

*I will honour Christmas  
in my heart and try to keep it all the year.*

*Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol, 1843*



## This Year's News

The big news this year is: we've all been torturers and murderers all our lives. Now there's a Christmas message! Yes. In July, *Scientific American* reported a study showing that bees and other insects can feel joy and pain; have drug-seeking behaviors for caffeine, nicotine and alcohol; have withdrawal when alcohol (as in fermenting fruit) is taken away; and that male bees learned to play with balls. Only the males played because they don't work for the colony. They're just like us!!  
Aside from that, nothing much to report except ...

AS WE HONOUR **CHRISTMAS 2023** IN OUR HEARTS, WE THINK FONDLY OF FRIENDS LIKE YOU AND THE PERSONALITY TRAITS YOU POSSESS THAT QUALIFY YOU TO RECEIVE THE 31ST ANNUAL ALTERNATIVE INGLIS NEWSLETTER. BUT ENOUGH ABOUT YOU...



## Summer Trip 5 weeks, in John's truck

### FLORIDA

**Destin** — Driving close enough to smell the ocean, Walter (the **rebouding wonder dog**) went berserk, bounding all over the back seat with excitement. First look at the clear, bluish-turquoise water with white-white sand ... WOW!! **Oh boy oh boy oh boy!** This'll be the beach trip to beat all beach trips!!

We packed our beach wagon and headed out. Not deterred after spending 30 minutes trying to find a parking spot, off we went to the beach to find 10 people per square foot. It appeared the female dress code was two-piece suits with thong bottoms. *They were wearing wedgies!! Eeww!*

The sand was so fluffy and deep that it was hard to walk, much less pull the wagon. Even Ian struggled, but we found a spot and parked ourselves, still not deterred.

**Toni:** Ian! What the hell?! There's a 45-degree drop-off down to the water!

**Ian:** [no response]

With too-fluffy sand and a severe slope, **Disappointment No. 1:** no distance-walking while blissfully throwing the Frisbee for Walter.

**Toni:** I guess exercise is highly overrated anyway, right?

**Ian:** [no response, pops open first beer]

At least we could swim and play in the waves! Should be warm by mid-June.

Plodding uphill



Wrong again! Felt like Barton Springs. How clever of me not to check the monthly water temperature while planning. Hence, **Disappointment No. 2:** too cold to swim. No problem! Who needs swimming? At least we could wade.

And at least we can throw the ball for Walter! After two tosses, a humorless beach official approached. "No dogs on the beach," he informed with an ominous tone as we looked around to see no dogs. "But it's a public beach!" I protested. "Sorry, ma'am." **Disappointment No. 3:** F\*\*\* THIS!!

The next day, we came to our senses and concealed Walter in the wagon, not going to the beach until 5 p.m. when the few beach police left were busy retrieving frozen corpses from the water.

**Disappointment No. 4:** Every. Single. Day. **It stormed.** I mean, storms so violent we were afraid our trailer would blow over (no joke.) Screw Florida and its fancy schmancy beach. We cut our Destin trip short.

I did receive a parting gift from Destin, though. **Disappointment No. 5:** sand flea bites! Never have I ever gotten them all over and in every unfortunate spot you can imagine. And never have bites itched that much. [See **Disappointment No. 3.**]

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## GEORGIA

Great hike along the **Suwannee River**. Tons of local families and kids were swimming and playing in it, which was surprising since it's in alligator country.

On to **Savannah**, America's first planned city with its beautiful old Victorian, even pre-Victorian homes dotting its huge national historic landmark district.

Most of Georgia's and South Carolina's peach crop had been destroyed by a bad winter, but the local Savannah farmers market had *to-die-for* peaches and a local favorite: boiled peanuts, the most ghastly thing you may ever put in your mouth.

On to **Jekyll Island**, a national historic landmark that *welcomes dogs*. What a place. In 1886, a bunch of millionaires with names including Rockefeller, Morgan, Vanderbilt, Pulitzer, etc. purchased the island and built



We stayed in a great state park that was next to ... **MOON RIVER**! You could hear Andy Williams crooning as it rose and fell with the tides.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

By the time we got to **Myrtle Beach**, we were pretty tired of beaches and their homicidal sand fleas.

## NORTH CAROLINA

**Asheville**, where we visited **Biltmore** nestled in the **Blue Ridge Mountains**. The architecture and furnishings of Mr George Vanderbilt's restored home reminded me of Downton Abbey where the servants' quarters were downstairs with bells over their room doors, and the staff and owners had good relationships, e.g., Mrs Edith Vanderbilt celebrating all the staffs' birthdays. Just as impressive were the farm, garden and landscape designs of Frederick Olmsted — a massive masterpiece of function, natural beauty and color. In a word, humbling.



**Otherworldly Driftwood Beach**

clubs and using a larger, lighter ball. In their spare time, they secretly conceived and drafted what's now the Federal Reserve. Busy, busy!

