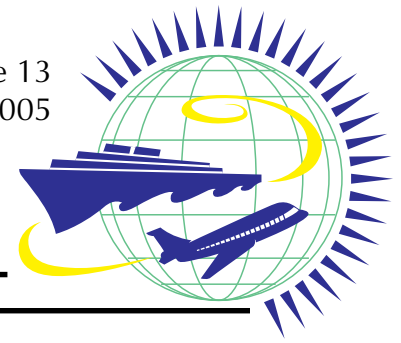


# Routon's **ROUSING** Reports

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A Routon's Romantic Reservations Publication – not for resale

You'll never guess where we have been since the last Report. We've been *home!* Now, that's different for us! It was just as promised in the last issue, but some of you just didn't believe it. And for the first time in several years, the Chez Routon has had guests in the house. (Maybe that's what happens when you stay home?)

Of course, it wasn't quite that simple. We did have our usual springtime trips after our return from the World Cruise. Helen was off to Florida to see her son, Mark, in Ft. Lauderdale BH. And no, BH is not a state; it means "before hurricanes". And the hurricanes this year are a story in themselves. For Mark and Raina, they have meant almost two *months* with no electric power!

After Helen again helped a friend with her semi-annual migration (driving) from Florida to Akron, things got busier. Suffice to say that in a matter of about three weeks, we drove 700 plus miles to Atlanta, attended a high school graduation and parties, drove 700 miles back to Ohio with a stop in Kentucky, flew for visits in Arkansas and Texas, visited friends in Ohio, and then made three stops to visit friends along the way home. *Whew!*

Unfortunately, in the interests of time, Helen did not make the trip to Texas to visit the grandchildren. As a result, she missed four year old Elizabeth Grace's "final" dance recital. This was a quite a show in a large auditorium with hundreds of people in the audience. The girls ranged in age from about four to 18 years old. The "spirit" was not unlike a sporting event with much shouting of encouragement. It was an experience. The girls were cute, but the best story involves Lara, our daughter-in-law. This was her first experience. As a result, she and another mother innocently volunteered to help shepherd one of the four year old groups, get them dressed and made up, corral them to the stage on time, etc. As usual, the show was running just a little bit late, but the little girls were lined up and patiently waiting. Then, one little girl announced loudly, "I have to go

potty." To this, Lara simply said, "No, you don't", and they made it through. I think I can sum up Lara's experience simply; Elizabeth Grace is **not** doing dance lessons this year.



*Elizabeth Grace at her dance recital.*

So what did we do being home all summer? Well, when you've been gone for all but six weeks in the first six months of the year, things get behind – and I get tired. However, I did manage to end the summer with a bang. As our condo association cocktail party came to a close in mid-September, I managed to pass out (no, not from the alcohol) and have my very first ambulance ride! Before the end of the week I had my new, shiny (I think) pacemaker and all was well. But enough of that.

We did "travel" this fall, but to see and show a bit of New England to our visitors. (and you could have been among them!) One of our favorite "local" spots is the seaside resort town of Ogunquit in Maine, about 45 minutes from here. (Fascinating story of how the town got its obviously Indian name. It seems there was a chief named Ogun and one day he got disgusted with the tribe and announced right there, "OgunQuit". And to this day...)

Ogunquit is a very nice seaside town, lots of shops, and so on. One of its features is a walk along the cliffs overlooking a rugged stretch of the Maine coast – twisted

*The rocky shore of Maine near Ogunquit.*





Main lobsterman demonstrating a trap for the tourists.

rocks with waves slowly eroding them into sand, a delightful place to sit in the sun and watch the birds and the sea. There is also a fine beach. We did not discourage Heather, our Aussie friend, from putting her feet into the Atlantic. We let her find out for herself that the water in October is only for small children and surfers in wet suits – cold!

Of course, it is the cold water that makes Maine lobster the very best. One of the things to do from Ogunquit is to take a short boat tour to see lobsterman pull some lobster traps and to learn about lobsters. We had never done that and our Aussie friends said, “let’s go”, so we did. Very interesting. Did you know that male lobsters have larger claws (hands) and females have larger tails (rears)? (No further comment – except, if you prefer the claw meat, always ask for a male lobster.) And if you want to stump your friends, ask what animal has a superb sense of smell but has no nose – right, the lobster. It seems its antennae perform the function externally.

Lobsters are bottom dwellers and apparently will eat anything they can get including other lobsters (but without the drawn butter or sauces that we like). They are certainly not good neighbors. In addition to trying to eat their neighbors, they are aggressive and territorial. Lobsters that lose the battle for territorial supremacy frequently also lose a claw in the fight. But that’s okay, because they can grow a new one. By the way, this aggressiveness is the reason the claws are rubber banded as soon as the lobster is pulled from the trap. It prevents the lobsters being held in the tank from eating each other before you can pick one for your dinner.

