

Diana and Tom Burton

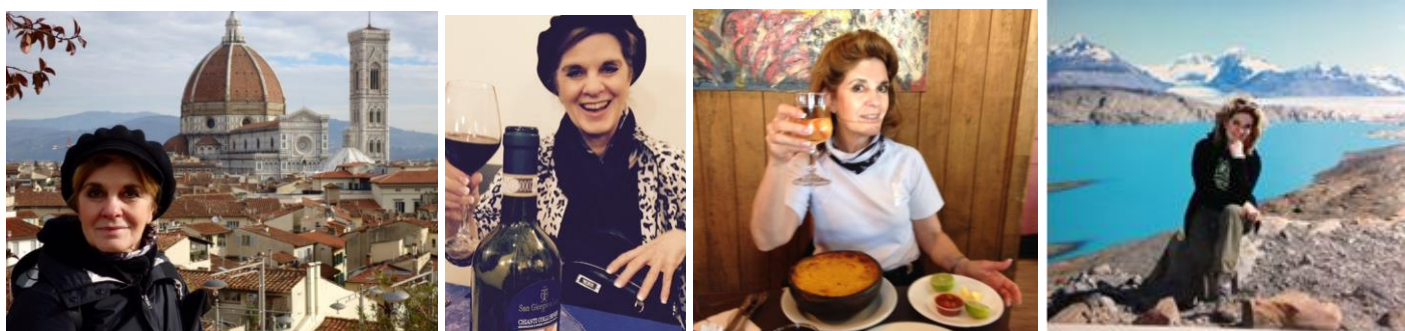
Holiday 2015

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This year put us into our 70s and 80s, both fortunate and grateful for our health and ability to continue travel. So how to put the special in Christmas 2015? Well, how about taking off to Lisbon for 9 days with Marie and staying in another super apartment, again found for us by Tom (he loves the search) and taking multiple guided tours to learn and be dazzled by the sites and sights. Yet every trip is special and I've not yet tired of 'exploring' and that even though I count up 17 trip reports for 2015 and about 200 days away. (I wonder if I can get a discount on my NJ taxes?)

Since my life is an open book at www.LibertyLadies.weebly.com (Tom's sometimes photo shows at www.TomsKoi.com) I'll not list all the trips but suffice it to say that I hit the top elite category with United Airlines about half way through the year. 2016 could play the same with trips already planned for St Paul and Boston with Sister Beverly to see ice-skating, Santa Barbara for a photo workshop tour, domestic hikes with www.ParksPlusHiking.com at Chaco and deChelly Canyons, Yellowstone and Beartooths, Crater Lake and Redwoods, and South Dakota. Foreign hikes with www.CW.com include Granada to Seville, Normandy and Brittany, and Austria's Bavarian Alps plus one to Olympic National Park. Tom will join me on the majority of the foreign hiking trips, meeting up in the evening.



Pics: Florence with friends, Santiago area, at the bottom of the world in Patagonia - all certainly BIG trips for me but later trips to Croatia's Dalmatian Coast, the Isle of Skye Scotland, Paris, and Rome can't be ignored. There were domestic hikes in Salida Colorado, Colorado Springs, Grand Junction's Black Canyon of the Gunnison in Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, Mt Rainier and Mt St Helens in Washington.

Tom and I went to San Francisco and then to deliver Marie to Stanford for her pre-med summer internship. He also went to Yosemite and Sequoia for my hike, and a long trip through Madrid, the Basque County and San Sebastian. He almost got the biggest trip of all for his 80th but after a few days in Paris we aborted the French Riviera, Switzerland and Zurich, though he was declared fit and ready shortly after returning home to try that Big Birthday Bash trip again.



We had plenty of Big Birthday Bashes to include my trip to Santa Monica for Ellen's 80th where we had three days of museums, eating, and three special 'high teas.' Tom chose a small dinner party that included tastings of all known blends of Johnny Walker and a bottle of JW Blue for each guest. See the stack of bottles and the Aged-80 card.

