

BLACK OAK RESORT

Newsletter

2007

Greetings To All Of Our 2007 Guests

Hello again! It's only been five years since I last wrote a newsletter. At that time, I decided it was time to live my life instead of writing about it. Now, five years later, I feel the need to chronicle what has been happening in our lives and share it with all of you. Many people have asked me when I'm going to write again. So, I hope my memory is still working.

I turned 65 this July and Michael turned 67. Michael and I are now both on Medicare. Michael is on SS and I go on early next year. Our health care expenses dropped significantly. Most of the cost savings is on me because my health insurance up to now was \$850 a month for the premiums with only catastrophic coverage, not paying anything until my health care costs exceeded \$5,000 a year. So now we're thinking we're sitting pretty. But the fates had other plans for us.

My plan was to do some things I've always wanted to do—sort of a bucket list. So, some of the highlights are included, but not nearly as many as I would've liked. There will be plenty of griping and calamities, (the things everyone is most interested in). So, here we go. Beginning with the year 2007 and ending with 2011. The years from 2007 through 2010 will only be the highlights of that year. Then for 2011 I'll bring you up-to-date on our plans for the future, and my critiques (restaurants, pop culture, etc.) blah-blah!

New in 2007

This was our most ambitious year up to the present as far as things we did at the resort. The years forthcoming have calamity after calamity that the whole country in many cases had to deal with—some uniquely ours, unfortunately. But this was a productive year as was the start of 2008. Then it's mostly all downhill from that point on.

We replaced **patio doors** in Cabins 4 and 7, changing to swinging doors instead of sliders.

We added **Copper (colored) Metal Roofs and Gutters and New Skylights** in Cabins 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8. We removed fireplaces in Cabins 3 and 4. They were the original fireplaces installed in the '50's and were all rusted out and were unsafe to use. We didn't install new ones since we have enough units with fireplaces already.

New **TV** in Cabin 2

New **Door Locks** in All Cabins

Replace **A/C Compressor** in Cabin 2

New **Pool Cover**

Started work on **Pool Project** in November

Pets

This was a tough year for us, losing our beloved Sam and Jitterbug. We also had many of our feral cats go missing either this year or the next: Studly, Little Blackie, Scaredy-Cat, White-Foot, and Blondie.

Sam

After all we went through earlier this year with Sam (see 2006 newsletter), it turned out to be cancer after all. This July 9 Sam died. The night before, Sam's left eye started bulging to the side. He went out once in the morning to pee, then he just lay down and wouldn't get up or eat.

I called my vet, Dr. Brian Seidel and told him I thought it was Sam's time and asked him to come to my home and euthanize him. He agreed, and arrived several hours later. He examined Sam, who was still down, and tried to get him to respond. Sam lifted his head, then dropped it down. Dr. Brian and his assistant Patti then performed the euthanasia without moving Sam from his spot on the floor.



It was very quick and very peaceful. Dr. Brian was very comforting afterwards, telling me that I just did the best thing I could for my dog. We were so very grateful for Dr. Brian, allowing Sam to go peacefully without that last stressful trip to the vet. Sammie was my dog. He would wake up from one of his many naps and the first thing he did would do was look for me. If I was out of eyesight, he would get up and start looking for me until he found me. He was a real family dog, loyal, devoted, and loving. He is buried with all my other dogs in my pet cemetery.

Jitterbug

The last time I saw Jitterbug was Halloween Eve. Jitterbug was happily ensconced in Cabin 8, which was unoccupied. He did that. He'd sneak in whenever we opened a door so he could take up residence without any person or cat or dog to bother with. I left him inside as long as I could, but we were going out to dinner that night, so before we left we had to kick him out. That was because if he wanted out and couldn't get out there would be hell to pay when we returned. So, I picked him up – he had been sleeping on the couch – and deposited him gently outside. The thought crossed my mind that it being Halloween Eve, sometimes things happen to cats. But as quickly as I had the thought, I put it aside, knowing Jitterbug's nature. He was only friendly when people moved into a cabin and he became Black Oak's goodwill ambassador until he softened the people up enough so they would dote on him all week. So we left for dinner.



