

The Bainbridge Blabber

Holiday Edition

December 2012



Merry Christmas

Dear Friends & Family: We hope you all had a pleasant year. We are thankful for our continued good health and the many friends and family with which we have been blessed. 2012 was a quieter year than most for us, still, we had our moments!

New Year's Good Luck:

This year, on advice of some native Arkansan acquaintances, we decided to start the year out right with a traditional Southern New Year's Day dinner of "Hoppin' John" and hog jowls! We had no idea what to expect. Turns out, hog jowls are very popular this time of year and are readily available even at Wal-Mart! Tradition says that eating "Hoppin' John" (black-eyed peas, rice, onion and bacon – or jowls) on New Year's Day brings good luck for the rest of the year. So, Sandy bought some hog jowls and canned "Hoppin' John" and we had us a real feast! Hog jowls actually taste like greasy bacon, and the "Hoppin' John" was tasty, but would be much better if made from scratch. So, this year we will try again with actual recipes and will see if our luck improves!

Weather Report:

Spring arrived early this year and plants and shrubs seemed to bloom too early, but no one complained about the bounteous blossoms. Summer, however, was another story as the searing heat brought 21 days of temps over 100 degrees compared with the average of 5 days over 100 for Arkansas. Additionally, our area was in "extreme drought" on the US weather map. Folks in town on city water quit watering their lawns as they saw their monthly water bills rocket over \$100! Here in the country, we let our lawn go dormant, but continued to water our vegetable and flower gardens. Yet, even with regular irrigation, the persistent heat and drought took its toll on many plants and trees. Sandy gave up on gardening as it was just too hot to be outside. Some of her Master Gardener friends also "threw in the trowel" on this year. We even saw deer swimming in the lake! Hopefully, winter will bring some much needed rain.

"Critter" Complaints:

While the vegetable garden is fenced in, the other gardens are not, and whatever survived the heat and drought, was fodder for various four legged "critters". While Sandy blames the deer for eating everything, we did spot a big fat groundhog exiting her flower gardens one day. Meanwhile, rabbits got into the vegetable garden, deer ate her rosebushes, armadillos did damage to the yard, and who knows what the squirrels got into! Can't get too mad as the drought really impacted the amount of native food sources for the critters. But still – do they have to eat all the pretty plants? There are still way too many deer here. We have groups of 5 or more coming through the yard each morning and evening. Deer hunting season is upon us. Sandy's getting out her recipes. Venison is in our future!

"Soggy Bottom" Tournament:

In March, Bob and one of his friends volunteered to be drivers for a college fishing tournament on Table Rock Lake near Branson, MO. This involved using their own boats and driving a team of two wherever they wanted to go on the lake to catch fish – no coaching or answering questions allowed. Bob had a great time and learned a lot, although it rained all day. While rain is not a big deal to fishermen, the seats in Bob's boat were not designed to drain, and Bob's raingear left him with a wet bottom. Based on Bob's rant's, this was the most notable part of the experience, according to Sandy. Of course, Bob upgraded the raingear and modified the seat to drain. Problem solved. Now if it would just rain!



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Fish heads and night crawlers:

Bob and his fishing buddies, knowing that fish like fresh bait, ordered 500 huge nightcrawlers and divided them up. We ended up housing most of them until they were all picked up which meant that the garage “beer” refrigerator turned into the “worm” refrigerator. Occasionally Sandy would hear Bob admonish the crawlers as a few would invariably climb out of their boxes and be crawling around on the shelves when he opened the door. Oh well, he never did have any pets as a kid! The local Walleye Club also continued to collect fish heads for a study by the game and fish department. Lucky Sandy – she got to have bags of fish heads in her freezer. Well, at least she avoided the worms!

Up, Up and Away?

This year brought a new adventure for Sandy. At the annual Red, White & Blue celebration, someone was offering hot air balloon rides and Sandy and her friends took advantage of the opportunity. She discovered that the most memorable part was climbing in and out of the basket without a ladder or door! As one becomes older, less flexible, and more bottom heavy, this presents more of a challenge (don’t try this in a dress)! Of course, the balloon was tethered and only rose up about 75 feet, but still, it was something she could cross off her bucket list at a small cost to Bob!



Anniversary Time:

In August, we celebrated our 30th wedding anniversary with a trip to Bentonville, AR to see the new and fabulous Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. The museum was built by Alice Walton (Sam Walton’s daughter), and it rivals anything we have seen in New York or Washington. Aside from the art, the architecture is amazing with lovely nature trails and gardens on the grounds as well. While in Bentonville, we also toured the first Wal-Mart store and informative museum which showcased how Sam Walton’s background, education, foresight and hard work built the empire that Wal-Mart is today.

Travel Report:

January was so mild that we decided not to go on a winter trip this year. Summer got too hot to travel anywhere, but later on we did take some short trips. In November we traveled to Nashville to attend a wedding for Sandy’s cousin’s son. We were pleased to share in their lovely outdoor wedding at an old mill, and had a great time visiting with family afterward. Later in November we traveled to Branson to see a show and the Christmas lights at Silver Dollar City (a theme park). Over four million lights adorn the entire park! We also discovered that the park sits on a large cave that is available to tour. Being cave aficionados we took the tour and were not disappointed. It is a first class living cave, and in spite of thousands of visitors, was very well maintained.

Other Stuff:

Sandy keeps busy with her various activities and “gallivanting” as Bob likes to call it. She continues to enjoy her bible studies at church where she often leads a small group. Her Red Hat group activities keep her busy as well and this year she put together personalized photo albums commemorating the past 8 years of events. Each album contained at least 35 pictures customized for each of the 20 ladies. It was a major project using Photoshop software to crop and enhance each photo as needed, and it took Sandy all year to complete them all, but each lady seemed to really enjoy their album!



Bob continues to fish, buy lures, fish, make wine, fish, make beer, and fiddle with computer software. In his spare time he goes fishing. Sandy is pleased that he has made new friends, has a new audience for his stories, and is learning the art of telling fishing stories as well!

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas, and may God bless us all in 2013.

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.