



**R F N I**

December - 2021

Issue No: 371

Catch The News

The image shows a decorative header for a newsletter. It features the letters 'R', 'F', 'N', and 'I' in large, colorful, 3D-style fonts. Below the letters are small cartoon illustrations of people and a dog. The text 'December - 2021' is on the left and 'Issue No: 371' is on the right. A small logo with the text 'Catch The News' is positioned between the 'F' and 'N'. The entire header is set against a background of autumn-themed decorations, including yellow sunflowers, red berries, and a pumpkin.

**HAPPY  
THANKSGIVING**



# Thanksgiving Celebration 2021

By Bud and Margaret

In the gap between the decline of the Delta variant and before the rise of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, the Riel/Mehans welcomed the extended family into their home for Thanksgiving XXVI. And the weather was wonderfully warm and dry, and it was great to see everyone after a year of no large parties. Fortunately, following CDC Guidelines was not difficult as we always celebrate Thanksgiving outdoors. We did notice that no one was upstairs watching football-- maybe it was COVID or maybe the teams playing football were not family favorites.

It would not be Thanksgiving without the aroma of roasted turkey being basted and then expertly carved by the Bud-Jeff team. But when the growing size of our family outpaced even the largest turkey, we started to add other family traditions. This includes a sizable salmon marinated in Margaret's secret Alaska-inspired sauce. More recently we have added a third tradition- an incredibly tender tri-tip marinated so well by SeaSide Market that they sell it as barbeque "crack." Both the tri-tip and salmon were cooked to perfection by Michael on the outside grill. Also, it would not be thanksgiving without the appear-



ance of Carol's delicious tangerine-inspired fruit salad (which is also Bud's favorite dessert) affectionately called Orange Goop. There were also more recent favorites such as Tim and Fedrico's mushroom pate, as well as a wide range of salads, vegies, stuffing, and pies, and new additions such as Nicole's home-baked olive bread, and Ana's taco bar. The collective efforts of a family of cooks are quite impressive and enjoyable.

It was great to see so many of the cousins discovering each other after a year of no cross-family gatherings. And we got to enjoy the newer family members born during the pandemic. It was a wonderful celebration, and as fitting finish the thirty-odd family members in attendance raised a toast to those who were not able to travel and be with us for thanksgiving.

If the family Christmas cards you receive have a familiar background, you can thank Robert once again for his artful photography. It is great to have a professional photographer to create family memories. Here's hoping that by this time next year, the fear of the coronavirus will be minimized, and all of our far-flung family will be able to join us.



# Happy Thanksgiving





# Hawaii with Friends

The Gillinghams, Pantons, Farkases, and Halls all took off together to celebrate retirement freedom by traveling in October and using the opportunity to roast our youngest friends in our group, turning 60 in Kauai!

By Listy Gillingham





The Gillinghams, Pantons, Farkases, and Halls all took off together to celebrate retirement freedom by traveling in October and using the opportunity to roast our youngest friends in our group, turning 60 in Kauai!

We ventured into Poipu Beach as Lyle and Birdy have a condo with the Marriott timeshare and offered that to the group to share. Holly and Rex stayed with the Halls, while Kym, Doug, Bob, and Listy found a condo less than a mile away right next to Poipu Beach. It worked out great because we were able to walk back and forth from each place, sharing meals and gathering for various events. We were also able to get Marriott passes for the whole group so spending time lazing around the Marriott beach front zone was also fun.



After spending the day hiking or venturing around the island, Bob would escape over to Brennecke's Beach for some crashing body surfing waves as others ventured into the ocean for some snorkeling action.

Each day was filled with fun, relaxation, and action, which made it a great vacation. We did find time to play Pickleball which proved to be quite the challenge with trade winds that often changed the direction of the ball causing much laughter and some incredibly interesting shots. We played golf as a group on one day (though Birdy and Lyle managed to play 3 days while we were there).



