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On The Road Again!





For those of you who know me well, the first thing you thought of when you saw the cover was not... Wow, they are out on their trip again, or look how nice of an area they were in. Nope, most likely it was... did Robert lose weight? Yes, I am happy to report that since the beginning of the year I have dropped about 60 pounds!

First the why and then the how (eventually I will get into how this ties in to the trip, I promise.) A little over a year ago I was taking pictures of Listy running the Rock and Roll marathon and I came across Bob who was riding his bike and watching her as well. He told me that the next year's R&R was on his birthday and he was looking forward to running it with his family. Now anyone that knows Bob, knows that he is always up for a marathon when it's a year away, but once it gets closer he finds a way to get out of it (unless it's part of an Iron man, then he is all in!) I told him that if he ran it so would I (what was I thinking?) After all, he would just back out and I would be off the hook. I even added a penalty clause that if he backed out; he would have to pay for my registration. It was agreed and I signed up.

Fast forward to January this year. I mentioned to Bob that the marathon was only 5 months away and he bet-

ter start training (fully expecting him to have a reason to back out thus letting me off the hook.) To my surprise he said he was ready to run! After all, he didn't want to have to pay for my registration (uh oh, I didn't count on his aversion to wasting money!)

So, there it was, I had to run and the one thing I knew was that if I wanted to finish (without the help of an ambulance) I better get in shape. So back to the diet and a lot more running. This brings me back to our vacation for a bit. In the upcoming months we had two weddings and the dreaded R&R marathon. Basically, leaving vacation time to sometime after June. Knowing that this was a busy time of year I made reservations in January for a July vacation (one of the most crowded times of the year).

With Listy's and the running club's help, my running mileage started to increase while my daily calorie intake went down. By Brett's wedding I was down 10 pounds and up to 10 miles at a time. My pace had dropped from the mid 18-minute miles down to around 15 minutes a mile (OK, you young kids just remember I'm 63. Let's see how good you are at my age!) Then... The dreaded COVID came to the forefront.

We all know what came next but from a runner's perspective we lost our running club for a few weeks while everything got sorted out. Next, it was where can we run without getting yelled at? Believe me, we had our share of people shaming us for being out in the open and running. But on we went.

By the end of March, I was down 30 pounds, up to 16 miles in distance and down into the 13-minute mile pace. But it became clear that the R&R would not happen. In fact, they sent out an email saying it was postponed to the fall (still no date on when, or even if, it will ever be run again.) Here was my big chance to back out... But I liked where this was going so, I decided to just keep on running (sounds like Forest Gump right?)

By mid-June I was not running as far on single runs (I mean after all why kill myself for a marathon that most likely won't happen?) but I was still putting in plenty of miles each week. I had lost about 55 pounds and was getting faster pace times each week. However, our vacation was rapidly approaching and the last time we went out for a trip like the one we had planned, I gained 15 pounds! So I decided to make this a running vacation and set a goal to run at least a 10K (6 miles) 4 times a week and also run a half marathon (13 miles) in both Yellowstone and Glacier National parks (see I told you I would tie this all into the vacation report!)

July 8th we are all packed and ready to go (after one last run at 5:00am with the running group) off we go to Las Vegas. Every time I visit Las Vegas I can't help but think of Mom and Dad and the fun times they have had there.

The good news about Covid that just about everyone can agree upon is that there are fewer cars on the freeway. I especially noticed this when we pulled into Las Vegas at about 4:00 pm. Normally it's stop and go until we get past the downtown area. Not this time! Breezed right through to Sam's Town and got all hooked up for the night. Next morning I ran a 10K in 80-degree weather.



One would think that running in the south area of Las Vegas would be ... well boring. And for the most part you would be right. It was hot with lots of traffic and, well... just another run until... I found this open space park. Once out into the park the temperatures dropped into the low 70s and it was a genuinely nice place to run (see the picture below of the pond in the middle of the park).

After breakfast in the casino (yes we went in and it was dead) we headed off to Utah (Filmore to be exact) and another fine night and another morning 10K. Filmore puts off a nice small town of the 60s kind of vibe. Plenty of small community stores and parks with the town hall buildings at the center of town. Forth of July was just a week prior and many of the homes were decorated for the holiday. No sign of Covid closures just a wonderful place in free America.



