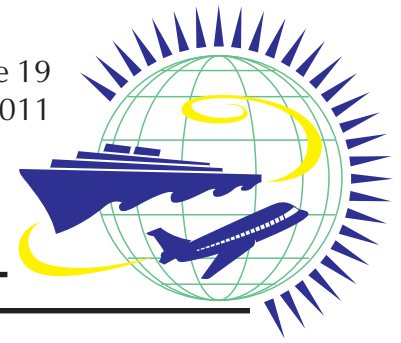


Routon's **ROUSING** Reports

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A Routon's Romantic Reservations Publication – not for resale

Yes, it has been a long time since the last edition but in answer to a number of inquiries, the last edition was not the last edition forever, not yet anyway. We have been busy but not with the overseas and other travel that has been our staple. Also, as I get older time seems to go faster. Once, I measured time by the hour, then day, then week followed by month. Now I measure by the seasons.

I can offer a few observations from the events of the “exciting” year just passed. For starters, one example of just how far behind I always seem to be is last spring when Peter was here he worked on my computer software and brought me up from Microsoft Office 97 (as in the year) to 2003! Also, I found that experience creates

wisdom in regard to illness. Specifically, when you are in your eighties, the four day cold your grand daughter lovingly gives you at Christmas takes until the end of January to be cured. And one word of advice, do *not* let the map fool you into taking the “shorter” US 50 route through the mountains of West Virginia.

We did make the now annual lake party in Arkansas and it was the best ever – warm lake and easy access from a lovely house. This trip to Arkansas in August is a bit special to me. As I reported in the October, 2009 edition, this week-end lake party started two years ago as a celebration of my 80th birthday. It was a wonderful family party on a lake near where David and Paula live. I greatly enjoyed the party

and so did the others. David and Bill decided that it should become an annual event, a new “Routon tradition”, something I consider an on-going, 80th birthday present.

As I briefly mentioned in the last edition of RRR, we did take advantage of our time in Arkansas to make a “non-family” trip to the resort area of Branson in Missouri. I promised a report and the report is we liked it enough that we made a second visit this year. Branson is a very interesting, small city in the eastern end of the Ozarks that has developed into a family and “elderly” resort area. There are lakes, amusement parks, and lots of live entertainment together with the hotels, condos, and restaurants needed to support all of



Arkansas lake site for the 2011 “Routon Tradition” week-end. Easy in (82 degree) water and shallow for standing and games. Note house on top of hill across the lake – a fast slide into the lake maybe but a real climb back.

the activities. The lakes range from small to one so large the dam creating the lake is all the way south in Arkansas. The main town is on fairly level ground but is nestled in “Ozark mountain nature” with small tourist areas all around, ideal for a summer vacation for the family.

The extensive live entertainment – seems like nearly 100 different shows – is full of talent and is very professional. It comes in a wide variety of choices and is surprisingly inexpensive. You have choices ranging from excellent and traditional country and western groups to performers with classical backgrounds. There are solo and group singers, instrumentalists, dancers, comedians, magicians, one show with trick horseback riding, and variety shows that combine some of these various acts. The variety is extensive but you won't find the big, Broadway type productions they have in Las Vegas, but then you also do not find the Vegas prices. Shows in Branson range from about twenty to forty dollars, maybe a bit more if dinner is included. Another thing you will not find in the shows in Branson is vulgarity, crude language and gestures, or smut. Double entendre yes, but nothing inappropriate for the whole family. The humor comes from clever words and skill in delivery and not from “shock vocabulary”, a very pleasant change.

Just as there is a variety of entertainment, the background of the entertainers is a bit unusual. There are some acts that come in for specific time slots, but many of the performers call Branson home as well as a place to work. We greatly enjoyed a singer with a Broadway and opera background who after sixteen years of being on the road decided he wanted a life with his wife and five kids (obviously he was not on the road *all* of the time). He moved the family to Branson and only works in his own shows there. We saw and heard an excellent traditional country and western music trio. The leader is a recognized member of the Hall of Fame in Nashville and a veteran of the “Opry” there. He also tired of the road, moved to Branson, and has been producing C&W music shows in Branson for fourteen years. There are several shows that feature a particular family perhaps augmented with other talent. One of these has been doing their show in Branson for 50 years. There are also younger performers who are just



Theater portion of the Baldknobbers complex. Seats 800 plus. Note the PreShow. This is a well done warm up, almost a show in itself.



“Country boy” comic with MC straight man. Interesting word plays and twists, not slap stick but definitely not Las Vegas “sophistication” either.



