

Happy Holidays from Anne VanTine and Robert Evans



We hope this December finds you in good health and good spirits. We had a pretty good year. Robert is still happily employed at Stratus, and Anne has been happily unemployed all year. Robert survived two lay-offs and is now engaged in automating some of the manual steps to build and test Stratus software. He also designs and develops new system management features for a modified version of Windows that runs on Stratus fault-tolerant computers.

In March, we took the Amtrak "Auto Train" from Virginia to Florida. The auto train loads passengers' autos triple-decker onto special train cars.



After a pleasant 18 hours with dinner on the train, we headed out in our own car. First stop was Anne's father's brother in Lady Lake, then south to Robert's parents near Ft Lauderdale. (Swimming in their big warm retirement community pools is so pleasant we're getting too lazy to go to the beach.) Then west to visit a ham radio friend on a canal in Punta Gorda, and a couple of days with Robert's sister and husband in North Port. We had a fine outing with them to the ritzy island of Siesta Key, with a seafood lunch, an afternoon on the beach, and dinner at elegant "Ophelia's on the Bay". Then the train to Virginia and the drive back north. Ironically, since the auto train was Anne's strategy for staying out of scary airplanes, the auto train had a serious crash just a few days after our trip on the same route.

At the end of Oct. we flew south to celebrate Robert's father's 90th birthday, his mother's 80th, and their 55th



wedding anniversary. With Robert's sisters and other guests, we attended a dinner celebration, and enjoyed having the family together for three days.

To get a jump on summer, we opened the NH cottage May 18. It was a dramatic wintery day, with snow falling and fog drifting over Perkins Pond



and tiny birds circling just a few feet above the water and a creature we decided to call an otter swimming around. On subsequent weekends Anne got a little fanatical with her leaf blower and cleaned the entire forested yard, engaging Robert's help to cart leaves to the dump. Anne continued as secretary to the lake association and published the *Perkins Ponder* newsletter. This was a great year for blackberries. Since Anne likes the challenge of battling briars and bugs way out on the hillside, we now have a freezer full of blackberries.



Friday afternoons we escaped the "city" and raced north, (with stops at all the farm stands) to arrive in time for a slow boat tour of Perkins Pond before cooking dinner. Robert got barbecue tools and cookbooks for his June 1 birthday, which set off a summer of gourmet bbq'ing. We cooked up a storm for a visit from Robert's cousin and family and then all summer tried new things like grilled scallops & plums with sweet mirin sauce and the biggest hit, thick pork chops and fresh peaches smothered in a homemade bbq sauce. Although this year was hot and dry, summer never lasts long enough. By mid September, when the weather turned, we abandoned the grill and consoled ourselves with a oven-roasted duck glazed with peach reduction.

Our Cape Cod vacation spanned the 4th of July week. The neighborhood where we stay traditionally puts on an unauthorized fireworks display at the local boat landing on Pleasant Bay. Townies and tourists applauded the excellent fireworks until the marsh across the creek caught fire, and then the fire was exciting. Unfortunately someone called 911. By the time the fire trucks arrived, local guys with pails had put out the fire. The grumpy officials, now stuck with their big trucks on a crowded dead-end, decreed an end to the fun. Next night we rode bicycles to fantastic town fireworks.



Early Oct., the last warm summery weekend found us at the beach in York and Ogunquit, Maine. Anne was disappointed that the York Wild Animal Kingdom had closed for the year, but we watched the taffy-making machine and ate lobster. From York Harbor, we explored several miles of walking trails and paused for a tour of a pre-revolutionary sea captain's house.



One sad event this year was the death of Anne's sister's ex-husband, Ed Winkler. Although Ellen and Ed had moved into new lives and relationships, Ed's illness brought the family and the



grown children Jeff and Amy all closer together. We spent several occasions with them and Ed last winter and spring. Ed had acquired about two dozen 1-ton towers of granite, and had made quite of project of getting them set up in his field like Stonehenge.

The last event we all attended before his death was a June ceremony for the completion of Ed's Stonehenge.

We also lost another cat this fall, to diabetes. We're now down to one, Cadbury, who's trying to adjust to being an only cat. Since Anne lost "her" cat a while ago, she's adopted Cadbury. We're trying to resist getting a new batch of cats. In earlier days, here's



Cadbury stalking his sister Hershey

Anne just finished her third Java programming course, just in case the job market picks up before her social security kicks in. So far, she's in no danger of getting bored with home life. Last winter, she got to skate on the pond before the snows, then encouraged Robert to stay fit by accompanying him

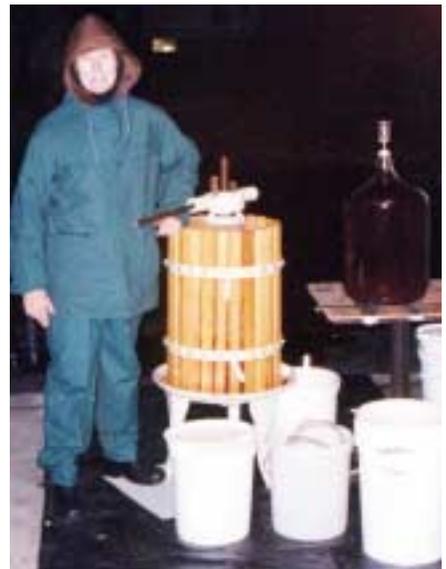


regularly to the gym at Stratus. This was offset by delving into our large cookbook collection and putting an interesting meal on the table every night, including half the dishes in a *Savory Stews* book.

Come spring, Anne joined "adult education" courses for walking and bicycling. Each week the bicycle group explored a new back road or easy nature trail in the local towns, with rides of 12-20 miles. The walks, up to 5 miles, were also a great way to see local conservation areas and hidden trails. In the fall, the Conservation Commission of nearby Sudbury led a wonderful series of walks, pointing out vernal pools and the life cycle of their inhabitants, small chestnut trees fighting the blight, the progress of a beaver dam, the sassafras plant, the bittersweet berries that birds eat like candy, and many more sights.

We still are making wine, but skipped this year to catch up. From the 2001 harvest, we have a Pinot Noir and a Cabernet ready to bottle, and a Chardonnay that we have ambitions to make into champagne. We're also indulging in store bought wine. Our wine tasting club helps us to make informed choices. On a given theme (e.g., "wines of Chile"), everyone brings a bottle and we taste one at a time while socializing.

Robert is actively involved with the Minuteman Repeater Association as vice president and newsletter editor. The MMRA is just one of the several Ham Radio clubs he belongs to. In a recent activity, Robert led a MMRA team that set up radios for the state Simulated Emergency Test.



Pressing the 2001 vintage



Best wishes for the new year!