

# Loose in the Foothills

by Bob Ring

## Extended Christmas Letter

For the nine years that Pat and I have been together, we've sent out an annual Christmas letter to family and friends – recounting our news of the year. We used to include the one-page letter in an envelope with a nice Christmas card – until two years ago when we discovered at the last minute that our holiday message combo required extra postage. Now we just send the letter (and bought a better postal scale).

We always have a lot to say in our Christmas letter and can't always fit in all the good stuff. Here are a few things that didn't make the cut this year.

In September we hosted an open house for about 40 family members and friends. Open houses are our choice for entertaining – we're more comfortable doing this than holding occasional dinner parties – and we think we're pretty good at it.

I swear it was only 20 minutes into the gathering – I spilled an entire glass of red wine onto our light-beige great room rug, just below the entry stairs, where absolutely all 40 guests had to pass on the way in or out – not counting the usual milling around to talk with each other.

Pat and I leapt into action, first sopping up all the liquid we could and then, with some success, using soda water to try to clean the spot. But there still remained a starkly-visible stain – a reminder of my embarrassing faux pas.

Then I had a brilliant idea for a temporary solution. I pulled out the two small, matching rugs that we use in front our TV chairs, placed one of them over the wine stain, and the other I placed symmetrically near the first – to look like a planned arrangement at the bottom of the entry stairs. The party resumed, and I switched to soft drinks.

Note to open house guests: Yes the stain did come out – just took a few days and a few chemicals.

I believe that I mentioned in my September column that I had been rear-ended in my “most-prized-material-possession” little red sports car at the intersection of North Sabino Canyon and East River Road.

Heading south with Pat, I was stopped at a red light when I felt a slight bump from behind. I got out to discover a big GMC SRV up against my bumper and the “perpetrator” driver talking away on a cell phone. A minute later, with my blood pressure boiling, the driver finally finished his call and got out to admit his fault. Then he couldn't find his insurance card right away! Two weeks of insurance company dancing later, my bumper-cover had been replaced and repainted – for almost \$1,500.

You know that I like to write, and in fact wrote quite a bit this year – mostly columns and history papers, and all of it goes up on my website. I really should say “our” website because my brother Al is the principal architect of the site and contributes much more content to it than I do, including Ring-family history; his old Kentucky Fire Department history; his high school history; info on his collections of postcards and postmarks, stamps, magazines, and DeGrazia pieces; and even photos of his pets.

We currently have approximately 17,000 pages of “stuff,” over 40,000 photos, and 51 videos on the website. We don’t use *facebook*, *MySpace*, or *twitter* – so the website is it for us.

Pat and I spent quite a bit of time this year working puzzles in the newspaper. We do the Jumble word game together; then Pat does the Cryptogram – usually before we get out of bed in the morning.

Our favorite puzzle is the Sudoku that we work independently later in the day. We make an enlarged copy (easier to insert candidate numbers and erase the bad ones) that I work on, while Pat works right in the newspaper. Pat has taken a personal challenge to work these darn puzzles in her head – even the “hard” ones, such that she can eventually write the correct number in each block – in ink if she wanted to. Somewhat intimidating!

Well, that’s enough of that. I hope that all of you have good (or humorous) things to remember about the year 2009. Pat and I wish you happy holidays and a safe, healthy, fun new year.



*Columnist Bob Ring wishes you happy holidays with this Foothills photo from January 22, 2007. (Photo courtesy of Bob Ring)*