Off to Lava hot springs in Idaho. One of the first things we noticed when we got there was the water park packed with kids in line. No masks, no social distancing, just fun. Don't get me wrong, I understand the need for all of those things in locations that have lots of reported cases but in Idaho, this just wasn't the case and we really enjoyed the vacation from the Covid gloom.

Another day and another 10K run up some dirt road called Fish Creek Road. Just as I got to the turn around point the sun came up and lit up a beautiful moment right in front of me. I took the picture (shown on the next page) with my iPhone. It really looks a lot better in real life but this photo will always remind me of the run.



Every time we visit, we find something new and this year was no different. As we were driving through the park, we noticed a new pull out / parking area and decided to stop. After all, why put one here? From the road all you see is trees and bushes but once you slip through on some small trails you are treated to a beautiful set of falls and a spring that I have never seen before even though I have drove by this location literally dozens of times.

Enough of all this travel, finally we arrived in Yellowstone and set up for a week of exploring and relaxation. The weather was beautiful, sunny with a few clouds, 70s in the day and mid 40s at night. One of the benefits of Covid was that the rangers at the park entrance did not want to spend a lot of time looking at IDs and checking everyone's passes to make sure they match. They just waved you in. BTW I got to use my senior pass finally! Yup, for those that don't know it, once you hit 60 you can get a pass that gets you into all the national parks for free... for the rest of your life!



Campsite in West Yellowstone



For July which is a peak month for visitors at the park, it was fairly crowded at the usual popular spots. So we tried to go to some of the lesser known areas of the park. If you have never been there, then the obvious choices like "Old Faithful", Geyser Basin, Lamar Valley, Mammoth, Yellowstone lake and falls are a must see. But we have spent so much time there we could bypass these crowded locations for a more intimate visit to the park.







While visiting Yellowstone I ran first, a half marathon, then a 10 K in the park. The half marathon was great! It was a clear morning and I ran on a trail/ bike path that was just beautiful. Never mind that there were bear warnings all over the place. The next day I ran a 10K in the same area, but it was really foggy, and the bear signs got to me. So, the rest of the week I ran near west Yellowstone along a well-traveled road.

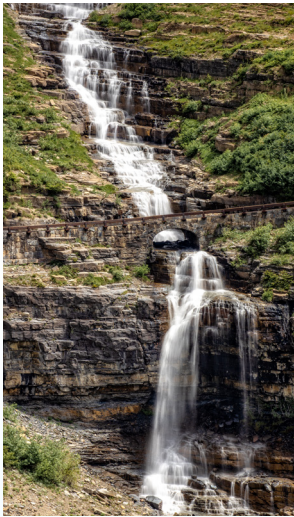


On a side note, one night I decided to cheat on my diet and have a McDonalds burger and fries with a chocolate shake. As it turns out, there is only one fast food place in the whole town, and we weren't the only ones with the idea of a burger. But oh well, I can wait for my first burger in over 6 months. Half an hour later, I get to the window

to order and it comes to over \$37.00!! I mean I guess I understand if you're the only game in town but... Come on Man!!!

One thing to keep in mind is that the elevation in the park ranges from 5,000' to 9,000'. We mostly stayed around the 7,000' level so if you're not used to the altitude you might experience headaches for a day or two. All to soon it was time to leave and make our way to Glacier National Park





I have always said that you go to Yellowstone for the animals but if you want big rivers, waterfalls and lakes with snowcapped mountains, Glacier is the place to go. The going to the sun road is the crown jewel of the park and it doesn't disappoint. Filled with spectacular views of Lake McDonald and so many waterfalls that there are too many to count.

While I did run a half marathon and some 10Ks in the park I took a few days off to hike some of the more popular trails. Glacier was extremely busy, in fact, they were talking about having to make reservations online just to enter the park! Thankfully, that didn't happen while we were there. However, if you weren't in the park by

7:00 am you would find it exceedingly difficult to find parking at any of the popular areas.





Karla is not a morning person, so while she slept, I got up at 4:00 am and was the first person at the avalanche parking lot. Avalanche lake is my favorite hike in the park. You follow a river up to a hidden lake about 2 miles from the parking area. Pictures just can't capture the overwhelming view when you step out of what seems like a jungle of trees and shrubs to see a large lake with high peaks all around it. Many of the peaks have glaciers on the tops with incredibly high waterfalls cascading down to the lake.



