

1997 - 98 Yuletide Confessions of an Innkeeper

by Deanna Brown

Dear Friends and Family:

Since many people have asked me recently about when my "confessions" will be mailed, I will continue to share them with you for 1997. Happy Holidays to you and your families!

Dedication

I dedicate my yuletide confessions to our newest Cape May neighbors, my sister, Judi and her husband John. In 1997 they bought a four bedroom house behind Antoinette's. They are only steps away and are in the process of fixing it up - the second floor is finished. I love the home cooked meals during their visits. I hope they both find the peace and serenity I have found since moving to Cape May five years ago.

Getting a Better Neighbor

Earlier this year, I decided to file a complaint about my neighbor barking dogs. Behind my house, there lived a couple who had three beautiful playful Huskies. Since they worked nights and weekends, they decided to build a pen outside in their driveway. Land in Cape May is at a premium, this dog pen had just enough space for their Eskimo homes for the dogs and a little running space. Unfortunately, during various times at night these dogs would begin barking. When the couple arrived home from working at a four star restaurant at 1 AM, the animals would be glad to see their owners, but would wake up the neighborhood including me and my guests.

Well, after several complaints from my customers, I decided I had to take action. So I filled a complaint and then had to go into arbitration. A month later, the original owner of the house died and the family decided to put the house up on the market. I decided to consider renting the house and then sublease it to other tenants. This way I could control who rents the house. Within a few months, this no longer became a worry. My sister and her husband bought the house. No more dogs.

Trip to Sea

One of the key highlight of last several months was taking a family trip to Norfolk, Virginia and spending a day at sea on an aircraft carrier. At 5:30am, we boarded the U. S. S. Eisenhower on June xx, to share 12 hours of sea life with 3500 people. As the sunrises over the Chesapeake Bay, the

carrier began it's voyage to sea by being tugged to deeper waters by four tug boats.

As we were well underway, the Captain came on to welcome all the visitors on the ship. "This is the Captain speaking. We would like to welcome you all aboard Ike on such a glorious day." At that point I was taken back as I realized that the Captain was my brother, Greg." Little did we all know that 30 years later when he left home he would be head of a key military ship.

We had a fabulous day filled with tours, food, demonstrations and a live air show of fighter planes landing and taking off the carrier. We sat right on the deck and watched with awe as a plane dropped from 200 miles to 0 miles in just seconds. It was a sight to see. The navy rolled out the red carpet treatments for all their guests but gave the Captain's family special attention. My dad, Fred, had four Navy personnel available at his beck and call. At one point Fred disappeared and put out a military alert to the staff to find Mr. Brown. After enjoying his corn cob pipe on the carrier deck and chatting with the people, he finally returned to the Captain's quarters. Well, the crew could once again relax that Mr. Brown was once again in sight.

What an exhilarating day for all of us. My sister Judi and her son Lee took great video shots of the days events. We now have to video to watch at our leisure and we can recreate on TV our day at sea. We are all proud of Greg as Captain of the U. S. S. Eisenhower and wish him safe journey as his ship serves our country during peace and war times.

Empire Couch

During the winter and spring months, with the help of my Father, we recovered several chairs and couches that needed improvement. I decided to invest in a professional stapler used by upholstery shops. Just to ship it to Cape May was \$50. Once we began to use it, it was worth it's weight in gold. It is a high powered staple gun that will penetrate all type of woods within seconds. As I began to start on a new chair this winter, the gun was no where to be found. After spending hours and days looking in every cubby hole, it didn't reappear. Finally, in early December, it appeared at my sister's house, next door. What a relief.

In January, I plan to begin the final stage of covering an Empire Couch that is sitting in my garage. My dad took it apart in the spring time. This will probably be my most challenging chair. This couch is 92 inches long and has over 50 springs in both the base of the couch and the back. It

originally has horsehair with spring in the cushion. Once it's all put together, I'm sure it will be very comfortable to sit on. I have 20 yards of a tapestry fabric that will go nicely with the rest of my furniture. In January, I will move the couch into my first floor living room and begin the work of putting it back together again.

The current couch that sits in the room today is more modern. However, the plan for that is to move it to the 3rd floor as my main couch. The advantage is that the couch has levers on each side of the couch as recliners. Unfortunately, the 3rd floor stairs are very narrow and I will probably have to take this couch apart to get it upstairs. What's one more couch to fix. This will eliminate my father stepping on my feet when he gets up to go to the bathroom during the middle of a good movie. Space on the third floor is tight and I have a small foot stool to rest my feet. Once less object to move around.

