

January 4, 2015

Happy New Year,

During 2014 we continued to enjoy Australia and also took a round-the-world trip with stops in the USA and Europe.

Melbourne, Australia

In late January we spent a long weekend with friends in Melbourne whom we met last year while hiking near Brisbane. The weekend began with an invitation to be passengers in a yacht race off the Mornington Peninsula and continued with hikes in the forests near Melbourne. We also spent some time on the beach where some locals own "Beach Huts" - small sheds which were built years ago and are now rather expensive, in part because no more can be built. Prices range from \$55,000 to \$170,000.



Afloat off the Mornington Peninsula in a Friday afternoon race



Beach Huts, also called "Bathing Boxes"

USA - Cathie

In March, Cathie returned to California to attend an annual 10-day meditation retreat with her Ridhwan Diamond Heart group. She has been a part of this group for 22 years. After two weeks back in Australia, she returned to California for the annual conference of The Professional Fiduciary Association of California, to keep up to date on management of trusts and estates. As a side treat, she was able to attend a family wedding in San Diego during this second trip.

Round the World

In May we attended the wedding of Bill's niece Emily in Pittsburgh and greatly enjoyed catching up with family. Bill and Cathie also played the role of wedding videographers and worked for their supper!



Family at Emily & Colin's Wedding

After working a week in Houston, we continued on to Europe where we toured several World War I battlefields in northern France, and later met up with 20 Australian friends - "Mates on Bikes" - for a week-long Bicycle Barge Trip from Bruges, Belgium to Amsterdam. We dined and slept on the barge at night,



Mates on Bikes at end of the Bicycle Barge Trip in Amsterdam

and bicycled along during the day. We followed a guide during the daily bike rides, which was an informative and entertaining way to see the countryside. And it only rained one day! Here are web links to additional pictures from that trip - [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#).

High Tea for Cathie's Special Birthday

For her birthday, Cathie and a few girl friends enjoyed High Tea at Rochelle Adonis in Perth - where they "create cakes and confections that close your eyes and widen your smile." It was a really fun celebration.



Cathie and several friends at High Tea

Cruise - Kimberley, Australia and Spice Islands, Indonesia

In August we celebrated Cathie's special birthday by taking a 17 day National Geographic Expedition cruise on the ship Orion along the coastline of north-western Australia and further north to the Spice Islands of Indonesia. This was our best vacation ever! The expedition cruise focused on the natural environment, local culture and



A humpback whale off the Kimberley Coast

photography. The daily cruise schedule included presentations on what we were going to see and an educational review of pictures from the previous day taken by the four National Geographic photographers on board. With focused help from these professional photographers, everyone learned to take better pictures. With only 90 passengers and 70 crew members aboard, the service was excellent and friendly and the food was "to die live for!" We saw breaching humpback whales, used zodiac boats to visit Australian Aboriginal rock art sites, climbed the cliffs at King George Falls, snorkelled in reefs off East Timor, saw Komodo Dragons and finished the trip at a resort in Bali. Here are web links to additional pictures from that trip - [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#).



In a zodiac boat, returning to Orion from shore



Komodo Dragon - this one is 12 feet long



At the base of King George Falls

Singing Lessons

This year Cathie began singing with a community choral group, "Born to Sing". The concerts raise funds to help families and communities in need across Australia. Several months ago Cathie decided to begin private voice lessons. The results are great and improving!

Perth - Friendship Force Visitors

In October, two Friendship Force friends, Ken and Annette Garbe, visited from Brisbane. This was their first visit to Western Australia. We toured Perth, including UWA, the Swan River, Kings Park, Cottesloe Beach, Subiaco and Wireless Hill, where we saw a lunar eclipse.



Annette, Ken, Bill and Cathie after dinner in Subiaco

Collie Adventure Race

Also in October, our adventure race team, called "The Steelers", participated again in the annual Collie Adventure Race. Cathie excelled as team manager, finding a new kayaker just in time this year! We had a great day out, kayaking, road bicycling, swimming, mountain biking and running. We finished fifth out of ten teams in our SuperVets "over 50 average age" group this year. Here's a [web link to pictures from that event](#).

Given that our average age this year was 63, we find ourselves competing with much younger teams. After this year's event we suggested to the race organizers that they consider including an additional older age group for next year called the SuperDooperVets :-)



Cathie at the awards ceremony after the race, trying to recruit a new Steeler team member - a baby kangaroo.

Mates on Bikes Country Ride

In November, Bill spent five days bicycling a hilly 600 km (370 mile) loop south and east of Perth with eleven Aussie friends. We stayed overnight in motels and roadhouses in small Western Australian towns. Our ride passed through a mix of places with interesting Aboriginal and English names, including Karnup, Waroona, Yarloop, Harvey, Myalup, Bunbury, Capel, Donnybrook, Mumballup, Collie, Williams, Marradong, Dwellingup, Pinjara, Baldivis and Perth.

Home

We were very happy to spend a quiet Christmas and New Year's Eve in Perth with friends.

We wish you a wonderful 2015!

Cathie and Bill



At Thanksgiving Dinner in Perth