

January 3, 2012

Happy New Year Everyone,

We can't believe it has been a year since our last newsletter posting. We've had an enjoyable 2011 in Australia, and took the opportunity to see more of this beautiful part of the world.

Australia Day

January 26 is Australia Day, a national holiday which commemorates the arrival in 1788 of the eleven ships of the First Fleet at Botany Bay in eastern Australia. The ships held about 1500 people, half of them convicts. The event marks the formal beginning of European settlement of Australia. Some aboriginal groups refer to Australia Day as "Invasion Day" or "Survival Day".



Fireworks from the Perth Foreshore

Most Australians celebrate the Day with fabulous fireworks. We watched the Perth fireworks from the Perth Foreshore with friends Marti and Art Bradley.

New Zealand

We visited the South Island of New Zealand in February on our delayed honeymoon. We saw Queenstown in the Southern Alps, took a jet boat ride on the Shotover River, rode a tour boat on the Milford Sound fjord, and walked 4-days along the Hollyford Track.

The jet boat ride was exciting. The jet boat company has sole access to a scenic section of the Shotover River. The airboat drivers push their boats to the limit of safety - speeding along through narrow defiles and purposefully coming within inches of protruding cliff walls along the gorge - to alarm the thrill-seeking passengers.

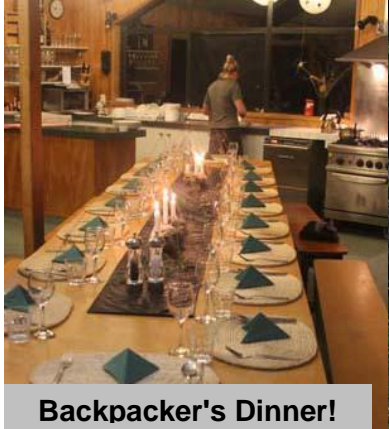


Jet Boat on the Shotover River

The tramp (hike) along the Hollyford Track was more at our speed. We joined a guided walk through the rain forest adjacent to the northern shore of the South Island. The area gets about 5 meters (16 feet) of rain per year. Each night we stayed in a lodge owned by the trekking company, and had a gourmet dinner on china!



On the Track



Backpacker's Dinner!



Rain, rain, rain



The Track Ahead

Each lodge had a special drying room in which a fire burned all night. The guests hung up their wet clothing and boots, and in the morning they were dry and ready to wear.

The fjords along the northern coast of the South Island, as in Scandinavia, are glacially carved, narrow valleys, which the sea flooded after the last Ice Age. The fjords are quite deep, except at the seaward end where glacial boulders were dropped by the ice.



Milford Sound



On the Boat

Visitors!

In March we had a wonderful visit by Cathie's cousin Pat and her friend Betty, both avid photographers. They enjoyed a 3-week tour of different cities in Australia including Perth.

We made a special stop at the Pinnaroo Valley Memorial Park, north of Perth, where they were excited to see mobs of semi-wild kangaroos roaming the cemetery.



Mother with Joey in Pouch



Young male kangaroos practice fighting



Having a tail sit

After touring the sights of Perth, we drove south to see the karri forests and underground caves in the Margaret River area.



Entrance to Lake Cave



It was really fun for us to have visitors from home!

California Visit

In April, on a business-related visit to California, Cathie got to spend Easter weekend with her godmother, Mary Louise Knoblauch. Mary Louise will be celebrating the gifted age of 90 in February 2012.



Shifting House

In Australia, people don't move to a new house, they "shift house." In May, after 6 months of looking, we shifted from Subiaco an older community just west of Perth, to the suburb of Applecross, which is a 20 minute drive south of Perth.

We moved so that we could have our household goods shipped out via sea containers from the USA. At last, after 2 1/2 years we have our own furniture, our dishes, clothes, pictures, and tools.



We have a two-car garage that Bill uses as a "shed" for woodworking projects.

Cathie has an upstairs art and sewing area and we both have converted a bedroom into a walk-in closet filled with wall-to-wall IKEA units to hold clothes and shoes galore!



It took some adjusting to live in this new area "south of the Swan River." Cathie still drives back to our old Subiaco neighborhood "north of the River", for shopping and appointments.

As time has passed we have really come to love and appreciate living 2 blocks from the Swan River and almost every night we walk, run or bike ride along the river front. We get a real treat with views of the river and the city in all kinds of weather, different cloud formations and light.



Holiday decorations at entrance



A view of Perth from Applecross

Norway

In June, Bill had a business trip to Oslo, and Cathie came along too. We found Oslo to be a people-friendly city with excellent public transport. We saw one of the renditions of Edvard Munch's "Scream" in the National Gallery.

