

Dear Friends—

2006 was an amazing year! For openers it's the third year in a row that we've written a newsletter, and you know that doesn't happen often. Actually, we liked last year's letter so much we thought we'd send it again, ... but I jest.

First, the trips: two months during spring. It began in March with two weeks in the steep southern coastal towns of Italy plus a few days in Turkey (for a meeting). While Dave and Sinan worked, Sinan's wife, mother, and I had tea, and a day in old Ankara, and I got to see the wedding dress his mother made for his bride: an exquisite marvel of beaded seed pearls one would expect to see only on a queen. And she made it before meeting Mariella. It was a wonderful day.

April found us on the Islands of Malta and Gozo south of Sicily. Dave taught a course there, while I explored the Baroque buildings and the 7,000-year old World Heritage Sites. Malta is only about 8x12 miles, but it has more than 500 yellow buses to ease the traffic. Nevertheless, 35 mph is about as fast as one can drive. There is a museum in a cave in the rocks of the capital, Valetta, where the Allies endured more bombs than any other European city during WWII. General Eisenhower had a tiny office in there overlooking the "war room." Dave is getting the hang of this travel thing; we went to Gozo and enjoyed gaping as tourists.

Home for a day, and we were off driving to the Grand Canyon. Ever since I was a teenager watching TV documentaries of rafting down the river, I've wanted to do this trip, and Dave made it happen. Ten days alternately motoring and drifting in inflated pontoon rafts down this awesome gorge was a trip like no other. I assumed it would be a trip about riding rapids, caught in whirlpools, flipped by standing waves and surviving, but I was so wrong! Our boat crew and the naturalist had such reverence for the protection of the canyon's fragile beauty that the rapids became secondary, replaced by the profound beauty, stillness, and isolation from civilization. Once we started down the river, there was no returning. The next road was 10 days away. And cell phones don't work! The crew read to us from Powell's accounts written more than a century ago by the one-armed scientist who strapped himself to a chair roped to a wooden dinghy and spent far longer than 10 days negotiating a wild river. Our crew read Canyon poetry that touched the heart of all 12 passengers. They hiked us up carved side canyons to see ancient sea fossils and etchings of hands smaller than mine belonging to ancient humans, our ken. This was a very hard act to follow.

But then we went to Greece for two weeks. Dave worked for a week, and then we joined our wonderful Greek hosts---Basil and Veni---for a week at their summerhouse by the beach. Basil's mother, who could be a 5-star chef if she chose, cooked for us, and we ate our way through some of the best cuisine on the planet. We swam in deliciously warm water. We took a boat trip to a place I've wanted to visit for decades: the monasteries of the Mt. Athos Peninsula, but because I am female, I was not allowed within 500 m of the shore. Basil and Dave may do a hike between monasteries next May. We are to spend May in Thessaloniki next year.

Dave attended a meeting in Grenoble, France, in late summer, where he gave a keynote address. Recently he won the quadrennial Indian Society of Earthquake Technology Trifunac 2006 Award for Significant Contributions in Strong Motion Earthquake Studies.

Dave and I took a 3-day Sierra backpack trip this fall, as the aspen were flaming and luminous. We were rained out of the fourth day. We had the mountains mostly to ourselves---except for a bear who fled, terrified for his life, after I howled at it [Editor's note: Judy's howl is truly frightening---you really don't want to hear it unless you are wearing industrial-strength ear protectors].

Now to the non-trip part: For 3 days a month I am an "embedded counselor" in a National Guard unit that is being deployed this spring. I take classes with them, do Physical Training with them (I can't pass the push-up test, but I can do most of the sit-ups and the 2-mile run!) I recover machine gun casings and linkages on the firing range, though I am not allowed to shoot. I have mastered disassembling and reassembling a machine gun, an accomplishment that causes some cognitive dissonance in this anti-war enthusiast. I have worn a Kevlar helmet, and as my head wobbled under its hefty weight, I understood why soldiers seem to have thickly muscled necks. I may go to basic training camp in Indiana with them next spring. Kuwait is forbidden to me, unfortunately, as is Iraq, but I wouldn't want to visit the latter. Some of these soldiers have been to Iraq before, and I feel increasingly bad for all of them as their departure looms. Some of these people, whom I have come to care about, won't return.

