

2012 Christmas News from the Browns

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Merry Christmas !

Cuba Tour - January

The year began once again with a tour to Cuba. This year, unlike others, had only 10 people booked so the tour company asked that only one of us go as an escort. Normally someone else would go in our place if they couldn't afford to send us both but everyone else was busy with other tours, so we reluctantly agreed to help them out and Gord managed the tour on his own. There are 20 people already booked for the tour next January and Paige and Mitch have booked this tour as a 50th birthday present for Mitch. We will go a couple of days in advance and stay for a few days after the tour to do some SCUBA diving at the Bay of Pigs. It will be fun to have them along so that they can see how we occupy our "spare time." Our Greek and Egypt tours were cancelled again this year because of the trouble in these countries. Too bad as Egypt in particular has spent millions recently to make visitors more comfortable when they visit the various sites. Our tours next year include Cuba, in January, Japan in April, Greece in May & Kenya in November—should be fun.



Bits 'n Pieces

In May, a friend of Gord's - Mark Frobb - asked him to crew on his sailboat as he joined a group of twelve other sailboats for their annual sailing trip through the San Juan



Islands in the U.S. The group, called the "Prairie Buoys", so named for their province of origin, were mostly made up of retired professionals. They probably all moved out to the coast because their taste in sailboats - mostly 40 footers - exceeded the size that could be accommodated in the small lakes and rivers of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Mark's boat is a 40 foot Island Packet which he sailed to and from Hawaii last year so there was lots of room for the two of them.

THE SUMMER was filled with little trips around the Province. Marilyn's annual bunko trip this year saw the girls travel from Vancouver to Seattle on a Holland America cruise ship that was repositioning from Vancouver to LA for cruises to Mexico. After some shopping in Seattle, they made the return journey by rail on Amtrak.

WE TRAVEL all over the world but spend little time visiting our own

Province so this summer we visited Barkerville - the old gold mining town some 800km North of home. Along with another couple we headed out to explore Caribou country. Gord's sister, Carole, has a B & B at the half way point so we stayed there for an evening both coming and going. The B & B, called Cedar Bear Inn, is perfectly located by the shore of Lac LeRoche on a small rise surrounded by tall pines. Near Barkerville, we stayed at the famous Wells Hotel in Wells, BC. Everything in this 80 year old hotel creaked and groaned but it was comfortable and the food was excellent. Barkerville was a great experience, with some gold panning, follies-theatre show and actors everywhere playing the parts of school teachers, blacksmiths, shopkeepers and water wheel/mill operators. After lunch in old China



Town, we took the stage coach ride around the site. We had planned the trip for just after they opened for the season and just before the kids got out of school so it was quiet but cool. The rain held off for the day which would have turned the whole place into a mud bath.

Palm Desert/Springs

In February, we spent two weeks with an "old" troop mate of Gord's and his wife in Palm Desert. We have always been curious about what draws people to Palm Desert so decided to make the journey to see what all the fuss was about. After flying to Los Angeles, where we rented a car for the balance of the trip, we headed out into twelve lanes of traffic going 70 miles an hour. Gord had pre-set the GPS to take us to Del & Edna's place in Palm Desert but, after merging with heavy traffic, Gord noticed that the GPS was saying we had 2,150 miles to go! Forgetting that we had used the GPS to find Del & Edna's place in Penticton, BC, Gord had inadvertently selected their address in Canada. There was a moment of panic as Marilyn reset the GPS for the Palm Desert location. Our faithful GPS kicked in just in time to send us in the right direction. The weather was wonderful as we explored an exhibit called The Living Desert, a display of plants and animals throughout the local ecosystem. We spent a day driving the high desert which was cool but ex-

hilarating and, driving over to Palm Springs one day, we took rode their Aerial Tramway. Once you've been on the gondola at Whistler a few times, this seemed a bit of a mini-ride but was fun as it took us up into the snow covered mountains with an excellent view of the whole valley. Gord went for the executive bike ride each morning which consisted of 30 minutes on the bike to Starbucks, 30 minutes for coffee and 30 minutes back—they called it a 1½ hour ride! There is so much wealth there. Where else in the world would you use 70% of your water resources to maintain lawns, spend a fortune on fertilizer, then pay a bunch of migrant workers to cut and haul it away for you every week? Five other couples we knew were there at the time of our visit, including Gord's brother, Mike, and his wife who met us for lunch one day. Despite all the hoopla about how wonderful the weather is in Palm Springs, we were treated to 4 inches of snow - that's right, it's not a typo, snow in the middle of the