We visited Waimea Canyon and said hello to Francie as we hiked around the area. We stopped for lunch in the valley and enjoyed the local fair and our friendships with muddy shoes that had traces of our adventures. We also kayaked around the Wailua River and walked to the famous no-so-secret falls. The good news, for those of you who have traveled there, is they have made the path more tourist friendly by adding board bridges to help get you through the



slipperiest parts. They added a few more river crossings too which added to the hike as well.

We enjoyed celebrating the 60th birthdays (Doug's was in October and Kym's was in Nov.) with a few crazy games. We played 60-Opoly and added top hats for everyone to wear to help get us in the spirit of the games Listy had planned for everyone. Bob wrote a crazy song to help keep the fun flowing and there was plenty of wine and beer to create a rather spirited celebration for everyone.

Some of the other games included: Are You Smarter Than a 60-Year-Old? Kauai 60 Bingo, and Roll Em. Lots of laughter and fun competition made this a memorable trip for all.



# Jeff and Carol Hit Beaches, Monuments and more in Mexico

## Then visit the Family in New Jersey and see the Sites in DC

By Jeff & Carol Benesch



This Fall was a busy one for Jeff and Carol as they hit the beautiful Caribbean coast of Mexico one week and were on the East Coast with Jessica and family the next. With neither of us ever having visited the mainland of Mexico before, we certainly picked a good time to visit Cancun!

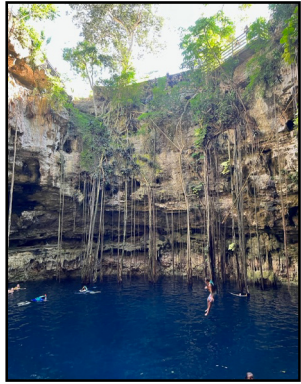
Two dear friends, George and Jennifer Qsar, members of our camping group, had a timeshare right on the beach that they offered to share, the “B” side of the unit just like a nice resort hotel. We spent a week with them, and the weather, the company, the food, and the beach couldn’t have been nicer! We had a full schedule nearly every day, with a couple days devoted to seeing heritage sites some distance away from our resort, and a couple of days more, leisurely spent at the fabulous pools (with swim-up bars!) just steps away from our rooms.

We also played some pickle ball, after teaching our hosts the finer points of the game. Having played a lot of tennis, they were quick learners.





We spent one day on an excursion that included visiting the coastal ruins at Tulum, an ancient Mayan site that included large royal residences, a huge stone lighthouse, temples, burial sites, and many more significant architectural marvels. Who knew that the Mayans were as mathematically advanced as the Greeks? They were wonderful builders and engineers, without a peer in the Western Hemisphere.



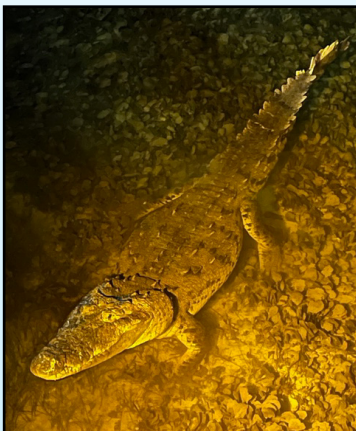
That same day, we visited an amazing underground pool and cave, called a Cenote in the Yucatan. It turns out the limestone environment of the Yucatan Peninsula is filled with thousands of these Cenotes. The one we ventured into was a privately owned marvel, that held numerous beautiful limestone deposits on the ceilings and floors and a teal blue pool which we entered and walked / swam in a large circular tube many acres across. The pictures can't convey the eeriness, the colors, and the calm mystery of floating in these crystal-clear streams through the limestone cave.

We followed our cenote experience with a snorkeling adventure on the reef just off the coast of Tulum, where we saw lots of coral, colorful tropical fish, rays and one large green sea turtle. Turtles are plentiful, and protected throughout the whole Cancun coastal county, called Quintana Roo. We later found out, much to our surprise, that so are the Caribbean Crocodiles!



We had a great meal that evening at a seafood restaurant near our resort and ate on the veranda fronting the Cancun Lagoon, a large tropical lake that separates the hotel zone from the main town of Cancun.