The lobster, of course, grows but its

shell does not – sort of like your kids growing while the clothes stay the same size. Only the lobster does not stop growing. Adult lobsters have to have “new clothes” about once a year. And while fashion is definitely not an issue, the only time the female can mate is when she is newly “naked” and unprotected. Fortunately, the male’s interest at this time turns more to sex than food and he shields her

until she gets enough shell back. Interestingly, the female picks her mate and prefers the biggest male she can find – and then leaves him without a backward glance. But back to the new “clothes” story.

The first thing that happens is the lobster shrinks the flesh in its claws to about ¼ size so it can pull them up through the narrow knuckle in the shell. It will also start to weaken the shell by absorbing calcium from the old shell while it is still wearing it – sort of eating itself. Then, at the right moment, the lobster will start flexing and the shell splits down the middle



This captain shows a lot of courage when it comes to naming his boat. Who’s Anne?

of the back. Out crawls the lobster leaving a complete shell that looks exactly like a real lobster. And since it will eat anything, it starts to eat on the old shell for calcium to more quickly build the new, larger shell it is forming. The size of the new shell must, of course, be big enough for a full year’s growth – again, sort of like buying school clothes for the kids. What fills the rest of the shell while the lobster grows into it? Seawater. This is why when you select your lobster dinner, a hard shell lobster at a given weight will have much more meat than a soft shell lobster.

Another insight from our trip pulling lobster traps is the history of lobster and

man. In colonial times, lobsters were considered a nuisance that interfered with bottom fishing. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they had become a food but not a desirable food. The prisons in Maine served lobster every night leading to such a riot that there is to this day a law in Maine limiting the serving of lobster to prisoners to no more than once a week. And now, conservation is the issue. In Maine there are some strict rules for lobstermen. The lobster (essentially the main body) must be at least 3¼ inches long and no more than five inches. Why the maximum? It is to protect the big breeders. Remember, the females like the big males. Regardless of their size, females able to breed, and for unknown reasons only about half are able to breed, have their tail fin notched before being returned to the water. The notch is their passport to safety when they are caught again. Now, you may ask, how does the lobsterman know any particular female is able to breed. Good question. Strangely, after the female has grown her new shell, she “lays” and stores the eggs – lots of them and the bigger the female the more eggs – on her underside where she fertilizes them with sperm she has stored since her “naked” days. This process also changes the color of the eggs. So, if the lobsterman sees the right color eggs, he knows this female is able to breed and is to be protected.

Obviously, the way to end this day was to have a boiled lobster dinner at the Lobster Pound in Ogunquit, our favorite lobster restaurant – three trips there this fall alone. You pick your lobster (male for big claws and female for big tail) from a large tank and they cook it, crack it to make it easy to eat, and serve it piping hot. Mmmm! And maybe that’s all you really need to know about lobsters!

Brilliant fall foliage is what brings most people to our area in October – trees in yellow, pink, salmon, Christmas red, and some that go multicolor like they cannot make up their mind. All set against the green of the evergreens. Mile after mile of beauty. This year, though, there was good news and bad news. The bad news: it was a much poorer color season due to lots of rain this summer and fall. The good news: the weather cleared for the one day we were scheduled to take our Aussie friends to the White Mountain area. While the foliage color was less

than normal, the day was typically fall – bright blue sky, sunny, and not too crisp, ideal for touring. Those of you who have visited here may remember the covered bridges, the cascading water of the Swift River, the cog railway, and the historic Mt. Washington Hotel (and those who cannot remember will just have to come and see).

For a change, we arrived at the cog railway station while there were still seats available for the last train of the day. Despite a very chill breeze – and likely a freezing wind at the top, Will and Heather, being Aussies, said they just had to go up – an hour and 20 minutes up, 20 minutes at the top, and another hour and 20 minutes to come down. The railway, formally known as the Mount Washington Cog Railway, was originally built in 1869. Fortunately, the coal burning, “puffer belly” equipment, while appearing ancient, is not the original! The railway was the very first of its type, and as it climbs its way to the top of 6,293 foot Mt. Washington, it is the second steepest railway in the world with an average grade of one in four. Heather and Will reported that the view from the top was forever – all over New England. I loaned my coat to Heather and so my coat went up, but Helen and I headed to the Mt. Washington Hotel for coffee!

