

2006

On January 4th, we drove the motor home to storage and then made our way to Phoenix. The first stop was at Luke Air Force Base where I renewed my military ID. Turning 65 soon, I will be on Medicare so my military coverage will be secondary, Medicare primary. We then drove over to long term airport parking and caught their shuttle to the airport. At this point I realized we actually are going to go on our cruise. We met up with Jim and Sara Jinright. The first leg of our trip took us to Los Angeles. We then boarded a Cathay Pacific 747 and prepared for the 17 hour flight to Hong Kong, which included crossing the International Date Line. We were all so excited that not much sleeping got done. We landed in Hong Kong at around 8:30 a.m. on January 6th.

After gathering our luggage and getting through way to the buses that would be taking us to the named Nautica. I felt sorry for the Oceana lady instructions from Oceana to show us some of the our ship when the lines were shorter, eliminating through the city, she called the ship to see how told to wait a few minutes longer before bringing us in. Well, there were three couples on the bus who had concierge service which would allow them special privileges. A mutiny almost broke out as the three couples demanded to be driven to the ship immediately. I got a real good look at the ugly American, so selfish that they refused to wait a few more minutes so that embarkation would go smoothly for all concerned.



customs, we made our Oceana cruise ship on our bus. She had city and try to get us to chaos. After a short tour the lines were and was



When we got to the ship, all went well and after we got signed in, there was a beautiful buffet lunch waiting for us. Around 2:00 p.m., we were allowed to go to our cabins and the luggage began arriving. After unpacking and settling in, we met Jim and Sara for a drink at the Horizon, a beautiful bar located aft with windows allowing great views. Hong Kong at night was awesome. A huge laser show began at 8:00 p.m. with brightly colored laser lines piercing the Honk Kong skyline. Jim's brother Wendell and his wife Betty didn't get in until late that night so we did not meet them until breakfast the next

morning.

After breakfast, we enjoyed a four hour tour "Highlights of Hong Kong." The city is very modern as well as a city full of ancient traditions. Our first stop was to Victoria Peak, the highest point in the city, which presented wonderful views of Hong Kong,



Victoria Harbor, Kowloon and the New Territories stretching to the north. The winds



were extremely cold on the peak. We then drove past impressive mansions, and luxurious apartments, mostly facing water with mountains to the back. These people are very superstitious and facing the water with mountains at the back is a good thing. I found Repulse Bay fascinating with all of the colorful statues. There was even a bridge which the people believe you increase your life span by three minutes each time you cross it. We made sure we crossed it at least a couple of times. Then it was off to the floating village of Aberdeen. Even though factories and commercial towers have engulfed this district in recent years, Aberdeen still maintains the characteristics of a traditional fishing village. There were many low income apartments in the area where many of the occupants hung their wash out their windows on polls to dry.

We took a ride on a sampan that maneuvered us through hundreds of boats which serve as floating homes for the remaining boat-dwellers. In stark contrast, the area also was lined with impressive yachts and two giant floating restaurants. After returning to the ship and having lunch we visited the huge mall that was right there at the pier. Sara, Betty and I ventured to the street, but after being bombarded with sales people, soon made our way back to the ship. Roy went searching for a camcorder with no luck. That night, we set sail for Canton Guangzhou, China, formally known as Canton.



After an over night sail, we docked at the port of Haungpu on an island on the Pearl River at 8:00 a.m. January 8th. After a quick breakfast, we boarded buses for our short drive into Guangzhou, which is the site of the great national trade exposition held there every spring and fall since 1957. China was experiencing an unusual cold snap and this day turned out to be very uncomfortable. The wind breakers most people had brought just did not cut the dampening cold during that day. Our first stop was the huge structure memorializing Sun Yat-Sen, a leading figure in

China's revolution against the Qing government and founder of modern China. The building stands 15 stories tall and contains an auditorium able to seat 5,000 people. A bronze statue of Sun Yat-Sen stands in front of the building. Because of the normally mild temperatures in the region, there was no heat in this building. We sat in the auditorium huddled together for warmth as we listening to our guide's story about the building and Sun Yat-Sen. Interestingly, two of his daughters married future Chinese leaders. One married Mao Tse-Tung and another married Chiang Kai-Shek.



Our next stop was the tomb of Zhao Mei. This tomb and it's over 1,000 relics date back to the Western Han Dynasty (206BC to 9AD). The tomb had been discovered in 1983. The relics along with Zhao Mei himself are on display in the museum. Several of Zhao Mie's concubines were also found in the tomb. Outside the museum, locals were selling roasted chestnuts. Two men tried to sell animal skins. Can you imagine trying to bring one of those through customs?

