

*Another "Excellent Adventure" in our life.*

## Black Friday 2006

Today is called Black Friday, the “official” first day of the Christmas shopping season. Shopkeepers hope that today will boost their profit margins into the plus columns. It is 7:15 AM as Jim returns from filling up the Buick with gas. He tells us, “The race is on!” Apparently traffic is already heavy at the mall and Wal-Mart as Christmas shoppers vie for the super bargains advertised in yesterday’s papers. Well, the merchants will have to do without our revenue today because Harold and Ola Parsons, our Thanksgiving houseguests, and Jim and I have other plans for the day.

With sodas and coffee in hand we head away from the commercial area. The sky is clear, the sun is shining, and it is gonna be a great day for poking around in the mountains.

Our first stop is at Cindy’s home to retrieve the camera I left on her buffet last night. Ola collects the camera and reports there is no visible life nor noise in that house. One vehicle is missing so some people have left on the early morning shopping excursion and everybody else must still be asleep.

Trees are mostly devoid of leaves and there is a hush of quiet expectation in the air. It is evident that Christmas is on its way. A few houses already sport icicle lights along their porch roofs and blow-up figurines in their front lawns. Black cattle, munching frost-kissed grass, don’t pay a hoot of attention to the herd of deer that are soaring over pasture fences.

An hour later we are walking into the lodge at the Peaks of Otter and breakfast is ordered. And a mighty tasty breakfast it is! Beside our table is a huge tree, decorated with pine cones and birds and other “woody” things. Behind us is a life-size nutcracker figure. In the main lobby is a 9 ½ foot-tall tree with a topper fashioned to be an old world Santa’s head. His gold-threaded tapestry cape drapes gracefully over the sides and back of the tree. The front of the tree has lovely Victorian ornaments and the effect is stunning!



In another room is a patriotic tree, showcasing American flags and ribbons of the various military branches. Lighted stars illuminate the tree and a Statue of Liberty figurine graces the very top.



The gas log in the fireplace wraps the whole scene in a Norman Rockwell mood.

Ola and I browse the gift shops and strike pay-dirt on several items. The trouble is that we want one of everything but that would not be so practical; we settle for a key chain for her and a sun catcher for me.

The Parkway northbound is closed due to ice and snow so we head south and inhale the beautiful scenery. It seems like we stop at every overlook. I never tire of this no matter how many times we follow this road along the spine of the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains. Sun-drenched valleys stretch below our path and the world below us continues on its normal life.

We stop at Roanoke's Mill Mountain and show Harold and Ola the recently-renovated star.



The Star, built in 1949, is considered the worlds' largest man-made illuminated star. It stands eighty-eight and a half feet tall and uses 2000 feet of neon tubes and 17,500 watts of power, glowing in red, white and blue. The city of Roanoke spreads out before us as we view it from the observation platform. What a pretty city! The parking lot is filled with tourists from New Hampshire, Georgia, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, North Carolina, Maryland, and Alabama. Gentle breezes play tag with the leaves and cause us to pull our jackets a bit tighter around us.

It is a sparkling clear day as we visit the Link Center, then do a walking tour of the crowded Market Square. Christmas music drifts over us and life couldn't be any better today. Harold and Jim call Ola and me over to a shop window and Ola becomes the owner of a gorgeous "witch's globe." This is a hand-blown multicolored glass ball with a tiny hole on one side. The story is that the witch flies into the glass ball, then cannot find her way out because the many colors of glass confuse her. This may or may not be a true story but it does earn the artist some money and Ola happily carries her treasure away from the shop. Another shop, Twist and Turn, is filled to capacity with Christmas "finds". I can't imagine a more fun place to visit! Trees are decorated in any theme imaginable. One is covered with tiny peacocks and even has a life-size

peacock at its peak. Another tree sells for \$972 ....no decorations included for that bargain-basement price. I do not buy a single thing in that shop, but, in my mind, I own everything I see.

A stop at Dairy Queen conquers “the hongries” , then we head for the edge of town. Oops! Jim wants to visit a hobby shop along our way. OK, fine, he goes to the hobby shop, Harold stays in the car to guard our purchases (His method of surveillance is to lay his head back, close his eyes, and emit a soft snoring sound.), and, don’t you just know, Ola and I find yet another “junk store”. (You know the type -- it is filled with things that we can live quite comfortably without but it sure is nice to go look at the goodies.) She and I decide that it is probably a good thing that we do not live closer to each other. We could be a disaster if we were together more often.

All too soon it is time to return to Lynchburg. A stop for a picture of a westbound train adds bonus to Jim’s day. Actually, this whole day has been a bonus in our happy life. We have spent it in the presence of two good friends and now we will top-off the day with supper at Cindy and Freddie’s home, among family and friends. I am so blessed!

