

## **2005, Another year has slipped away... But it was another fun one.**

In 2005 we shifted our emphasis from racing sailboats all over the place and replaced it with some long awaited plans to travel to Europe. We began this planning in the Winter by beginning French lessons at the Alliance Francaise in West Los Angeles. My (David) continuing career as a Flag Officer at the Los Angeles Yacht Club continued to claim more and more of our time and resources. All in all, we stayed busy.

### **A Winter Reunion in New Canaan**

My long lost New Canaan High School class (of '59, last century) decided that Connecticut was lots of fun in February. (Apparently old age dims the brain???) So along with HS pal Holly Newcomb and her husband Rich we flew to New York and had a really fun weekend exploring our old haunts in New Canaan, Pound Ridge, Rowayton and Darien. We visited our old homes, the ponds where we swam and skated, and the little harbor where I learned to enjoy sailing. We had a wonderful time. And I re-met a bunch of old, old friends.

### **Summer in France**

About 10 years ago, we celebrated our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary by taking a wonderful trip to England and Holland. We learned that Europe is really a lot of fun, the trains are great, there's tons of great stuff to see, and we wanted to do more. We had let our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary slide by occupied with other priorities, but this year we determined to do something about our earlier resolution to return to Europe.

I was reading the New York Times one weekend last winter when I noticed an ad for a small farmhouse for rent in the South of France for \$500 per week. The ad included a phone number in New York. After some discussion I called and talked to the owners of "La Bayssa" an adorable little stone farmhouse in the village of Cabrieres in the Languedoc region. They told me about their website which had some pictures of the place. Here's the website: <http://www.hnbpub.com/house.html> We decided that the place looked tres charming and the price was right... an adventure was started.

Planning quickly took place. We decided that we couldn't go to France without visiting Paris, and spring seemed a good time to take the trip. Carol started looking for an apartment to rent in Paris and I lined up the house. Spring slipped into early summer and the trip was on for June. A family dinner turned up the fact that my 18 year old



Granddaughter Gilliane was interested in France also. We consulted and decided to take Gilly along for part of the trip. Carol located an apartment near Les Halles in Paris and we were all set.

Carol and I flew to Paris on June 11 and settled in our apartment. A few days of orientation, wandering all over Paris in mostly beautiful weather, and then Gilly joined us. We visited the Louvre, the Eiffel Tower, the Picasso Museum, the Jacquemart-Andre museum, and ate our way thru Paris. When our feet died, we learned to ride the Metro. Paris was unbelievable. We were totally taken with the charm, the history and amazed at the nice reception we got from so many people. Gilliane was continually amazed at all the weird food that we loved and tried to get her to eat, usually unsuccessfully.



After a week we were off to the South. From the Gare de Lyon we took the TGV south to Montpellier. I almost didn't get to leave town when my backpack and I wound up on opposite sides of the Metro turnstile gates, while I was wearing it! Gilly rescued me by putting another Metro ticket in for my backpack. The train ride across most of France in a little over 3 hours was fantastic. Beautiful countryside and small towns, thru the foothills and almost to the Mediterranean. After arriving in Montpellier, we located our rental car (eventually) and headed off to our little house. We had detailed directions, but got lost at the first roundabout and wound up taking a "new route" that turned out to be the preferred route of the house caretaker. Anxious moments, but we finally found our little road outside Clermont l'Herault. Great navigating by Carol and her collection of Michelin maps

saved the day. A real shock after the hustle and bustle of Paris, the tiny road led us thru a tiny town out into the woods, past little vineyards and at last to our house.

La Bayssa is rustic to say the least. We knew that it was going to be, but I think we were all surprised to find out just how rustic and remote it really was. The fact that we came in the "back way" didn't help. The house was a mile or two from the nearest "neighbor." About 5 or 6 cars a day came by on our little road. The actual nearest town, Valmascle, really didn't exist. Just a few buildings, some people we rarely saw, and a few dogs and chickens. The nearest "real" town was Cabrieres, which had a church, a boulangerie which was only open for an hour or two in the morning, a café, that may have never been

open, and a small market. It did have a “cave” (kāv) or wine co-op which is a great fixture in most small French towns. It is the local winery. They have some nice bottled wine but also had a unique feature, common in France. They sell wine in “bulk”. You bring your own jug, bottle or whatever, and they will fill it with red, white, or pink for 1 Euro per liter. Each day we would return to the house from our travels, pull out the jug of local Rosé from the fridge, and have some cheese and olives and bread while unwinding and planning where to go for dinner.