Another hike I made was at Logan's Pass which is at the top of the going to the sun road. Once again, I got up at 0-dark-thirty to get parking. This hike takes you across a glacier and up to another hidden lake surrounded by mountains (sound familiar?). The good news is that even as old as I am, I kicked butt up the stairs, glacier, and hills. I even overtook and passed some 20-somethings along the glacier. OK maybe they were going slow because they were hiking in flip flops on the snow, but hey, give me experience over youth every time!

Karla and I also took many "car hikes" in the jeep both in Yellowstone and at Glacier. You don't know what a car hike is?? That's where you get in the jeep and find some old fire road that you have no idea where it goes and follow it for as far as you can. You never know what you will see. On one such occasion, we were traveling down a fire road, when we had a very large black bear jump out in front of us, stood up and looked us over, then decide that we were not another bear and moved on.

One of the good things about visiting the parks this time of year (besides great weather) is all of the spring flowers that decorate the fields and side roads. Every turn of the road would bring something new to see. Many times, something would jump out in front of us and then be gone before I could get my camera on it. So, Karla suggested we get a dash cam next year so we can capture everything we see. Great idea, consider it done!



Speaking of capturing things, we were lucky enough to be there while the comet neowise was visible from our location. According to reports all we had to do was wait until just after sunset and look to the north-west horizon. So, one night we decided to go and take pictures of it. Sunset was at 9:30 so we left around 9:00 and found a nice spot on the south shore of Lake McDonald to do our viewing from. Only one problem. Even though the sun technically went down at 9:30 it wasn't dark enough to see the comet until about 11:00 (way past my bedtime). Once it made its appearance it was a very impressive sight. I didn't do a particularly good job in capturing it but in my defense, it was the first time I tried something like this. When in comes around a few thousand years from now, I'll be ready!



That line above that looks like a scratch is actually the International Space Station Flying by

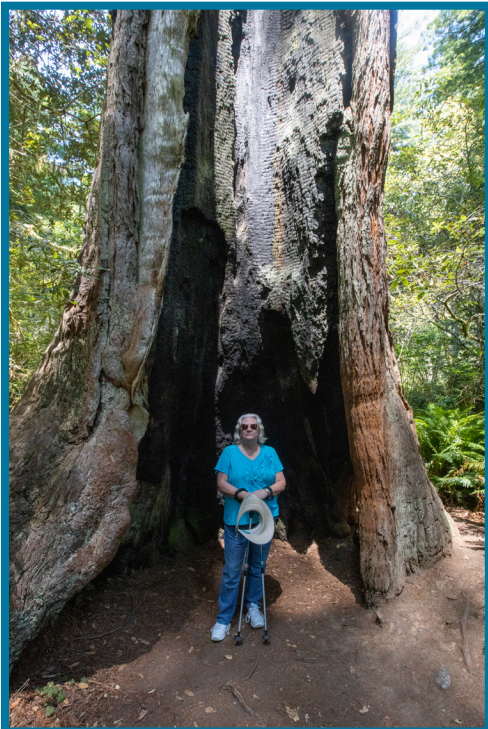
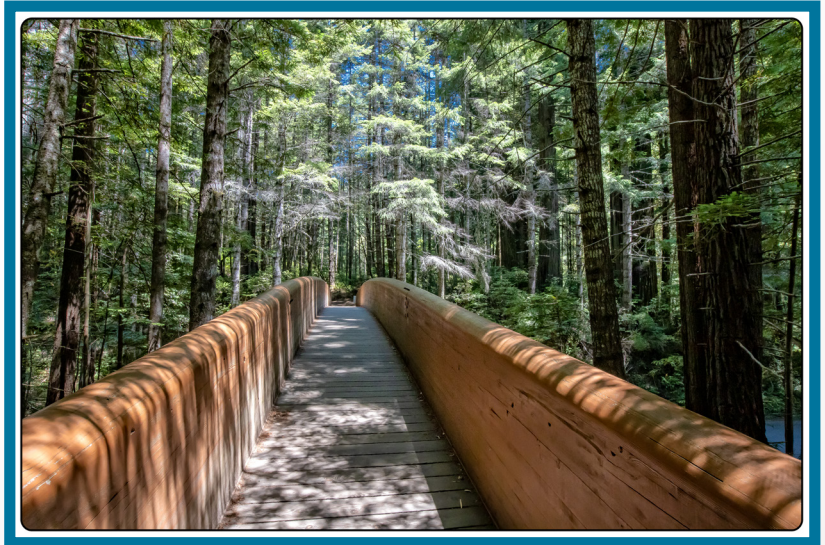


Once again and all too soon it was time to leave. So, we packed up and off we went to see the redwoods of northern California. It took us a few days to get there and we had to go through Portland but eventually we got there.

