



December 23, 2008

Dear Family and Friends,

In less than 48 hours we will be celebrating the holiday season. May you all have a festive season with a very healthy New Year's.

In trying to recall some interesting experiences that happened to me throughout the year I realized that 2008 became the year of travel for me, to my surprise. For several special events I was able to sneak away and enjoy time with family and friends and had many memorable moments. Let me share with you my 2008 Yuletide confessions of an Innkeeper.

Giving a Helping Hand

My first week in January was spent giving a helping hand to a 92-year-old senior citizen. A friend, leaving for Florida, asked me if I could help her with her paperwork. Her sight was failing and she had trouble reading. She still lives alone, drives and takes care of herself.

I helped her go through her mail, tons and tons of it. I learned she was on every mailing list like publishers clearing house. She saved everything. After several days of going through her paperwork we finally got down to the bottom. We balanced her checkbook and got all her bills paid. In the midst of all this we found an NJ State rebate check from 2005 for \$800. To our surprise, the State of NJ was willing to cut a new check for her. I continued to visit and help her during the year.

Winter Getaway

By the end of January, we headed to Las Vegas with my three sisters and a few good friends for a fun week to celebrate my big birthday. We had a fabulous time and lot of laughs. I even got three or four marriage proposals, but nothing serious. We are planning a return trip in 2013 when my younger sister reaches this milestone birthday.

My friend, Betty, joined me in Las Vegas and we headed to Maui for eight more days. Maui is such a beautiful green island with lots of sights to see especially wonderful waterfalls. As my friend stayed pool side, I decided to venture out to "the road to Hana." It's a 52-Miles stretch of underdeveloped land, 617 curves and 56 single lane bridges. Although it was more than six hours to make the trip, there were some unbelievable sights.

As an alternative to snorkeling I took a ride on a reef runner, an above ground submarine which allows you to see the coral and sea life without being physically in the water. We flew to Oahu for a few days to visit Betty's brother-in-law and had a wonderful time. He took us on a Whale Watch trip and actually saw several whales unlike Cape May. They hibernate there for the winter till mid April when they head north.

We headed back to Las Vegas for a few final nights. The highlight was watching the New York Giants cinch the super bowl at a casino betting parlor. The crowd went crazy. We headed home the next day but I have some great memories.

Getting Ready for the Season

Following our vacation, I had to get ready for the summer season in Cape May. I was fortunate to have my friend Jane help me for several days to do the spring cleaning. She was a great help.

After extensive work, my cousin Don added two attractive vintage street lamps to brighten up the front yard. I especially enjoyed decorating them for the holidays.

To make things easier, I scheduled a professional awning company to hang my 19 awnings. I waited, called, waited, called to no avail. By June, I decided to put them up myself with the help of some local help. My new custom outdoor cushions were added to my rocking chairs on the front porch.

Washington Street Mall Renovated

During the winter months the City of Cape May worked on renovating the Washington Street Mall. They had to strip the mall of all its greenery (trees etc.) to rebuild its utilities' infrastructure. After several months of hard work, by June, the City of Cape May rededicated the Washington Street Mall. They did a great job and was now ready for the summer season.

So You want to be on TV

In the 1980's I was active in a public speaking/leadership organization (Toastmasters International). By 1987 I became a District Governor (DG) and responsible for close to 100 clubs. In the last 20 years, the number of Toastmaster clubs in the New York/New Jersey area reached more than 250. The organization decided to split the District into two parts by summer 2008.

To record this historical event they decided to invite all the Past DGs to speak on a community TV station in Staten Island. Our assignment was to give a short speech on our experience as DG. After several weeks of agonizing over my speech I was able to get it down to four minutes, the time allotted.

My speech was laid out on several pages in large print (almost like a Teleprompter on paper) since I was going to be on TV. I planned to easily slide the pages from side to side at the podium. When I got to the studio, the podium had a big microphone taped to it and that sliding papers would be impossible. Sadly I ran into technical problems giving my speech. Obviously I was disappointed in my performance. Some of the DGs who are still active were writing their speech while waiting for the taping. I have the DVD of the show but haven't gotten the courage to view it. Well, that's life! The best part of the event was seeing all these people I worked with while being an active member.

Summertime

We were blessed with **great weather** during the majority of the summer. My guests came from more than 20 of our states, and Canada and Germany. Several guests were making return visits. Some guests were new to Cape May and Antoinette's. The summer went smoothly with little to no unusual happenings. My most memorable week was when the house was filled with 12 children and their parents of which six of the children were less than three. It was a week to remember.

As we approached the fall, the economy started to fall and as you all know we are now in an "official recession." Certainly our local businesses have been affected by the recession here in Cape May. Just this weekend, while stopping at the Lobster House to get some fresh fish there were only three people there.

Post Summer Fun

After Labor Day, my family, friends and I attended the annual VFW **Clambake** in Cape May and had a great time. We were glad that my nephew Max and his wife Lynne were able to join us from Florida.