After lunch at a local hotel, we visited the Orchid Garden. Unfortunately the orchids were not in bloom. Other than very few flowers, the gardens were quite beautiful. Here we were treated to a traditional tea-tasting ceremony. That hot tea went down nicely into our chilled to the bone bodies.



Our last stop was the Temple of Six Banyans, constructed in 537AD. The 220-foot high Hau Ta Pagoda was quite impressive as were the giant bronze Buddha statues which were forged in 1663. A pagoda is an Asian temple.



At 6:00 p.m. we left the port of Huangpu to cruise the China Sea on our way to Ha Long Bay, Vietnam. On the 9th, while at sea, we celebrated Sara's birthday, enjoyed the pool and just sitting on the balcony. As we traveled south, the weather became much warmer and much more pleasant.



On January 10, we entered Ha Long Bay cruising by many of the monolithic limestone islands protruding from the ocean. The islands are topped with thick jungle vegetation, many occupied by birds, bantams, antelope, monkeys and iguanas. Unfortunately, clouds rule the sky so the islands appear gray, as does the ocean. Well, at least we are warm.

The locals tell of the myth as to how these islands were formed. Their forefathers were fighting invaders from the north. The gods from heaven sent a family of dragons to help defend their land. The dragons descended upon what is now Ha Long Bay and began spitting out jewels and jade. These turned into the various islands (1969 of them) forming a fortress. Their land was safe and the new country of Vietnam was formed.



As we continued to cruise through the bay, we



passed many fishing boats and sampans, some on the move and some anchored together, forming long lines. Most of the locals waved at us as we passed and seemed to sport big grins as we waved back. I watched from our balcony, a lady on her sampan filled with goods, making her way very slowly down the bay. Shortly, I saw her again tied to a motorized fishing boat heading up the bay while the people on board did their shopping. I wondered how many times she is towed up and down the bay as the boat owners do their shopping.



The next day, we boarded our busses early and began the long, but interesting drive to Hanoi. I was fascinated with the countryside and just got a good picture on how the people live. Our driver spotted a lady plowing a field with her water buffalo. He stopped so that we could take pictures. Many of the people got off the bus to enable a better shot.....not good! The buffalo became spooked and jumped forward dragging the lady to the muddy ground. She was livid shaking her fists at us.

There was construction of new homes everywhere. They are two, three or four stories tall and extremely narrow but deep. All were painted in pastel colors. The sides of the homes were left unpainted and windowless. This is because the next home would be built up against the existing home, similar to some of the older homes in San Francisco.



Vietnam has 80 million people and sixteen million mopeds. Thus, most of the traffic is made up of mopeds, some carrying a mama, daddy, and two kids. In addition, many of the people needing to transport goods have no choice but on their mopeds or bicycles. The people have become quite creative. One man had a table sitting on his moped. He was sitting on the table as he drove the moped through the heavy traffic. Another man had two live pigs on their backs tied to the back seat of the moped. They were squealing their heads off as he weaved in and out of traffic. There, of course, are

also cars, trucks and busses sharing the roads. To simplify and determine fault if involved in an accident they have come up with the following rules. If involved in an accident, the biggest vehicle is at fault. So, if a moped hits a person, the moped is at fault, if a car hits a moped, the car is at fault and so on. Everyone honks their horns continuously, warning everyone that they are approaching. Sara, Betty and I must have jumped out of our skins several times as a vehicle would lay on their horn as they passed our bus. Before leaving the bus, our guide gave us the following advice. When crossing the street, look for a little break and then begin to cross



slowly...no sudden moves, the traffic will just drive around you.

Hanoi, even tho cosmopolitan, has the charm of ancient Asia. We saw the Tran Quoc Pagoda, one of the oldest pagodas in Vietnam and a cultural symbol of Vietnamese Buddhism. We then drove to the massive grey marble and granite Mausoleum of Ho Chi Minn. We were not able to go in due to it being a holiday and visits were only allowed by hundreds of school



children. They stood in long lines as they waited their turn to enter the Mausoleum. They laughed with glee when we waved at them and they enthusiastically waved back. Suddenly, we were reminded that we were in a communist country when Roy, to get a better picture, wandered onto "sacred ground," or somewhere he was not supposed to be. He was sternly

