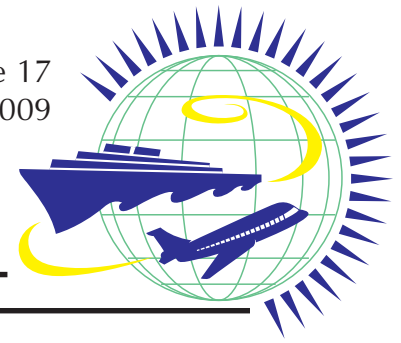


Routon's **ROUSING** Reports

Volume 4, Issue 17
October, 2009



A Routon's Romantic Reservations Publication – not for resale

No, RRR reader, you have not been forgotten – not at all. And you have your editor's apology for the lateness of this issue. (If it happens again, the publisher said he will be terminated!!!) Not only is the issue late, it is different in another way as well. A Rousing Report with NO overseas travel or cruises to report! *Hopefully*, with some more help from the stock market, this will not need to be repeated!!!

At the time of our last edition, we were off for our normal November domestic trip to be followed by our first Christmas at home in many years. We were looking forward to a relaxing December with Bill and Lara and the grandchildren coming for a white Christmas in New Hampshire. Well, we got the white Christmas just fine but the relaxing December disappeared with the ice storm that left us without electric power (and heat and water) for a week with the temperature well



Will, Elizabeth Grace, Lara and Bill (?)

below freezing day and night. Instead of 20 days we had 13 to finish the redecorating job left unfinished in November, clean the house, prepare beds, find the "long lost" Christmas lights and ornaments, get a tree (where is the *@&#* tree stand???), decorate for the holidays, etc., etc. Fortunately, Bill made a wrong turn on the last day and they were late arriving at 11PM, 30 minutes after I had finished mopping the kitchen floor.

Our preparations and some cooperation from Mother Nature made the Christmas holidays great. Outside it was a New England white Christmas straight from a

card – just enough fresh snow for fun, a bright sun, and moderate (for here) temperatures. Elizabeth Grace (7), Will (5), and Lara (age classified) had a ball just outside our back door. With Helen's guidance – but not participation!! – they completed their very first snowman. AND Santa Claus did find our house despite their concerns. It was a great holiday.

This year has been and continues to be busy and full. It has been a year of not one but two milestone birthdays, two graduations, a six week winter trip, one "foreign" trip, and a dramatic increase in guest occupancy here at the Chez Routon this summer and fall. And, of course, we had our garden to plant and nurture – double the size from last



Will's first Snow Angel.

year just as promised and as shown in the photo (see page 4).

Possibly the highlight of the year – for us at least – were the two milestone birthdays. Helen's birthday is in February and I'll leave it at that. It wasn't until June that I celebrated turning 40! OK, OK, so it was for the second time – and it is better the second time around, just like the song says. We had a small celebration here – Helen took me out to dinner – and then we had a delayed but wonderful reunion party in Arkansas. David arranged for a house on one of the many lakes near where he lives for a short week-end party. Peter flew in from LA, Bill and Lara and the kids drove up from Texas, and Mark (Helen's son) flew up from Ft. Lauderdale. It was the first time I had been together with all three of the boys in seven years and Mark's presence just added to the honor for me. Like anything real good, it was too short but I really appreciated it. Maybe I should turn 40 more often?

Our winter trip started with a family dinner in Atlanta to celebrate Helen's big day. The big surprise for Helen was Mark and his wife, Raina, came up from Ft. Lauderdale just to join us for dinner. And it was a big surprise. Raina walked by within 4 feet of Helen and Helen didn't even see her. Then when she did it was the typical, "What are you doing here?" It was a delightful evening made especially festive for Helen by the surprise. After the party, Atlanta went



Brunch for Jerry in Arkansas with the Routon clan.

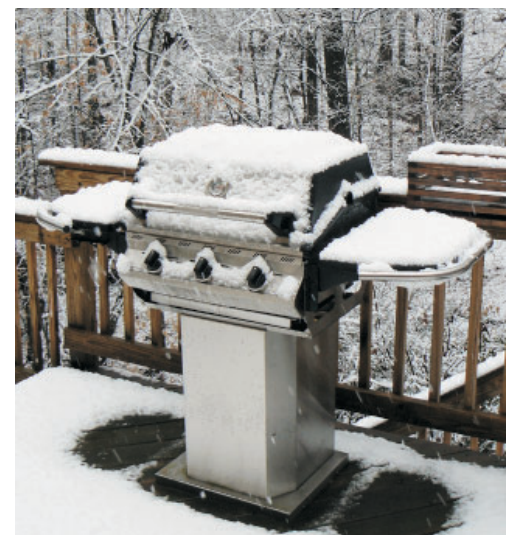
all out to make us feel at home. They had a snow storm. Nice but the snow did not get deep enough to make us "homesick". And can you believe nobody in the neighborhood had a snow shovel or snow blower?

Atlanta was the second stop in our 6 week, winter getaway (from the cold for Helen's sake). Six weeks and 6,000 plus miles visiting family and friends, some of whom I had not seen for maybe 15 years and Helen had never met – North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, and Ohio. We weren't in any one place very long nor were there any "great" events to report, but every place was a joy and pleasure. Our thanks to our hosts and we hope they and you will come our way; hopefully, not during an ice storm.

