

Greetings, Dear Friends and Family,

We hope you have had a good year. We've had only minor mishaps this year. In August, Julia fell while in the tub, and gashed her head above her eyebrow. While trying to stop the blood flow, I could tell it was a deep wound. But after getting five stitches, it's healed nicely.

At the end of September I was in a car accident. I was exiting the mall where I work, and traffic was busy. Somehow I didn't see the car barreling down the road. But nobody got hurt, only the cars. Ours is now fixed up better than it was. (And I learned a lesson!)

I turned fifty this year, a number which seems odd to me. As I correctly noted when I was forty, 'by the time I get used to be forty, I'll be fifty'. I suspect it will be likewise for this new number. Julia's having a milestone too, as she retires in December, and she's looking forward to that. We'll soon know how the budget must be.

Meanwhile, this year we've had lots of travel.

In February we took a weekend trip to Tucson, a city we hadn't been to since 2001. As could be expected, there's been much growth. We enjoyed seeing the zoo, the U of A Art Museum, and the Botanical Garden.

In May, I went solo to New York City. I visited some places new to me and some favorites I'd seen in 2005. The Egyptian collection at the Brooklyn Museum is really quite surprising, with lots of very nice pieces. I took photos of almost everything. This attracted the attention of a tall, dark and muscular security guard, who spoke with a deep, rich accent: "why are you taking so many pictures? What are you going to do with them?" I told him they'd likely go into an online photo gallery, and he was satisfied.

I did a quick walk through of their Asian art, really lovely pieces, but my feet were sore, so I didn't pause for pictures.

And then I got up to the fifth floor to see the Murakami exhibit. Quite fanciful items, with the Japanese animé themes combined with futuristic themes. I was particularly grateful for a movie room, soft carpet to sit on that had been delightfully given his flower treatment. I liked the movies, especially "Planting the Seeds", which featured two friends, (one with three eyes), and their farming adventures. He does deal with scary war themes, but in a whimsical way. He has the cutest skulls I've ever seen.

The next day, I wasn't up to the huge Metropolitan museum, so I took in smaller exhibits, The Klimt and the Wiener Werkstätte exhibits at the Neue Galerie and then "Wine, Worship, and Sacrifice: The Golden Graves of Ancient Vani" at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, which is very near the Neue. The Klimt and the Wiener Werkstätte exhibits were very nicely displayed. The room with the jewelry featured tall silkscreens of the ladies of this time wearing the jewelry, along with the modern loose fitting corset free fashions of the day. Some of the ladies who wore that jewelry might have posed for Klimt.

Meanwhile, the 'golden graves' featured exquisite jewelry, skill equal to that of the Viennese artisans! But what brutal funerary practices! As late as the fourth century B.C., they were still burying the servants with the deceased person! Early in Egypt's history they did likewise, but not very many dynasties on, they quit that barbaric practice and used the Shabti, clay servants that would animate to do their bidding.

Later in my visit, I took two days for the Met museum. After taking a thorough assessment of the Egyptian collection, I made sure to visit the Greco-Roman area. There were plenty spectacular items there, which I photographed. I managed to make the rounds of the ancient Near East section, but after that, it was very near to closing time. The next day I returned home with many happy memories.

The great Yuma summer heat had both of us longing for cooler air, which we got plenty of when we headed north in our little red car to Flagstaff and the Grand Canyon. We enjoyed exploring the little town of Williams, then we took the train into the Canyon. The train is a fun way to get there. Everyone did their part to be as entertaining as possible. Musicians came into each train coach and played and sang for us. One had a guitar and a mouth harp attached to a device that held it in front of his mouth so he could play both in songs featuring trains. Another had a banjo and sang. Another at the trains return got our friendly hostess Lorraine dancing as he played and sang an old Beatles tune, "Feelin' Groovy".

What can I say? The Canyon is awesome, and there's no photo or movie that can really convey the experience. (But I will try with mine.)



At its widest point, it is 18 miles across, on average it is 10 miles wide. It's 277 miles long, and nearly one mile deep.

After our adventures there, the next day we went to Flagstaff, where we enjoyed the older part of town, and the Northern Arizona Museum for dinosaur skeletons and then to the University art museums.

The Northern Arizona museum is well-established, having begun in 1935. The exhibits are displayed gorgeously and well-explained. It is more than equal to anything the big cities have. I enjoyed learning some of the history of Native Americans, in addition to their art.

The Marguerite Hettel Weiss Art Museum houses a display of art and furniture from her estate. It's a varied collection, featuring many sculptures. Photos weren't allowed, but I do remember a Francisco Zúñiga. Photographs could not do justice to the other exhibit of works by Adrian Hatfield. Many of his paintings were done with a unique multi-layering technique using resin. The result is a three-dimensional effect. My favorite is a large piece framed with a velvet curtain. It looks like a fantastic aquarium, bursting with active life.

Another intriguing piece features a dinosaur 'falling' through a Victorian type wall paper. The discovery of the great age of the dinosaurs upset the Victorian sense of order. What is amazingly synchronistic is how his art brought together everything we've seen on this wonder-filled trip.

Not only that, we fit in a visit to Lowell Observatory. The Google map said we could make it to the observatory in six minutes. I figured we could do it in fifteen. Both the maps were almost useless, but signs were posted once we got in the general area, and we followed them. A scary spirally road led around the mountain up to the observatory. I took it real slow, glad it wasn't full of impatient speeders.

We arrived just in time for the last lecture of the day at 4:15pm. The young man was a lively and concise speaker. It was fun learning about Lowell and his unique telescope. It was a rustic project, soldered together by a crew who boasted they could make anything, and they did. You gotta love the frying pan lens cap, the bicycle chain turning device, and the row of 1954 Chevy tires around the rim of the ceiling, upon which the ceiling rotates to the proper location of what ever you want to view.

We returned south to hotter, drier and less greener climes, but with such nice memories of this charming area and some of its attractions. Our state really does contain a great variety of beauty.

We hope you've had a chance to enjoy some of the beauty in your own unique region, and that the new year will be much better than you suspect!