

Gym Rat Rantings

by Bob Ring



A Year-End Birthday Card for Pat

Shh! Pat hasn't read this article – a surprise birthday card. According to the Chinese calendar, 2008 has been the year of the rat (gym rat do you suppose?). But in our family it's been the year of Pat, because last December Pat declared that she was going to celebrate her 60th birthday for the entire year.

So I gave Pat a birthday card on January 1st and we've been celebrating life all year. I've already shared some of our travels with you – our winter trip to the Grand Canyon, our birthday/anniversary trip to Denver, and our homecoming trip to Ann Arbor. We also traveled to Victoria, British Columbia, where Pat got to see the beautiful Butchart Gardens she had dreamed of for years.

What else has Pat been doing to “celebrate” in 2008 you ask? Some of you know Pat as a terrific knitter, always willing to offer help, guidance, and encouragement. You have seen her at the Gym's annual craft fair with some of her beautiful sweaters, vests, and scarves plus artistic Christmas tree ornaments. Those of you in Lynne O'Brien's Building Bones class appreciate the jokes that Pat provides.

I know Pat as a warm and caring partner. She supported and encouraged me last winter through months of pain and frustration with my “frozen” shoulder and again when I was unexpectedly hospitalized in March to undergo angioplasty and the insertion of three stents in heart arteries. That emergency messed up Pat's plan to take me to San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. (We've rescheduled for March, 2009).

Pat spent a lot of 2008 helping others. I see Pat volunteering each week at the Arizona Cancer Center to support patients undergoing chemotherapy treatments. I see Pat busily involved in knitting and weaving guilds, arranging special programs and lending a hand wherever she can. I see Pat knitting gift sweaters, scarves, and even a prayer shawl for relatives. I see Pat going way out of her way to assist friends in time of illness or other difficulties.

Somehow Pat found time to develop new skills in 2008. She took several drawing classes and produced a self portrait good enough to frame on my office wall. Pat is also illustrating a collection of my papers (over 50 years worth) that that I'm compiling for a book for my children. And did you notice my new Gym Rat logo?

Pat and I “celebrated” a lot of other things together in 2008, including our regular exercise at the gym, and weekly wine tastings (usually followed by buying, and drinking with dinner). Our medical history has motivated us to watch our diet more closely – we enjoy the challenge of planning healthy yet tasty meals.

I guess it comes down to how one looks at life – our remaining time together. We try to enjoy each day and don't put off the things we really want to do, like travel, while we can still do it. Pat's optimistic spirit can best be summed up with her oft expressed happiness that her body is in good enough shape to be able to get up and make the bed each morning.

So if you see Pat in the gym this month, this is your last chance in 2008 to help her celebrate and wish her a happy 60th birthday.