

The Bainbridge Blabber

Holiday Edition

December 2006

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 2006, we are thankful for the blessings of the year, and continue to grow in the experiences of life.

Travel Report

The Bainbridge's really helped boost oil company profits this year, with travels in 13 states and "nicking" another 3 more plus Mexico. We took two trips with our 5th wheel camper – one in January/February to Palm Desert California, and the other in August/September to the Grand Canyon, Utah, and Yellowstone. Since neither of us had traveled much out west, both of these trips were a real treat.

The California trip provided a much appreciated respite from winter's cold and the opportunity for visiting relatives. Along the way, Sandy the gardener enjoyed seeing the numerous cacti and desert plants, while Bob was trying to sell her on the idea of redoing the front yard in a desert motif (no grass to mow)! In addition to marveling at the very different landscapes of the southwest, we enjoyed seeing the attractions along the way – Carlsbad Caverns, Smokey Bear National Park and White Sands National Monument in New Mexico. At White Sands, they plow the sand to uncover the roads from drifts. The roads appeared snow covered and being from Minnesota, we were instinctively practicing our winter driving skills, expecting to slide all over the road. How bizarre it was to get out of the car and be walking on sand!



Of course, no trip through New Mexico is complete without a trip to Roswell in the hopes of seeing an alien or a UFO. We drove through town and past the UFO museum – but it looked a bit tired. Bob opined that the whole story had probably been made up by the chamber of commerce to boost tourism. As much as we wanted a tin foil helmet we didn't stop.

Going through Southern Arizona, we enjoyed the Tucson area but Bob was insistent on seeing Quartzsite, AZ as there was a gem and mineral show to see. This small community is a real slice of life as it swells from several hundred to several hundred thousand inhabitants in the winter, most of whom camp out in the desert in their RV's. It's dry and dusty. The town has a lot of traffic jams, no place to park, and huge tents full of various trade shows and flea markets. Seeing so many square miles of RV's in the desert is quite a vision itself. Having "done" Quartzsite, Bob is now fulfilled and won't need to return anytime soon.

Palm Desert California was beautiful, to say the least, and we had a lovely visit with Bob's relatives. Sandy wished there was more time for upscale shopping, but Bob was relieved that she settled for seeing the Living Desert museum instead.

Our fall trip was full of adventures. We saw both the North and South rims of the Grand Canyon, hiked a lot and couldn't get enough of the fabulous scenery. At Zion Nat'l Park Bob goaded Sandy into walking up "the narrows" of the Virgin River. The canyon walls are high and steep on each side of the narrow river bed, but you actually have to walk in the water (sometimes up to your thighs) and watch out for slippery boulders underneath. Bob had made 6 ft 'walking sticks' out of PVC pipe for the trip, which proved to be invaluable in negotiating the swift current and the rocks. They also prompted a lot of comments from others who thought the idea was either clever or weird. The scenery was awesome and the experience unique.

Lobbying for equal time, Sandy got Bob to take a mule ride into Bryce Canyon. Getting up close and personal on the canyon floor with the "hoodoos" and other rock formations was extraordinary. Sandy rode ahead of Bob, which was a good thing as Bob's mule was extremely flatulent! It also was nicknamed the "rim walker" and walked so close to the edge, Bob could only hope the mule did not fall asleep or have a death wish.!



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In Arches Nat'l Park, Bob talked Sandy into renting a Jeep – a popular way to explore the canyons and back roads. Bob cautiously drove the Jeep, like any rental car - carefully negotiating the dirt roads. However, when Sandy got behind the wheel, she drove like you see on TV – now that's four-wheelin'!

Bob also finally got timid Sandy to agree to go rafting down the Colorado River. The rapids were medium to mild and Sandy actually had a good time. We got into a kayak and paddled through several rapids. Getting splashed was actually quite welcome as it was a very hot day.



An anticipated highlight of going to Salt Lake City, was to be the chance to float in the Great Salt Lake. Bob's romantic notion of bobbing around in the water quickly evaporated when he got a whiff of the lake. We didn't realize that it is really a large, smelly, inland tidal flat. Another bubble burst! We continued north to Yellowstone to see Old Faithful and the other geysers and geologic formations there. While very interesting, the tour books don't tell you that the geysers, painted pots, mud volcanoes, etc. all stink of sulfur – P-U!

Fishing/Boating Report:

In October, sixteen of the neighbors and six pontoon boats made took an overnight boating trip 90 miles up Bull Shoals Lake to Forsythe, MO - just East of Branson. We pulled up on shore and camped on our boats, covering them with tarp to keep off the dew and possible rain. Bob had constructed a frame out of PVC pipe to support the tarp, and with a small heater inside, it was like a floating Holiday Inn! The weather was mild, and the moon was full, but the floor was hard! Still, we had a lot of fun with a bonfire on the beach - and we all had matching tee shirts that said "Redneck Yaht Club".

Sandy's Doings:

Sandy continues to be busy with her Red Hat ladies, and Master Gardener organization. At the annual spring gardening seminar Sandy was called on to MC the event with only 24 hours notice. She handled the room of 200 so well that they asked her to MC again next spring! In August her Red Hat Ladies had an overnight "pajama party" at a popular trout resort about 60 miles away in Missouri. It was great fun. Of course, by 9:30 PM, the ladies were starting to wear out and go to bed – and those with hot flashes kept turning down the thermostat while those sleeping in the room above the air conditioning system (Sandy) were practically frozen by morning. Outside temps were in the 90's. Sandy could see the headlines: "Red Hatters freeze to death in 90 degree heat"!



Bob's Doings:

Bob has been busy doing yard work and fishing this year. He built three raised bed flower gardens for Sandy, and a raised bed vegetable garden. (What a guy!) We figured we better put in the veggie garden so that we will have a more interesting wildlife report for future Christmas letters! His summer project was working with a group to get a petition signed for a ballot initiative allowing liquor sales in the county. It has been "dry" since about the depression. After many months of work, the requisite signatures were obtained and the initiative passed with 60% at the last election. Victory! Currently, he's constructing frame out of PVC pipe to support a sun shade for his tractor. This is his third project out of PVC pipe this year. And you all thought duct tape was the answer to everything!



We continue to be enamored with living in northern Arkansas. For those you who are our contemporaries living in the North, it is a great place to consider for retirement and for others it is a great place for a vacation. Come visit us - our door is always open and the welcome mat is out!

For those of you who are interested, we have posted some pictures of the Bainbridges, our travels and Arkansas life on a website that Bob has put up at: <http://home.centurytel.net/bainbridge>.

Merry Christmas to you 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.