ordered to return to the group by a soldier dressed in his brown and red uniform. After a short stop to see the One Pillar Pagoda, we visited the Temple of Literature. This was built in 1070 to honor the Chinese philosopher Confucius. After going through the impressive entrance, we were treated to beautiful statues and grounds. The bus made a quick stop at the Hoa Lo Prison where the American pilots were held captive during the Vietnam War. It was known to the Americans as the Hanoi Hilton. It now, is a tourist site. After a delightful lunch, we were taken through city streets on pedicabs. The pedicab is a bicycle with a seat for one passenger on the front. It was quite a sight seeing all of these pedicabs maneuvering through the crowded streets. The ride ended at Hoan Kiem Lake, a small body of water in the heart of Hanoi where we were free to go through the shops. When we got back to the ship, over twelve hours from the beginning of our tour, we were welcomed home by the captain and his crew standing at the bottom



of the gangway. It was a real nice touch.



The next morning we left Ha Long Bay and headed out to the South China Sea. Unfortunately the clouds still ruled the sky, so we were denied seeing the islands of Ha Long Bay in bright sunlight. The pilot did give us a treat by steering the ship close to many of them.

After a day at sea, (Saigon) Vietnam. by beautiful colorful native fishing village and million people Vietnam. Our The first stop was what an people, some



our next stop was Ho Chi Minh City As the ship docked, we were greeted Vietnamese girls dressed in their costumes. Saigon began as a small now has a population of over seven and is the largest economic center of first day here, we took a city tour. in the China Town district. Wow, experience. It was wall to wall delivering goods, some buying goods and some selling goods, all making their way through the narrow aisles.



This was a “buy by the kilo” place. We were there just to look and experience. It was exhausting trying to keep up with our group while trying not to get knocked over by the many people trying to do their business. I can say one thing. The Vietnamese people are not bashful about pushing their way through the crowds. After finally getting back outside and fighting our way back across the busy street and onto the bus, many of us fell into our seats giving a sigh of relief.

Next we visited the Giac Lam Pagoda, built in 1744. Here, Taoism and Confucianism merge with Buddhism. The compound included ornate tombs, a rare bodhi tree and a statue of Quan the AM Bo Tat, the Goddess of Mercy. The grounds were being decorated for the Chinese New Year, the Year of the Dog. Small bright yellow imitation flowers had been individually attached to many trees in the compound. We were Reunification Palace, Southern forces officially Revolutionary forces. stormed the gates of the the palace, we saw the room with the original table and chairs where the surrender took place. There was also a room full of the history in stories and pictures of the war. It was hard to read about and see some of the terrible things that happened during the war. Finally, we stopped at a square where we saw the 19th century neo-Romanesque Notre Dame Cathedral. It was quite impressive. Also here we saw the Central Post Office built by Gustave Eiffel.



then off to the where in 1975, the surrendered to the Two of the tanks that palace were on display. In



The ship did not sail until 4:00pm the next afternoon, so after lunch we hired a couple of cabs to take us down town. Roy and I went to an internet café so he could check our email. After checking



for messages, I took off by myself to do a little shopping. Later, we met for lunch at a hotel where Jim had stayed while he was stationed in Vietnam. When crossing streets, Saigon was like Hanoi. Wait for a small opening and begin walking steadily across the street. I was feeling very proud of myself not letting anyone fake me out. However this feeling of power came to an abrupt end when a bus came around the corner, flying towards me blowing his horn very loud and long. I choose to stop and give him the right of way.

The next day was spent cruising on the Gulf of Thailand. It was nice to relax on the patio and watch the sea slide by.

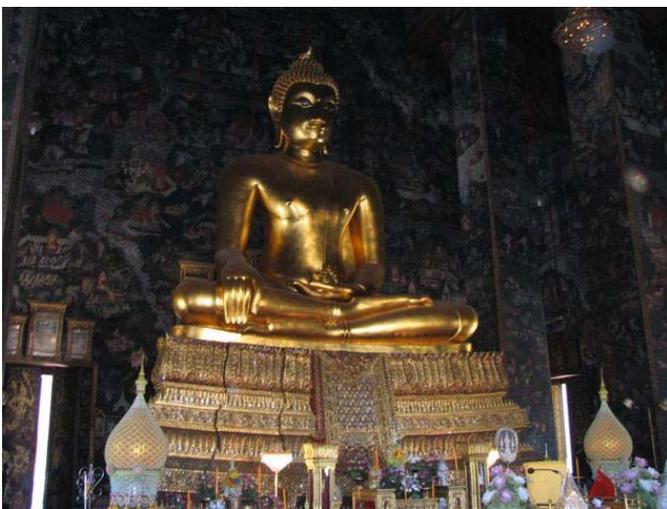
On January 17, we docked at Laem Chabang, the gateway to Bangkok. Shortly we are on the bus for a tour of Bangkok. This turned out to be mostly a driving tour. After the 2 ½ hour drive to the city, the first thing we saw of the city was mile after mile of slums. There were many tall and beautiful apartment buildings in the city but most were vacant. It seems there was a building boom followed by a financial down turn leaving the city



