

April 15, 2008

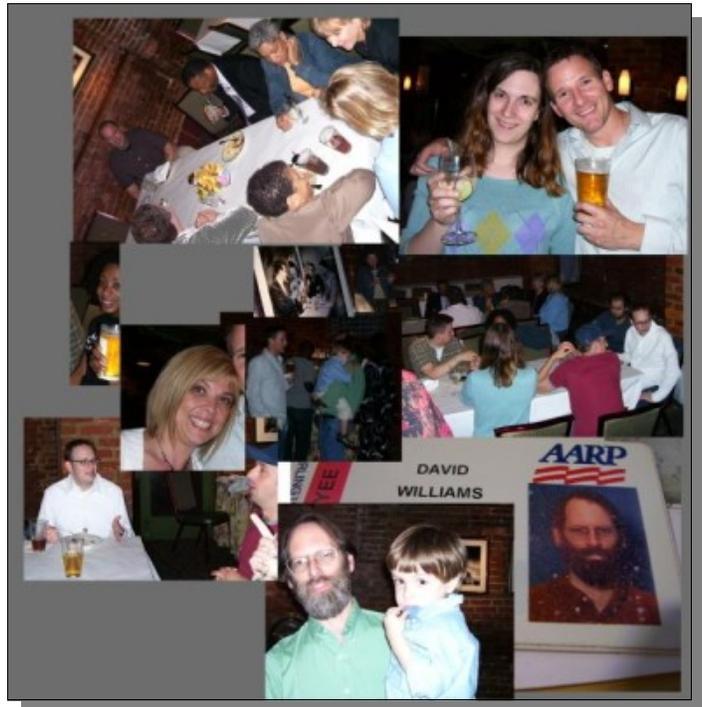
Last year's tax day letter closed with our sabbatical in Costa Rica. The goal of that program for long term staff with good performance reviews is to avoid employee burnout. That proved harder to do in David's case and he left AARP in May after 14 years there. It seems like a big scary world out there for the unemployed as he has listened to the dire predictions on the economy. However, the irreplaceable chance to spend more time with Robert and Sarah, made the decision well worth it. He took off 6 months and started looking for a new position late in 2007. Since then, he's had several interviews but no takers in his job search which remains focused on a high quality of life (sane commute, sane hours, good organization). We would love the coming year to provide that new position.

That employment change did not slow us down from enjoying a year of travel, visits and visiting:

Beginning with a May trip to Seven Devils to celebrate Robert's paternal grandfather's 80th birthday. Robert's key contribution was to say the room needed to be "strewn with balloons" – we did our best to accomplish that. That trip provided a good chance to see that David's mom continues to improve after her hemorrhage in April 2006.

AARP threw a very nice going away party for David later in May. It was hard for him to leave the group he's been a part of for so long, but it was also time to move on.

As the spring weather improved, we spent lots of time outside in various settings: at our favorite local farm, the Potomac River, Butler's Orchard, the zoo and just walking around Old Town.



One milestone this past June: Robert's first solo haircut. After three years of sitting in someone's lap for his trims, he's taking the whole process in stride now and may be ready for the "bizzer" (electric razor) for the final neatening one of these days – it's still a bit loud and scary for him now.

We drove to Highland Park in June for a fun trip which included a visit to an entertaining sculpture garden. "Grounds for Sculpture" covers 35 acres in Hamilton, NJ with

lots of artwork to wander around and interact with. While his parents found the sculptures of famous paintings (Renoir's *The Luncheon of the Boating Party* in the photo) lots of fun; Robert may have enjoyed the percussion instrument most. Check out the photos on the web if that sparks your interest: www.kayakero.net/per/jr/jun_07_02.html.

We received medical news that we'd rather not in July when David's dad was diagnosed with cancer. One huge benefit to not working was how easy it was for David to head down to NC to help out a bit. Steve, Helen and Aaron were off on the 2007 Salmon River trip (David was on the '77 and '87 trips and he and Sarah were on the '97 trip – but we decided Robert was a bit small for 5 days on the river this time; we'll plan to be there in 2017 though). Loren reviewed the options his Oncologist provided and decided on a chemotherapy regime. That was much less dramatic and traumatic than anyone expected and so far, the mass has responded well to the treatment.



We celebrated Robert's third birthday later in July with parties at home and daycare.

In August we headed back to Maine for a week (photo above). This time Sarah talked the rest of her family into making the trip, so we enjoyed lots of fun walking the coast, kayaking around a bit, and tossing rocks and seaweed into the ocean with the full Zapolsky clan. We took advantage of the chance to visit the site of Condon's Garage and Condon's General store from *One Morning in Maine* – a favorite book.



We drove down to Seven Devils again in September to get the full report on the 2007 Salmon trip and visit with Steve, Helen, Aaron and David's parents. And later in the month, we joined Harry, Elle, Oriana and Sebastian at the beach in New Jersey (including a stop at Barnegat Lighthouse shown in the photo on the left). More fun in the sun was had by all.