A country and western fiddle player of Japanese extraction just struck me as unusual – and he was very good.



The Pierce Arrow singing group from the show and theater of the same name – per the hotel people the hottest show in town. Good show and bass (second from right) great, not our favorite show but definitely worth the price and then some.

settling in as experienced professionals, some with whole shows they have put together while others work in established shows like the very good variety show on the Steamboat Branson Belle. As the song says, “Something for everyone”.

The show that has been running for 50 years was interesting. They claim to be “the first show on the strip in Branson”, although maybe not the oldest show in Branson. This show started as a family show and then expanded with other performers over time. The family not only has their own theater – not uncommon in Branson – but have built a hotel and res-

taurant into their complex. Many in the cast are second and third generation from the initial cast and, as I recall, a couple have been in the show for all 50 years. The name of the show as well as the whole complex is “The Baldknobbers” and the show “fits” the name. Some country western music, some more standard music, dancing, and some very amusing “corn pone” humor. It may sound hokey but we and the crowd enjoyed the excellent talents and precise timing and just relaxed and had a good time along with the cast. Great show but not for those who want a sophisticated evening. As is generally

true in Branson, if you are looking for sophistication, you are in the wrong city.

In both years, our biggest problem was our timing. When the schools open in late August the tourist volume drops drastically until the fall season starts in mid-September. This is good in that hotel prices are down, the traffic on “the strip” is minor, and you can get into most any show without reservations. The bad news is that during this slow period many of the shows either go on vacation or use understudies to fill the ranks, some of the restaurants close for a few weeks, and maybe the entertainer or show you really



Lunch and a very good variety show on a 3½ hour river boat cruise just south of Branson. Great singing and good dancing, definitely worth both the price and the drive. For a bit extra you can have your own box – recommended.



Not sure what goes on here but it is the landmark in town. Whenever you ask for directions they always seem to include “go down to the Titanic and...”. Appears to be a museum but we did not investigate.

wanted to see just isn't there. One example is the Japanese violinist who is reported to be a fantastic talent and someone Helen really wants to see – sorry, he's on the road or vacation while things are slow in Branson. We may have to go at another time some day, and we do plan to return. When we do, we have found we like the "small shows" and we want to try the very up market Chateau on the Lake for a posh dinner. Always having something for which you can look forward keeps you young!

Speaking of looking forward to something, thanks to careful research and study we accidentally stumbled across an incredibly inexpensive 15 day repositioning cruise from Rome to Ft. Lauderdale. A repositioning cruise is when the cruise line needs to move the ship from a summer cruise area to a winter one or vice versa. Since the cruise typically is not in the prime time of either area, the prices are reduced to try and fill the ship. The objectives are to move the ship with as much revenue

as possible and to provide income to the service staff whose income comes primarily from passenger tips. We've been to most of the ports scheduled for this cruise but the Island of Corsica will be new as will Tangiers in Morocco. So, by the time many of you are reading this, we should be on Holland America's Rotterdam building new memories, and you have to build new memories at our age because you keep forgetting the old ones – right?

Shortly after our return from Rome we will be entering "winter season" (see first paragraph for how I tell time) and this year it is Atlanta for Christmas. The day after Christmas – boxing day in England – we will rush to Ft. Lauderdale. It seems that once we got started on cruises we couldn't stop and we will take a 10 day cruise round trip from Ft. Lauderdale into the Caribbean. Many of you may ask why am I, not a fan of the Caribbean, doing that. Answer: for New Year's Eve. It seems that none of the people we know here or in the south can stay awake that

late and we decided we wanted one New Year's Eve party before we might lose our ability to stay awake at night. It should be fun. We will stop in Florida to see many of you before we start to wend our way home for a cozy New Hampshire winter.

As you can see from our fall into winter schedule, things will be hectic. So while this may be a bit early let us wish each of you a very Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukah, and our very best wishes for the new year. May it be much better for each and everyone and may good health, happiness, and joy fill your lives and those dear to you. And for many, may your travels include the Chez Routon – and if you cannot visit, please do email, write, or call and give us your news.

As I always say and mean sincerely, 'til next time *may a kind and loving God walk with us and with each of you.*

Amen.



Two directors at a "Board Meeting" of David and Paula's business in Arkansas. Edgarrrr on the left and Elsie "work" everyday in the shop supervising, watching for the FedEx man, etc. When David wants help with strategic direction he says "Board Meeting" and they drop whatever they are doing, head for Dave's office, and position themselves for a formal meeting. Of course, it always starts with dog treats but don't they look ready for serious discussions?