When we returned about four hours later there was no sign of Jitterbug, and that nagging thought once again popped into my head. He normally would spot our car pulling in and he would run ahead of us to the door. But

not every time. Sometimes we wouldn't see him till the next morning. I checked several more times before retiring for the night, and didn't sleep well.

When I awoke the next morning my mind went immediately into worry mode as I jumped up to see if Jitter was at the back door. But there was no sign of him. Now I was becoming filled with dread. I kept checking and calling until around 10 a.m. when I completely caved into frantic anxiety. I started walking the property and beyond, calling for him. Michael and I drove down to our dock looking for him as well as up and down our road. No sign of Jitterbug. He never returned.

We continued looking for him for days into weeks, with never a sign. He was very smart around cars and not so smart around boats. He had once taken a boat ride to St. Louis, and we were very lucky to get him back. See earlier newsletters for Jitter's adventures. We were completely heart-sick. We did not have anyone leaving that night taking a boat home, so we ruled that out. We can only assume that Jitter met with a bad end somehow. Perhaps a wild bobcat or coyote. It could be the Halloween syndrome, but we think less likely. Jitterbug truly had nine lives, and this time it must have been his last. He lived a life full of wild abandon. My earlier newsletters chronicle his life. For a long time we looked for him every time we went outdoors. We will never forget our Jitter. Now, five years later, our guests still ask if Jitterbug ever returned. The pictures taken of Jitterbug by our guests came pouring in to me. Our guests were completely taken with Jitterbug, and he became a member of their families. He lived like a king, and when the vacation season ended for the year, he would grudgingly come back to us. He was like a teenager, basically ignoring us except to eat and sleep by us. We loved him still. There has never been another cat like Jitterbug, and we've had 26 so far. I wish I could have a do-over that fateful night. He lives on in our hearts.



See if you can find Jitterbug sleeping between Bob Ericson's legs.



Jitterbug enjoying a stay at the resort with Amelia and Hannah Middleton.



Jitterbug guarding Bill Sligars' cabin.

We never had a year like this with the loss of our sweet pets. We still have our one dog Abby and our cats Handsome, Little-Little, Gorgeous, Igor, Pinkie and Fluff-Fluff.

In Memory

John Eastwold

John Eastwold, longtime owner of Bull Shoals Lake Boat Dock, died May 12, 2007. He was 73. No-one was a harder worker and promoter of our area than John. Many of you from the Chicago and St. Louis areas would have known him. We knew him long before we moved here from our annual trips to the Chicago Sports Shows. Both his sons still carry on at Bull Shoals Boat Dock. Steve runs the boat sales and repair and Ricky runs the marina business. John was the first one to organize the 4th of July fireworks display put on every year at the dam, as well as countless efforts to promote our lake and the surrounding area. We owe him a debt of gratitude for all he did. He leaves behind his wife Delores and two sons.

First Bucket List Item Accomplishment

Our First Real Vacation in Years to Washington D.C.

After 22 years of owning Black Oak Resort, we finally got to take a vacation. I've always wanted to visit our nation's capital, so we made the decision to take our first vacation in many years. Most of our traveling had been fishing trips to Arkansas and numerous business trips where we never got to immerse ourselves in the places we visited. So this was special for us.

We traveled by car, taking two days to get there. We left on October 30. This was our first mistake, because Mount Vernon, the home of our first president, closes for the year on November 1. So, one of the most important destinations I wanted to visit was not to be. However, this was hardly the only destination on my list.



We stayed at a Hilton in Rockville, MD. The beauty of this is that we were less than a block from the D.C. Metro system, which saved us a ton of money on D.C. hotel bills and parking or taxi costs. We got weekly Metro passes for \$32.50 each, unlimited access. Having lived in Chicago, we marveled at the ease of use. It did strike me as odd watching the other riders with all the paraphernalia they carried along: laptops, luggage carts, cell phones, blackberries, I-pods, games, folding bicycles. Also, no one was apparently aware of their surroundings at all. Very easy to miss suspicious behavior. They were either engaged with their devices, talking on their phones, texting, watching movies on their laptops, reading (no kindles yet), lots of sudoku and crossword puzzles, or sleeping. Also, we learned to avoid peak commuter times entirely since everyone was packed in like sardines. We found the locals to be surprisingly friendly and helpful.