As soon as we ordered our margaritas, up swims a very large, and somewhat terrifying crocodile. It turns out that this croc hangs out at the restaurant eating whatever the patrons toss over



the rail. Even though he was surrounded by many fish of varying sizes, he seemed to prefer the fare that generous, if somewhat mis-guided, tourists drop into the water to this 12' long, and very gnarly old grifter. Carol threw him some pineapple, and he seemed to enjoy that just fine.



The next night included a romantic dinner cruise (all the drinks and full lobster dinner included!) on the lagoon with the sunset, the clouds and the impending storm all providing us a fabulous light show. We had the obligatory proposal made by a kneeling aspiring groom (she said yes!), music by a solo talented saxophonist, and a great dinner below decks of this pretend pirate ship. Very romantic and entertaining evening. Thankfully, the rain held off until we were disembarking, but wow, did it rain! That was about the only rain we saw in our whole stay in Mexico.

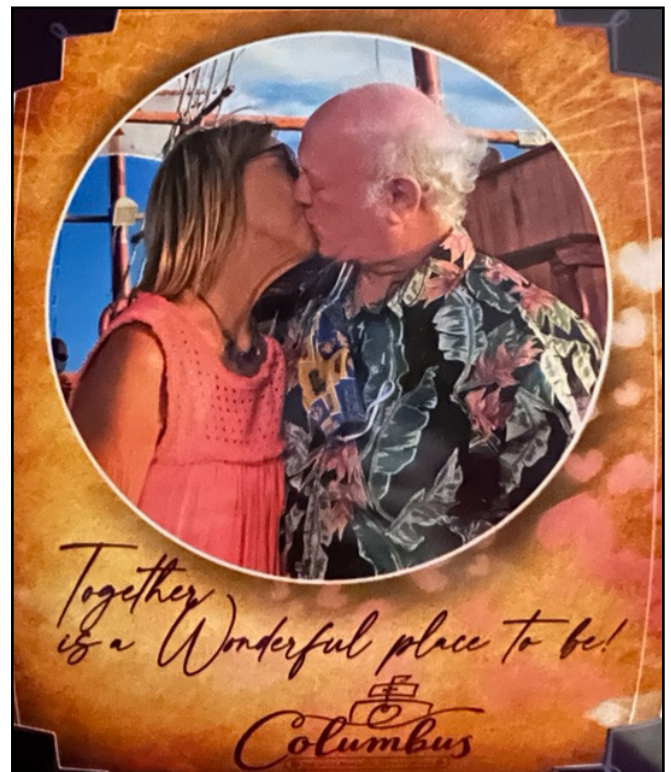


The highlight of our trip was the bus excursion to the pyramid at Chichen Itza. One of the seven wonders of the “modern” world, the main pyramid and its surrounding acres and monuments are awe inspiring to say the least. Tulum was an engineering wonder, but this pyramid, 1500 years old or more, is truly ingeniously designed to reflect the calendar, the solstices, the light of the sun and moon, and the power of the emperor and other royalty. There is a ball court arena in which ancient Mayan games were played, that reminded us of the Quid-ditch games of Harry Potter fame. And an ancient stone observatory from which



the Mayans traced the paths of the sun, the moon, planets, and stars. The bus trip was long but well worth the ride. We even visited another popular cenote on the way back, but it paled in comparison to the underground caves of our previous excursion.

Cancun was lovely, and warm, even in the late fall, and we'll not soon forget our wonderful trip there and our welcoming hosts, George and Jennifer!





No sooner had we returned to San Diego, but we headed off 4 days later to visit Jessica, Miguel, and Benny, Sofia and Matty in Edison, New Jersey. The weather was actually quite pleasant with crisp Fall afternoons, and trees that were in full coloration! We finally got our autumn leaves sighting! After spending a night at the Rios home, we headed off in the family van to Washington, DC, a first for 10 year old Ben, and the 7 year old twins. Our three days were full of walking, touring, and monument hunting!

