the front yard. This winter she hopes to lay out some gardens for him to build in the back yard. She is also still busy with her Red Hat group. She went with some of them to a show on the Branson Belle showboat. Imagine over 650 Red Hat ladies from around the country all in once place! What a hoot! She also rode on her first float in the local 4th of July parade with other members of the club. She's doing lots of fun things which, after all of the years of caretaking of parents is a good thing for her.

Bob's Doings

Acknowledging that he was retired didn't stop him from working on some local issues. He spent some time working for adequate electric supply, road maintenance, and a petition to allow our County to sell liquor. Take pity on the poor local officials when faced with Bob who had too much time on his hands. Imagine him living in a 'dry' county!!!

After years of complaining that he never had the time, he has finally decided to do some fishing! He's been to some fishing seminars, joined the local rod and reel club and the walleye group, poured over catalogs, etc. Finally, Sandy explained that reading, talking and doing research about fishing was no substitute for actually getting on the lake and doing it! So, finally he got out fishing with “some of the guys”. In the spring, he and Sandy also took a trout fishing float trip on the White River – just a few miles from our home. It was an all day trip complete with a shore lunch. We enjoyed the trip and the fishing was great! It almost got boring just pulling them in one after another. Even brought home a few trout for the freezer. Now the trick is to do it without a guide...hmmm.



No year seems complete without a new toy and this year was no different. He found a used Sea Doo jet ski and both he and Sandy enjoy riding around our lake.

Odds and Ends

On a more somber note, Sandy's dad, Joe, passed away on the first of the year. He was 2 months short of being 91 and had a good, long life. After a cold and snowy trip on icy roads back to Minnesota for the funeral, we returned home for Sandy to sort through her memories and “find” herself again after having been a caretaker to parents and in-laws for the last 12 years.

Overall, we are still glad to be in Arkansas with many new friends and activities for us both. We are both in good health and hope that this greeting finds y'all in good health and circumstances as well.

Please do consider coming down to see us sometime. Our door is always open and the welcome mat is out!

Merry Christmas to y'all!

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.