

KEEPER OF THE MEMORY

DECEMBER 2008

RIBERAS DEL PILAR, JALISCO, MX

Peace
On
Earth



Riberas del Pilar; Another year has trickled through my hourglass of life, so quickly in fact I hardly had a chance to savor it's delights, but I darn sure noticed it's barbs and rough edges, though they were few and minor. I've started this a bit early this year in hopes of actually sending out some paper copies, but then again if it's not in the mail, guess the PDF will have to suffice again this year.

I suppose I should start by reporting Max and I are just fine, we've not been kidnapped by Zapatista mercenaries or met with any other disasters and I'd have to say we're adjusting well to this new life so it looks like we'll re-up for another year or so. I rented the whole estate this year including the casita and my neighbor who spends her summers in Canada agreed to return this winter so it was quiet for the 6 months she was gone. I had hoped the Gkids would make it down, but the cost of travel, schedules etc. didn't work out, so, it was just Max and me and each morning while I'm here working on the PC, Max comes up at about 7:45am and we go out for a walk to the casita and turn off the night lights and he walks through each room and checks them out to be sure we're safe and then we do an inspection tour of our little domain.

At the end of January I made a border run to TX storage to retrieve some stuff and do a bit of NOB shopping. Most things are available here if you look hard and long enough, but some things are alien to this culture like Swiffer dusters - never heard of them? And they ARE needed, we have two seasons, dusty and muddy, the dusty lasts 8 months with no rain so it's a tad dry by the time June comes and the rain starts. It's a tradition to bring down things for other folks as well, so you load up the Jeep and haul it back.

I made a second border run in Oct. and also flew from San Antonio to Denver to spend a few days with Mom, who is now 93, and friends including eating spaghetti at Louisville with my friends Norm & Dee. As I was sitting in their living room I asked "how long have I been coming to this house" - turns out 33 years, it's good to have continuity in some things in life.

I hadn't been here long enough before my Jan trip to really compare the two places. But now after a year it's more obvious. The first thing I did, after sitting in line an hour to cross the international bridge into Laredo, was to check in and go around the corner to the nearest Taco Bell, I could actually sit in the car and order, I can't do there here, my limited Spanish requires eye contact and waving of hands and pointing to order. Then I pulled into a shopping center and drove around it twice just reading all the signs - and understanding them! The next morning when I stopped at the INS checkpoint he asked if I was a US citizen and I said yes, but have been in MX for a year and it was good to be back and able to read all the signs, he laughed and said "welcome home".

I originally started this letter by saying "life in retirement is a bit odd actually" - that pretty much said it all so I quit. But it's good to finally have time to do what I want, even if it's nothing; although keeping up the estate occasionally consumes my time. Sometimes the Internet is a problem, other times electricity and I went through a stretch of about 6 weeks when the City was pumping mud to me instead of water requiring almost daily washing/replacement of filters etc. Then there's the pool, the money pit which always requires attention. But eventually all things in MX settle down, it just takes a bit longer.

Example: my water heater started leaking and I told Rentals to replace it, the maintenance guy came out and said "Si" and that was about 2 months ago. (Cont'd)

however the pilot light is also failing and sometimes when it kicks in the gas builds up before igniting and there is a very large and loud KAWHOOOM from that side of the house and it blows the burner door open which in turn exposes the pilot light to being blown out by the breeze and I can tell right away when I get in the shower? - but then it's only been 2 months, maybe for Christmas?

For me these days of life are a continuing adventure and they are documented at www.oneblueflower.com on a random basis. Sometimes events are funny, sometimes trying, but never dull. I really would encourage you to visit the site, there are some funny adventures there and if you've ever considered living in MX this will give you a first hand view of life as an old gringo in MX. Plus a bunch of pics including a slide show of me painting a wall - 5 times? - you have to see it to believe it (or with me, maybe it's totally believable)

Family; Mom in Denver is doing fine, my sisters and families are all well. My daughter Keisha and family are all fine and it seems my oldest Grandson has a wicked sense of humor, he's going to make me a great grandfather sometime in February - and I'm still not used to being a grandfather?