The Clancey's

Paige, Mitch, Ben & Mathew are all doing well. Mathew, 14, busy with Soccer and his sports buddies and Ben, 17, preparing for graduation in 2013. Ben, has expressed an interest in auto mechanics and has secured an apprenticeship though a local college programme which will give him a start as he dives into the "real world". Mitch's business continues to do well and the big news this year is that Paige has sold her remaining interest in Basic Business Systems, the company Gord founded in 1979 when we moved out to the Fraser Valley. Originally started to sell and service typewriters and calculators, Basic now installs and maintains computer network systems. Paige is

taking some time off before deciding if she will go back to work. In the mean time, she has immersed herself in domestic pursuits that have taken the pressure off the busy life of working couples these days. Mitch's claim to fame is that he has not seen the inside of a grocery store since July. They are currently working on plans for Paige to work in a division of Mitch's company and Gord is helping to get it organized.



Barbershop in Portland

July took us to Portland to visit our friends Dave and Sally Smith who live in Ontario now. Dave is involved with a Barbershop choir who were competing in Portland which is only 500km south of here. We decided not to drive the whole way in one day so stopped at Tumwater, Washington, home of the famous Tumwater beer ("it's the water that makes the difference"). The goal was to visit the Falls Restaurant which is a wonderful seafood restaurant situated above one of the waterfalls. We had forgotten, however, that it was July 4th and everything was closed except the odd fast food joint. All hope of fine dining had to be abandoned in favour of The Teriyaki Café, the only place in town that was open. Even the gas stations closed at

6:PM so that the staff could get to the park for fireworks. We had no doubt that it was the 4th of July when the windows in the hotel began to rattle with the exploding fireworks. The park was very close so it sounded (and felt) more like dynamite than fireworks). Our visit with Dave and Sally who we have known for over 40 years was memorable as always. In addition to knowing them when they lived nearby, we have met them for holidays in many other parts of the world. No trip to Portland could be complete without a visit to the Woodburn Outlet Shopping Center just 20 miles South of town. Good thing they have increased our purchase exemption when returning to Canada.



RCMP Reunion

In September, we joined some of Gord's "old" troop mates and their wives at Harrison Hot Springs for a little gathering of troop members from BC. We had rooms in the main hotel which meant that we didn't have to go very far to any one of three hot springs that were situated right in the hotel itself. All the old war stories from our 1964 training days were retold and rehashed in the comfort of the adult-only hot springs. The weather could not have been

better with sunny skies the whole week making a two hour cruise around the lake a very enjoyable experience. Sadly, some of the members are no longer healthy enough to travel so, after 48 years, we will have to count on phone and email to stay in touch. Our troop reunions, of course, are changing. We used to be out partying all night and generally making a nuisance of ourselves. Now we sit around talking about recipes and which operation we are currently recovering from. New aches and pains along with hearing aids and walking sticks have been added to packing list.



Gord, Mitch, Ben and some other dive buddies spent Thanksgiving diving at Port Hardy once again this year. It seems to have become a tradition and the boat

owner loves to promote the fact that there are 3 generations diving on his boat at the same time. The weather, which normally cold and rainy, was bright and sunny for a change.



Peru/Ecuador Tour



In November, we escorted a group to Peru and Ecuador. For a change, everything went smoothly and we had the rare experience of having a group that were all interested in the history and culture of the places we visited. Sadly, some people go on these tours to simply say that they have been there and have no real interest in anything but their own comfort. The actual tour went OK but the air travel was a zoo. It seems like the whole airline/airport infrastructure is overloaded—we guess that it might be the cheap flights (points) that are driving everyone to fly instead of drive. Getting on our connecting flight in Houston was more like boarding a Grey Hound bus. With a five hour flight which was not catered, there were people bringing on plates of food, shopping bags full of stuff, large carry-on luggage and half the passengers seemed to

be kids. Flying isn't as much fun as it used to be. When we travel from Cusco, Peru to Quito, Ecuador, we have to connect in Lima. The airlines book that connection with only 1½ hours between flights but the system is so crowded that we almost missed our flight this time. There were line-ups for passport check, boarding pass scan, security, then immigration. Each line-up was 15 to 20 minutes long and there was no priority line for those who had tight connections—at least 3 hours is required. Since 2002, we have missed our connecting flight twice and almost missed it another couple of times so, to avoid the stress, we are working with the tour company to re-organize the itinerary to include only original flights. We're getting too old to wait in line with a group of guests while a waiting plane sits on the tarmac ready to go.



Happy Birthday in Hawaii

This year—December 11th, Marilyn is celebrating a milestone birthday (we'll let you guess which one) so we are taking off for Hawaii for a little rest and relaxation before escorting a tour to Cuba in January. We have friends who have a house in Kona and have been pestering us to visit. They have been on most of the tours we lead so are anxious to be our tour leaders in Hawaii.



Aloha . . .