

2003 was a quiet year for us with no big changes. Robert still likes his job as software engineer at Stratus and enjoys many ham radio activities. Besides editing a ham radio newspaper, this year he put together a team of emergency communicators in our town of Stow, coordinated a drill, and remains on call.

Anne just started a mini-job (18 hr/wk) contracting as Local Access TV Coordinator for Stow. Getting the station up to speed will take a while; early goals include purchasing a computer and video cameras and developing a policies manual. This will be all new experience for Anne and the town. Anne's looking forward to having some neat equipment to play with and learning a lot about the town.

Our families are well in Florida and New England. Our remaining cat Cadbury, now certain he's a person, traveled to NH with us throughout the summer.



We spent the year messing around with a boat. Our obsession began last Feb. with an afternoon spree to the New England Boat Show. We almost bought a "porta-boat" which folds like an origami toy for easy transport. Back home, our fate veered a different way when Anne discovered the "\$1000 and Under" section of the used boat ads. So many bargains! We finally settled on *Avocado*, a 15 foot 1967 fiberglass runabout with a 60 HP Johnson motor. The fisherman who hated to part with it threw in a trolling motor, two fish-finders, a supply of rubber worms, repair manuals, and a list of shops that service ancient outboards.

Despair and embarrassment ensued when the gas dripping confirmed that our motor was toast. But wait! We were saved by the old salts at the ancient-outboards shop, who said they just happened to be rebuilding a 1966 60 HP Johnson that we could have for a song.

Meanwhile, our living room became a carpentry and upholstery shop as we rebuilt and reupholstered the seats, with gorgeous green vinyl and 10 coats of spar-varnish on the new plywood base. The spiff-up included fiberglass repair and polish, soap, green paint, and lots of elbow grease.



At last it was test run time. The motor started, ran nice and quiet, and the boat moved, just barely, followed by black clouds of smoke. Eventually we learned to change the motor's tilt, which added a little power, and we learned that in 1966 all motors emitted great clouds of smoke and in those days no one cared. Unfortunately our friends, family and neighbors have been less enthusiastic about the back-to-the-60's time machine. They run for gas masks when they see us turning the key, and seldom request a second ride.



But we've been happy prowling around Perkins Pond in our comfy green seats in *Avocado*. From May through Sept. we raced up to our NH cottage on Friday nights to have slow sunset cruises before dinner. All weekend our old sailboat was abandoned at dock while we careened in circles in the middle of the lake or zoomed from one end to other in no time. Back when we were sailing (last year), how we scoffed at the simple-minded motor boaters!

Some weekends, that is. The other weekends were the ones Robert spend honing his skills as an outboard motor mechanic. We were glad to be on a small lake every time the motor conked out at the other end, and came to appreciate the trolling motor as it silently pushed us home infinitesimally slowly. Long days were devoted to searching out a 1966 distributor rotor, shopping for fuel lines and spark plugs, poring over repair manuals, tinkering in the hot sun and thinking it almost started that time. Sometimes we would visit local marinas and gaze at new boats and motors.

It's almost time for the 2004 New England Boat Show.

*Best wishes for 2004,
Anne & Robert*