We started our day pretty much the same way each day. Breakfast at the hotel. The Hilton chain has a very nice buffet, with made-to-order omelets or waffles, fresh fruit, juices, delectable sweet rolls, and great fresh coffee. Being in the service industry, I realize the importance of tipping, so even though most people fail to tip at a buffet, we made sure to leave a generous tip every day. We saw the difference in the service we received compared to the other diners. Also, when we left for home, on our way out at 5 a.m., we ran into some of the servers coming in to work. They were obviously sorry to see us leave, since I got a big hug from one of the ladies.

Then, we'd hop on the metro around 10 a.m. (no crowds) with our destination in mind. Some of the highlights in brief:

We took a **trolley bus tour** of the capital, with stops along the way where you could get off at any destination on the tour and resume the tour afterwards. We chose Arlington National Cemetery where we saw JFK's Grave, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and got to see the changing of the guard. Also saw the Korean War Memorial. The tour is a good way to start off your visit, helpful in planning out your stay.

The Metro stops at **Union Station**, which is a destination itself. The interior had recently been restored, and is a work of art.

Smithsonian Castle, which looked slightly worn. A good starting point for some of the other Smithsonian Museums.

Holocaust Memorial Museum. Should be on everyone's list of places to see. Haunting and troubling, that so many people knew what was happening, yet few spoke out or took action. What would our world be like without Japan bombing Pearl Harbor, thus involving the U.S. in the war.

Smithsonian Air and Space Museum

Smithsonian Museum of Natural History

The National Mall. Lots of homeless people, or so they seemed, sleeping on the grass. Huge, open space that connects all of the capitals best sights to see. As with lots of other sites, not well-maintained. I just heard that they are redoing the grass on the mall, which will take years to complete.

The **Washington Monument, WWII Memorial, Vietnam Memorial, Jefferson Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, and FDR Memorial**

We did the Mall and all the Memorials and Monuments on the same day. Lots of walking, we didn't realize just how spread apart all this was. Take a bus and take two days if you're our age.

Tour of the Capital. Saw House of Representatives in session. Saw resolution introduced by Dennis Kucinich to impeach Dick Cheney. History in the making! Found whisper spot in the Capitol Rotunda. Saw old Supreme Court.

Tour was conducted by **Jeff Adkins, an intern for our congressman Marion Berry.** Took the underground tunnel/subway from the Sam Rayburn House Office Building to Congress. Lots of security.

Afterwards had dinner at the **Monocle**, a bar that's frequented by members of congress. Saw Alphonse D'Amato, former NY –I think- congressman. (Probably turned lobbyist).

Things I wish we'd been able to do that we couldn't squeeze in:

Mount Vernon, Washington National Cathedral, Tour of D.C. at night, Kennedy Center, Library of Congress.

Also we didn't get to take a **White House Tour.** We didn't plan far enough in advance. We thought we'd be a shoe-in since we both had been cleared for Secret on our old jobs.

Wouldn't mind going again to finish with the things we missed.

Quote of the Year

Spoken by John McCain on his presidential quest.

"Thanks for the question, you little jerk. You're drafted". (After a high-schooler's comment that at 71 McCain might be too old to be President.

Personal Milestones

My brother Bill moved from Oakland in September. His house was collapsing around him, and he was not taking care of things. He needed a safe place to live. So, he rented an apartment in Mountain Home. He's happy there, with not a care in the world. A perfect example of living with less: No stuff, no worries. He did leave me with boxes of my mother's things for safe-keeping. More stuff for me! I still haven't gone through it. I do miss my brother from time to time, but not that much. I check up on him and have him out for a visit every couple of months. I mostly miss my walking partner.

Book Club Demise

The year my book club came to an abrupt end. Within months, four of our six members moved away from the area. That left me and Pam. Sorry, two people don't make a discussion. So we dissolved. What a loss for me, who loves books so much, and the caliber of these members made us all better, more discriminating lovers of literature. It was a great ride.

Coming Soon

My plan is to release a newsletter every week til we are caught up. So be on the lookout for much, much more tragedies and comedies in our lives. Then in our last newsletter we will tell you all about our future plans. Til then..

Betty and Michael Serima