We stayed in a close neighborhood called Logan Circle, an historical area about 1 mile from the

Mall. Our accommodations were somewhat rustic, but a very clean, large basement apartment that reminded one of their college days. Not bad, but definitely not the Ritz. The location, however, was terrific. We walked to the White House the first day, and though it was closed to tourists, we walked all the way around it. We followed with visits to many of the Mall side monuments, the Washington Monument (from the outside), the WWII memorial, the reflecting pond, and the glorious Lincoln Memorial. We spent quite a long time there as the kids had their National



Park Passports that had to be stamped, the monument has a gift shop, and the walls are filled with quotes, speeches, and other memorabilia. It's an amazing place!

A short walk away was the Korean War memorial, the new (for us) Martin Luther King Memorial, (very impressive statuary) with a commanding view of the Jefferson Memorial across the Tidal Basin. We finished our long day of driving and walking by spending sunset at the awe-inspiring, and quite large, FDR memorial which encompassed many acres, and many panels, statues, and memorable vignettes and speeches engraved into the massive rock walls.



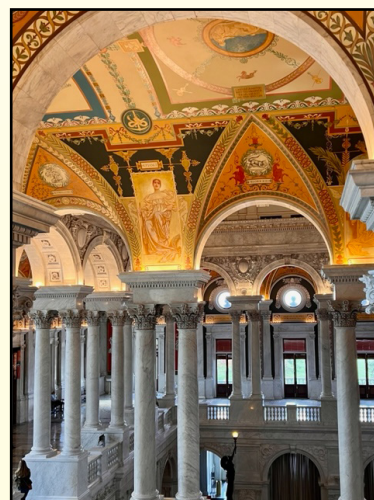
The next morning, we stopped at a bagel place and headed to the Capitol Complex to meet with our Congresswoman. Our appointment was at Noon at the Russell Office building which is due West of the Capitol Building (also closed to tourists.) A couple of aides came down to get our group, escorted us through security, and walked us to Sara Jacobs office on the second floor, very near Nancy Pelosi's office. Congresswoman Jacobs is newly elected and represents the 53rd CD which includes San Carlos and La Mesa. She is one of the youngest members of Congress, and is the granddaughter of Irwin Jacobs, the founder of Qualcomm. (Never hurts to have \$\$\$ when running for office.)



We were escorted into her office, and she couldn't have been more gracious! (Jeff knew Ms. Jacobs and worked on her behalf during the election.) She interacted with the kids like a pro, and asked them questions about their trip to DC, their school, their likes, and dislikes, and much more. She spent nearly ½ hour with us and all of it will be long remembered. It was a key day at the House of Representatives, with the members planning to vote on the Infrastructure Bill which was being debated and brought to the floor later that day for a vote. The 3 kids each got a drink, a picture with the Congresswoman, and a great memory.



Jeff has a first cousin, Dan Klein and his wife Rosanne, who live in nearby Silver Spring, Maryland. Jessica lived with the Kleins when she interned with Senator Dianne Feinstein for several months following her college graduation. We met with Dan and Rosanne for lunch at a nearby restaurant, right after we toured the Library of Congress, right behind the Capitol Building and next to the Supreme Court. The Library of Congress is one of the more amazing buildings in DC, with a



stupendous domed ceiling and one of the original Gutenberg Bibles, the first large book to be printed with moveable type, in 1455. It started the publishing revolution in Europe where books were made available to the masses. Dan and Rosanne spent lunchtime with us, and we caught up on family happenings and it was very nice.

Since it was fairly close by, we headed out to the Spy Museum, which captivated everyone in our group. We all were given a mission, an alias, and an ID card, and we headed upstairs to get our assignment started. Actually, it was quite fun, but the museum had detailed interactive exhibits on the history of spying, the good (and bad) agents that have changed history, several rooms full of spy craft from WWI, WWII and the Cold War, and films and gizmos a plenty! And of course, the gift shop. We were all exhausted from our spy adventures and UBER'd home back to our apartment.



