



December 23, 2006

Dear Family and Friends,

In just a few days, we will be celebrating the Christmas holiday. As you join your families and friends, may you all have a festive season with a Happy and healthy New Year. Let me share my 2006 Yuletide confessions of an Innkeeper.

Winter in Cape May

My winter was very quiet since I decided to stay put in Cape May. I spent a good deal of my time helping a friend prepare for the sale of their Bed and Breakfast. I realized that in a three story Victorian house there's a lot of stuff to dispose of (I'll be facing that someday).

To add a little entertainment to the quiet winter months, I spent some of the Sundays via door to door service to the Atlantic City Casinos. I was the youngest on the bus but I met a lot of nice people and had a lot of fun.

My winter local classes began in late January. This year I continued my upholstery classes and focused on making 8 outside awnings and chair cushions. I ventured into a six week series on saltwater fishing. There was 25 students in the class with me being the only female and the only one without a boat. The class covered a wealth of information. This included learning about the back bay, inshore, offshore, surf, and fly fishing. My favorite was learning how to read a fishing chart to HOPEFULLY locate the fish. It was a great class opening my eyes to the joy of fishing for many visiting our shore community.

For the next semester I continued the fishing series and attended a class on fishing rod building. Well, the class has come and gone and my two rods are still in the construction phase. I hope to have it finished by spring thanks to the teacher letting me repeat a few classes. Another student offered to stop by in the spring to help with me finish up. Maybe some day my guests can use my hand built fishing rods and catch a BIG FISH.

Antoinette's Guests

My guests continue to visit Antoinette's from all over the world including as far west as Hawaii and from Canada, Germany, Sweden, Italy and the UK. The majority of my guests still come from PA, NJ, NY and MD. One couple came right off a fishing boat in the Cape May Harbor.

This year, to my surprise, I had 3 couples visit Antoinette's as their honeymoon destination. Congratulations to all of them and hope they share many loving years together. I was visited for a week by the Father of the Bride from NH who brought along his fancy Harley Davidson for fun between rehearsal dinners, gorgeous but noisy.

In June, an author of children books offered to trade two nights with her son for an article about Antoinette's being family friendly. Well, I'm still waiting to see the article. Watch out for scams.

For the 4th of July I had a family of 26 stay for 4 days. The parents came with 7 of their 8 children with

spouses and grandchildren. All the children were born in the Dominican Republic and now live in various parts of the US. The three big rituals was preparing the 4 coolers with Corona beers for the day, eating and playing cards as a family affair. It was the first time the family was back together in one place for many years. I was worried that my house would be trashed but to my surprise all worked out fine.

This fall I had 2 young girls trying to toast marshmallows in my gas log fireplace. They said it worked but got caught when they described their experiences in my house journal.

One memorable experience stands out for 2006. A gentleman decided to surprise his family and take them away for a weekend retreat. They all arrived as usual on Friday night and by 9pm, three policemen were knocking at my door. My guest was missing and his wife moved out and went to a hotel on the beach with the two kids. By 12:30 a. m. the police located my guest back in his room because my bicycle was back. They brought him to our local hospital for observation. By Saturday he returned with his son and left peacefully on Sunday. What I learned later was that he went off his medicines and had threatened his own life. Luckily, there were no dead bodies found on the premises.

House Improvements

As expected with an 1890's old house, things always need repairing. Most things I try to do myself but Antonio, a local non English speaking Mexican, continues working here to help me with my various chores.

For 2007, I can finally offer Wireless Internet access thanks to Todd, my nephew from CT. My outside lights have been temperamental for years and thanks to my cousin, Don, they are staying light during rain and shine.

When our local furniture store went out of business, I upgraded half of my mattresses. The only downside was how do you get rid of 8 mattresses when they no longer offer free mattress removal services. Well, Antonio and his family were happy with all their new beds.

I finally tackled a 14 old project from 1992. My parents gave me an old cedar whiskey barrel for Christmas. My hopes was to use it as a rain barrel but it sat in my back yard for all those years. Because of sentimental reasons, I dare not throw it away. Thanks to Wally, my 86 year old furniture refinishing teacher, we made it into 2 lovely flower pots in the front of the house.

Let's Find More Work

Since reservations were coming in slow for the 2006 summer, I decided to take matters into my own hands and take on some part-time work. In April, one job caught my attention, a part time bookkeeper only 2 blocks away from my house. Well, I interviewed for the job and was hired. After two weeks and 16 hours I was fired. Why? I asked too many questions, didn't answer the phone correctly and was too slow on the computer. Did he really not want someone who understood running a business and interpret his books? Well, I lost no tears over that job.

By May, I had secured another job, cleaning a 4 bedroom, 4 bath single family house down the street on Saturdays for the summer. Since my checkouts are on Sunday, my Saturdays were free. Well, I

managed to hold onto this job and am watching their house for the winter months.

In July, I began walking a dog for 5 days a week. I thought it would force me out of the house and do some daily exercise. Well, six months later I am still walking the dog and have learned to work around this commitment.

Throughout the year, I have done a variety of other work and have been able to still effectively manage Antoinette's.