But the Depression and World War II dismantled the group enabling the state of Georgia to buy the island in 1948 opening it as a state park, which is the only reason we of the proletariat were able to go there.

**grand and ornate structures.**

They also built a spectacular seaside golf course in 1924 where they transformed golf, replacing hickory shafts with steel

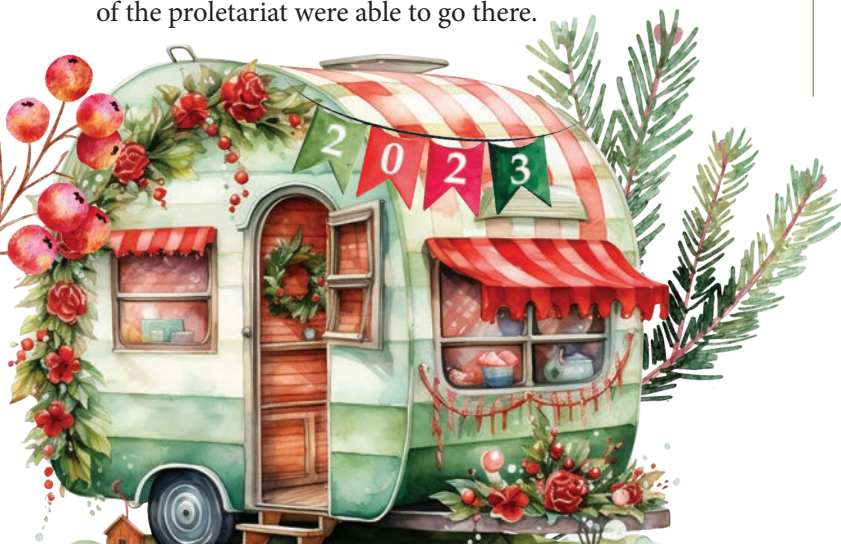
## KENTUCKY

Versailles, home to the small and wonderful **Woodford Reserve Distillery**, built in 1812, another historic landmark. To get there, we drove along long, windy roads lined with double white fences and gorgeous thoroughbreds. Mamas with colts were in their own fields. The grass was so green it had a bluish hue — bluegrass!



**The Still Room**

Summer trip historic honorable mentions: Kentucky's **Red River Gorge/Natural Bridge** area and fishing paradise Missouri's **Bennett State Park**.



## Ian Purchases Man-Magnet

Ian and I have had an ongoing feud for more than a year about his buying a truck to pull the trailer. He yammers on and on about how it stresses the car, blah blah. I, on the other hand, argue sensibly that it's totally unnecessary since John is happy to lend us his truck.

In the spring, Ian went to the annual reunion of his truck-owning fellow high school football jocks where they apparently collectively yammered on and on about why **OF COURSE** he needs to buy his own truck.



In July, he mysteriously invited me to go to Kerrville. How romantic. What an idiot! After several hours at the Ford dealership, we drive home with a MONSTER truck, a Tremor. TREMOR! Who names their truck after an unfortunate medical condition?! [See **Disappointment No. 3, p. 1.**]

Guys in our parking garage who may never have spoken to us in 19 years come over *every time* they see Ian and fawn over that stupid truck. Same thing happens when we go anywhere in the truck.

Women, on the other hand, *never* notice the truck. When Ian proudly showed it to our friends Tom and Lucina, she asked incredulously, "Why is your truck all jacked up?!" Great question! What is it with guys and big trucks?



### Four Corners, six weeks, in Ian's truck

#### NEW MEXICO

**Santa Fe**, where we walked the obligatory **Canyon Road** and found a mountainous trail lined with fabulous adobe homes. Heaven.

#### COLORADO

**Telluride** — No one seemed to be in a hurry. No one appeared to obey leash laws. Everyone seemed to be laid-back or grinning. I wondered what was in their water until I noticed all the dispensaries.

The camp host recommended we drive up Imogene Pass to see the historic Tomboy Mine, telling Ian his four-wheel drive truck could make it "no problem!" First, who would want to see an old mine? Second, the camp host is evil.

Ian takes his MONSTER truck on this five-mile, unpaved, heavily traveled, two-way mountain road that's as narrow as a parking space and has small boulders and cavernous potholes *all over it*. As we're thrown all over the front seat, we realize there's no way to turn around until we get to the mine. [See **Disappointment No. 3.**]

We kept coming head-to-head with these four-wheeled road crawlers, four-wheel steered by unhelmeted rednecks. They'd practically turn on their side to pass us as I watched between my fingers.