Here's the skinny on redwoods nation park: Its hard to find! Mainly because it's spread out and California has put a few state parks in the middle of it. There is no sign like you see at other parks, there is no gate to get in and without a map you wont even find the one road that goes through it. After all is said and done, the town (Crescent City) is more exciting than the park. But we did find it and since we were there, we decided to go on a hike (yes Karla went on several short ones at every park). This one was nice but let's face it Sequoia National Park is much better.

I did a 10K on the beach and it was really difficult due to the soft sand, but I made it (did I mention that the one cool thing about the park was that it was on the coast?) Fortunately, whenever we go somewhere new, I only schedule a day, or two, to see if we like it, If so, we come back later... Redwoods is a nice place to visit but we won't be coming back anytime soon.

Three days later, we were pulling into our RV garage back in Alpine. We had a great trip and were really sad that it was over. Just about everything went perfectly. Good weather, no travel issues and for a little over three weeks we were able to forget about Covid and the social injustice issues. We hardly ever checked out the news and for the most part the only sign of Covid was the 40% of the people who were wearing masks. Vacations are really great, especially in a RV!



New Baby Vacation Planning Turns into the BEST COVID Vacation

By Listy Gillingham

Last November, Annie and I were thinking about ways we could vacation as a family. With Evie coming in December, the thought of flying with a new baby didn't sound like much fun and so we began looking for staycations that could be fun. We found a house with a pool, grotto, and slide that looked very Hawaiian-like but it was situated in Temecula. Having done one weekend house rental in Temecula, we knew the wineries would be fun and the temperatures would likely be friendly, so I booked it. Who knew this would be a perfect vacation given the pandemic situation that was going to be a game changer (more than a new baby would be) for travel?



So, on July 25 it was off to Temecula for the Gillingham Clan! The house was big (5 bedrooms) but the outside was amazing for kids and adults with many features to keep us all happy. We delayed our Annual Holiday Hoopla event due to the arrival of Evie 2 days before Christmas knowing we wanted everyone to be together for the festivities. Seamus and Bethany had the onus of planning this event, but they pulled a fast one on us, as they turned Holiday Hoopla theme into a tennis-themed Retirement Party for Listy, Bob, and Birdy.

Unfortunately, Birdy was unable to join us for the Hoopla due to her recent trip to New Jersey, but we celebrated and toasted her regardless. Shirts and posters (Kiss my ACE Goodbye) were displayed all around with retirement sayings. Our shirts said Wimble-DONE, while the boys read “Droppin’ Deuces” and the girls “Kiss my Ace.” The teams for Hoopla was divided by Gillinghams vs. The Others. That put David, Listy, Bob, and Bethany facing off with Annie, Kevin, Seamus, and Kristy. The games included water balloons with tennis rackets, beer pong (modified a few ways), and frisbee throwing through a hoop. In the end, Kristy, Annie, Seamus, and Kevin team took the grand trophy for the big win. Later, that night, gifts were given to Listy and Bob after a slideshow was shared with thoughts from many families (thank you to all that participated) and a song written by Annie and Kristy was sung.

Wouldn't it Be Nice

Isn't it nice that you're retired?
Seems like you've been waiting for so long.
And won't it be great when there's no COVID?
Then you can just travel all day long!

You know it's gonna make it that much better
When you can sleep your way through next September!

Won't it be so nice when there's no email?
Nothing on your list of things to do.
Crossword puzzles and your morning coffee,
Maybe take the Grands out to the zoo?

Happy times together you'll be spending,
We hope retirement if never ending.
Oh, yes it will be nice!

You know it seems the mover we talk about it
It only makes it worse to live without it.
And you've really earned it!

Oh, yes it will be nice!
Goodbye, oh Bob!
See ya, Listy!
Peace Out, Oh Birdy!
We love you three, retirees!





