

Christmas, 2017

Here we are, at the end of our first full year of retirement. 2017 went by surprisingly quick! We certainly hope everyone else enjoyed it as much as we did.

As we mentioned in last year's letter, we were headed to Australia and New Zealand for all of March. John got a summons for federal jury duty in Portland that would have him serving during the planned trip time. Fortunately, because we were able to show that the tickets were not refundable he was released from jury duty.

In late February, we left for Sydney, Australia. After several days of touring Sydney and the Blue Mountains, we boarded a flight to Auckland, NZ. After enjoying Auckland for a few days, we went to Wellington at the southern tip of the North Island. We very much enjoyed Wellington. There is a fascinating museum there (Te' Papa) and a planetarium / observatory. John was unable to take his telescope, but an evening at the observatory allowed a great view of the southern sky, including the southern cross and Alpha Centauri. Plus, Orion is standing on his head and the moon appears upside down!

From Wellington, we took a ferry to Picton on the South Island, where we rented a car. After sightseeing in that area, we drove to Greymouth on the west coast, then drove over the "Southern Alps" to Christchurch. Christchurch is still rebuilding from a devastating earthquake 6 years ago, so we were glad our tourist dollars went to a place in need of help.

After that, we took the ferry back to Wellington, a flight back to Auckland for a day stopover, and then to Melbourne. After touring the Melbourne area, we took a flight to Hobart, Tasmania. We loved Tasmania as much as NZ. Finally, after two weeks in Australia and two in NZ, we boarded a flight in Sydney back to the US. However, our flight involved a 10-hour layover in Fiji, so we toured the nearby town of Nadi.

In June, we finally took the plunge and bought the motor home of our dreams. We sold the old 32' unit, and got a 40' "rolling palace" of a diesel pusher, complete with washer/dryer, dishwasher and central vac. Currently, we are planning to take this unit around the country starting in perhaps March on a 3 to 4 month trip, so many of you may be seeing us in person.

In August, we arranged for a nice spot for our new motor home for viewing the total eclipse right in the middle of the path of totality in the town of Madras in the Oregon high desert. Our friends Joe and Libby Calhoun came along with us for the trip. As (bad) luck would have it, Janet took a bad step on the stairs and broke her foot the day before we were to leave. However, we took a wheelchair with us and, with the Calhoun's assistance, we made it work. Totality was an awesome experience, leaving some people around us weeping.

Toward the end of the year, we joined the Family Motor Coach Association and the Winnebago / Itasca Travelers club. These organizations put on rallies and meetings in every state, and gave us a way to meet other motor home aficionados and go on group camping adventures. We went to the state rally in September and enjoyed it very much. The other great thing about these rallies is the fact that they put on technical seminars that teach you proper care and maintenance of your RV, and you can get recommendations from other members on vendors for RV related goods and services.

In October, our friends Vince and Susan Sheetz visited us from San Diego in their motor home, and together we took a trip to the Oregon coast. Vince and I have been friends for almost 40 years, so it was great to see them.

We look forward to more travel in 2018. In addition to our motor home trip around the country, we have already booked a 10-day trip to Waikiki Beach in January to get away from the cold damp winter weather in Oregon.

Pictures of our adventures are on our web site, www.majorspain.com. John hasn't been able to update this site for several years due to a lack of viable editing tools, but he took a course on Wordpress content management software and promises to make every effort to get it updated this year.

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

John and Janet Spain

john.spain@frontier.com

janet.spain@frontier.com



[John and Janet @ Sydney Opera House](#)



[Sydney Opera House](#)



[Auckland from the Mt. Eden Caldera](#)



[Wellington Airport "Lord of the Rings" theme](#)



[Wellington NZ harbor](#)



[Display at Te Papa Tongarewa Museum](#)



[Arthur's Pass through the "Southern Alps"](#)



[Earthquake damaged ruins of Christchurch Cathedral](#)