Aging

One of the things that is a reality is that we all age. This year, to some people, was an important year in my life. I turned 50 years old. This fact was something that I did not publicize in Cape May. Three months before this day arrived, I got my first indication of this was the receipt of the AARP material. Somehow, they knew I can become a new member. Do they have access to our social security record. The first time I received the material I threw it away. I didn't want to be reminded that this is happening to me. The following month they sent me another packet of material. I decided to glance at it and maybe find out if there was some value to me. Finally when I hit 50, I decided to join up. The cost of membership is cheap and maybe there were some cost saving. So if you think no one knows you are aging, AARP will find you. Happy Birthday.

Antoinette's Lampshades

I continue to make my Victorian lampshades. Occasionally, I will have some customers that stop by to have me make some traditional shades. I had a lady from Westchester, near Philadelphia, hear about my work. She dropped off 2 small shades that were beige but she wanted white. If I do any of this work, I will only use pure silk fabric. My best source is to mail order the material from Connecticut.

Lamp restoration can sometimes become harder than starting from scratch. The odd thing about this job was the original fabric on the shade was rubber. I had a difficult time taking off the glue from the fabric and the metal frame. After bathing the shade in water over a few days, finally, the substance began to come loose. Well, finally I finished the job but I decided to avoid the traditional shades. There is very little creativity to them and working with a color and a

pattern is more exciting.

My furthest lampshades project was from Uganda. A gentleman had transported the shade here from that country. The shade was about 24 inches long and had an unusual thick lace crown. The lining was ripped. After much haggling, we came upon an agree price for me to perform the work. I learned through experience to get a deposit. Well, it sat in my hallway for a month. Since it was so large it became an eyesore. So I had to move it to another room. Well, a couple months later, the gentleman calls and asked how I was doing. Well, I reminded him that there was yet no deposit. He indicated he'll be over in the morning. Now 6 months later, this lamp and it's shade from Uganda has collected some dust. Is it now one of my collectibles?

My latest lampshade is a Christmas shade. For the past four years I've been wanted to make a special shade just for the holidays. So I found a white milk glass lamp and had my father replace the wires and a few rusty parts. At last I found a lamp that would blend well with a red holiday fabric. I had an old shade that had six sections to the frame and would be a good size for the lampbase. Well after several days of work, I moved my Christmas shade to the first floor hallway. Each night when it turns dark, the red lampshade turns on and provides a nice glow for my hallway. The other nice thing is that I have it standing in front of Antoinette's Lord's Prayer. The affect is a nice warm glow over this magnificent lace work and when you past the house at night you get a sense of Christmas holiday spirits. Finally, my Christmas shade is done.

Awnings

Eighteen months ago, I had a big tree fall next to my house with little damage to the property. The real lose was the shade it was providing to the south side of my house. My steady customers informed me that the air conditioners were working harder but were not doing the job. After much deliberation, I decided to invest in awnings. The staff arrived and measured five windows on the first floor and five on the second floor. This house had 70 windows. How would it look if I only cover a few windows? So I decided to try the first floor first but could order the second floor if I liked the result. Well, I loved them. Awnings are attractive if properly hung and maintained. The impact inside the house is that they do cut down significantly on the heat that comes in from the mid afternoon sun. The end result is that my rooms are cooler and the air conditioners have less strain from high sun. I decided to do the second floor. If you have a similar problem with your house try awnings. It's a great investment. I just had them taken down for the winter. If you leave them up, the snow may damage them. Go for it.

Bank

The opening of the two story bank next door has been a major improvement over the prior neighbor of a gas station. The drive up window along the side of my house is occasionally used. Most people in Cape May walk to the bank or occasionally drive there and park in the lot. Since parking is a rare commodity in Cape May, they had to hire a person to watch the lot during the summer hours. Occasionally, I have to remind my guests to use the clothes line in the back for their beach blankets. The lovely six foot fence between the properties has occasionally seen a quick drying area for wet beach towels. Within minutes I am reminded by the bank to remove the towels. I gladly remind my guests to use the back line so we can keep the fence in it's fine stature.

My father has his account there and he loves to visit the ladies there.

Being Audited

Once of my more serious experiences this year was being audited by the State of NJ. Fortunately it was not for Antoinette's but was for one of the non profit groups that I was their treasurer. The government is cracking down on these groups. This group did not submit any tax returns since 1993. There were several attempts by accountants to prepare the forms but without the proper paperwork, it was not possible. After scouring through files, boxes, journal books etc, I began to piece together the tax puzzle. Quicken was my computer financial tool of choice.