I worked one disaster in November for the Red Cross--floods in Washington state--and met some wonderful, very humorous people. I drove a feeding truck through flooded neighborhoods one day.

Stacy engineered and built (with Keenan) a huge fence-with-arbor in our front yard. It is amazing! Now I must find just the right climbing roses for it. She has finished her pre-med. classes, and is about to start the prep class for the MCAT (medical school admission test). Keenan has finished his first quarter of undergrad work, having done well. Both are working at Planet Granite, a rock-climbing gym, and both have finished EMT training. Stacy is volunteering at Planned Parenthood. Jeff was recently promoted in his office, and promptly left for a surfing vacation in Costa Rica. (He is back on the job). His girlfriend, Victoria, spent two weeks in Germany with her mother who teaches high school German. Victoria has been accepted into a high school teaching program next quarter, and may have her masters in social science ed. in a year or so.

I have started a Monday conversation-sewing-whatever salon that lasts all day, and brings together many wonderful people to talk while they do otherwise boring tasks. We've had several fascinating readings aloud, and equally fascinating conversation. I bake bread and serve lunch. Why didn't I think of this before?!

I have become a docent for the Open Space District so Dave and I could lead walks together. We idle away our time thinking up hike names: "Pre-Prandial Perambulations, Precipitation Permitting." And I am still volunteering for the Red Cross, lately preparing for a pandemic flu as well as Mental Health lead and disaster response.

Dave continues to ride his road bike for exercise and for commuting. He's thinking of buying a new bike (his current one was purchased used 30 years ago), but given the state of his riding shoes and his reputation as a cheapskate, we wouldn't advise betting on it. His riding shoes were a bit small when purchased—hey, he got a good deal on them—and his feet have grown, so he simply cut out the toes of the shoes.

Dave's dad passed away this fall, and Dave was with him. We shall miss him. He was a fine gentleman who could remember up to his last days the running

times of the students he coached 70 years ago. We are thinking about a summer trip to Port Angeles to visit Dave's sister, Sara, and her husband, Gary.

We lost our little black cat while in Europe, probably the victim of a car. We are catless and lonesome for their personalities and sensuous tactile pleasures, but Dave was developing allergies; so we probably won't be "catted" any time soon. We find ourselves drawn to cats abroad, comparing their friendliness qualities.

Both my dear sister, Jeanie, and a close friend, Janice, have been held close in our thoughts over the last year or so. Both are cancer survivors and doing well. They, and we, are so lucky! They are such blessings in our lives.

Jeanie and her husband Barney did an inspiring Rotary trip to Guatemala to build stoves in villages so remote that there are no roads to them. The stoves prevent incapacitating smoke inhalation and disfiguring burns. Another project we'd love to do!

Dave speaks of retirement occasionally, but said today that he feels so lucky to have such an interesting and creative job, that he isn't really ready to retire. Nor am I and for the same reasons. There is so much to do, so much life to live and people to love. For the future, Dave promises to take me on a non-work-related trip--I mentioned Paris, he is thinking of Alviso.