For Gale, Helen's daughter and her husband Steve, and Helen's two grandchildren, the big events were graduations. These posed a real challenge for those of us attending. The great scheduler in the sky definitely showed a sense of humor. Erica's graduation was at 5PM and Jeff's at 10AM the following day. No problem? Well, Erica's ceremonies were in Atlanta and Jeff's some 1,000 miles away in New York. One – and only one – flight could get us from Atlanta at 10PM into Syracuse just after midnight for a few hours sleep and then an hour and a half drive to Ithaca. As the time came closer, the Atlanta weather closed in delaying flights, the NY weather got worse with heavy thunder storms and rain – and the ceremonies were outside. Would the one flight be cancelled? Would the heavy rain in



Helen's Birthday celebration – part surprise, part not.



Atlanta welcomes the N.H. Yankees.



Erica with a special graduation gift: Memories from the rooster outside her bedroom window on our Romanian trip, combined with a useful tool and way to meet people in the dorm at NYU. Oh yes, and presented in the restaurant after I set off the alarm – without telling her how to shut it off.

New York persevere forcing the exercises inside and guest attendance only by cooperating local television? Tune in next week...

Erica graduated from Pace Academy in Atlanta in a class of 97. The ceremonies were very personal, each student called by name, and the venue for graduation a large church. Jeff, who is four years older, graduated from Ithaca College in a class of seemingly thousands where even the graduate degrees were awarded by a “you all stand up, be blessed, now sit down” ceremony in the middle of a football field where the stands were overflowing and the field itself was full of graduates and guests. Somewhat less than rewarding. And yes, we did make it there and the sun did shine. Frankly, we might have been better off at the TV in the bar, however.

No cruises or overseas travel this year, but we did make one foreign trip, all the way to Montreal, a full four and a half hours by car from here! While Montreal is close, the signs in French make it feel not exactly foreign but different. The occasion for the week end trip was to meet with some of Helen's Romanian – and my adopted



Lunch in Montreal. Maria “the bread maker” is in orange.

Helen with Maria's ten pound loaf.



Romanian – relatives. I won't try to define the relationships but Helen is called Aunt Helen and I am now an adopted uncle. The young couple, Simona and Ovidiu, that we saw married a couple years ago (see RRR for details) were in Montreal so that Simona could present at an international conference some of her advanced doctorate work regarding the transmission of electricity. (It seems there is more to it than just shoving a plug into a wall socket.) In addition to bringing Ovidiu, Simona also brought one of my very favorite Romanians, her mother, Maria. We had a great time in the evenings and on Simona's day off. Maria speaks no English and I speak no Romanian but with Simona, Ovidiu, and Helen to interpret it was non-stop chatter and laughter. Laughter especially welled up when Helen started translating my English for Maria – but translating from English to English! Maria is the bread maker I've talked about in previous reports. She couldn't bring me any of her famous tomatoes but she did carry one full and monstrous loaf of her bread (see picture) all the way from Romania. Wonderful people and a too short but wonderful interlude.

One of the joys this year has been the

greater guest occupancy here at the Chez Routon. Fortunately, we have been able to maintain the full and experienced staff from the General Manager to the bell man – our chef, the kitchen and dining room staff, the reservations manager, transportation manager, housekeeping crew and so on. No changes in years and while they may be aging and may have become a little rusty due to *your* lack of visiting the Chez, they can still call every guest by name... well, most of the time.

Seriously, we have been blessed by friends and family coming to visit. We

especially enjoyed the long visit by the Whittinghams from England – Sally and Gary with their two teenage daughters. They were in and out for several weeks with the “outs” including nearby Salem and Boston, New York City, the White Mountains of New Hampshire, Montreal, Toronto, and Niagara Falls. It was great fun hearing about their adventures – and misadventures – when they returned to the nest here at the Chez Routon. While they all enjoyed the ambiance from our back deck, Sally was particularly intrigued with the humming birds. She would be up by 6AM and still be out on the deck hours later trying to catch a humming bird while it was “humming” (in a picture, that is). The squirrels, the chip monks, and the many other birds also captured her attention. When she would step in for a minute, we always graciously told her what she had missed while inside... and sometimes she actually believed us!!

Other visits were shorter but just as enjoyable as the Chez Routon was filled most nights from mid-July to the end of August, finishing the summer season with the Blairs from California enroute to a reunion near New York City. The reunion was for people who had been ex-pats when I was one in England. Karen even convinced us to come down for the big dinner. Again, Helen met

new people and I saw people again for the first time in many years. And we can now recommend a Persian restaurant near White Plains.

As we start to wind down the year, things are good and we are truly blessed in so many ways – including the stock market doing better (at least as I write this!). We will be off for the “standard” November trip to Akron and then Jerry to Arkansas and Helen to Florida with her friend. It will be Thanksgiving for both of us in Tyler and then home to regroup before Atlanta for Christmas plus a sojourn to Florida and who knows what going and coming. Ssshhh – we do have a tentative reservation for – sshhhh not so loud – a cruise in March for 45 days in South America. It is still very iffy but maybe...

I know that for some of you, 2009 has been and continues to be a most difficult year. Our hearts go out to you and we keep you in our prayers. I do hope for those from whom I have not heard bad news that this year has been good or at least better than 2008. We do sincerely wish that 2010 will bring solutions, employment, comfort, whatever you need most, to each of you. Whether you celebrate Christmas or Hanukkah, we send our warmest wishes for the season and the year ahead.

We look forward to your emails and letters or even a telephone call. We are always interested in what is happening in your life so do let us hear from you – and how your plans might include a visit to the Chez Routon in 2010. 'Til next time then our prayer remains, *may a kind and loving God walk with us and with each of you.*

Amen.



Our extensive vegetable garden – we doubled the “acreage” this year.



The Brits (and Helen) do like the ice cream.



Sally finally got her bird, but not humming.