After many, many hours of data entry and reconciliation of the bank statements, I had something to start with. I was determined to get this done before the end of the year. Well, on December 22, 1997, a letter of explanation and all the tax forms were submitted to the IRS. The letter said we will be good and always submit our forms from now on. Well, on January 1st, I turn this job over to another person. However, for eight weeks, our new Treasurer worked with me to get all this paperwork submitted. I have the utmost confidence that at least for 1998, my letter of confidence will be maintained. I learned a lot about how the State operates when performing an audit. I will be a step ahead of the game if and when they decide to audit me. But I wouldn't wish this experience on anyone. I am so glad this job is done with.

Cape May Historical Society

I joined the local historical society and became their treasurer. Once again I used my computer skills and kept the books on Quicken. The prior treasurer was not computer literate but did a great job with good, solid records. She did accounting in her spare time. The people I met at the

society were from all walks of life. I was beginning to learn a little bit about Cape May history by some of the educational session they held each month. For 1998, I moved from the treasurer's job to become their new President. I look forward to working with a whole new group of people and continue to expand my knowledge base of Cape May History.

Chamber of Commerce Involvement

I was reelected this fall for another three years as a member of the Board of Directors for the local Chamber of Commerce. The chamber continues to expand my knowledge of the town, and helps me meet a steady stream of new peoples as Membership Chair.

Christmas Cards

Last winter I had a professional photographer take some exterior shots of Antoinette's. In the fall, I selected the shot I liked and decided to have some made as a Christmas card for business customers, friends and family. It was a great shot and it showed the spirit of Christmas in Cape May. What message do I put on it? Who should I sign it. Well after much thought, I decided to put down "Fred and Deanna". Many of the customers met Fred on the front porch and enjoyed their chats there with him.

The dilemma I had was I did not get enough pictures. Also should I continue my yuletide confessions? Will I be ready for Christmas? Well, after much thought, I decided to send out all my cards via my photo and miscellaneous cards. If time permitted, I would write my confessions and get them out later in the month. Well, I disappointed my readers and got several notes about thanks for the Christmas card but I miss your newsletter.

So here I am on December 22, trying to not disappoint my readers and share my confessions with all of you. Happy Holidays!

Christmas Tree

A family tradition for years was going to Pennsylvania for Thanksgiving and on the weekend head down to the local tree farm and pick out a Christmas tree. I loved the smell of a fresh tree for the holidays. I realized that it was not safe to have a fresh tree up for the holidays in one of my units. These trees need to be watered and not all people would do this. So I bought an artificial tree three years ago. This was the first year I put the tree up by myself. They color code them so when it was dismantled I separated it for easy installation the next year. Well it worked.

At a local fundraiser, I decided to purchase a gift certificate

for a fresh tree for my front porch. Much to my surprise, my dad and I went to the tree farm only eight miles north of Cape May. Well the trees they have there reminded me of our wonderful trips to the farms in Pennsylvania. My dad picked out a tree that was 10 feet tall. Since it was going on the front porch the sky the limit.

We brought it home and tried to raise it! Our first attempt broke the tree stand. I found another stand but it was too wide for the opening. Well, the third stand was "computer generated" for whatever that meant. It was made out of heavy plastic and had two sets of bolts, top and bottom (eight screws). We decided to put the stand on the tree while it was sitting on its' side. The cut of the tree was straight. Well, much to our surprise, when we raised the tree, it was almost straight. Obviously with this size tree it needs some decorations. That was another trip to the store. Well, we tied the tree to the house but it's still standing. After all this trouble, it looks and smells nice. Will we go back and visit the tree farm every year? Only time will tell.

House Lights

This year I found myself doing my own Christmas decorations. I was fortunate for the first two years to have my friends, Tom and Bonnie do the lights. The following years, I had employed Guy to do the decorations among many other jobs that needed done around the house. This year I was faced with doing it myself. Of the several strands of lights on the house, only one of still working. Where do you start. Well, the only way to do it was take them down. I had to seek out my 40 foot ladder to do some of the roof lights. Well, the miniature white lights are all up. There are only two flaws. Once set of lights on the roof were too far to reach, so they are still out. When you hang lights you must have them go up and around. I had one set that the only way it could go was to go across the floor. I had to hide them behind the steps so people don't walk on them.

Next year I plan to lay out a diagram of all the dimensions of the front porch. And then determine how far a set will go. A few of my columns are missing lights put the house is lit and it looks nice.

More House Lights

After hanging 10 sets of lights, you would think that was the end of it. Well, while visiting the town after dark and seeing other people decorations, my father wanted some color light. White lights are dull. Well, on December 20th, I gave in and bought four sets of green and red lights - two were green and two were red.