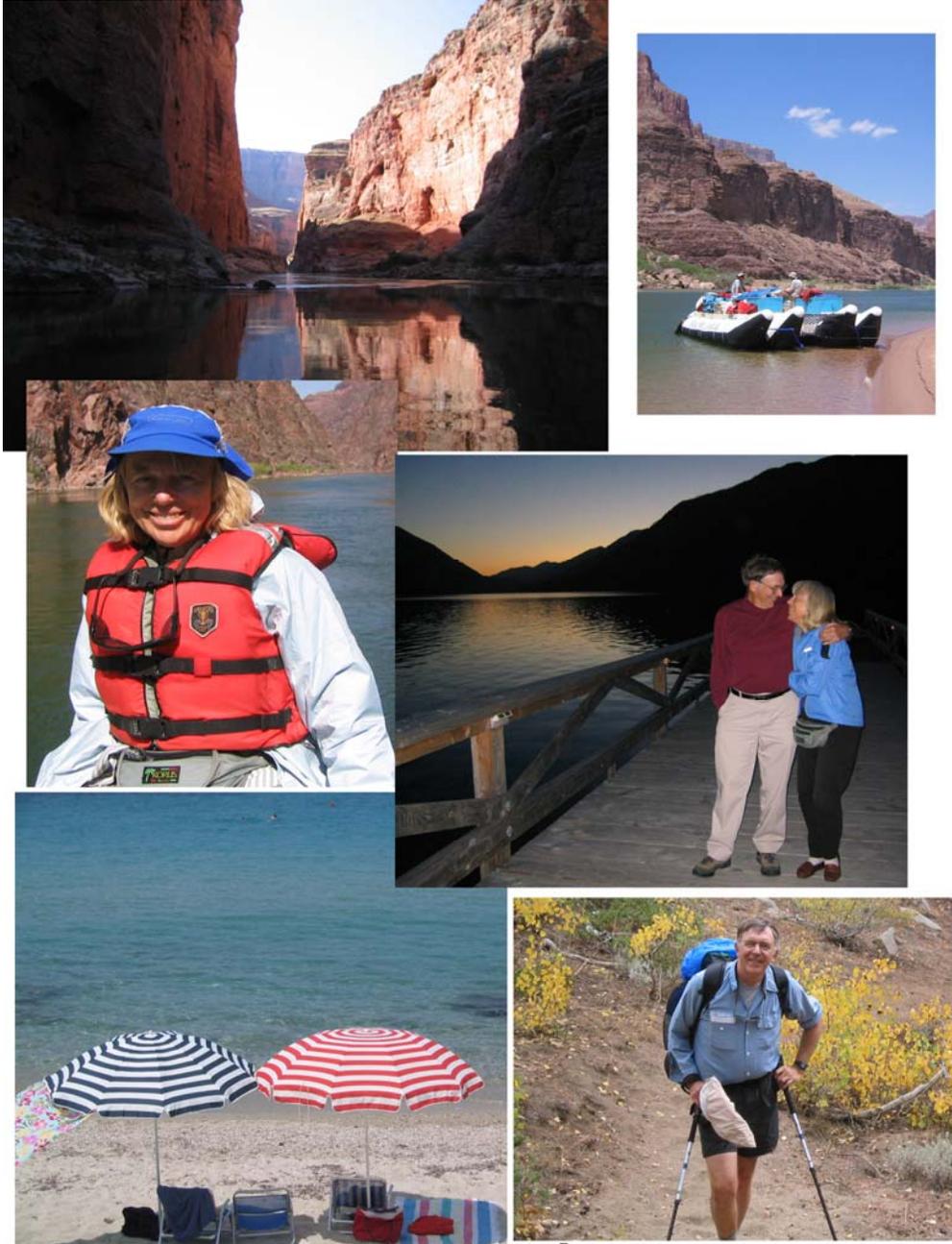
We hope this holiday finds you healthy and happy. We're looking forward to hearing from you.

Love, Judy, Dave, and Family



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Upper left: Stacy working on the fence-with-arbor, supervised by Dave.
Upper right: A windy day at Xlendi on the island of Gozo, Malta
Middle left: The view from near Paceville toward St. Julian's, Malta.
Middle, right: Judy at lunch in Marsaxlokk, Malta. Notice the octopus, which was fantastic.
Lower left: One of the many brightly-colored Maltese fishing boats in Marsaxlokk harbor, with the "Eyes of Osiris" on the bow to ward off evil spirits.
Lower right: Above the Colorado River.



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Upper left: The peace and grandeur of the Grand Canyon.
 Upper right: Our Arizona Raft Adventures boat on the Colorado River. We had two crew plus a naturalist for 12 clients.
 Middle left: Judy in her river gear.
 Middle right: D & J on the pier at Crescent Lake Lodge, Olympic Peninsula, on one of our many trips to Port Angeles, WA, to visit Dave's father and sister.
 Lower left: Our camp on the beach at Siviri, Kassandra Peninsula, Greece. Where's Dave? He is in the picture.
 Lower right: Dave during our 17 mile last day, trying to beat the rain (we didn't make it), West Walker River, east side of the Sierra, California.