Sister & Family Heading South

In September, my sister Judi & her husband John bought a house in Cape May Court House. Eventually they plan to retire in Cape May County. Since I relocated here from North Jersey in 1993, they are the first family members to buy a retirement home. I'm excited about their upcoming plans.

Let's Celebrate Getting Older`

I had a lot of fun this year attending all the baby boomer's birthday parties. Besides seeing some old friends and families I was able to visit some of the cities that I missed all these years (Philadelphia, New York, Washington, D.C.) . For one of my friends we attended the American Idol concert in Atlantic City and saw a great show. The highlight, just last week, was going to New York City for a few days. My last trip there was more than 15 years. I loved seeing St. Patrick's Cathedral, Rockefeller Center, Central Park, and downtown New York. We took a free ride on the Staten Island ferry and saw the Statue of Liberty and NYC at dusk. I'll be back.

Our Nation's Capital

With my friend Laura, we took two short trips to our Nation's capital to attend board and annual meetings of NHLSA (National Historic Landmarks Stewards Association). During our free time we did some touring of the city sites and Alexandria. You could spend weeks there and not see everything. Great trips.

We learned later that we stayed in the same hotel that Mark Spitzer stayed in. He resigned as Governor of New York this year due to his illicit sexual activities.

Navy Retirement

In late October, we headed down to Jacksonville, Florida with Aunt Lou and my older sister Dolores to attend Max's (her son) Navy Retirement. It was a very impressive event, recognizing his dedication and sacrifices he and his family made to our country for giving 25 years of service. Congrats! We managed to get to the beach, visit St. Augustine and enjoy a trolley ride.

Our St. Augustine hotel had a little excitement when it hosted the University of Georgia football team overnight. Our elevator bank was being secured by guards and draped with blankets to hide the team while riding it. On the day of the game, while walking to the elevator, I was met by a bulldog and his trainer. We loaded the elevator and the coach and part of the football team asked the trainer how is "UGA" today. I learned later that "UGA" was their famous bulldog mascot from the University of Georgia and was 7th from a long line of the same family breed. Sadly the team lost badly that day to the Florida team. UGA was not a happy bulldog.

Mulching

In November, when I returned from my trip to Florida, I found the trees had finally shed their leaves. Since Antonio didn't show up for several weeks (who been helping me for five years), it was time to rake them up. I tried something different this year - mulch the leaves and use them as a garden bed cover. After collecting 36 bags of leaves I spread them across the yard. I'll find out next spring if all the work was worth it.

Trying to Stay Healthy

One challenge of aging is staying healthy. During last winter I tried a three month "complete body

cleanse.” It was rather simple and entailed taking a lot of natural pills. They claim that a lot of physical problems can be eliminated by removing all those toxins in your body that accumulate over the years. The most noticeable change was that my metabolism improved and I had more energy. I told my Doctor about what I was doing. He said “oh they just took your money.” I joined Weight Watchers Online as another health measure. I’ve already found it helpful since you can track your eating habits online as well as your progress. I hope it works.

Cooking

After 15 years I decided to treat myself to my first new pot set, which I never got during my adult years. I added a new stockpot for making homemade soups and Italian sauces to freeze. I wasn’t sure what size I should get so I picked the largest one - 20 Quarts. It was great because everything would fit in one pot. I immediately began cooking with it but found myself with a dilemma following its use. It did not fit in my refrigerator for overnight cooling. So now I’m stuck keeping my old pots to use for storage.

Technical School

I repeated my upholstery and fishing rod building classes. My upholstery was almost a bust because I skipped more classes than I attended due to my vacationing. Although I attended half of the rod building class, sadly my rod remains incomplete. I hope to get it done by 2009 for the summer season.

Miscellaneous Work

I continued to walk my senior citizens’ family **dog** three days a week. I also am the property manager for a **single family summer rental** down the street (check in, check outs, cleaning, emergencies). A few of my other small jobs dried up due to the downturn of the economy.

Future Plans

We have one trip planned in late January 2009 to return to Las Vegas with my older sister Dolores for 6 days. Unfortunately she was diagnosed with more cancer since she was treated for breast cancer two years ago. She may have to get around with a scooter but we plan to have a good time.

Final Remarks

We’ve had a very tumultuous six months with skyrocketing gas prices, an uncertain economy, an October crash of the financial markets. I wish that 2009 becomes a much brighter and happier and profitable years for all of us. In January 2009, we will be watching a historical event and inaugurate our first African American as President of the United States, Barack Obama. I look forward to seeing it.

As usual, the clock is ticking and 2008 is just about over. It is time to close another year of my Innkeeper’s **confessions**. I would love to hear from you if you enjoy reading my confessions, email me at deannab@snip.net. Please lets’ remember our **Military** personnel who are serving our country while we are enjoying our holidays. Please keep in touch and <http://www.antoinettescapemay.com> Happy Holidays.

Fondly,

Deanna