I thought of becoming creative and making them into red/green lights. All it meant was switching 200 red bulbs

and 200 green bulbs. I tried my luck the first night and got one set to work, and the second set had one of the 50 light strand working. My father took over the next day and tried his hand at the remaining two sets. Well, when he was finished, he had one set completely not working and the second set only had half. Our success ratio was low. Only one set was working of the four sets. Well, we tried our hand at a Christmas light bulb tester. After several hours of work and three days later, we finally got the four sets to work. A great spot would be on my fence. Well on December 24th, my Dad and I were ready to hang color. My father said he would meet me on the porch. Well lo and behold, he decided to put three of the colored sets on the Christmas tree. It already had lights. So much for color on the fence. There is always next year.

Church Volunteer

As a church parishioner, I decided it was time to do some volunteer work. Annually, they have a car raffle which is their best fundraiser. I thought it would be good for my father to take a stroll to the mall and meet some of the local and visitors to Cape May. He loves the front porch but he needs to get off it for a change of sceneries and exercise. This was just the place for him. Well, his first two hours on the job, he didn't take his responsibility completely. He wanted to get coffee, go to church and light a candle for my mother and get some donuts. I had to remind him that he had a job to do. After a few more times, he did fine. A few times he worked with other church staff.

For the holidays, the church had a special dinner for the volunteers. Over 300 people were invited. It was a wonderful event. Since we got there after most of the people were seated, very few seats were left. We went over to wish the Monseigneur happy holidays and wound up sitting with him. We had a lovely time learning about his background as an immigrant from Ireland. We found ourselves receiving great service from the children of the parish. We look forward to our next dinner next year.

Finding an Artist

One of the things sorely missing in a Victorian home are closets. With fifteen rooms, there are only five closets. In my travels I met Stephanie, an artist who paints furniture, watercolors and a vast variety of art forms. I liked her work and decided to have her do some painting for me. I decided to have her paint me some coat racks. She took get pride in her work and took samples of the fabrics I had in the rooms where these racks would be hung.

When they arrived at Antoinette's she delivered a wooden crate that she painted with flowers and added the name to it.

My customers are happy now that they have a little more hanging space for their clothes. I'm happy that Stephanie a little bit more personal charm to Antoinette's. I added legs to the crate and it sits on the front porch. Many people admire her work as they pass the house during a stroll down the streets of Cape May.

Computer Teaching

I continue to do computer teaching and consulting in my spare time. One student lasted 50 hours and came from a computer novice to using spreadsheets, designing newsletter and party invitations and doing stock tracking on the Internet. It was amazing how her desire to learn never wavered. I had other students. My father has purchased his second computer and gave his first to his son in law who moved over a PC Junior. My original plan for his old computer was to set it up at Antoinette's and use it as a training machine. But, it took up too much space and most of my training took place at the peoples' homes.

Well, while we were doing our Christmas shopping we returned his machine for repair. It is in for repair for a sound card replacement. Fred is stuck watching tv while in the evening he would try to balance his check book with Quicken and play his card and casino games. A popular gift for him at 82 is more computer games. It has become a great friend for him. He continues to use his "Typing Tutor" game to help his move from two fingers to all. Bravo Fred for his new learned skills.

Cyberspace Antique Shop

Over the past several weeks, I have been talking to a local antique dealer about automating his business. As I was investigating the Internet, I found Antique Shops in Cyberspace. I decided that why not open up my antique shop on the Internet. All I have to do is inventory my antiques, take photos of some of the more interesting items and place my ads in Cyberspace. This has now become my goal for 1998. If I can become successful and gain experience on the Internet for myself, I can help others. Well, look for my opening on the Internet - Antoinette's Linens and Lace.

Decade Beach Badge

When leaving office as president of our Victorian Guest Accommodations group, the members decided to do something special. As co-founder of this apartment group three years ago, they wanted to give me a gift that was unusual. They gave me a "decade beach Badge". This badge is good for ten years. I managed to put in a few days at the beach while my friends and family were in town. It

was a great gift and I plan to use it for the next 9 years. That brings me to 2006. Wow, I'll have a great tan by then. Thanks for the wonderful gift.

Egg Harbor Township Photo

When our computer president was leaving office earlier this year I decided to get him a gift of appreciation. Well, while in my travels, I found a black and white photo from 1934 of a group of teenagers who went to Washington, D.C. The school was from his local school. Obviously, he was not old enough to graduate from it. It became an interesting piece of me mobilia. People from his local town were begging him to borrow this photo. Of the 35 students they were able to locate 5 of the students. They are now in their 70's. You never know what you find at a yard sale. It was a fun investment and gift.

