

Happy Holidays!

'Tis the season when I think about friends and family - especially those who I don't see often. Since I have not sent a holiday letter lately, I will share the major happenings in my life in the past year (or so) starting with last year.



In February of 2008, I went to Mexico with my friend Rob to use (before we loose) our time off. We went to Playa Del Carmen and then Chitzen Itza. In Playa, we dove in the colorful Cenotes (caves) where fresh water and salt water meet. While in Playa, we rented scooters which were great to get around town. Unfortunately, I dumped mine at 45mph with nothing but a swimsuit, T-shirt and Tivas. I was scraped up badly, but given that I slid 40 feet on pavement, I am lucky to have walked away.

Next we went to Chitzen Itza to see the great Mayan pyramids. On the way there, we stopped at Tulum to see the seaside ruins. The ruins looked great along the coastline. We spent about an hour here, and then moved on to Coba and climbed the great pyramid with a great view over the jungle.

The next morning we got to Chitzen Itza before the crowds. Last time I was there was in 1997 with almost no vendors and I climbed the great pyramid. This time, there are lots of vendors, and the pyramid is roped off. However, this year, I got some great pictures since we were there before the crowds.

In October of 2008, I had shoulder surgery to repair my rotator cuff (reattached the Superspinatus). The recovery was long. I didn't drive for 5 weeks but I have great friends who took care of me. Now more than a year later, my shoulder is great. I am back to playing volleyball and the other activities I enjoy.

In April of 2009, I was laid off from Agilent after almost 25 years. It has been a tough transition to leave the company and all the great people where I worked for so long. To clear my head, I took several road trips.

The first trip was in June with a friend, Liz. First we stopped at Sequoia National Park to see the largest tree in the world - the General Sherman sequoia. We drove to the other side of Yosemite to Bristlecone National Park where we saw the oldest living thing - the 4776 year old bristlecone pine tree - and during the hike dime-sized hail pelted us!

The second trip was 5 weeks on the road north. The trip began with about 20 friends' annual camping trip to Lassen National Park. On the first hike, one of our friends, Elizabeth, died on the trail from a heart attack. I was first to discover her and before the rangers arrived I tried to revive her using CPR for 20 minutes. Her death was very sad for all of us especially for her husband, Bill. On the positive side, she died in a place of beauty doing something she loved. We will all miss her.

The next part of my journey was to Oregon where I stayed at Big Pine and I saw the tallest Ponderosa Pine. I had the entire park to myself for 3 days. Each night, I coaxed a feral cat to sit on my lap at the campfire. From there, I headed to Siuslaw National Park for one night of camping. Then I drove to Portland to stay at my friend's Dave and Annette and to visit my friend April. I went to Seattle to hang out with my friend, Chris and then spent a week at my dad's in Port Townsend where Valerie, Jon and their son Ian joined us. It was a fun time and we got really close to killer whales on a boat trip. (pictures soon on my website). From there, I went to Spokane to play in the Summer Shimmy Volleyball Tournament and spent some days at my friends Heather and Shawn's house. Then, I took a short drive to Moscow, Idaho where I spent several days visiting my friend Patricia. The rest of the trip was heading home via Portland to stop in at Dave's again and then home.



In October, my dad had his reunion near my house and I showed him and his friends the area wineries, beaches and other notable sites. I had a fun time showing them around Sonoma County.

In addition to my trips, I have hiked a lot and I have more actively taken up photography. Many of my photos from the hikes and other activities are on my website: www.mills4.com. Highlights were going to the Monterey Bay Aquarium; a trip to Pt Reyes lighthouse and coastline; our annual trek to the Marin waterfalls; camping at Pinnacles National Park - where I got to see a California Condor in the wild; kayaking in Bodega Bay; and a couple of backpack trips to the coast where I saw a bobcat!



I hope to start a new job in January with General Dynamics. The details are being worked out. Drop me an email or find me on Facebook to keep in touch: tj@mills4.com.

Best wishes,