

January 31, 2013

Happy New Year,

During 2012 we continued to explore Australia and south east Asia from our home base of Perth. Travel included Singapore, Tasmania, Taiwan, north western Australia - the Pilbara, and eastern Australia - The Blue Mountains and Sydney. We also returned to the US for special events.

## Singapore

In January we spent five days with our Aussie friends, Lyle and Carole Burgess in Singapore, who were there for Lyle's temporary consulting job.

The trip included shopping in the fabric district and a visit to Sentosa Island, an entertainment park. Cathie practiced being charming with the traditional fan, while Bill charmed snakes.

While touring Singapore, an interesting architectural feature really stood out. We kept noticing that the tall buildings had an extra floor on the top that looked like a "hat".

These "hats" were in all colors, shapes and sizes. In many cases this is a design feature to provide shade. On the Marina Bay Sands hotel, the "hat" is designed to look like an ocean liner that has come to rest upon three skyscrapers after a huge flood. It looks like a building from a science fiction novel.

Outside Singapore, we visited the grave of Cathie's uncle Michael Flanigan, a British soldier who was taken prisoner shortly after Singapore fell to the Japanese in 1942. The British had already surrendered Singapore when Michael's navy transport ship arrived. Michael and the rest were marched from the ship into prison camp. Michael did not survive the prison camp.



Shopping for fabric, Singapore



Marina Bay Sands Hotel, Singapore



## Tasmania

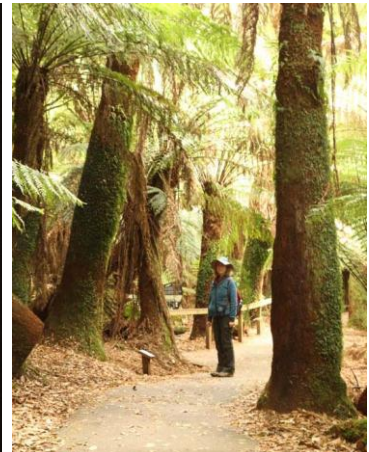
In February we were off to Tasmania to celebrate Bill's 60th birthday. We started a driving tour at the northern coastal city of Launceston and drove clockwise around the island on a 10-day adventure. At Cathie's instigation, we glided through tall tree tops on a zipline and learned to ride Segways on forest trails.

At the Sunday morning Evandale Village Fair, we came across the annual National Penny Farthing Bicycle Race. After watching the riders mount the large-wheeled bicycles, and see them race pell-mell down the road, riding high up, we readily understood why the modern bicycle was initially introduced in the late 1800's as a "safety bike."

At Eaglehawk Neck we experienced the 1830's dogline - a line of sentry dogs positioned across the narrow peninsula to block the escape of convicts from the Port Arthur prison colony. Herman Melville visited in 1840 and said of the dogs "Every four-footed, black-fanged individual among them would have taken first prize in his own class for ugliness and ferocity at any show." The modern bronze versions are very docile.

In Hobart we visited the surprising Museum of Old and New (MONA). This private museum aims high to be provocative and controversial. A live, tattooed man sits as one exhibit.

At Mt Field National Park we walked among the giant antediluvian swamp gums and fern trees. We saw Tasmanian Devils close up at a reserve - their snarling, aggressive behaviour during feeding time



Three Tasmanian Devils fighting for food

was impressive - if not careful you could reach in and lose finger, as they do jump.

## Pennsylvania

In April we participated in Bill's mother's 90th birthday party. It was great to catch up with our Pennsylvania family. Bill's mother and her great grandchildren had a wonderful time, as did everyone else in the family!



## Perth

Back in Perth, Bill completed two bed frames made of the Australian hardwood "jarrah". The design came from memory of a bed frame in the old house that we formerly rented in the town of Subiaco. The wood was finished with varnish, followed by a trick learned from a book -- rub down the dry varnish with a brown paper bag to eliminate any remaining dust nibs - this greatly smooths out the surface.



Saturday mornings we usually explore the rivers and lakes around Perth in our double kayak. Along the way, we noticed that McDonalds had adopted a new colloquial label in Perth - Macca's. Australian friends explain that they have never heard of "Mickey D's", and



their children instead know the name "Macca's" !

We had our share of dress up events around Perth this year. Cathie and friends participated in the annual Australian mania surrounding the Melbourne Cup horse race in November. Think Kentucky Derby and Super Bowl packed into one event to get the flavour. The ladies wear very fancy hats or head pieces called "fascinators." There are prizes for the best dressed ladies and gents.

In November, we attended the annual Chevron Christmas Ball. Cathie wore her new 5-inch heels!



Decked out for Melbourne Cup



### Northwest Australia - The Pilbara

In June we took a 10-day driving trip in a Maui camper with our friends Jean and Herb Kolbe from Pennsylvania. We headed out north early one day from Perth and several hours on saw this sunrise through the gum trees.

We toured the mining center of Newman and later camped at Karajini National Park, where the stars of the southern sky blazed. The Milky Way presents a very different appearance in the southern hemisphere. Come see it!

One day at Karajini, we swam in Fern Pool, a formerly secret Aboriginal location, and experienced a refreshing shower in the warm water falling over the 2.4 billion-year-old banded-iron rock



Sunrise and Gum trees



The Milky Way from Southern Hemisphere

formation at the pool edge.

We continued west to the Indian Ocean highlights of Ningaloo Reef and Shark Bay. An Australian driving trip would not be complete without experiencing the very red and very corrugated outback roads. Fortunately most of our route was nicely paved. Then there are the fuel bills, again, fortunately, not ours! All in all, we put 4500km (2800 miles) on that Maui Van. And we all got along really well for the duration.