Fire Escape

Well, my two historical Christian Admiral fire escapes still sit on the lot of a Welding company in North Cape May. I've have spoken to many local contractors to seek help in getting these mounted. I even had a couple men, visit my house and promise me that after their vacation they would do the job. Well.....Earlier this week, the local code enforcer came back to review my progress from my violations report from earlier this year. Well, his big concern was my fire escape. I concluded that in order to make progress with this, I will have to be the main contractor and follow it each step of the way. I obtained a copy of the technical document from the code enforcement and now will become familiar with the requirements. I hope that by next year, this story I will succeed at getting these fire escapes mounted on the building and dispose of the spare parts. Will keep you posted on my progress.

Fireplace

One of the nice things about Antoinette's is the lovely fireplace on the first floor. It has become popular during the winter months while my guests visits Antoinette's. On occasion, I have found people not familiar with using a fireplace and having difficulty. I decided in the fall to make my house safer and install a gaslog fireplace insert. The model I selected has a wall switch which can be switched on to start up this modern gaslog. It is amazing how real they look. Well, everyone was happy.

With every step forward, I encountered a step back. When the fireplace is in use, it generates a lot of heat. The bedroom next to the fireplace on the first floor has the "main thermostat". As a result of all this new found heat, the furnace was not starting up for the rest of the house. I do not have zone heating. Well, for weeks, I didn't know what was wrong. I thought maybe I had a furnace problem, but

experimented with the heat while the house was empty. I installed simple thermostats in all the living rooms and found out that without the fireplace going, all the rooms were properly set.

Well, how do I break the news to my guests to close the living room doors while in use. Problems become opportunities - any suggestions?

Senior Citizen Blind Date

My computer student had a mother who was only months younger than my father. She was quite a feisty lady. She still lived alone in Brooklyn, NY and would travel from time to time to visit her daughter in Wildwood Crest.

My student and I decided to introduce the two senior citizens. Our plan was to go out to dinner with the two of them. The mother was leaving for home the next morning and really didn't want to go out. She wanted to use up the left overs. Well, after much persuasion, we traveled to a local restaurant.

It was the first time I saw my father trying to pick up a lady. The dinner went well. When the check came, my father insisted he wanted to pay the check for all four of us. Well, how could we refuse. We headed back to the Motel that my student owned. It was located right on the beach. Well, Fred opened up Florence's door and asked to take her to the beach. Before you knew it these seniors both tired out and Fred and Florence separated. Well, occasionally, they very casually asked about each other. It was fun to watch my father take on his charming role of pursuing a female as he did in his earlier years.

If Florence returns next summer, will Fred and Florence have their second date. Dating for seniors progresses at a much slower pace than for the younger generation.

Front Porch

One of the highlights of my father's day is to sit on the front porch. On the weekends especially, many interesting things are happening on the streets. People are coming and going for the weddings and anniversary parties. Watching the horse and buggies ride up and down Washington Street is never a dull event. The Cape May Post Office is always hustling and bustling. The mansion across the street is frequently conducting house tours. These activities keep my father outside enjoying the activities in Cape May. During weekends and during the summer weeks, he also enjoys entertaining our guests. He has become a fixture on the front porch and waves to the passerby. This is a nice way to spend a day especially when the sun is shining.

Gift Shop

For those of you who have visited the third floor, you may have seen my project room. Some how I managed to squeeze in my bed. Well, this fall I decided to start working on my projects. I started to make some gifts for my future gift shop. They include special gifts for the holidays like teddy bears, aprons and holiday clothes. I plan to sell them at future craft shows until I can have a store front. My lobby is my temporary home. My room still looks the same - filled with work. But I know I've made a small dent.

Karistan Rug

My large apartment on the first floor has an excellent rug but the burgundy color shows even the dust. At one point I was ready to replace it but was discouraged by a professional carpet layer to keep the rug because it was a high quality weave. A lady friend had a large Karistan rug that was bought in Europe in 1922 that was available. Her son delivered it one day to my surprise. I laid out the rug and it covered the entire room. It looks great and adds charm and warmth to the room. It blends in well with the fireplace in the winter.

House History Project

A local senior in high school asked if it would be ok to do a project on the architectural history of Antoinette's. He knew we had done some research on the prior owners and had copies of the deeds dating back to 1849. I shared with him old photos taken of the house from the 1910's which showed some of the original architecture. He revised my photo board of various restoration stages of works and used it as part of his presentation. His biggest challenge was how to condense his talk down to 5 minutes. When it was all over, he educated the local students on the history of the house and I was glad that he could make use of some of my material.

