

KEEPER OF THE MEMORY

DECEMBER 2006

LAKEWAY, TEXAS



Lakeway – One last time (as you'll see)

Dear Family & Friends; today, is November-16th, 20th, 30th, I see by reading last years offering that I'm on schedule to be late as usual. This final edition (from Lakeway) is shorter. I've got some new things to share this year and I'll try to be brief(er).

This year was one of change and pending change, one of searching for a purpose and closing a chapter in my life.

Around the first of March I picked up my laptop, walked into the President's office and set it on his desk and said "I'm tired, I'm going home". He said ok, he'd see me in a couple of days – I said no, I mean I'm *REALLY* tired, I've been doing this for 30 years and it's time to go home. He looked at me a bit puzzled, but said to think about it and call him in a week.

I thought about it and decided I would use one of our products to create some webstores, for pet supplies, so the old road warrior hangs up his spurs one last time and is going "virtual".

I created Stuff Dogs Like and Stuff Cats Like with Keisha's help and began to set up suppliers etc., all seemed to be going well with a new direction, but, fate (as usual) had other plans!

One day in early April a friend was disturbed by all the immigration things happening and I said to him "George, don't get mad, get even, they want to move up here, get even, move down there!" "Move down there?" For some reason that joke suddenly started to make sense - so, a bit of research and suddenly it seemed moving to Mexico was logical – well, as logical as I ever get.

My problem here is twofold, first this house was Chris's and without her, some days it's very hard to be here, and secondly, without her income I can't afford it. But, when I tried to think of where I'd move - no place (I could afford) came to mind – so, Mexico it is – olé.

That began the long, painful and tedious process of closing out a house full of "stuff" collected over 20 years, of replacing, repairing and upgrading to get the maximum when the house sells. At this point it should go on the market early next year, but I'm jumping ahead.

My research led me to Lake Chapala which is about 35 miles south of Guadalajara, the land of Eternal Spring. It's in the mountains of central MX, a mile high and so mild they don't put heating or AC in houses. There are up to 5,000 Americans & Canadians living in a string of villages along the north shore of the lake, primarily focused in Ajijic (ah-he-hic). The costs are going up as popularity grows, but it's still relatively cheap to live there. And, has all the things necessary to live comfortably like broadband Internet, chain stores in Guadalajara etc – now I need to learn Spanish (after only 63 years I was just getting the hang of English)?

I found an online chat forum and got to know people and they are genuinely nice and I felt it was the right direction to go, so Max & I talked it over and he agreed to give it a try.

As I began to tell people I was moving to MX they smiled and nodded knowingly like "sure Steve sure, wink wink" – but I persisted and basically focused all my attention on the house and so the webstores are half finished, and sadly, the book I started also has been delayed until '07.

People kept saying I wouldn't like it etc., so in Sept. I flew down and spent a few days and loved it. I met some of the people from online and had a wonderful time and the area is gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous. Oh, it's still Mexico and it's a different culture and there are many new "adventures" yet to come I'm sure, but the trip merely was icing on the cake.

When I got back I ended up creating a blog – yes, I've fallen victim to self aggrandizement as have millions of others. But, it's actually the bridge and collection point for bits and pieces and address changes etc. for the ongoing odyssey of Max & Steve go to Mexico – olé! – or whatever. You can find the blog at www.oneblueflower.com/ and I would encourage you to take a peek when you get a chance and bookmark it for future reference. There are only a few entries at this point including one about the road trip to Lake Chapala including a lot of pics I shot. When you read it I believe you will see why I've made this decision to move. Each day I was there, Chris was there with me, she would love this place.

Also you will find some links to pics of house update Projects 2006 done this year (if at all interested) and to the web stores.