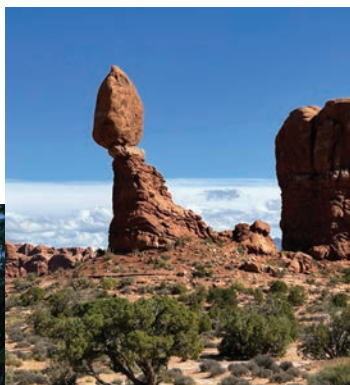


Telluride

#### UTAH

**Moab** — Pictures of **Arches National Park** don't do it

justice. The arches in reds and corals: stunning. Apparently this too is 4-wheeler road crawler country.



Balancing Rock at Arches

#### ARIZONA

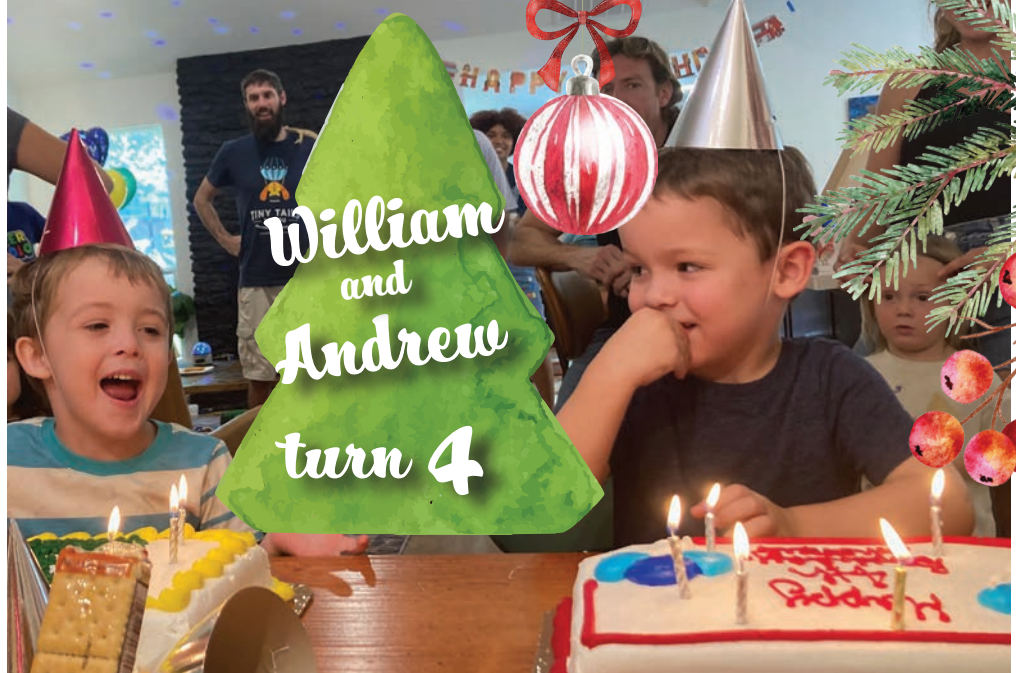
**Sedona** — Driving the Red Rock Scenic Byway around Sedona was absolutely The. Most. Beautiful. Imagine one glorious rock structure after another in the most spectacular reds you've ever

seen. We just had to ignore the 14 roundabouts invented by a sadistic idiot.

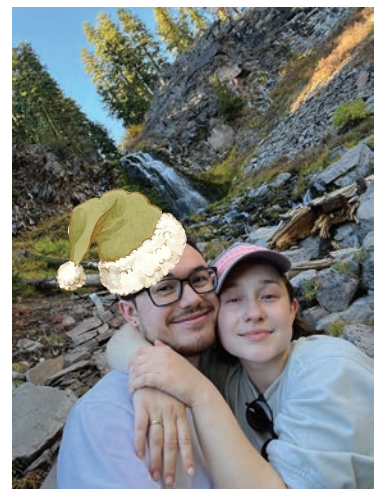
On to **Chiricahua National Monument** with its hoodoos and balancing rocks where we repeated a hike Ian did with his brother John Morton decades ago.

But the best part was staying at an RV park with no lights. With a small observatory nearby, it's a favorite of astronomers. In a stroke of unfathomably good luck, we were there at just the right time. The skies were clear, and we had a waxing crescent moon with single-digit percent illumination. Each evening, we watched the sun, then the moon set behind the mountains. From blues, pinks and purples, the sky became pitch black with a gazillion bright stars. Soon the **Milky Way** was clearly visible in all its glory. Now *that's* humbling.

Fall trip historic honorable mentions: **Valley of Fires, Valley of the Gods, Goosenecks State Park** and national monuments **Bears Ears, Canyons of the Ancients** and **Hovenweep**. All humbling.



With AFD Fire Academy instructor



Drew & Talula (Burton's daughter)



**Endnote:** I have to admit that Ian's truck is awfully comfortable, and now we don't have to pull the trailer with our car going 35 mph uphill on busy highways.



Here's wishing YOU a **2024**  
WITH NO SAND FLEA BITES,  
**GREAT HIKES, HUMILITY,**  
**STARS AND** maybe a *Milky Way* viewing.

*love,*  
*the Inglises*

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