Investment Club

In early 1997, I joined a local investment group. I was completely uneducated in the area of the Stock Market and thought it would be valuable to learn. We meet monthly and review financial areas of interest and companies to consider to invest in. We have learned some techniques to use in analyzing special stocks. I am just beginning to understand some of the terminology. When I look back in time, I would have preferred learning about this while going to high school. I urge young students to educate themselves in this area. I am looking forward to my continued education in this area.

Jazz Involvement

I continue to work with the Jazz Festival volunteers and

enjoy the festival here in Cape May semi annually. I can now recognize some of the musical instruments and jazz musicians. We are fortunate that we are attracting a great group of well known musicians as well as great entertainment for the public. We will be approaching our 10th festival in 1998.

Laundromat

With the large selection of accommodations available in Cape May, good cleaning staff is hard to find. At the present time, my biggest challenge was my laundry and it was worthwhile to get a linen service. Well, since I moved over two years ago, I had plans to build a laundry room in the cellar. I had the additional appliances but needed to have the work done. Finally, I found the contractor who aided me in getting this work done. Since new water lines and electrical work was required, it wasn't a small task. Finally, it's fully operational and is for my own private use. I do approximately 8 loads of wash after a weekend rentals. With one washer and one dryer it was an all day task including going from the basement to the 3rd floor several times. Well, I love my laundry room and I can have my laundry now done before it gets dark.

Florida Visitor

Recently, we had a visitor for a few days during the Thanksgiving holidays. It was Max, my nephew, who recently completed his Navy training as a navigator and got his Ensign role. He was one of nine people who went to Maine to receive survival training in preparation for his new assignment. He will be stationed in Rodia, Spain and will be joined by his family who are from Scotland and waiting for him to return for the holidays. His plane that he will be in charge of navigating is a U3. The current military cost to develop this plane is approximately \$200 million. We wish him well as he begins his tour of duty in Spain for the next three years. We are all very proud of his recent accomplishment.

Oak Mantle

Earlier this year I found a local antique dealer that specializes in refinishing oak mantles. I found it several years ago in north Jersey and it traveled many miles to finally arrive in Cape May. It was painted white but needed to be refinished to its natural oak finish. Well, nine months later and it is still in the shop. They found nine layers of paint on it much to their surprise. I had a beveled mirror on it that needed to be resilvered. I sent it back to north Jersey and with the help of my niece had it sent out to be resilvered. The mirror returned in one piece but the mantle is still in the shop. Well, I hope by early 1998, I can have it finished and installed at Antoinette's. I'm sure it will look great!

Old Telephone

One of my many treasures sitting in storage was an old telephone I got from a local friend. At an art show, I met an artist who specializes in stain glass but is multi talented. It put together an exhibit and had a display called "Static". It was an old radio with lots of wires attached with lights that made static. This man was a genuine inventor. So, I pulled out my old telephone and asked if he could fix it. After a little work, he mounted my old telephone on the wall with most of the parts working. Well, it was fun to watch Peter in action and we plan to work on some other antique projects in 1998.

PC Training

President's Prayer

I am a lace and linen lover. As I roam the thrift shops, yard sales and antique shops, I will always catch a glimpse of fine lace work. A half a block away from my house at a local shop I stumbled upon a hand made lace work called the "President's Prayer". As I read the work, I was shocked when the bottom of the lace work was signed "Dwight D. Eisenhower". Well, I thought I might like to frame it and give it as a gift to my brother since he is now head of IKEA. With the help of a local librarian, I conducted some research on the meaning of the prayer and learned that this prayer was part of Eisenhower's speech when he was inaugurated as President in 1953. To frame it properly, it required a 24 x 36 frame. I decided to include photos of Ike and my brother in the frame. Well, I enjoyed the project and gave it to my brother as a gift from my father and myself. I am not sure if he made a home for it. If it needs one, Antoinette's has a wall waiting for it. I still am amazed that I found this piece only a block away and that the President was Eisenhower. Amazing.

Oh No, a Grade School Reunion

In September of this year I attended my first grade school reunion at St. Joseph's School. My sister Judi was head of the Reunion committee and was hoping to have a good turnout. The school had 35 graduating classes and was closed earlier in the 90's. A great deal of research was conducted by the committee in seeking out the graduates. I was fortunate to find two local ladies who were willing to watch Antoinette's while I was gone for the weekend. My father wanted to stay behind with the ladies but it was important to his family that he would be there for this special event.

