

Loose in the Foothills

by Bob Ring

Holiday Season Family Gathering

Last month Pat and I drove to San Diego for a family gathering to celebrate Thanksgiving and my 70th birthday. Regular readers of this column will remember that my actual birthday was back in March, commemorated at the time with Pat's wonderful gift of a trip to the NCAA Basketball Final Four tournament. This Thanksgiving event was delayed to a time when the whole family could participate. We hadn't all been together for years.

The weekend was hosted by my son John and his wife Cat – both in the Navy – who live in Coronado, across the bay from San Diego. I've mentioned John before; he currently is the Executive Officer of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz.

My son David, his wife Cinta, and their two children, Clinton and Laila, flew in from Boston. David is an orthopedic surgeon at Massachusetts General Hospital while Cinta consults as a quality control engineer. My grandchildren Clinton and Laila are 16 and 11 years old respectively and of course, are model kids.

My son Steven and his wife Lynne, with their two dogs, drove to San Diego from Houston, Texas. Both Steven and Lynne are librarians, Steven at the University of Houston Downtown campus and Lynne in the public library system.

Pat's son David flew in from Phoenix where he is a prosecuting attorney.

There were eleven of us all together. Most of the group stayed at the spectacular Coronado Bay Resort on the Silver Strand, a few miles south of Coronado Island. The hotel has very nice rooms at reasonable rates, terrific views of San Diego and the Coronado Bay Bridge, and boasts a fabulous gourmet restaurant called Mistral.

John rented a van to take all of us to Thanksgiving dinner at Humphrey's on Shelter Island, across from the airport. What a stupendous spread – the best buffet I've ever seen, and eaten.

The next evening was my "birthday" dinner at the Mistral restaurant – a culinary delight which included a stunning view of brightly-lit nighttime San Diego across the bay. We finished with a special birthday cake!

One of the highlights of the weekend was John giving us a tour of the Nimitz, anchored in San Diego harbor. What an impressive ship! I can hardly imagine what it's like when it goes operational with the full complement of sailors and the entire air wing, totaling over 5,000 people. (Note: Eleven days after Thanksgiving the Nimitz left San Diego for Bremerton, Washington, its new homeport for several months.)

We had a grand time together. I am so appreciative of my family's efforts to bring it off with their busy schedules and geographic constraints. Pat said that we were building wonderful memories – a nice way to look at our family gathering. We also added a few pounds – back to the diet!

Pat and I hope that you are experiencing your own family gatherings. May you have the happiest of holidays and a wonderful new year!



The Ring-Wood clan posed for this family portrait right after Thanksgiving dinner on San Diego's Shelter Island. (Courtesy of Pat Wood)



This spectacular view from the bridge of the Nimitz, looks across the ship's bow towards the city of San Diego and the Coronado Bay Bridge. (Courtesy of Bob Ring)