Max is Max; and we've been adopted by two neighborhood cats, Gray and Shorty, guess I should have called them something more appropriate like Pedro and Jose. Max now goes out into the compound at times although he still prefers the security of the house, but it's good for him to explore and roam a bit and play with Shorty, they're such good friends Shorty even shared some of his fleas recently - what a guy? They have no shame, they mooch dry food from me and then go to my neighbors for chicken or whatever she might be cooking?



Back to work? - maybe; I met a fellow online a year or more ago and it turns out we paralleled each other in Denver and sales career's etc. They now live in Albuquerque and are building a beautiful new home and allowed me to suggest some things. In August they came down and stayed in the casita on their way to buy some copper sinks about 200 miles from here. The overall story is in the blog, but the end result is that we've decided to form an export company for copper and onyx sinks and other specialty items. It seems that I've not totally retired yet - learning to live on a fixed income with variable spending habits has it's challenges. So we're at www.haciendamagnifico.com with only a front page at the moment, I need to get busy and create the site and fill it in, we spent a day shooting pics of onyx sinks recently in Tonalá. I need to make a trip to Santa Clara del Cobre before Christmas to meet our supplier and view the fabrication of the copper sinks, the onyx comes from Puebla near Mexico City which will be a trip next year with my partners. Who knows, maybe this is why I'm in MX?



Merry Christmas
From
South of the Border

Steve & Max the Cat



Medical in MX; - In Nov my neighbor and friend who rents the casita had a nasty bout with her gall bladder, ending up in a hospital in Guadalajara. For a week she was trapped between her MX physician who wouldn't let her out without removal and the Canadian insurance company who didn't want to pay, but it all ended nicely, more in the blog.

Address/Phone number; - Everything remains the same this year, but, here's the skinny, mail to:

Steve Brown
5802 Bob Bullock C1
328C-125
Laredo, TX 78045

This is a PO Box in Laredo used by many of us gringo's to get mail more direct than the Mexican postal system? Twice a week they haul the mail down to San Luis Potosi, sort it out and bring it on down to my box here which is at the local pool supply place (I'm not kidding). So, it takes a bit longer to get here, but it works.

The phone remains the same, it's an Internet service and so is still a local call for my old neighbors and I call the States as a LD call. It works well – usually? - and totally confuses the telemarketers when I tell them I'm in MX – I love it!

Email remains the same or through the blog at the private email there.



We Remember; - this year we remember the passing of: Lee Snyder, friend, educator, minister in March.

Lester Mueller, "Uncle Lester" to all the kids of our family for generations, he followed Aunt Lois this October.

Chris, for whom this annual newsletter is named, now gone home 4 years ago this December.

12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

There is one Christmas Carol that has always baffled me. Have you ever wondered about THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS?

What in the world do leaping lords, French hens, swimming swans, and especially the partridge who won't come out of the pear tree have to do with Christmas?

Here's a version to consider:

From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly. Someone during that era wrote this carol as a catechism song for young Catholics. It has two levels of meaning: the surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known only to members of their church. Each element in the carol has a code word for a religious reality, which the children could remember.

The partridge in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.

Two turtledoves were the Old and New Testaments.

Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love.

The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke & John.

The five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.

The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.

Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit: Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership, and Mercy.

The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.

Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self Control.

The ten lords a-leaping were the Ten Commandments.

The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.

The twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in The Apostles' Creed.

So there is your history for today. This knowledge was shared with me and I found it interesting and enlightening and now I know how that strange song became a Christmas Carol..

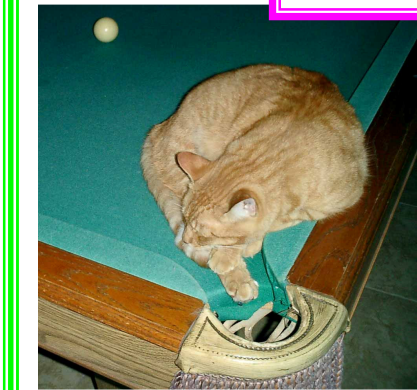
Merry Merry Christmas!!

"If you want to feel rich, count all of the things you have that money cannot buy!"



- Fresh bottled water every day and he likes to drink from the fountain?

- Cat in the corner pocket?



Blessings to One and All from Mexico