It was a wonderful reunion. I was very apprehensive about meeting my classmates from the 1950's. My sister Judi and her committee did a great job and we were really proud. My mother, a teacher at the school for many years, was

remembered by many of the attending students. Of my 30+ classmates, seven were able to make it to the reunion. It was fun reminiscing about our eight years together and where life has taken each of us. I learned that some of the students are frequent visitors to Cape May and I never met them on the street. It would be great to have a class reunion here some day at Antoinette's - we could easily handle the group. We hope to stay in touch with each other.

Southern Mansion Ball

In November 1997, the Southern Mansion across the street from me held it's first Ball. Each invited guest was encouraged to come in costume dating from 1600 through 1940. Well, the week before the event I decided to experiment with making a vintage costume. After searching out clothes from the local thrift shops I located some interesting wearing apparel. All the clothes were petite to size small. I started with reconstructing a black jacket. On the front it had four large colorful buttons that were red, green, yellow and blue. I ripped off the sleeves and made it into a vest. I located a linen jacket that had beautiful lace collar. I transposed the collar to my black vest. Once my jacket was made I found a white blouse that was covered with lace. Well, my top was done. My biggest challenge was a fabulous green shiny skirt that had a Rosetta (flower petals from the same fabric) with a great crystal button sew to the center. At first I thought I could enhance the front of the skirt with lace but after several hours I decided it just wouldn't work. So I settled for a black wool circular skirt that was readjusted. A friend suggested I use the green skirt as a cape. So I quickly turned it into a cape - it was the great holiday green. I topped my outfit off with my vintage black hat with ostrich feathers.

Well, I arrived at the ball an hour late since I was just finishing up my green cape. The first thing they asked me when I entered the ball was "you can put your coat in the next room". Well, I took off my green cape and laid it on the bed and entered the ball. Overall with 300 people invited, the 75 + people arrived in costumes. It was fun to see the people in their various garbs. Some people had the same costumes because they came from the same rental store. But I knew no one came in my costume. It took three days to make my costume but I decided to hang part of it up in my entrance as part of the decor. So now I'm ready for my next ball. Does anyone need to rent a costume?

Stain Glass Work

Sunday check-ins

Traveling to Cape May on weekends has become more and more time consuming - traffic! At the end of the 1996 season

I polled my customers and decided to switch my summer check in from Saturday to Sunday. It had to start at the beginning of the season. I had to make some adjustments in my schedule, but overall we were very pleased with the change. The long delays on the road to Cape May were mostly eliminated. My first weekend that I switched I found all my guests here at check in time - 2pm. Fortunately, I was ready for them. A few other surprising things happened. On Saturday night, the night before checkout, many of them had friends in town that they were able to meet. Since I was not tired from working all day I was able to enjoy my friends and family while they were in town. I go church for the early mass and by the time I return, they are ready to check out. It worked out well, and I have already begun taking reservations for Sunday check in 1998.

Surprise, Surprise

On my 50th birthday, I manage to survive the day without much fanfare. I took a boat ride around the bay with my mother's best friend, Marge and my father. It was a great day and a gorgeous sunset. The next day I sat with my family and planned my birthday party. I actually designed the menu. Well, they took me by surprise. I went out to lunch with my cousin and Aunt and lo and behold, I found myself in the midst of a surprise party. Well, my sisters did a great job planning it and I had friends from New York City and other parts of the New Jersey here for the party as well as large numbers of family relatives. I thought by moving south, I could avoid embarrassing moments like this but I didn't. It was a great party and now I am ready for my next 50 years. Time does fly by. Thanks for a great time.

Toastmasters

I continue my membership in Toastmasters International, an excellent communications and leadership organization that I joined in 1981. From time to time I meet people who are or have been members of this fine organization. An advanced club in Central Jersey was having a tenth reunion but I was unable to attend. It was fun catching up on some of the members. One of my Christmas cards came from a Toastmaster asking me if I would be willing to start up a club in Cape May. The Coast Guard made an attempt a couple of years ago but was unsuccessful. When it will happen is up in the air but some day I will help charter a club here. To be continued...

Treasurer, Treasurer

By the beginning of 1997, I found myself as treasurer of two organizations. One thing they both had in common was the accounting was done by hand. I thought it would be a challenge to computerize both organizations. I didn't think

much of it until I realize that there was a lot of paperwork involved. It was also very important to insure that when I was handling incoming checks and outgoing expenses, that I kept the two groups separate.

When I presented financial reports at our business meetings, the staff were excited about the progress we made and we actually had reports from the treasurer. I learned a lot about accounting practices and came to the conclusion that one job as treasurer a year was enough. It's a job that is often overlooked and the time involved can mount up quickly. For 1998, I will be turning over the jobs to two new people. One person is already in training and will do a great job. The second person I look forward to our training session. I look forward to the day when I only have to go to one bank.

