

Happy New Year! I missed Christmas so don't think you got left out. This is only the beginning. Oh, I like that: This is only the beginning! It would be convenient to claim that I've been waiting for inspiration yet part of the story is that I've been on the road. Inspiration (if not confinement) came in the form of Mother Nature. Here's our backyard view in the snow.



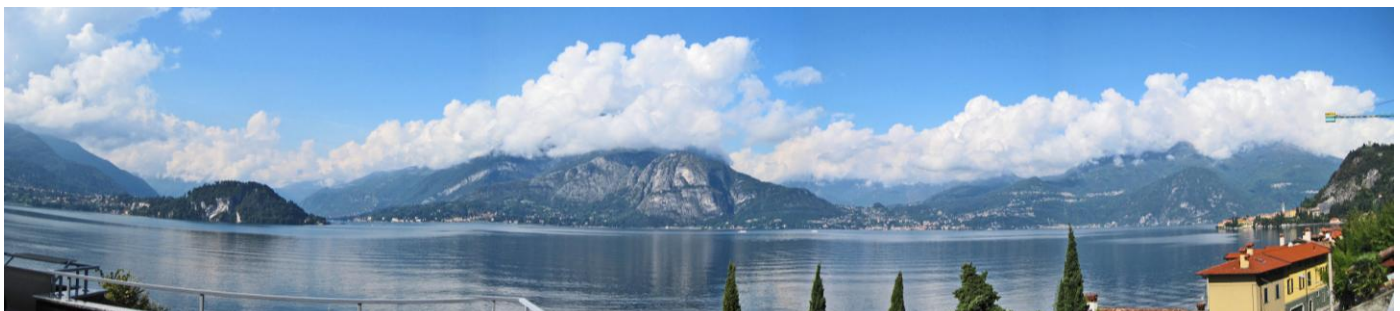
"On the Road Again" is my motto for the year, and somewhat Tom's too though he's the mainstay of the home and animals. If you're on my email list for trip notes (or want to be - or are ready to cry uncle) then you know that our travels have kept us in the frequent flyer miles. The marathon trips are humorously documented by fellow Liberty Lady's documentary found at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldvReuaQ-gA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldvReuaQ-gA). I've been a tourist for marathons in Mobile, AL; Miami; Greenbelt, MD; Little Rock; Louisville, KY (during the Kentucky Derby Festival); Olathe, KS (where snow called off the marathon); Champagne, IL (with new runner BIL Carl); Capon Valley, WV (where I finally completed my first 50K through streams and up 1000 foot peaks); Buffalo, NY (where I toured a Frank Lloyd Wright home); Lake Placid (with Ironman hunks getting ready for their triathlon); San Francisco (immediately after ascending Yosemite's famous Half Dome); Turkey Swamp, NJ (for my 2<sup>nd</sup> 50K); Albuquerque; Omaha (where we visited my uncle and niece); Kansas City; New York City (for my 5<sup>th</sup> one); Indianapolis (to include touring the Indy 500 Speedway again); Philadelphia; and Tucson. **Here's a picture of the Liberty Ladies without their crowns but with Kentucky Derby headgear.** If you remember how I made a big deal out of doing 6 marathons in '06 for my 60<sup>th</sup> year, then 7 marathons and 7 half marathons for '07 for a triple-7, etc., well, this was a new level at 9+9=18 marathons in '09. There's a club called *Marathon Maniacs* for those who do silly numbers of marathons a year. Well, I earned a new maniacal level by increasing from my 5-star/Ruthenium Marathon Maniac '08 qualifier to a 6-star/Osmium level meaning I finished 16 states this year versus 13 states last year.



Now to find some balance: You might recall that we started the year with a trip to Paris for the holidays. We find that we continually put Paris on the tops of our list for return, which we'll do again this September. We branched out with Tom and I traveling to Italy in September, first to Lake Como where we stayed in a lovely modernized villa on the lake with a view of Bellagio from our balcony, and then onto Milan to complete the trip. I especially loved Milan.



**Here's a picture of the little town of Varenna where we stayed on the lake and then one of the Milan Cathedral where you can walk on the roof and through the spires and between the flying buttresses.** Magical! The most special was the view of Lake Como from our balcony. If you'd like to see more of our trips, please check into Tom's website at [www.TomsKoi.com](http://www.TomsKoi.com) and/or [www.photoshow.com/members/tomskoi](http://www.photoshow.com/members/tomskoi).



For the fall foliage we ventured to another presidential library at Hyde Park, NY to tour the FDR complex. (I've collected presidential libraries this year with Clinton in Little Rock, Truman in Kansas City, Eisenhower in Abilene, Lincoln in Illinois and will visit Johnson in Austin next month.)



I had three visits to Italy this year: first to Florence, Lake Como with Tom, then later this year to Rome where I may return this April to see some adjoining towns. Tom and I had a most delightful time in Chicago where he finally saw why I love that city. It was partly for a half marathon and to accompany BIL Carl and Sister Beverly and gave us a stay at the historical Blackstone Renaissance Hotel across from Grant Park. A friend's wedding took me to Jamaica and outside the resort was about as foreign as I want to see but I did venture across the island. I signed up for three week-long hiking trips with [www.timbertours.com](http://www.timbertours.com), first to Death Valley, then Yosemite (where I returned later for the second week for an ascent of Half Dome), and the Canadian Rockies. **Here's a picture of the descent from Half Dome, the spookiest part. Yes, there are little ant-sized people on the point.** I've already signed up for 2010 week long trips to Grand Canyon/Havasupai, Portland's Columbia River Gorge (where Tom will join me a few days before), and Anchorage's Kenai Peninsula (where we'll also run a marathon after and then visit Denali afterwards.) I'd like to get to Glacier National Park.

What does Tom do when I'm gone? He really knows how to retire and stays plenty busy with a multitude of good friends, (he's noted for having girl friends), restaurant sojourns, and being a fantastic cook. How could I be so lucky? Well I press my luck by asking him to babysit Big Bird Pandora. One of us loves the Bird and one of us merely tolerates her but fortunately is good to her. He still exercises most every day and totally takes care of all aspects of the house. Whenever he can he's happily in either his Mercedes SL convertible or his Lexus LS460. To keep up with him with his sports car and luxury car, I have a half attempt with my Chrysler 300C Hemi and old Nissan 300ZX. Guess who gets the garages?



Last year I told you that my family remains in the Kansas City region. My parents lived in their own home and had reasonable health through the early part of the year but at age 87 both checked-out within a couple weeks of each other. They were happy and glad to be together in their own home and with the help of a hospice program we had many months to prepare and grieve if need be. I was there in March, August (for the memorial) and October. Daughter

Alayna and grandson Joseph still live in the little historical town of Plattsburg about 45 minutes NE of Kansas City. **Here's a picture of Alayna at the memorial.** And now I have a semi-adopted granddaughter who lives in Kansas City too so Kansas City is even more so on my 2010 travel plans.



About Marie: last year in Charlotte we met this cute little 11-year old. She was with her Aunt Loudean, who is sister to friend Parker who I met while commuting to Palm Beach. We met Marie again at Olathe's marathon and took her for a couple days touring to include the Truman Library. This smart cookie loves museums and we love her. She came to New Jersey in July where Maricar (the first Liberty Lady) and I inducted her as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Liberty Lady and she ran her first 5K on a tough and hilly course. **(That's Marie in the middle.)** This kid can do anything. I saw her again in August and October and intend that she visits us in New Jersey again this summer, if not before.

From us to you with a hope that the holidays and the New Year will bring us all closer together.



**Pictures taken in NYC at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the historical Barbetta Restaurant.**