Cape May Development

Like other shore towns, Cape May continues to be affected by redevelopment of shore front properties. Several of the motels along the beach are being torn down and being rebuilt as Condominiums. Just in my neighborhood, one of our local churches was redeveloped as a 3 unit condominiums. They sold the first floor unit but they are having trouble selling the other 2 especially the unit on the 3rd floor. Although it is hard to accept the conversion of a church to condos, the property is much improved.

My neighbor's house next door was finally purchased in March 2006 after being vacant for many months and falling in disrepair. By July all the renovations were completed and the house was put up for sale. In early December, the new owners moved in. Since they are not year round residents, they come and go on weekends. I hope to meet them before the end of the year and welcome them here.

Our latest challenge in town is the demolishing of our Movie Theater on Beach Drive and the creation of more condos! Well, many of the local residents are upset and over 1500 signatures have been obtained to stop the demolishing of our only theatre.

Thanksgiving with the Coast Guard Recruits

After 13 years I finally decided to join the hundreds of families that host Thanksgiving dinner for the Coast Guard recruits from all over the country who train in Cape May. This year you could have 2-4 recruits, and I asked for 4. By the time the holiday came, the Salvation Army list was so long that most families here got 2 recruits, including me. The 22 pound turkey was already bought but was it too big for just 2. So I decided to expand the party.

I offered to have a trial run the weekend before for 9 people (students and teacher from my 2005 refinishing class that have kept in touch). When I was preparing for the first dinner (the weekend before) I thought how foolish I was to do 2 back to back dinners. Well, Wally, age 86, and Larry, age 70+, came to the rescue in the kitchen. We made 2 apple pies, 4 pumpkin pies, home made stuffing, 10 pounds of potatoes, 3 lbs of fresh cranberries and 2 turkey breasts. Needless to say, we had plenty of food and lots of leftovers. But more importantly most of the food was prepared for Thanksgiving ahead of time.

For Thanksgiving day I invited a few friends to join me but other commitments were already made. So it was me and the recruits. Earlier that week two ladies from NY decided to make the trip to Cape May and stay at Antoinette's. They wanted to know what restaurant was open for Thanksgiving and I invited them to dinner at Antoinette's (Restaurant?). The two recruits came from Dallas, Texas and Missouri. One of the ladies was experiencing her first holiday without her 4 children since she is in the middle of a divorce. Well, to my surprise, the dinner was a success and I enjoyed 4 strangers at my dinner table.

By 8pm, prior to returning them to the base, we toured the town and enjoyed the holiday decorations. Certainly, I will have fond memories of this special day for years to come. Since I now realize how

much it takes to prepare this special feast I may hold off for a few years, but it was worth the experience. The only downside was I gave the two recruits a 700 minute phone card each and they went to one of my suites upstairs and did not come out till dinner time. I thought I would have some casual conversation time with them during the day. I told them that next time I would not give out the phone card until I fed them for breakfast and lunch.

Oops, Why Won't My Car Run

In the midst of preparing for the Thanksgiving festivities, my car transmission was failing after 110,000 miles. I determined that I would have to find another car quickly. After looking at all my options, I decided to find a used Taurus/Mercury Station Wagon similar to what I have. After searching the internet, I located a car north of Philadelphia that was a 2004 and only had 13,500 miles on it. After exchanging several emails I learned that the car belonged to the son's mom who died six months ago. After trying out the car the week before, the day before my big Turkey Dinner the two sons delivered the car to Cape May and I bought the car.

What do I do with my old car - try to sell it or donate it? I learned from my accountant that the laws changed in 2005 eliminating most of the tax loopholes for donating used cars. Now you must wait until the car is sold to declare this actual charity contribution. Cars have now become more difficult to dispose of. So with no responses to my 2 week auto ad, I decided to sell to a local dealer or a used car salesman. I thought that would be easy. After several tries, going door to door from one dealer to another, I finally sold it. After I signed the title over to the salesman, I was skeptical of the "used car salesman" check. I never did this before. So on the way home they dropped me off at the bank and my concerns were eliminated.

What Lies Ahead for 2007

On January 23rd, I will be flying to Florida to take my older sister, Dolores, on a fun filled vacation for three weeks. I decided after she survived breast cancer earlier this year that we both deserve a vacation. With my extra funds from dog walking, bookkeeping, house cleaning and other odd jobs we plan to have a great, relaxing time. I am planning to hook up with some friends that now live there. Prior to our return home, we are taking a 5 Night cruise to Key West and the Bahama's with my sister's son and wife and our cousin. Bon Voyage! I'm sure I'll have great memories to share with you next year.

Final Remarks

Well, since the Post Office door is still open but the staff have gone home for the holidays, it is time to close another year of my Innkeeper's confessions. Since email is now becoming more popular I am considering emailing this out for 2007 but still am undecided. If you enjoy reading my confessions, just email me at deannab@snip.net and I'll add you to my list if I decide to do it for 2007.

Please lets' remember our Military personnel who are serving our country while we are enjoying our holidays. I plan to stay put for Christmas day since I have guests coming in for the holidays but look forward to joining my family for New Years. Please keep in touch and would love to hear from you via email at deannab@snip.net. <http://www.antoINETTEScapemay.com> Happy Holidays.

Fondly,

Deanna