Tulip Festival Garden Tour Guide

During our annual tulip festival, I continued to volunteer for the Tulip Festival garden tours. This year I had a job that was more my speed - selling tour tickets. I don't miss being the tour guide. I found out real quick that gardening is one subject that can not be learned overnight. I am glad however that I was forced to open my eyes to the work of plants and flowers by being a tour guide. But our visitors who take these tours do deserve to have staff that have experience in this area. When they are short handed, I'll be glad to pitch in since I know the route of the 18 gardens in town. But to be honest, I don't miss being a tour guide.

TV Coverage

Owning your own business requires constant advertisement. This can become a very costly part of your budget. The Internet is a great place to advertise and it hits so many people all over the world. Getting any free advertisement is always a big help. A couple weeks before Christmas I was asked if it would be ok to show Antoinette's Lord Prayer to the public on TV. Well of course I jumped at the chance - what a great opportunity for advertisement.

I alerted my father the morning of the interview that we had a local TV station coming over to film at 5pm. They were running behind schedule and my father has to stick to his dinner schedule as a diabetic. Let's order pizza. During the interview everything happened at once - the pizza arrived, the phone rang for a reservation for the interviewer. We managed to squeeze my father into the picture with a few short comments. It aired on TV the night we attended the church volunteer dinner. When we arrived home I was quite surprised that most of the interview was included on TV. With 2 minutes and 40 seconds free air time, it was the best advertisement I could of asked for. The TV lady did a wonderful job scanning the Lord's Prayer, Antoinette's oil

portrait and her newspaper articles as I was describing the meaning behind her work. Her spirit must have been here giving us some help. Thanks for a great show. Following the film, my father complained that "he didn't get enough coverage". I think this is one senior citizen that is letting his stardom get to his head.

Vacation

Since Cape May is considered a vacation spot for hundred of people, where do people who live her go for vacation. My last vacation was in the early 90's. I found out that having a vacation was something I put on the back burner till my business was in full swing. My friend Jane and I decided that the only way we were going to go on vacation was to open up a vacation plan. Three months into our vacation plan, I bought a weekend pass for Mt. Airy Lodge in the Poconos at a great rate. I certainly wasn't my choice if I went out and bought it. However, it gave us a chance to get away for a weekend. Another good friend, Jackie joined us at the Lodge.

It was a short trip but it was a great time to spend with old friends and have time together. We have continued with our vacation plan for 1998 but don't have any firm plans yet. One thing is for sure that our weekend away is being expanded to 10 days. One possibility is a trip out west to California and Lake Tahoe. Looking forward to our next trip.

Surprise Party 2000 Work

Four Course Christmas Dinner

Since my family was not coming down for Christmas day and would be arriving on the weekend, I decided to try cooking a special dinner for Christmas for my father and I. I got a new cookbook for Christmas and I promised my sister I could cook an after Christmas dinner. So, why not experiement a few days ahead of time. After hours of going through the book and selecting my items, the next step was what ingredients do I need to cook these. Well, off I went to the market and spent another two hours shopping for the food.

On Christmas day after Church I began my preparation at 11am. Since my desert needed six hours to set, I decided to start with that. After I mixed the cheesecake ingredients with the sour cream in the mix, I realized I had just made my first mistake. Sour Cream go on the top of the cake and not inside the cake. Ooops, would the cake rise? I quickly learned that you must read all the fine print and the complete recipe before your begin to mix.

Well, I then began making my Hordorves, homemade soup,

Veal & Peppers, sweet potatoes. Six hours later, I finally served this big feast. My dad's reaction was "the food was overcooked and my desert was under cooked". What I learned that day that cooking is a science and that I did complete a four course meal for Christmas. The quality has much to be desired but I took the first step.

Reflections

By now, each of you have receive mail from me for the Christmas holidays. However, many of you expressed your past enjoyment of my Yuletide Confessions and were disappointed that they were not included. Well, so much for sending out Christmas Cards. I feel fortunate that overall the year was a happy and healthy year. It was wonderful news when my sister and her husband decided to buy the house behind me. My father has gained a new lease on life and gained many friends in Cape May. Signs of my new plans/projects are beginning to develop. I'd like to extend my holiday wishes to each and every one of my friends and family and look forward to hearing or seeing you in the coming year. Happy Holidays!

Deanna Brown

Antoinette's

717 Washington Street

Cape May, NJ 08204

P.S. I am considering sending out my confessions in 1998, if enough interest, via the Internet. If you have an e-mail address, please send me a note on the Internet at Antoinette@jerseycap.com if you would like me to add you to my mailing list.