The Mt. Washington Hotel is the only survivor of the big, wooden hotels that were the summer destinations for the well-to-do from Boston, New York and Connecticut in the early 1900's. They arrived by train, were picked up by their hotel's horse drawn coaches, and lived in luxury in the cool mountain air. The Mt. Washington even had an indoor pool if it was too cool outside. The other hotels burned and the Mt. Washington just declined over the years. In 1944, though, it gained world wide fame when it was chosen to host the Bretton Woods Monetary Conference. The challenge was to avoid monetary chaos after World War II. Forty four nations attended and agreed to create the World Bank, still a cornerstone in world finance, and to use the US dollar as the backbone of international exchange.

Some of you may remember visiting the hotel which, frankly, was in bad repair a few years back. Now, it has not only been completely restored, it has been upgraded for year-round use. There are some meeting rooms, but mostly there is an



*Tourists at a 19<sup>th</sup> century covered bridge.*



*The classic Mt. Washington Hotel.*



*The Mt Washington “Limited” prepares to depart.*

elegant lobby, a spacious bar with incredible views, outdoor porches that run the width of the building with spectacular views of Mt. Washington in the back and lawn and mountain views in the front. Just sitting and enjoying the view is great – from rocking chairs on the porches in the summer or through the picture windows while sitting next to a roaring, open fire in the winter! And there is golf, tennis, horseback riding, hiking, and swimming in the summer, skiing and swimming in the original indoor pool in the winter, and gourmet dining year around. Helen and I are going to try it one day even if we are locals. Why don't you join us?

Of course, we didn't overlook Boston in our touring. Boston is without doubt the most important historical city in the US, so important that the city itself is a US National Park. One of the best ways to get into Boston is to take the subway (underground) to State. The exit from the station is *through* the Old State House, the very same building where Benjamin Franklin stood on the balcony to read the US Declaration of Independence to the citizens of Boston in 1776. And you exit the building onto the square that was the sight of the Boston Massacre.

The best tour in Boston is the walking tour from the National Park headquarters right across the street from the Old State House. You learn all kinds of interesting facts as you walk the Freedom Trail. For example, the "horrible" Boston Massacre of peaceful Bostonians wasn't quite as the propaganda pictures of the time indicated. Instead of peaceful citizens falling away in fear – with presumably many deaths – the crowd of some 300 were armed with clubs and stones, the latter being thrown at the eight, count 'em, eight scared British Regulars. And no one really knows how the first shot was fired, but when all was said and done, a total of three people were dead – hardly a massacre!

One more bit of factual history you get on the walking tour is the true story of Paul Revere. Now Paul was quite a man – two wives (one at a time) and 16 children, a fine copper and goldsmith, even a dentist among other things. And he did row across the Charles River that fateful night where a farmer (Hertz rent a horse?) furnished him with a horse so he could ride. However, the lantern bit is not quite right and he did not go galloping across the

countryside hollering "the British are coming" and he was not the one that successfully spread the word. Facts are (1) he was the one who told the sexton how many lanterns to hang so others would know "by land or by sea". (2) Only an idiot would have hollered that the British were coming since at that time everyone was British and half the people were loyalists for the King. And (3), Paul was captured early in his ride, and when they held a gun to his head, he told everything! Now why have US school children been told a bunch of hokum? Well, when Wadsworth was writing his poem, the name of Revere fit better than the real hero. Another case of media distortion.

And Boston has so many other sights. There is the oldest, still in commission and in service navy vessel in the world, the USS Constitution, better known as Old Ironsides. She was given that nickname after a defeated English sailor in the War of 1812 said she must be made of iron as the cannon balls just bounced off of her. Smack dab in the middle of town is the Boston Common, the oldest city park in the US, originally established in 1633 as a place to graze livestock. There are interesting old graveyards, historic meeting places and churches, excellent galleries and museums – so much to do and see. And one of my favorite places, Legal Sea Food, home of the best clam chowder

in the world (I say). Their motto regarding seafood is, "If it's not fresh, it's not Legal". I'm sure the other seafood items are excellent, but I've never gotten past the chowder and rolls!

Why don't you come next year? The Chez Routon guarantees the weather will be better. If not, your room charges will be refunded in full! How can you beat that? And the present prediction is that we will be home – 2 years in a row! We will be off for the usual holiday trips for Thanksgiving and Christmas, and we plan to break up the winter with a trip toward the south probably in February and early March. (Are you all in the Southeast ready for us?) Beyond that, we shall wait and see.

By the time this rather tardy issue arrives, we will be into the holiday season. So, with this issue, Helen and I want to send each of you our very, very best wishes for Christmas, Hanukkah, and the year ahead. May you all have joyous holidays and may the New Year bring good health, happiness, and peace – peace inside each of you if we cannot find peace in the world. Let us hear from you and 'til next time, *may a kind and loving God walk with us and with each of you.*

*Amen.*

## Helen's Corner

Shhh! Helen's busy collecting her notes – *tune* in next time.