Here is Tom, living high in Bilbao, even higher at the Ritz with a Spritz in Madrid, and not so high at 'In 'n Out Burger' near Sequoia National Park. This is just to prove we are able to travel in all circles (smile).



Then there is our future cardiac surgeon at Stanford. Marie received a car for her 17th birthday, compliments of Alayna, who had been gifted with an upgrade by Tom. Marie continues to show talent with flute and piccolo having been chosen for the KC Jr. Symphony, with 1st and 2nd chairs, and is active in the HS marching band.



And now - A Thanksgiving Miracle: A week ago our daughter Alayna (who lives outside Kansas City) heard from a friend that another gal whose little Chihuahua had wandered away from home. The gal had put up a \$50 reward and Alayna put up another \$50 and they handed out flyers and prayed to the dog-protection gods, crossed fingers, and hoped for the best. A week passed and no responses and no leads.



On Thanksgiving Day, in a raw, wet, cold and miserable day, Alayna was sitting inside watching TV when the wind blew her garbage can over making a loud noise out her back door. She put on her coat and got to the door and heard a plaintive whimper. Upon opening the door she looked down and saw this poor soaking wet, emaciated little creature huddled by the doorstep. She grabbed a towel and scooped the little guy up and hurried inside, drying him off and warming him up and realizing, this was the lost pooch! She quickly got on the phone to her friend to relate the story then got in the car to gather her friend and go to the gal's house that had lost her pet. Needless to say, emotions flowed all around. Then the gal wanted to pay Alayna the posted reward only to learn that Alayna was the one who put up the matching reward. At that they all fell apart with emotion and disbelief at how this poor little pooch ended up going to the perfect house to be saved and rescued by Alayna, the consummate dog and animal lover. And it all happened on Thanksgiving Day. Unbelievable but true and heartwarming to say the least.

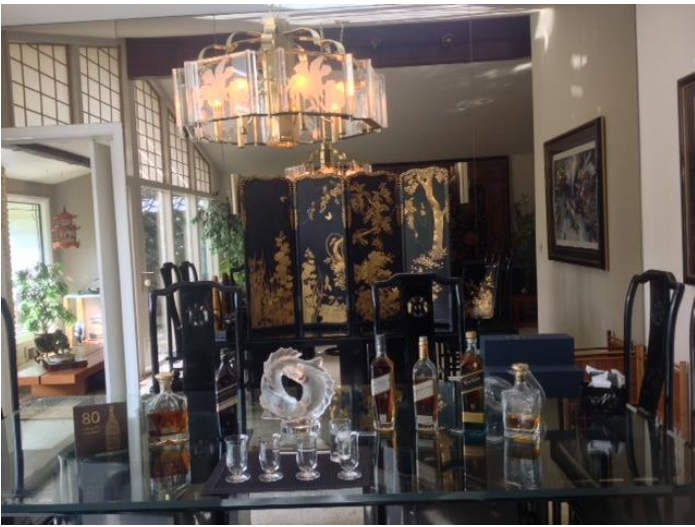


Final thoughts:

Alayna's "family" (pictured) might have to suffice for our additional grandchildren.

We still have Big Bird Pandora - since 1980. Do parrots get gray? She's holding up better than me.

2015 Photo Add-On



Our home with dining table for the 80th birthday featured. Well before the snows.



Barcelona's Opera House to bring in 2015; playing at a museum; keeping warm in a park.



Florence food tour and tasting truffles; Diana's continued hikes.



Basque food extravaganza; Madrid hotel suite; hiking in Bilboa in a Mount St Helens shirt.



Rome touring with hiking leader friends. More hikes.



Lisbon's food tour; Overlooking Sintra; at Lisbon apartment front door



Happy New Year from the family animals (Alayna's three dogs and our Big Bird) too.