After a well deserved night of sound sleep, we drove across the Potomac to Alexandria, Virginia and the Mt. Vernon estate of our First President, George Washington. We toured the house and the grounds, the extensive gardens and orchards, the out-buildings, and the tomb where Washington, his wife Martha, and their children and other relatives are buried. There was also a fairly new monument and memorial dedicated to the burial grounds of the numerous slaves and servants that served the Washington household



and farms. It's not well known that the prosperity that graced the ex-General and First President, and his family, was due in large part to the more than 300 slaves that worked at Mt. Vernon. Many were freed by the Washington's, but not until many years after they started their work there. Virginia, after all, was a slave state, and was even later the home to the Capital of the Confederacy, Richmond. It was quite an educational morning.



After Mt. Vernon, we drove back to DC and immediately visited the Smithsonian Aerospace Museum, which disappointingly was only 40% open with a sizeable enlargement and modernization underway. At least the kids were enthralled with the Wright Brothers' plane, the Apollo Spacecraft, the many planes and rockets hanging from the ceiling and walls, and the science oriented interactive exhibits, along with the gift shop. A trip to the Jefferson Memorial was a late day addition, and then we headed back to Logan Circle for dinner and bed.



Our last day consisted of a trip to the National Archives, and the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History. We arrived at the Archives only to find there was a fire alarm incident, and the building was temporarily closed. After waiting about a half hour with no resolution in sight, we went across the street to the Natural History Museum. It was re-done a few years ago to make the exhibits (which feature millennia of geographic and biological earth history) much more walkable and interactive. There are still many dinosaur fossil skeletons but also much more educational material to digest under and around the animals and plants. We also spent a lot of time in the gem and stone exhibit where the Hope Diamond is displayed, along with thousands of other amazing rocks, gemstones, crystals, jewelry, and geological amazements.







Everyone really liked this museum, but the adults realized it would take several days to digest it all, it was that large and extensive. After a lunch in the Museum Cafeteria, we headed to the Smithsonian American History Museum where the highlights included the Invention Room, the Inaugural Dresses of the First Ladies, and Dorothy's Ruby Slippers from the Wizard of Oz. With this museum and gift shop out of the way, we started our 3-hour drive back to Edison.

Jeff and Carol spent the next 3 days at a new hotel for us in Edison. It's within walking distance of the Rios home, a brand-new Homewood Suites by Hilton, right next to Target and with its own indoor swimming pool. Since the hotel had just opened a few months before, there were no tired smells of cigarettes, no stains on the rugs, no smudges anywhere. And each large room had a kitchen with full-size fridge and stove. Though we didn't eat much in the room, we did take the Rios kids to the pool for an afternoon swim and really had a great time with the whole clan! Can't wait to return to Edison and our East Coast Family.



# Tahoe Adventure

By Listy Gillingham

November seemed like a perfect time to visit Lake Tahoe! We purposely avoided the skiing crowds by going before the Thanksgiving Week, when the slopes were still closed. But we were happy to see that there was snow on the hilltops for us to admire and hike around which made the trip feel special. We stayed at the Ridge at Lake Tahoe which was exactly what it sounds like.

The hotel sat at the top of the Ridge of Heavenly Valley giving views of South Lake Tahoe on one side and the Nevada side on the other. We had a condo, so there was plenty of room to stretch out in front of the fireplace and read if needed and we were able to grill food on our own patio as well.

We spent the first day wandering through the downtown area and walking along the beach front of the Lake. We didn't see many people and were happy to stop for lunch and enjoy the outdoors while looking across the street at the beautiful lake. We bought groceries and stocked up for the week which made it fun. We walked right by the campgrounds that Carol, Birdy, and I stayed in the summer of 1972 when Mom and Dad took us on our family road trip to visit Richard and see Lake Tahoe. Mom and Dad didn't camp with us, as they stayed in a snazzy

room figuring we would enjoy the great outdoors and campfires. I remember Mom proclaiming that Harvey's was the best casino because you could get as many deserts there as you could carry when having dinner there. Bob and I weren't interested in the casinos, so we skipped that part from our trip.





We brought our Pickleball racquets and tried our hand on the courts at our condo. Playing Pickleball in Tahoe was a challenge, as there were some interesting winds that cut through the game at times, altering the path of the ball. On the flipside, we had a smooth court which made for some fast-paced play as every ball that bounced would get an extra sliding effect much like a well-intended spin would, racing by you if you weren't super quick with your return. It was truly crazy but once we got the hang of things, it turned out to be really fun.