As Sarah started up night classes again (after a Robert break of several years), Robert and his dad got into the habit of dinners out

on Sarah's class nights. Lately though, Robert has decided he'd rather go out to diner with both of his parents. That will be even easier next year as Sarah expects her second Masters after completing her thesis next semester.

Another milestone for Robert in the last year: his first dental checkup in October. His godfather, Dr. Hank, treated him very well and made sure that first visit was not traumatic at all. He had his teeth counted, got a star for his toothbrushing habits and went home with a goody bag. October also brought more medical news we didn't really want: our good friend Dan crashed his motorcycle (after several months, he has now largely recovered – the motorcycle did not recover). And a couple days later, Robert tripped on some steps on the way to a playground and made his first trip to the emergency room. He took it really well and the stitches didn't seem to bother him at all; we had a harder time watching that than he did experiencing it.



As if that was not enough excitement for October, we all went camping later in the month – Robert really liked it and we'll do more of that as the weather warms up this year. We heard about Prince William Forest Park from David's friend Bob; when David and Robert visited and saw the campgrounds, our path was clear.

In November, we headed to Seven Devils for a huge Thanksgiving feast with David's family. We rented a house down the road from his parents for all the out-of-towners and ended up seating 15 for Thanksgiving dinner – thanks to Susan's excellent table layout. Robert really enjoyed hanging out with his cousins and they all had a good time together (except for that one unfortunate cable chewing incident...).

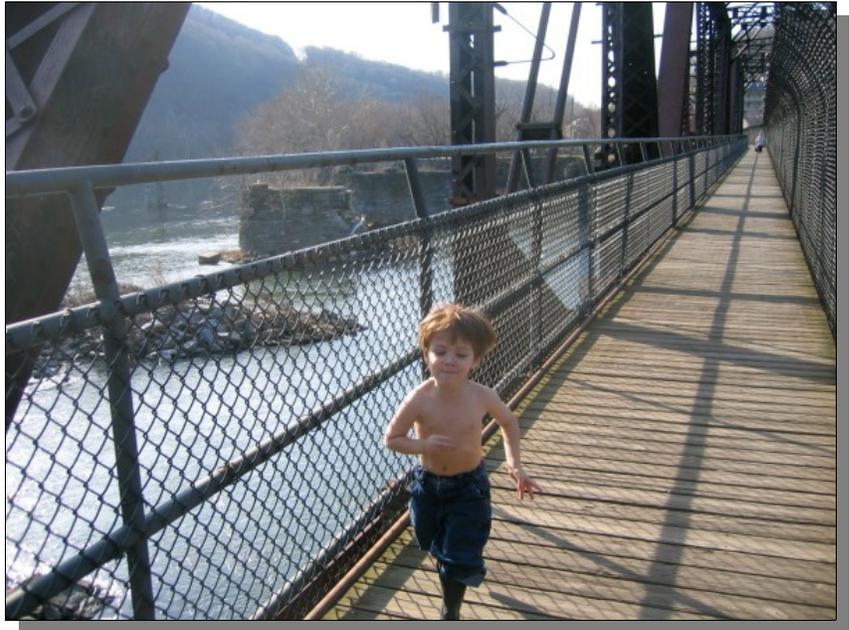


December brought a little bit of snow, a surprise birthday party for David at Hank and Sally's house (thanks again guys), and Harry and Elle coming down to join us for Christmas. One intriguing gift: Elle gave Harry a very fancy billiard cue in honor of his retirement the previous July. He'll have to make time in their travel schedule and his duties as professor emeritus in order to use it. But he was happy to introduce Robert to the other kind of pool

(though Harry prefers the more difficult snooker; snooker tables, however, are much harder to find).

Sad news in December: a Williams family friend of several decades died in Richmond. Gordon will be missed by all those who knew him and it's a shame that Robert didn't get the chance to spend more time with him. We drove down to Richmond for the memorial service in January.

We took advantage of a warm spell in later in the month (Global Warming??? What Global Warming?) to go to Harpers Ferry; David and Hank paddled the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers while Sarah and Robert wandered the park. We all enjoyed the surprisingly warm day, even though Robert had to work hard to convince his mom it really was warm enough in January to take his shirt off.



In February, we finally got to the Zoo when our friend Suz was volunteering there; Robert sat in the front row while she fed one of the spiders (photo below). Thanks again, Suz, for the fun morning.

And to close out the year's activities, yet another milestone: Robert's first bowling trip. We went with his friend Romeo; both boys (and the adults) enjoyed it. Romeo and parents also joined us for an Easter egg hunt, though the boys may have had more fun on the post-hunt trip to the playground.

As always, we are grateful for our friends and families and wish you all peace and prosperity in this tax season and all the best for the coming year. (There are lots more photos, mostly of Robert, on the web: www.kayakero.net/per/.)