with many vacant



buildings. The government tried to move all of the people out of the slums and into the new buildings but the slum residents said “No, No, We won’t go!!” We then drove through Chinatown which still has remnants of colonial architecture. The streets were narrow and filled to the brim with shoppers and merchants. Our drive continued past Royal Parks, passed the



Democracy Monument which is dedicated to the ideals that led to Thailand's changeover to a democratic monarchy. They love their King Bhumibol Adulyadej. The cities buildings were decorated with brightly colored cloth. This was in preparation of celebrating his 50th year as their king. His pictures are everywhere. Unfortunately due to the palace walls, we could only see the parts of the palace including the beautifully decorated roofs. At the Wat Suthat, we were able to walk the grounds. Here we saw a 14th century Buddha statue along with mural paintings. The temple courtyard is lined with stone statues that came to Thailand as ballast on Chinese trading ships. After removing our shoes, we were allowed to enter the temple, however couldn't spend too much time as the people were beginning to chant. We were able to listen from outside the huge doors. Because the New Year is coming soon, many people chose this time to visit the temples and give thanks to Buddha and ask for good luck the coming year. Many gifts of fruits and flowers are left at the temple and lots of incense is burned. The sounds and the smells were intriguing.

We had a scrumptious lunch at the Peninsula, an upscale resort looking across the river to the city. The grounds were breathtaking. After a short stop to visit some shops, we headed back to our ship. All of the sudden the bus driver pulls over to the side of the road. He got out of the bus and after a short period of time, he climbed back into the bus, took his seat and continued on down the road. The guide explained that the driver in order to pass slower traffic had gone into a lane he was not allowed to be in. Because the buses cannot take the time to have the police write out a ticket, he merely gives the policeman some money. We noticed several other busses pulled over as we continued on our way. The police probably know when the tour busses are heading back to the ship and lay in wait....Ya think?



Roy and I decided that we wanted to see the Nong Noch Cultural Village so we booked an extra tour. The tour started with a stop at what is often referred to as the Kew Gardens of Thailand. Here we were treated to bonsai, cactus, hothouse exhibiting exotic orchids and ferns and a palm collection of over 1,000 species. For a small fee you could have your picture taken with leopards or chimps. The chimps seemed to be having much for fun so I opted to sit with them. I was totally surprised at their strength. It was great fun. We then went to go see the show and were given a choice of a coconut full of its milk or a soda. I opted for the coconut. The show began with beautiful ladies donned in their brightly colored silk costumes dancing to their native music. Then the Thai boxers came on stage. What a show they put on as they



strutted about throwing punches and kicking their opponents. We had been told on the bus that they probably would not put on the boxing show as one of the boxers had done too much partying the night before and they were having trouble getting him awake. After watching the show they put on, you would never have guessed it. Next came the elephants carrying the warriors who battled each



other from top of their elephant. The elephants did a little pushing and shoving each other as well. It was quite a colorful and exciting show. We then moved to the elephant show where we watched them bowl, play basketball, soccer and throw darts. When ever they did well, they would raise up on their back two feet to celebrate. This move caused their trainers to hang on for dear life. Three of the elephants painted a picture on a tee shirt, each in their own unique style. Then, many people went into the ring and lay down on a rug while the elephants would put their front foot on the persons back. When the show was over, the trainers brought the elephants to the edge of

the arena so all who wanted to touch them or get a picture could do so. That afternoon, we set sail for an overnight cruise to Sihanoukville, Cambodia.

