

## Christmas, 2011

2011 was another busy year for us, filled with both adventure and tragedy.

March 5<sup>th</sup> was the date of our Mardi gras party this year. We had a great turnout, and lots of folks enjoyed Janet's Cajun and Creole cooking. The fireplace on the deck proved popular in the cold but dry weather.

In late March, John's mother Martha passed away. John was traveling and working at an Intel campus near Sacramento when he got the news on Wednesday the 30<sup>th</sup>, so he immediately started making travel arrangements. However, it was not possible to get a flight that would get us there before Friday evening, so the family held the funeral until Saturday. The services were held in Kosciusko, Mississippi. Mom Spain was laid to rest at the Isaac Cemetery outside of Kosciusko at the side of her husband Fred, who had been waiting for her there for almost 45 years.

In June, John's niece Susan came to Oregon to complete her studies toward her master's degree in conducting. She flew into Portland to visit, and then on a Friday we drove to Southern Oregon where her classes were to be held. First, however, we spent a day in Grants Pass, Oregon, where we took a jet boat tour down the Rogue River. On Saturday, we drove to the redwood forest in Northern California to see the big trees, with a stop to see the Oregon Caves (unfortunately, all the cave tours were booked the rest of the day). Finally, on Sunday we dropped her off in Ashland to get ensconced in her room.

In July, Susan completed her work in Ashland, and then flew up to visit for a few days before heading back east.

Also in July, John and his friends attended the Oregon Brewers Festival, a beer sampling held by the Willamette River in Portland every year featuring over 80 varieties of beer. The month ended with a major landscaping project that reconfigured our back yard with over 100 plants.

In August, we hired a contractor to build a proper retaining wall behind our RV pad to extend it an additional 14 feet. The results are beautiful. Now when the motor home is backed up all the way, it is even with the front of the house but the back end hangs over and sticks out in space, so we have another contractor coming to build a deck behind it so that we can walk around it when it is parked. After that, John is erecting a structure to cover the motor home so that it will not be exposed to the weather.

John was scheduled for a business trip to Israel the last week of August, so he arranged for a week off afterwards and Janet flew over on the first of September to join him. We spent 10 days exploring every corner of that country. We retraced the steps of Jesus in Nazareth, Bethlehem, all around the Sea of Galilee, Jericho and Jerusalem, as well as visiting many historical sites around the Dead Sea, Masada, Haifa, Caesarea, Akko and Jaffa. We went swimming in the Mediterranean, wading in the Sea of Galilee, and floating in the Dead Sea. See an album of our favorite pictures on our web site.

All of the travels through the year put us behind on our household chores and projects, so in November we took a week off to work on things around the house and yard. During this time John upgraded the kitchen and bathroom faucets in the motor home and modified the cabinetry in the motor home to add a flat screen TV, updated the outdoor lighting for the house, and replaced the driver's side seat belt assembly in his truck. Janet worked around the house, and both John and Janet did a huge amount of yard work.

Now we are counting down until the New Year. Here's wishing you and yours a merry Christmas, and may the New Year bring you joy and happiness.

Pictures of our adventures are on our web site, [www.majorspain.com](http://www.majorspain.com), and please note our new email addresses below.

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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Janet floating in the Dead Sea



Janet exploring the remains of Herod's palace atop Masada



John at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem



Janet at the 6<sup>th</sup> station of the cross in Jerusalem



John in Jericho, in the nation of Jordan



Janet touching the place of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem

