



December 22, 2007

Dear Family and Friends,

In just a few days we will be celebrating the holiday season. May you all have a festive season with a and very healthy New Year's. Let me share with you my 2007 Yuletide confessions of an Innkeeper.

Winter Getaway

This year I took my older sister, a breast cancer survivor, on **vacation for 21** days and had a wonderful time. A few of the highlights of the road trip included: Savannah (Maritime Ships Museum, a must see), Cape Canaveral (fabulous Space Station), Thomas Edison Museum (Ft. Myers), Ringling Brother's Museum (circus models), Sanibel Island (Seashell museum) and a special Sunday religious celebration overlooking the Atlantic Ocean near St. Augustine.

We then took a 5 nights/6 day **Cruise** from Jacksonville to Key West and the Bahamas. We were very impressed with the level of customer service provided. The food and activities were great. We did a quick tour of the Atlantis Resort on Paradise Island and absolutely loved it. While enjoying a brief stay at the Hilton beach before going back to the ship, the hotel manager announced the untimely death of **Anna Nicole Smith** that day. It was weird how we had just seen the Doctor's Hospital where her baby was born and her son died, to hear of this sad news. On a happy note, the cruise was great and I especially enjoyed spending quality time with my family.

Getting Ready for the Season

Following our vacation, I had to get ready for the summer season in Cape May. I decided to do some heavy duty inside (carpets/couches) and outside (awnings) cleaning. Cleaning my many **carpets** and stairs took several days and went very smoothly. Cleaning my awnings was another story.

I decided to **clean my 19 awnings** after 12 years of being hung. Since I gained some recent experience in making awnings, if I mess up, I could make new ones. Lets' start with the single windows, one at a time, remove the hardware and wash it in cold water in my washing machine. No problems - no fading - no falling apart. Should I try the double and triple windows? So we disassembled them, scrubbed them and threw them in the washing machine. After 25 loads of wash all the awnings were now cleaned.

The next challenge was putting them back together, however there was no record of what part belonged to what awning. Whose fault is that? oops! I struggled a week trying to uncover the maze of hardware. When I thought I had it all figured out Matt (carpet cleaner) returned and we attempted to reassemble them - only 3 days later. The final step was to get them hung, so my friend Larry came to the rescue. By mid June these awnings were finally hung but the overall process was a bummer. I immediately contacted a professional service to handle this job in the future. Lesson learned (I hope).

My last big job for the pre season was to upgrade and **go digital** with my TV cable. With the help of my cousin Don (he did it all) my TV cable lines were upgraded. We even added extra lines for future expansion for HD and Plasma TVs when the price drops and it becomes more affordable.

Summertime

We were blessed with **great weather** during the majority of the summer. My wonderful guests came from 13 states with a handful from Canada and abroad. Of all the many guests experiences during the season one especially stands out. Let me share it with you.

One morning in July a guest called me and said that I could be **held liable** for something they found in my suite. His wife used an unmarked Tupperware container as sugar for her cereal and had to spit it out.

He asked me what was it? Well, it was washing machine soap (the scoop was in the container). I noticed the label fell off the top. Realizing that it could happen again, I decided to put a permanent message on the container "***Do Not Eat, Washing Machine soap***". Well I thought my problem was solved.

My next guests arrived for an overnight stay. When they went to check out, the husband told me they had an accident in the kitchen. The dishwasher was leaking **bubbles**. Well I realized that they used my newly labeled container. Since these folks were from Denmark, maybe they use different words?

Get Rid of It

With good weather all summer, I made a concerted effort to downsize my **garage department store**. Three approaches were used: yard sale, antique fair and the Strawberry festival. My best sale was in my own back yard. No carting, no early setup, no entry fee. Sadly lots of stuff remains for next year (s).

Miscellaneous Work

I continued to walk my senior citizen family **dog** 4 days a week. I also was the property manager for a **single family summer rental** down the street (check in, check outs, cleaning, emergencies).

In May I began a **small taxi** driver job for the dog's family. The husband lost most of his vision and is working on getting his sight back (we hope). The wife had her license but hasn't driven for 10 years. Their SUV was too big for her to handle and she wanted a smaller car. Could I help them with miscellaneous trips to the doctors, pharmacy, hair dresser, etc.. Sure, why not!

Now there is a need for the wife to drive again. Keep in mind that this couple is in their mid seventies. I persuaded the husband, on one of our trips, to keep an open mind and check out his wife's car selection. To my surprise he agreed and we did. The next day when going to walk their dog, the wife was coming out of the driveway with a salesman to test out this new car. Happily they bought the car that week and she's doing the driving while her husband recovers from his eye loss. Although I lost most of my taxi job, it's great to see the wife regain her new found freedom on the road.

In July, I began assisting a local hotel/bar/restaurant with some **accounting** work. Shortly their bookkeeper became sick and was out of work till September so I tried to fill in the critical void. With 40 hours in the first few weeks I got a quick lesson in what it takes to run this complicated business. Thankfully the bookkeeper returned in the fall and I am trying to help her catch up for the year.

Technical School

Little time was left to go fishing with my new hand built fishing rod. I repeated the upholstery class with my focus on making **custom cushions** for my outside rocking chairs with awning fabric. After my teacher informed me that I had to make 60 buttons, I finally assembling them at my last class in December. I look forward to adding them to my front porch in the spring for comfort and pizzazz.

Post Summer Fun

After Labor Day, my cousin invited me to the annual VFW **Clambake** in Cape May and I had a great time. This event has been going on for years. They bring in over 20,000 clams from Maryland and believe it or not every last one is eaten. I think my cousin devoured at least 8 dozen. In 2008, we hope to have more family members join us for this post summer celebration.

Did the Coast Guard Come Back?

As most of you predicted, I decided to pass on having dinner for the Coast Guard recruits for Thanksgiving 2007. Too much time and effort for only a few. Instead, I attempted to try something else.

A friend, who runs her own ice cream parlor, asked me if I was interested in any leftover **home made ice cream**. I suggested using it for the local VFW Thanksgiving dinner for 50 recruits. Since she shuts

down her freezers, where could she store it? After filling up 15 containers she delivered them to me. I tracked down the coordinator of the dinner and left a message the day before Thanksgiving. Oops! Well I never heard back from the lady. The good news is that most of the ice cream has been distributed and has been enjoyed by the recipients.

Cape May's Best

One day at our local Post Office, I saw a lady who was my neighbor years ago. She congratulated me on being in the ranks of "the Best of Cape May". I learned that annually there is a reader's survey on the capemay.com website for subscribers to vote for the best of Cape May in a variety of categories. She was familiar with the results since her employer is "the Angel of the Sea" and they were selected as "Best Bed and Breakfast" in Cape May for 2007. Antoinette's was selected as "**Best Guest House**" and tied with the Columbia House. When I got home, I verified the information. I extend my thanks to all my supporters (and special guests) for making this happen. It was great to be recognized after 16 years.

Mall Under Construction

In November, the City of Cape May began the **reconstruction** of the Washington Street mall and hopes to have it ready for the spring of 2008. Sadly, they had to remove all the trees. The mall owners have been trying to make it look festive for the holidays but it's real tough. The Internet is posting progress.

The Affects of Old Age

Since Cape May is a seaside resort many people retire here. Thirty percent of our 4,500 year round residents are over 70 years old. I have met many wonderful senior citizens and some have become good friends. In April, a lady who I haven't seen for months was moved to a nursing home 60 miles away. My last contact with her was a fond memory of celebrating Halloween with her on my front porch one year giving out candy. For the holidays I decided to **visit her** with a friend. To bring a little bit of Cape May to her nursing home I made a beach pail with sand, shells and dune grass but left it in the car. They escorted us to her room and unlocked the door. She physically looked great but it was clear she didn't know who we were. After a half hour of meaningless conversation we bid our farewells. Her Xmas pail now sits on my front porch with the other decorations. I hope someday that they find a cure for this very debilitating disease of **alzheimer**.

Those Dreaded Pills

For the last few years, I have been "loyal" in getting those regular health checkups. Embarrassing to say, I have been fighting **high cholesterol/high blood pressure**. Lose of weight and physical exercise could be a solution. My Doctor advised drugs 18 months ago to get these health risks under control. I decided to try natural methods. I recently succumbed to taking preventive drugs - Bah Humbug.

When I picked up my high cholesterol drug prescription I was shocked that it costs close to \$4 a pill. I decided to start with a 1 month supply but had to look for alternatives or get another job. I found that the **Canadian** pharmacies were able to offer the same drugs at **40%** the cost. Surprisingly, some of my older friends had used Canada as an alternative, so I ordered the drugs. **Dateline** was airing a special report on "bogus drugs" being discovered in pharmacies and doctors offices around the world. I freaked out - what should I do? I compared the drugs from the Doctor office, pharmacy and Canadian drugs and found no differences. With trepidation, I resumed taking the drugs on schedule and waited for the side affects. Happily, on the next visit to the Doctor's office, my high cholesterol dropped to normal.

Now that my cholesterol is improved, the Doctor advised me to take a drug to lower my high blood pressure. Do I still have the phone number for the Canadian pharmacy? Well, I mailed the prescription and ordered the drug online. A week later the pharmacy alerted me that the order was placed at their **Italian** affiliate and the name of the drug was in Italian. I decided to alert my Doctor and seek his approval. Are my Italian relatives including Antoinette getting desperate to keep me alive so they are now sending me drugs from Italy? I am committed to that "wretched" little pill box cause I can't

remember..

Year for a Milestone

This summer I reached one of those big "0" milestones. It's bigger than 40! My sisters are taken me to Las Vegas in January 2008 to celebrate. A friend who is retiring soon will join me in **Las Vegas** and then we fly to **Maui** after my family leaves. We return to Las Vegas for a few more days but it's on Super Bowl Sunday. Oops! In 1979 I visited Hawaii and returned with two weeks of timesharing on the Big Island. Well, 7 years later, my Hawaii property declared bankruptcy. I do not plan to make the same mistake. I look forward to spending some time as a vacationer with family and friends.

The Littlest Tree

For over 12 years, I've held on to a special **handmade 2 foot Christmas tree**. I bought it in 1992 for Mrs. Crilly, my 90 year old friend who lived across the street for 50+ years (known today as the Southern Mansion). She loved the little tree and kept it lit for months after the holiday season. Sadly, Mary was moved to a local nursing home in 1993 and died the following year.

In 1994, the house was sold and at the new owners' yard sale I bought the little tree a second time. Every year I would take it out but it needed some repair with the lights. This year I decided I must get it working or just discard it. I brought it upstairs to fix it and magically when I plugged it in the tree lit. I can now once again enjoy this little Xmas tree and remember this grand lady on Washington Street.

Planning for the Future

A lovely couple, who were retired innkeepers, finally sold their house earlier this year and moved to PA. When they shared their holiday greetings with me, their messages struck a chord. "Selling our house, selling or giving away almost of our worldly goods was tough....Now however, we are free, knowing that **material goods are actually like a prison** - a necessity of life for a time, but fortunately not forever".

These are realities of life for those of us who are fortunate to live till our golden years. Many of us need to begin **preparing for the future**. Me too. Isn't it better for us to decide our own destiny like this older couple (now in their 80s) then to make our family members make hard decisions when the crisis arrives.

Final Remarks

I congratulate my sister's family on the recent **birth** of her daughter's little girl, **Ellie**, and the **marriage** of their son, **Lee** to his college sweetheart, **Kelly**. Congratulations! I especially thank my cousin, **Celeste**, who became a part time innkeeper while I was able to travel to enjoy this special event.

Well, the clock is ticking and 2007 is just about over. It is time to close another year of my Innkeeper's **confessions**. I still do not have enough email addresses to send it electronically. So I'll just stick to the old fashion way of standard mail. 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