

The Annual Scarecrow

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All the Fits that Print, We News

December 2008

What a Delightful Year It's Been!

Travel to Savannah
For Azalea Season,
And Bar Harbor, Too

Grits and Shrimp,
Lobsters and Clams

Digital Photo Class For Bob,
Jean Sue's Book List Grows

The best thing about the holidays is hearing from friends and family, sharing news and seeing all those photos of (grand)children, your trips and how you're doing. We hope you don't mind if we return the favor.

Our big trip of the year was to Savannah, Georgia, for the azaleas, dogwoods and other beautiful southern spring sights. Savannah has 24 squares, each unique and heady with the early blossoms, and our holiday flat was just around the corner from one of them, Troupe Square. We enjoyed a carriage ride through the historic area and were driven in a pedicab by a student from the Savannah College of Art and Design to and from an Audra McDonald concert. Bob enjoyed shrimp-and-grits several times and Jean Sue got her fill of benne bits, a sesame cracker that is a fond memory from her days living in Georgia. Bob went out to Tybee Island for a day, marveling at the parade of containerships going up the Savannah River. We relaxed, ate good food and were amused by the colonial bed in the apartment, which required a ladder.

Back home in Philadelphia, our



We enjoyed a spring day in Savannah's Forsythe Park

guest suite was open to many visitors, including Bob's sister, Debera, who came in from St. Louis to get her "big city fix." Her new business, consulting with nurses on conflict resolution, is getting off the ground with the Veterans Administration hospitals and 2009 looks bright.

Susan Kuc, retired from academic

publishing like Jean Sue, and living in Marblehead, Massachusetts, enjoyed our third floor hospitality suite not once, but twice! In late winter she visited for the Philadelphia Flower Show, then returned in October for the first of two Philadelphia stops of the Guanieri Quartet's farewell tour. A friend from Devon, England, Sara Errington, visited at the tail end of a multi-month

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U.S. sojourn researching her next documentary film, on teenagers sentenced to life in prison. We survived the hottest weekend of the year with Bob's college buddies Kathy and Richard Hall (and their Cardigan Corgi puppy Quincy) in June. This month we welcomed Neal Ulevich from Denver (via UW Madison with Jean Sue) with the added pleasure of seeing his son and daughter-in-law Jake and Jin, in from Bob's old stomping grounds, Hoboken. Neal and Bob took in the R. Crumb show of underground comic art at the University of Pennsylvania's Institute of Contemporary Art.

We grew spectacular Skaugum begonias and moonflowers this year and improved our patio, re-laying the old bricks, replacing a decayed wood fence with a Mediterranean-style wall with steps for plants. Our Bluebird Nemesia (bred by Ray Hubbard, of Sacha and Ray, another set of friends in Devon, U.K.) thrives, despite a dusting of snow.

Bob got his annual dose of Maine, lobsters and clams when we journeyed to Bar Harbor for a week. We've found a lovely apartment in town for repeat visits...close to the shops for Jean Sue and easy access to Wonderland and the rocks along Ocean Drive for Bob.

Bob signed up for a digital photography course at a nearby art college, returning to his long-time hobby. You can find much of it at www.book-schlepper.com/marketblog, where he keeps Philadelphians current on area farmers markets. He also judged an apple pie contest at the Reading Terminal Market but was disappointed with the entries, including a promising one with cheddar and bacon that, unfortunately, was served cold. Among his cooking experiments this year was *Pinnekjøtt*, a Norwegian holiday dish of dry-cured, steamed mutton breast. (Jean Sue declared it "Ick" though she acknowledged it's better than lutefisk.) To obtain this so-called delicacy Bob traveled to the wilds of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. On another New York City visit earlier this year he took in the



Bob appreciates Weber's Drive-In burgers and root beer



Assuming their regular positions, Jean Sue and Hydrox

new Museum of Modern Art, lunch at Aquavit Restaurant's annual herring buffet, and an evening performance of the farce *Boeing, Boeing* on Broadway. Once his medication kicked in to eliminate the pain, he could be amused by the diagnosis of ROFD: Rich Old Farts' Disease, a.k.a., Gout, which sent him to the emergency room in October.

Jean Sue got interested in the Olympics and the election. Her cataract surgery went well and enabled her to pick up her reading pace. In particular, she recommends *The Story of Edgar Sattelle* by David Wroblewski, set in Mellen (WI) where her Uncle Rob lived for many years. Other books she rates  include *The Brief*

Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao by Junot Díaz, *Gentlemen of the Road* by Michael Chabon (Bob enjoyed that one, too), *Out Stealing Horses* by Per Petterson, *Rhett Butler's People* by Donald McCaig, and *A Woman in Jerusalem* by A. B. Yehoshua.

We note with regret the passing of Jean Sue's longtime Racine friend, Frances McLeod McGregor, and JS's Uncle Bob Asplund, who taught her to love baseball, circus elephants and æbleskivers.

We look forward to the Obama years and new opportunities for peace. We wish you health and happiness in 2009 and, as the original Tiny Tim would say,

"God Bless Us, Everyone."