Back to the house. It had water, gas, a phone, but, no electricity. A couple of car batteries were hooked up to lights around the house but had to be used sparingly. Fortunately it didn't get dark 'til about 10 at night, but we mostly got by with lots of candles, and lots of reminders to turn the light off. When the batteries went flat, we didn't have the diesel that we're used to on the boat, we had to take them down to Clermont l'Herault to the Citroen dealer to be recharged, about 5 Euros. It took us 3 days of driving around exasperated to find the darn Citroen garage. Once found it was easy. Oh, no TV, no computer, no cell phone service.

But, it was totally peaceful, wonderfully quiet, featured a cherry tree in the yard with cherries, miniature wild strawberries in the yard, and a great road to walk along with cup of excellent coffee or glass of wine in hand thru the trees and grapevines on either side. Butterflies, birds, and the breeze in the trees. The peace was wonderful.



We took many side trips to local towns to shop. Down to the beaches of the Mediterranean to swim and walk. To Carcassone, to Arles, to Aix en Provence. Gilliane flew home after a few more days with our greetings for her family. Carol and I continued to explore and enjoy for two weeks. The house came with a list of recommends for local restaurants and experiences which was great. We met some family from one of the regions best wineries and took a small tour. We loved the beaches and swimming in the warm Med. Checked out the local cars, and boats. Ate many oysters and mussels. Had a fresh baguette almost every day. And some great meals at La Source nearby and La Mimosa (the absolute best) in the totally charming little town of Saint Giraud about 30 minutes away. (Go there for sure, if you are ever nearby!)



Finally after two fabulous weeks in the South of France Carol and I loaded up early in the morning of July 2<sup>nd</sup> and trundled off to the airport in Montpellier to fly home. We had learned a lot, and used our baby French some. We loved France and will be back.

### **New Car for Carol**

Carol needed a new car. She wanted a Honda Insight hybrid, but we never could find one around here. Finally I found one on EBay and bought it. The catch was that it was in Billings, Montana. I flew up and

got it and had a great trip driving home thru Yellowstone, the Grand Tetons, Idaho, Utah and Nevada. She loves her new car and is getting about 53mpg driving to work and around town. We'll need to return to Montana (in the Summer!) together sometime.

### **A Summer Sail on Lake Tahoe**

We managed to get up to visit my friend Rob on his sailboat on Lake Tahoe for week in August. Always a good time, plenty of sun and fun. And for the truly brave some very cold water swimming.



## Thanksgiving in Paris

We saw some great plane fares in the fall and decided that we had not had enough time in Paris to see all the things we had wanted to see. So, darn, it's off to France again! We rented a different apartment this time. An adorable place on the Left Bank, in the Latin Quarter, near St Michel and Notre Dame. We arrived in Paris right after the days of front page pictures of flaming Renaults and Citroens, but found the place utterly peaceful. The weather was colder than we expected, but the city, the Parisians, the river, the museums, the markets, the churches, the cafés, the bistros, and the restaurants were wonderful. We did get snowed on. Carol was reading Hemingway's "A Moveable Feast" for atmosphere.



We really did a good job of catching up. We got to the Orsay, the Pompidou, the Arc de Triomphe, the Champs Elysees, Montmartre and lots of more wandering and discovering. Shopped along Rue Mouffetard, strolled in the Jardin Luxembourg, and went to lots of new restaurants recommended by friends and locals. Checked out the amazing Bon Marche department store, and tried some Parisian clubbing. Very darn cold, very different from June. Very short days, but still lots of fun, great wandering down the banks of the Seine in the early morning chill, or the mists in the dark at night.



We love this city. Our list of things to do and see never runs low. And our list of great places to eat keeps getting longer. Our knowledge of French is improving, and we are gradually learning more about French wine and food. More experiments, please.



We've had a fabulous year and hope you did also. We plan to return to France next spring, do some sailing in the Med and explore the south some more. Happy New Year.