I've rented a storage area in Marble Falls just west of here and will store the Mark VIII and buy a small pickup or Jeep which are more appropriate for MX. I'm storing some, moving some and thinning out much. My plan is sort of 2 years and then we'll make the next decision. In that time I'll have learned enough language and explored enough to be comfortable in the culture and if it feels good, I'll stay or maybe even move to a quieter area, the South shore of the lake is still pretty much "native". Or, I may come back to Texas, but that's a couple of years away.

So, the course is set, the project well under way.



In other news; -My daughter Keisha and her family and I continue to build our bond over the miles. With all that's happening I didn't make it to visit them yet, but will soon – I promise. They are all fine and everything is going great in that area. And, we agreed to have her come for a quick "inspection/visit" of the old man's digs, date yet to be determined. But I told her, it's worth seeing, it's probably the best thing I ever did!

I also continue to share emails with Lynne, Chris's sister in OR with the possibility of meeting them next year in Chicago at a family get together. Cyndy and her family in CO are doing fine and Mom in Denver is still doing fine at nearly 92.

A personal note; - One of the chapters in the book is titled "I cry on Saturdays" – now, 2 years later I expected to be somewhat settled and adjusted to losing Chris, but I can tell you that the sense of loss and disappointment are as deep today as the day I lost her, in fact, maybe deeper at times as I complete projects that I would have done for her and planning a future that she would have loved – but will be without her.





Address/Phone number change; - When I move I'll get a PO Box in Laredo to keep my Texas identity for business etc. They collect up the mail there on Tuesdays and haul it south; they get to the Lake on Thurs or Fridays usually, so depending on the schedule it takes a little longer. Most of the folks at the Lake don't depend on the MX postal system. Outgoing is a bit easier – The Lake Chapala Society (or local geezer hangout for old American & Canadian folks) has a mail box and you just drop it in and the next person going North takes the sack and drops it in the nearest postal box NOB (North of border) and generally there's someone going every few days, so all in all it's a more casual approach to life, and isn't that what this part of life is about?



The phone remains the same, even when I move, it's in Internet connected phone, so it's like calling me here now, but I'll pick up in Ajijic, MX? – ain't technology a hoot – when it works?

I guess that pretty much takes care of current news as well as near future news.

Next year will bring many new changes and challenges and with the Lord's direction and help we'll deal with each and share the ones worth noting. I hope to find a sizable house to rent, so I should have room for visitors who just can't wait to see Mexico from a resident's point of view, just drop a line or email me through the blog at www.oneblueflower.com

Max is Max; - Being an inside guy he lives a quiet life and keeps the house pest free – he eats them? We've essentially adopted one of the neighbors cats OW (orange & white) who patrols outside and gets her meals here. She and Max have become good friends and we'll miss her when we go south.



SNIPPETS:

The following from my future home; seems in MX there is a law that every house must have a nativity scene.

Don't let the police inside your house unless you have a nativity scene, and one stipulation is that the Christ Child can't be in it until midnight 24 December or Noche Buena, unless he is covered with a small sheet or blanket.

The law stems from Spanish (Castille and Aragon mostly) common law and is related to the law that all main Spanish meals MUST contain some pork or be cooked in lard.

These laws come from the days after the victory over the Moors and also of the Inquisition, and served to show that the household was Christian (Roman Catholic) and not Moorish (Muslim) or Jewish, as the Jews were also mistreated, to say the least in Spain at that time. The laws came with the "Spanish" conquerors.

The Mexican Constitution of 1917 severely limited the Church's (Catholic) power in things like education, priestly vows, and evangelizing. During the 1920's laws were passed that were even more restrictive on any Church activity outside the walls of the church and in view of the people. BUT the law of the nativity scene was overlooked and never repealed.

So, put up a gringo tree, or a hanger tree if you want, even put an inflatable Santa in front of your house. BUT don't forget the nativity scene or you could spend the holidays in the slammer.

Hey in Mexico you can at least say Merry Christmas, and still be politically correct.

Feliz Navidad and Merry Merry Christmas to all!



Blessings to One and All from Texas