We were greeted by many young men and ladies dressed in their traditional costumes, some of the men wearing masks. We had no formal tour scheduled here, so that morning the six of us hired a local man with a van to show us his town. He only charged \$60 for all of us. He first took us to a local temple. There were several orphaned children there being cared for by the monks. There was a large grave yard with elaborately carved vaults. In the yard, there were



many statues of the 12 animals

depicting the Chinese years. Next our guide drove us to the market place. Again we are in wall to wall people as we maneuver the narrow aisles. Only this time it is stifling hot. When we got out, everyone was ready for a beer. Our guide found a bar that was closed. After all, it was still morning. He asked the owner to please open up for us, which he did. It was neat. After seeing a little more of the area, the guide took us to a really nice hotel on the beach. It was beautiful. We decided to have lunch in their open area bar. After another stop at the beach where the local people were selling their wares, we headed back to the ship.



I celebrated my 65th birthday sailing the South China Sea. That night, after sharing a bottle of

Champaign with Jim, Sara, Wendell and Betty we enjoyed a pleasant dinner.

The next morning we docked at Singapore. Singapore's name comes from the Sanskrit term Singa Pura, or Lion City. Its heritage is a mix of traditional Chinese, Malay, Hindu and British cultures. Singapore is a small island city state just a hundred or so miles north of the Equator among the islands making up Malaysia. Until 1963 Singapore was a British Colony. Then it became part of Malaysia. Since Malaysia was 90 percent Muslim and Singapore was 90 percent non-Muslim, by mutual agreement Singapore became a sovereign, democratic and independent nation in 1965.

The Singapore harbor processes more tonnage annually than any port in the world. By refining nearly all of the Brunei oil production, Singapore is the world's third largest refiner. This along with an almost corruption free government and a highly skilled work force makes Singapore poverty free. Nearly all permanent citizens own their own home, either a private residence or apartment. The road and highway system is very modern. The crime rate is low, probably due to the severe punishment. Drugs are not tolerated at all and the punishment for trafficking is death. Caning, along with confinement or death, remains a big part of punishment of law breakers in Singapore. Singapore is believed to have the highest number of executions in the world relative to its population. Our guide mentioned that about 60 people were executed in 2005. If nothing else, that would discourage breaking of the laws.



Because our plane did not take off until the evening, we took a tour of the city. We had to say our good-byes to Wendell and Betty at this point as they had a different flight back to the states, therefore were on a different tour. A very noticeable difference from most of Southeast Asia is that while it is not against any law, it is customary not to use the horn while driving. All of the buildings are well maintained and the foliage is very lush. We saw no begging on the streets or any signs of slum dwellings. The closest we saw to street solicitation were a couple of Indian men on the street with very

large yellow boa constrictor snakes in baskets. They encourage tourists to have their pictures taken with the snakes and probably expected a donation. All of the buildings were well maintained and the foliage was extremely lush. Mount Faber gave us a great panoramic view of the harbor, city and Sentosa Island. An aerial tram stretches from Mount Faber to Sentosa Island. Another stop gave us a beautiful view of the old colonial district across the river. Now the district is made up of brightly colored restaurants and quaint shops with sky scrapers in the background. Next we visited

Chinatown where we had another opportunity to shop. Roy found an itsy bitsy camcorder that he bought. It is too bad it was on the last day of our vacation. For such a little thing, it takes pretty good photos. The National Orchid Garden was our last tour stop. There were over 20,000 orchid plants on display; however, we only saw a fraction of them. Before we knew it, it was time to get to the airport.

After a stop in Taipei, Taiwan, and a plane change in Los Angeles, we arrived in Phoenix a little after midnight on the January 22nd. After saying our good-byes to Jim and Sara and getting a second wind, Roy and I drove back to Earp and the storage area where we had left the coach on January 4th. At about 4:00 a.m. we opened a can of chili to share and went to sleep for about four hours. That morning we drove back to Emerald Cove and I spend the day catching up on our laundry.

This was a really fun trip with our friends Jim and Sara and newly found friends Wendell and Betty.



On January 23, we drove to Quartzsite where we dry camped for 9 days. We did the normal things, visiting each of the different areas where things were being sold. There were lots of changes. RV dealerships have taken over a lot of the old spots and the feeling was it just isn't the old Quartzsite we have enjoyed in the past. I'm happy to say, we didn't run out of water or fill our tanks. I guess in the past nine years, I have learned a few tricks which has helped conserve water. For instance fill the drinking water jug using the hot water. By the time the jug is full, the water is hot enough for doing the dishes....no waste. When we first got parked, we realized that there were a lot of hippy types in the area...old converted school buses, old campers, etc. One day, a ranger stopped at one of the camp sites. Soon he was joined by three cop cars. They all began searching the camp site and finally the inside. That is when they handcuffed the owner of the old RV and put him into one of their cars. I assume the reason the ranger stopped originally was because the area around his RV was covered in junk. The ranger must have suspected drugs, therefore calling in the police. I guess they must have found something as soon the owner was handcuffed and put into one the police cars. There were several dogs two running loose. One of the other hippy types gathered the two that were running loose up and took them somewhere. Before he did that tho, I noticed him cleaning up his camp site. After the search was completed, the man was driven away. Then the animal control man came and loaded up the remaining two dogs. The man's friends were concerned about him and one by one walked over to the remaining police officer and ranger. A few even approached the animal control man. One couple with a baby looked as if they had just come from Woodstock. All