We also brought our golf clubs and decided to play in Genoa, which happens to be the OLDEST settlement in Nevada (1851) and situated within the Carson River Valley. We played the river course because it sounded pretty to Listy. However, "pretty" in the golf world means more hazards to make each shot more challenging. Let's just say, I might have lost a few balls to those "pretty" lakes that appeared out of nowhere on some of the holes. Re-

gardless, it was a beautiful day, 60 degrees with snow-capped mountains to view throughout the day.



We also loved seeing the deer roam right on the course as we played. On the 18th hole, there were probably 20 deer on the left-hand side, grazing around the pretty lakes, trusting that we would hit the ball straight leaving them to their afternoon snacks. Lucky for them, we had lots of practice by then and we didn't disturb their restive state. After playing golf, we shopped around the downtown area just for grins (2 blocks long) and then headed back to make dinner at our condo.

The rest of the time was spent hiking every day. We loved that part. Our first hike was at Emerald Bay where we traveled east along the shore and up to a cool overlook (Eagle's Nest Campground). We loved that!

The next day, we decided to drive around the lake. We saw the north shore and stopped in Alpine Meadows for a hike in the hills. We ventured out to conquer the 5-lake hike, but never hit any of the lakes because the hike was 20 miles long. We did get to hike through



the snow at various times and saw some beautiful scenery throughout the trek, but it got too late and cold to keep going, so we opted for an 8-mile hike instead. After the hike, we drove back

into town, found a table outside in front of the Marriott Timber Hotel, where there was outdoor music and a big fire pit! We ordered a few drinks and ate a well-deserved lunch!



Our last hike took us back to Emerald Bay where we decided to go on the Rubicon Trail but this time we went west/north. There was a map that showed a light house at the 5-mile mark which would make the hike a doable 10 miles long. So, along the shoreline we went, viewing the lake from several bays and viewpoints along the way. The lighthouse, though very old, was a little humorous because it was the size of an outhouse and looked like an old one from past decades. It did have a marvelous view of the lake, but to call it a lighthouse was bit of a stretch in terms of most people's expectations.

We loved this adventure and hope to redo it again sometime with friends as we know they would enjoy it as well.





## *Riel Bowl 2022*

Riel Bowl 2022 is back and we're ready for family fun for everyone. The festivities will begin at 12:00 p.m. and everyone gets to take their chance at bringing their favorite Potluck dish to share. Robert will be making his famous Prime Rib and we will host a Pickleball Tournament for anyone who is interested (weather permitting).

Everyone is encouraged to bring a White Elephant gift that connects to the decade you were born in or, at least as close to it as you can get. For example, the Gillingham kids (Kristy, Annie, and David) would need to find something nostalgic from the 80's as they were all born in that decade, whereas Listy and Bob would need to find something nostalgic of the 50's. If you're stuck and need to steal from a different decade, we will allow it! Just pick a favorite decade and make it fun. Of course, we encourage you to not spend any money, and find a true White Elephant in your garage or on your shelf. Creativity is always appreciated and remember, if you bring one in, you have to take what you opened home! We will apply White Elephant Steal rules just in case someone sees something that inspires them.

In respect to our amazing patriarch, Dad, there is an agenda for us to somewhat follow; and in honor of our unforgettable matriarch, Mom, we will host the event on her traditional birthday, January 1, 2022!

### Agenda:

- 12:00 p.m. Arrive with your own drinks and something to share
- 1:00 p.m. Time to Eat
- 1:30 p.m. Pickleball Tournament Begins
- 2:30 p.m. White Elephant Gift Exchange for the Decades
- 4:00 p.m. Dessert (ok, maybe earlier depending on the crowd)
- 4:15 p.m. Toast to Mom and Dad

Of course, the timing might not be as accurate as one might hope, so if you are thinking this schedule will be followed, you might be disappointed, but we promise you we'll do most of those things at one time or another. Looking forward to seeing everyone on the 1st!!!!