Fuel bill for the road train truck before us!



The bush beckons!

## Cathie's Reunions



In July, Cathie went back to the states a second time in 2012 to attend two reunions. The first was her 40th High School Class Reunion in Santa Monica, CA. The reunion at St. Monica's High School was a great party event, seeing classmates and catching up after so many years.

The second reunion was a family gathering to spread her mother's ashes in De Luz, near north San Diego County, CA.

The spreading of Patsy Flanigan's ashes was a somber and reflective family experience. It was a ceremonial completion of Patsy's life for all us.



## Friendship Force of Perth

For the past 20 years Cathie has been a member of the Friendship Force, an international ambassador organization. Its mission is to create an environment where personal friendships can be established across the barriers that separate people. The idea is that "peace across the kitchen table" creates the opportunity for a greater peace in the world.

In September, the Friendship Force of Perth proudly dedicated the Friendship Wall at Peace Park in East Perth, alongside the Friendship Tree Grove. The Wall is fitted with plaques to commemorate visits - inbound exchanges - from Friendship Force clubs around the world.

This year we hosted small dinner parties with the Perth, Australia Friendship Force members for ambassadors from Oita, Japan and from Taipei, Taiwan.



Perth Friendship Force Wall



Dinner with Ambassadors from Oita, Japan

## Collie Adventure Race

In October, Bill and three Aussie friends participated in the Collie Adventure Race. Collie is a small town in the hills about two hours south of Perth. The team, known as The Steelers, consists of Derek in kayak, Bill on the mountain bike, Ken on swim and run, and Russell on the road bike. Our team was fastest in our SuperVet age group, repeating a performance from last year. The SuperVet teams must have an

average age greater than 50 - and we far exceeded that! This year, our time was faster than the fastest team in the next younger age group (40+) too.



Collie Adventure Race  
Collie, Western Australia  
Saturday Oct 13th, 2012

Steelers Team  
Derek Amy, Bill Kowalik, Ken Alexander, Russell Cadd  
Average Age 61

First Place Team in Super Veteran 50+ Average Age Group  
Faster than First Place Team in Veteran 40+ Age Group

## Taiwan

In early December, our neighbour in Applecross, Frieda Lin, offered to be our personal tour guide in Taiwan, where she grew up. We flew from Perth through Hong Kong to Taipei, the capital city of Taiwan.

While in Taipei, we ate a wide variety of delicious Chinese food and packed a lot of sightseeing into three full days, including the Long Shan Buddhist Temple which dates from 1740.

We learned some history while visiting Taiwan. It turns out that Taiwan was a colony of Japan between 1895 and the end of World War II, and the people were required to speak Japanese, including Frieda's parents and grandparents.

We ascended the 101 Building, the 3rd tallest building in the world. The 101 dwarfs all other skyscrapers in Taipei, as shown in this post card view. During our visit the top was periodically obscured by passing rain clouds.

On another day we took a plane, bus and train ride to see Taroko Gorge, south of Taipei. This is a steep-walled marble canyon. The narrow road is quite an engineering feat. It runs from cliff edges to tunnels and across artistic bridges. The road was built by Chiang Kai Shek's army after World War II. The road begins with a formal entry way. Remote Buddhist Temples perch on steep hillsides.

Entrance to Taroko Gorge



Long Shan Temple



101 Building, Taipei



## Eastern Australia - Blue Mountains & Sydney

In late December we spent 10 days in the Blue Mountains, east of Sydney, with our friends, Art and Marti Bradley. We rented a house in the mountain town of Katoomba and hiked a different canyon every day.

The terrain is flat topped plateaus cut by broad canyons, with 200m (600ft) cliff walls stretching to the horizon.

Hundreds of stairs hewn from the Triassic sandstone bedrock guided us down the cliff walls. In the late 1800's the local cities competed for tourist business from nearby Sydney by constructing ever more dramatic cliff side trails. The stone carving put into the effort speaks of a time of low cost labour.

Internet connectivity allows modern hikers to conduct last minute business from the trail.



A Trail on the Edge



The Blue Mountains



The Three Sisters



On New Year's Eve we made our way from Katoomba into Sydney by car and train, and boarded a Captain Cook cruise ship near the Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge. After a very nice dinner on board, we watched the fantastic 9 PM and Midnight Sydney fireworks from the middle of the harbor.

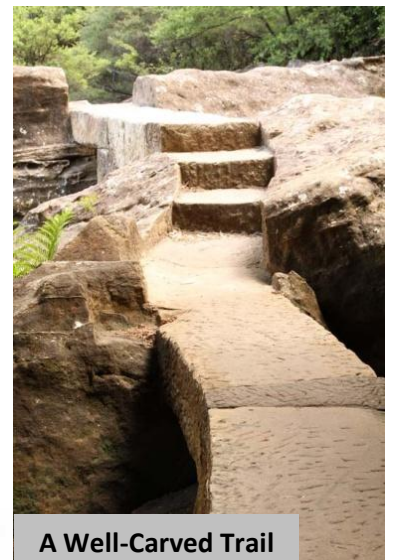


On the New Year's Eve Cruise Ship

In between the fireworks events our ship participated in a lighted boat parade around the harbour. Afterwards we returned to Katoomba in the Blue Mountains, arriving at 4AM. After a few hours sleep, the well-carved trails beckoned again!



Sydney Harbour Bridge Fireworks



A Well-Carved Trail

Happy New Year!

Cathie and Bill