The next day, we decided to celebrate birthdays which included anyone whose birthday was in July or August (for those who know the Riel family calendars, that included David, Annie, Seamus, and Bethany). Bethany happened to be celebrating her 30th, so we added a few extra special decorations in her honor and of course included a song.

Sweet Bethany

Where it began, we can't begin to know,
 But it's for sure she's made the grade.
 Was in the spring,
 And springs became the summers,
 Now she'll be in her fourth decade!
 Years, passing years,
 Growing up, goodbye 20's, getting old,
 Thirty years old!

Good times have only just begun.
 We've been inclined,
 To believe your life will be such fun.
 But now, we hoist up a glass and toast your birthday
 We filled it up with lovely booze!

And, when we must,
 We'll tap a kegerator!
 Cause running low we just don't choose.
 Us, celebrating,
 Reaching out, wishing you, happy birthday
 Thirty years old!
 Good times have only just begun!

We've been inclined
 To believe your life will be such fun!
 Sweet Beth-a-ny
 30's here and it's all good!
 Sweet Beth-a-ny
 Party hard just like you should.
 Sweet Beth-a-ny
 Happy Birthday!





After that, we just relaxed and enjoyed the house and our surroundings! We brought some new golf clubs for the Grands to use on the soccer court, we swam and read books around the pool, and roasted marshmallows around an outdoor fire pit.



Seamus was responsible for keeping us all in shape as the vacation wasn't short of treats and lots of food. Every morning, he arranged F45 sessions for everyone, young and old, all participated. F45 stands for Functional Fitness for 45 minutes of exercise led by a professional trainer. For us, that trainer was Seamus who incorporated many of the COVID video workouts he downloaded each day.

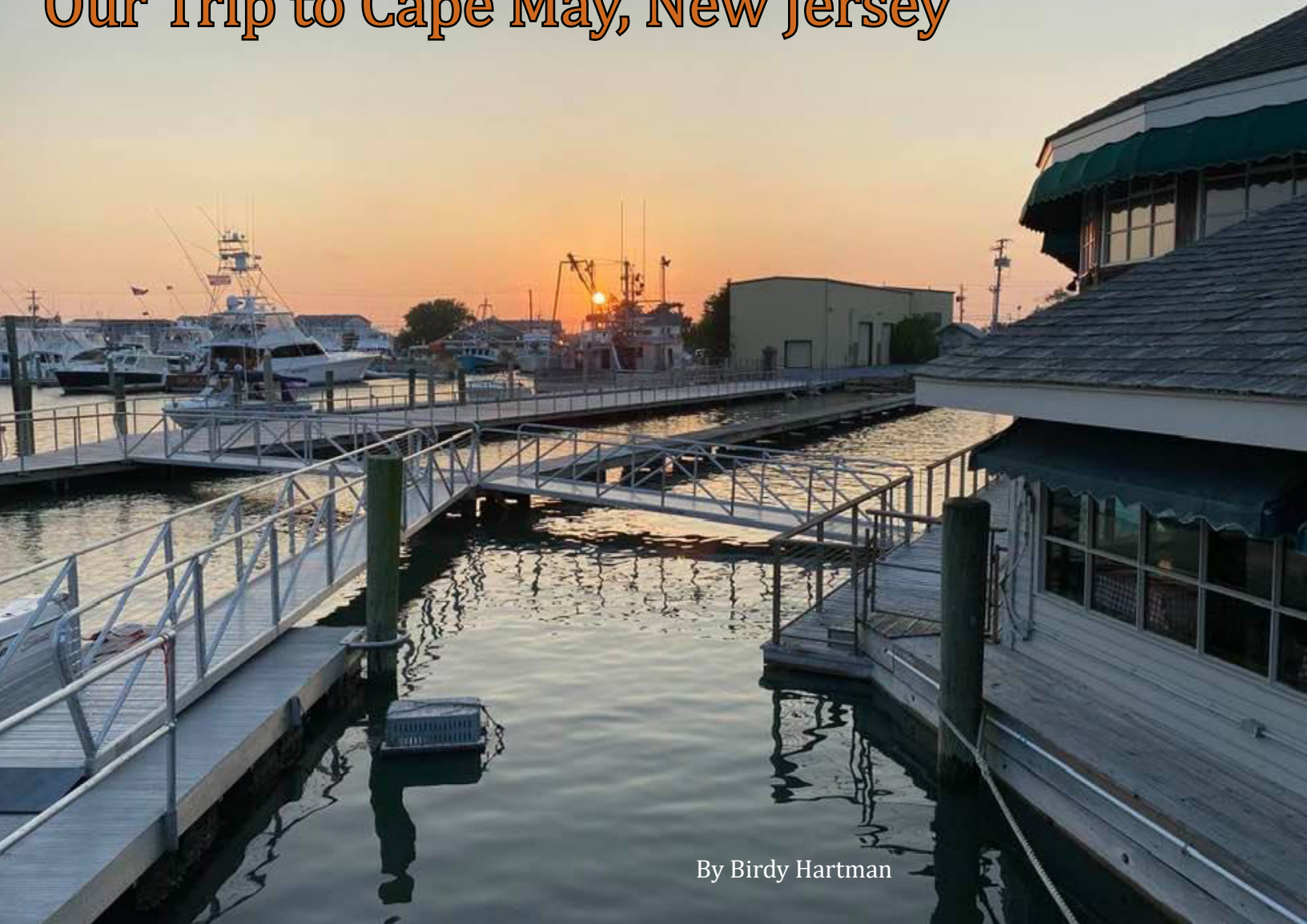
Annie was the motivator as she took it upon herself to yell out words of inspiration to keep us working hard on keeping up with the routines. Bob realized that being fit on the bike doesn't mean you could kick butt with the other core exercises. Listy was fine with using "modified" as a good excuse for not doing some of the harder routines... plus checking on Evie provided some great breaks too! However, we all had fun starting our morning with a little action before shifting to our bacon and egg breakfasts!



