

Holiday Greetings from Doug and Sherry Wilson

Another Holiday Season has rolled around already and as always it brings thoughts of our friends near and far. We expect your eyes will glaze over as you read this, but in case you find our year of interest ...

Somehow we managed to get through the whole year without any major surgeries. But fear not, our local medical community is not about to collapse. Minor back pains Doug was experiencing last year escalated into something more major, and testing confirmed a spondylolisthesis, i.e. misalignment of his L3 vertebra, right above the fusion he had 13 years ago. He's started physical therapy in the hope of easing the pain, but that can at best ease the symptoms and we fear there we'll be reporting another back surgery in next year's Holiday Message.

Cookie, our canine buddy for the last 16 years is getting pretty rickety, but so far at least, she's still hanging in there. Her hips are awfully weak and she's almost completely deaf, and she's getting lumps and bumps all over. But as far as we can tell, she doesn't seem to be in pain and is still enjoying her life with us. We're thankful for every additional day we have with her and hope there will be many more.

For travels, we managed to fit in a timeshare week at our place in Hilton Head in January which we were able to share in part with local friends Ed and Barbara Conover, followed by a week in Santee SC with more local friends Tom and Anne Grillo. In June we headed north to see friends in Ohio (with a round of golf at Firestone CC), followed by Sherry's "Class of 65 Still Alive at 65" high school reunion in Indiana, and a stop in Maryville TN to see Mike and Deb Husk.

In August, we both worked as volunteers at the PGA Championship at Kiawah Island. As we had worked the Senior PGA there five years ago, we knew how hot and humid Kiawah would be in August, and we both applied for and got indoor jobs. Sherry worked the huge retail sales tent and Doug did photo IDs for those granted access to non-public areas (no, the players don't get photo IDs, darn it!).

Our big trip this year was a 2-½ week trip to France in October, with Viking River Tours. Starting in Paris, we cruised down the Seine to Rouen and back. Then we bused to Chalon sur Saône, where we were joined by our friends Bob and Lynn Russell from Ohio. There we boarded another boat to cruise down the Saône and Rhône to Avignon, then a bus to Marseilles for a couple of nights before returning home. Along the way we toured many charming towns and villages, most of which dated back to medieval times and before, several wineries, and even a chocolate factory. Doug's back was a problem since there were walking tours at every place we stopped, but with a steroid shot before we left and a prednisone prescription while on board, he managed to get through it. Highlights included Paris with the Louvre and Notre Dame Cathedral, Monet's gardens at Giverny, the D-Day landing beaches in Normandy, the Palace at Versailles, tours of medieval Pérouges and Vienne, the walled city and Papal Palace at Avignon, the spectacular Roman aquaduct of Pont Du Gard, and the old town and harbor of Marseilles. We were almost literally blown away by the famed Mistral winds in southern France at the end of the trip.

Here in Aiken, Sherry this year was Treasurer of two garden clubs, continued as Secretary of the Aiken Garden Council, and maintained her Master Gardener status. She also serves as a volunteer docent at the Aiken Visitor Center and Train Museum, and continues to run the Book Babes ladies' book club she started several years ago.. Doug continues on the Board of the Aiken Academy for Lifelong Learning, edits and publishes the Academy's monthly newsletter, and maintains their web site. He also continues as Administrator for the Timeshare Users Group's online bulletin board.

We continue to golf poorly several times a week and Sherry is in two monthly mah jongg groups. And we get together with two other couples monthly to play a canasta variation called Hand and Foot that is popular here.

We've been fortunate over the years to fill our guest room with distant friends. Mike and Deb came down to spend a few days in March, followed a week later by a visit from John Pedrotti, Doug's high school pal from Pittsburgh, and his wife Donna. In April, Bob and Lynn visited for a few days. Rita Skelton, our long-time friend now living in Mound City KS, came back in November to spend Thanksgiving, and during her visit, she and Sherry went up to the Biltmore estate in North Carolina to see it in it's Christmas splendor.

If your travels should bring you down Aiken-way, please be sure to stop in and see us. Our guest room is ready and waiting ...

Best wishes for the Holidays and the coming year,

Doug & Sherry and 

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Tiger Woods' yacht dwarfs everything else in the marina at the PGA Championship.



Monet's gardens were spectacular, even in October.



Our boat, the *Viking Pride*, berthed on the Seine in Paris



Formal gardens at the Palace of Versailles



Some of the 9387 graves at the American Cemetery at Normandy.



With Bob and Lynn Russell at Pont du Gard