We especially enjoyed the Vigeland Sculpture Park, which displays hundreds of granite works by Gustav Vigeland of people interacting in daily life.



Having a Scream!



Jarrah Table



Vigeland Sculpture Park



In November 2010, Bill had the opportunity to buy two slabs of the Australian hardwood jarrah, from a friend, Colin in Margaret River. Colin had cut and slabbed the tree 4 years prior and had the timber drying in a shed out back. This was the impetus for Bill to pick up woodworking again, after a 20-year hiatus.



Picking up the timber

Jarrah is about 1/3 harder than white oak wood, and is very dense. Furniture made from jarrah can be quite heavy, especially because tabletops are usually made 50mm (about 2 inches) thick. Moving such a 230 kg (500-pound) table after construction requires several able-bodied people, or two average Australians.



Cathie helps to glue up the top with biscuits.

To avoid back strain, Bill had the timber slabs resawn to 20mm (3/4 inch) thickness, and built the table top from that.



Finished

Bill finished the table to seat 10, just in time for a Friendship Force dinner party for New Zealand visitors in October 2011.

Collie Adventure Race

Bill organized a team with 3 Aussie mates, Derek, Ken and Russell to compete in the Collie Adventure Race in October. The team, like in 2010, was called the Steelers, named for Bill's home city football (gridiron) team.



The Steelers - Derek, Bill, Ken, Russell

Derek paddled the 10km kayak section. Ken swam the 1km part and also did the 10km run. Russell bicycled the 25km road ride and Bill did the 25km mountain bike ride. This year the Steelers won first prize in the SuperVets age team, and \$200. Teams in the SuperVets group must have an average age greater than 50. Our average age was 59.5

Visit to Pennsylvania

In November we visited with Bill's family in Pennsylvania. We spent time with Bill's mother in Pittsburgh, and also enjoyed catching up with his brother's and sister's families at an annual cabin weekend at Prince Gallitzin State Park in north central Pennsylvania.



Bill, his Mother and sister Ann

While there, several of us did a half-marathon training run - my elderly brother Pete and his young son-in-law, Carl, were both wrapping up training for their first marathon. It was about 20 degrees F (-7 C) when we started that training run. Pete and Carl subsequently finished their Philadelphia Marathon in style.



At Prince Gallitzin State Park

Chevron Ball

Australians love to dress up in costumes and party. In November we attended the Chevron Christmas Ball, a costume affair called "A Point in Time."

Cathie and I went as Caribbean pirates from 1750. People came dressed as hippies, John Lennon, Cleopatra, Apollo astronauts. Mobsters were popular as were French and English royalty.



Melbourne

In December we took a five-day trip to Melbourne. What a cosmopolitan, alive and fun city! We travelled around the downtown area of the city to all the museums and sights on trams and buses.

In the Shrine of Remembrance, we saw the British flag that was used at Japan's Changi prison near Singapore during World War II. Cathie's uncle, Michael Flanigan was a prisoner of war and died at that camp.

One day we rented a car to travel the "Great Ocean Road." We wanted to see the famous

Twelve Apostles rock formations that sit along the edge of the coastline. They used to be called the Sow and the Piglets, but then the marketing team rebranded them into the Twelve Apostles.

There are actually only eight of them right now as 4 have fallen over in heavy storms but, none-the-less they are very impressive and we saw people from all over the world viewing them. The coast line is very similar to the Big Sur coast in California but with Australian bush features.



Changi Prison Flag



Twelve Apostles

On our way to visit the lighthouse at Cape Otway we saw cars stopped along the side of the road. Everyone was taking pictures of the wild koala bears that live in the trees. The koalas don't seem to mind all the attention as they just keep on doing their thing!



A Koala Bear



The Kowalik Bear

Ostrich Egg

In a roadside fruit and vegetable market south of Perth, we saw a crate of ostrich eggs. At first we thought they were very pale cantaloupes (rock melons) because the shell has a similar textural pattern. The shop clerk confirmed that they were actually ostrich eggs. The yolk quantity is about 24 hens eggs.

We needed an electric drill to pierce the shell. A surprising volume of egg yolk flowed out - about 1 quart (liter).

Bill made many omelettes and servings of scrambled eggs over the course of two weeks and we gave some to neighbors. The taste is a bit heavier than a hen's egg. Cathie only tried a teaspoon of the cooked egg and that was enough for her.



One quart!



Ostrich & hen eggs



Drilling a hole

Happy New Year !

Cathie and Bill