The week went fast, but it certainly was fun and we appreciated everyone using their vacation time to bond with our family!



Our Trip to Cape May, New Jersey



By Birdy Hartman

The Corona Virus sure has put a stop on most vacations for us. We had plans to leave Aug. 4th for Hawaii, but the islanders don't really want us to visit them right now and who can blame them. Lyle had a business trip scheduled also for Cape May, New Jersey and we really debated on if this was a good idea or not. Cape May has much lower Covid numbers than SD but you must fly to get there... and that was a concern. But in the end, we decided to brave the airports while staying as masks-up as we could. The trip was a lot easier than we anticipated and Cape May was beautiful! We stayed right across the street from the beach and enjoyed the feel of sand and sounds of the ocean.





However, the highlight of the trip was that on FRANCIE'S birthday, Bryce and Bridget came to stay at our hotel with Kieran in tow. It just so happened that they were planning a trip to Cape May for that exact week! We are certain that Francie prearranged all of this so that Lyle could finally get to hold his first grandbaby! What a heartwarming moment that was to see Lyle, all masked up but holding his grandchild. Even that mask could not hide the joy in his face. His whole body was beaming with love and joy. We got to spend two great days together, talking, laughing, drinking, eating, touring... but none of that mattered. The absolute best attraction was Kieran. He smiled and cooed at all the right times. He nestles into your arms like only a new baby can do and the love you feel in your heart when you hold him just is overwhelming. So that is the best and most memorable part of our trip to Cape May. We want to thank Bryce and Bridget for coming down early and hanging with us old folks! They made this trip worth every moment!

FAMILY

SHORTS

Brett and Carinda Move to Austin

By Brett Sorem

Well, it's safe to say at this point we went out with a bang. We had so much fun at our wedding and we want to thank all of the family who were able to make it out to Palm Springs. Two weeks later, we were in lock down in our quaint Brooklyn Condo. Among the 8 weeks we spent in quarantine a few things happened. I got Covid and recovered, both Carinda and I lost our jobs, and our honeymoon plans got put on hold. Not quite what we had envisioned the first few months of married life to be like.

Fortunately, Carinda and I had plenty of downtime on our hands. Over many margaritas, we came to the conclusion that now was the best time to move. We had not planned on staying in New York forever, but we were hoping to at least stay for another few more years, which would have allowed us to spend time with our favorite new nephew Kieran. With the uncertainty of our country and the worrisome future outlook ahead at that point, we decided to rent out our condo, stay with Big Al for a few months then head to Austin.

We have been in Austin for a few months and really love it. We are still figuring out what's ahead on our journey, but at the very least we know where we are. Hope to see any of you all out for a visit once our world is back to normal. Miss you all.

