

Christmas, 2012

2012 is nearly over. It seemed to fly by so fast, and now the Christmas season is upon us. We hope your year was as happy as ours. Here is a synopsis of the highlights.

In January, we enjoyed going to see Hal Holbrook play Mark Twain in his famous traveling one-man play in a concert hall in Portland. I have to say that many of the issues Mark Twain saw with politicians in his day still apply.

In February, we were planning a trip to Ireland to celebrate our 20th wedding anniversary, but fate intervened. Perhaps we'll make it to Ireland next year. Instead, we settled for a trip to Las Vegas. While in Las Vegas ("Lost Wages", a friend of mine calls it) we took a nighttime helicopter ride over the Las Vegas strip. Later in the week, we took a helicopter tour of the Grand Canyon and Hoover Dam. We've been to the Grand Canyon before, but this is the first time we toured in from the air. John took videos and pictures, which are posted on our web site under "Las Vegas and the Grand Canyon".

In May, we undertook a major remodeling job. We had our old deck torn down and rebuilt with new composite material. The new one also includes an overhead walkway from the upper deck to the deck behind our RV storage area. Between the upper and lower levels, it totals about 1600 square feet of deck. Once the decking company finished, John undertook the job of painting the supporting superstructure, adding post cap lights to all the rail posts, and adding polycarbonate paneling underneath the upper deck so that the lower deck stays dry during the winter. For reasons I'll explain shortly, all this additional work is not yet complete.

In June, John had another business trip to Israel scheduled. Since Janet joined him in Israel after a business trip there last year, this time she didn't go, so John did not take extra time there. However, he did accompany a coworker down to Masada on our day off. Janet and John visited Masada last year, but this time John got there before daylight, and he and his coworker hiked the "snake path" to the top. This path is about 2 miles, and you gain 1300 feet in altitude. It was a strain, especially in the desert heat, but well worth it for the adventure. If you are not familiar with the historic significance of Masada, we recommend looking it up, or watching the 1981 movie of the same name starring Peter O'Toole.

In July, John took a break from the deck remodel to erect a shelter for the motor home. Now the vehicle stays dry all year in our damp climate, and the frequent cleaning previously needed is greatly reduced.

In August, we returned to Mississippi for a family reunion. We visited with John's family in Brandon, Tupelo and Memphis, and enjoyed a big meal with everyone at an extended family gathering in Kosciusko. Among other sightseeing, we visited the Ground Zero blues club in Clarksdale, Mississippi. This is an authentic delta blues club run by actor Morgan Freeman.

In September, John took advantage of a long overdue birthday gift from his siblings. He enjoyed a glider ride over the Willamette Valley in Oregon. It was awesome gliding almost silently above the vineyards and golf courses. Again, videos are on our web site.

In October, we had a major setback. Janet, while walking from the light rail station to a hotel in Portland to attend a seminar, tripped on the sidewalk and fell, fracturing her leg. It was a fracture of the tibial plateau, meaning a crack at the top of the tibia running downwards. This changed our lifestyle drastically for a while, as John took on the role of caretaker in addition to his work. Janet's employer provided a medical transport to take her to and from work each day, where she worked from her wheelchair. Outside of work, all other efforts, including our deck remodeling, came to a sudden halt. However, Janet is on the mend and is walking with a cane now. In fact, we anticipate taking a motor home camping trip over the long New Year's weekend.

Pictures of our adventures are on our web site, www.majorspain.com.

Here's wishing you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. Please keep in touch.

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John and Janet Spain

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The deck with the decking and rails up



John on the "snake path" up Masada; Dead Sea below



Our Grand Canyon / Hoover Dam helicopter ride



At the Ground Zero Blues Club, Clarkdale Mississippi



John and his glider pilot



Janet, John's sister Nancy & our friend Marc at Ground Zero