of the junk was packed into the RV which then was taken away by a tow truck. It was as if nothing had been there. Two hours after it had begun, it was over.

On February 1st, we left Quartzsite and drove to Yuma Lakes. On Valentine's Day, Roy wanted to take me to dinner at the Olive Garden. We'll it was a nice idea...but not on Valentines Day. At least thirty people were waiting outside, and this was 5:00 p.m. This was true at the three other restaurants we drove by. We finally went to the grocery store and picked up the makings for one of my favorite dishes Roy makes, chicken with pepper corn gravy and oven roasted potatoes. It was yummy.

We went to our dentist in Algodones, Mexico. The partial he had done for Roy in March last year wasn't working well. The dentist did a new one for Roy and wouldn't charge him a cent. He said they were still under warrantee. We also visited two swap meets, one with real junk and one with all new stuff. At the swap meet, we visited a Direct Way dealer booth where Roy talked to Glen Simpson, one of the guys he talks to about our satellite for the web. He told us about a rally being held in Gila Bend so we drove over one day and sat in one of the seminars. Unfortunately, everything was way over my head. It was a very technical.

After our two week stay in Yuma, we decided to try the Picacho Peaks State Park. We weren't due into Tucson until February 19. The State Park was real nice. There was no sewer or water at the sites but they did have electricity. We were lucky and found a real nice pull through with lots of room between us and our neighbors. We hiked three of the four days we were there. The weather was perfect.

On Sunday, February 19th we drove to the Beaudry RV Park in Tucson. On Monday, we drove to Green Valley where my step brother, Gary and his wife Sue live. Green Valley is somewhat of retirement area and we wanted to get an idea of what it was like. After driving around for a while we decided that we needed to do a little more home work on the area. We didn't want to take up a realtor's time this early in the game. That evening we met Jim, Sara and Izzi, Sara's mom, at The Casino Del Sol. After a playing a while, we had a real nice dinner with them. On Wednesday, we drove back to Green Valley to visit Gary and Sue. We had a very nice visit with them. We drove down to Nogales, Mexico and walked around for a while and stopped in a nice restaurant for a beer and nachos. Later we had a late lunch, early dinner at an interesting place called The Longhorn Grill. The front is made up of a huge steer head with huge horns. You actually walk through the steer's nose to get in. After dinner, Gary had me take the scenic route back to their place so we could get more of an idea of what Green Valley is like. We enjoyed the day very much.

On the 23rd, the Maxwell Satellite Rally began. It was put on by the people we bought our satellite from. The rally consisted of three seminars. Mostly the reason for the rally was to share information. They also had a contest setting up the system from start to sending an email when you were up and running. Originally, Roy was going to do the contest as a single but at the last minute, the rules were changed. The computer had to be off at the beginning of the race. His lap top takes 10 minutes to boot up which he would have been using outside, so he decided to use my computer which would be inside. So I booted up as he began to put the satellite together. We were the first couple to complete the process and get an email off to Margo. Our prize was a plaque and a light that mounts on our satellite to illuminate it at night. Pretty cool! As part of the entry fee, we had dinner at Beer Bottoms Bistro on Friday evening. The next night, we had a potluck at the pool. Jim

and Sara wanted to come over for dinner on Sunday, so that morning we left Beaudry RV Park and drove to the Catalina State Park near Saddlebrooke where they live. It was a nice park and now we have another place we can stay when in Tucson.

On February 27th we drove back to Emerald Cove where we were able to get a river site for two weeks. The first Saturday night they had a Hawaiian dinner dance. Everyone looked so nice dressed in their Hawaiian garb. On the last weekend we were on the river, they had ski races. It was quite a sight seeing the boats race up and down the river pulling water skiers. Unfortunately on Saturday it was quite cold outside so I did my watching from inside.