

Christmas 2014

Both of us failed at a very basic task. **Retiring.** 10 years ago Charlie nominally retired, but turned around and started a furniture making business. Jenny became self employed as a Consultant/CPA working for a few small businesses, figuring she could gradually cut back. Last week we deposited 21 paychecks from different clients. Yup, CFO or controller for 25 companies is retirement. Some of them are small – local bars – but others are more massive, such as the beverage concession for South by Southwest (SXSW) in Austin, or Lollapalooza in Chicago, or a construction company or ... whatever.

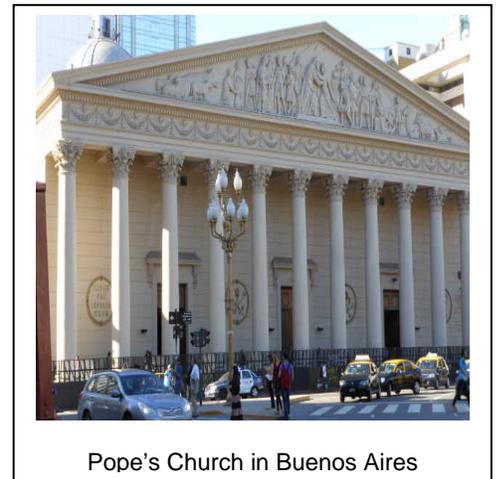
Jenny says there are three reasons she still works:

1. So she can go to the hairdresser often enough that nobody knows she is 69 years old
2. So she can have a massage every 2 weeks and a housekeeper to clean every couple weeks
3. So she can travel. We do a particularly good job at the travel bit.

There were a number of significant trips this year, at least three of which most people would call “the trip of a lifetime.”

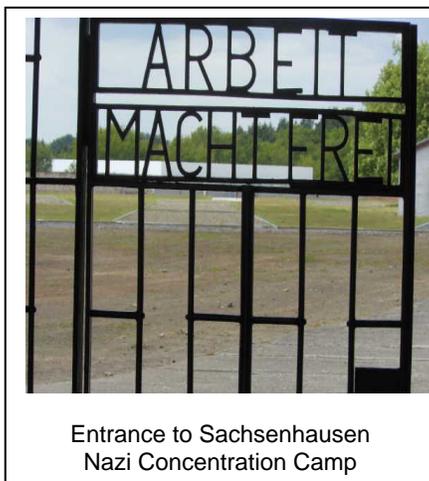
First we took our granddaughter **Chelsea** to visit Charlie’s sister **Rita Isenberg** in Cabin John Maryland (basically Washington DC). Flying with “new people” to a “new destination” was an adventure, but it must have been successful – she asked for a rerun as a Christmas present this year.

Second, we took a quick trip to **Buenos Aires** in March. Guess we had to escape the severe (?) winter here by going to the Southern hemisphere. While there we took a side trip to **Colonia, Uruguay**. Travelogue and pictures at www.plesums.com/travel/buenosaires



Pope's Church in Buenos Aires

The third trip for the two of us was to **Berlin in June**. Jenny had audited a Union College course on the Holocaust, so this trip was not only to the wonderful sights of Berlin, but also to visit many of the sites of the holocaust, including the Sachsenhausen Concentration camp and the House of Wannsee where the Nazis determined the “final solution.” See the travelogue with lots of pictures at www.plesums.com/travel/berlin



Entrance to Sachsenhausen
Nazi Concentration Camp

Our fourth big trip together was to **Calgary in July**. Why Calgary? 1) We had never been there. 2) The Ott family reunion was in nearby Montana, but American Airlines doesn't fly into Montana. We rented a car in Calgary, drove down the west side of Glacier Park to the reunion near Whitefish, Montana. After several

days cavorting with Jenny's family we returned via the east side of Glacier Park, for a few days in Calgary and a drive North into Banff and Jasper Canadian national parks. Yes, another travelogue at www.plesums.com/travel/calgary



Charlie next to World's largest Truck
British Columbia



Jenny - historic Rickshaw
Hong Kong

Our fifth big trip together was **to Hong Kong in September**. We had been there 22 years ago, while it was a British Colony, shortly before it returned to Chinese governance. It has grown even more, and was a great place to visit. The biggest transition was language... in most countries, the younger folks speak English, the older folks only speak the native tongue. Hong Kong was English for many years, so here the older folks all speak English, but the younger folks were born after it had returned to be part of China, so fewer young folks speak English. See www.plesums.com/travel/hongkong The riots in Hong Kong started shortly after we left, but were in the area where we were staying in Hong Kong.

Why the emphasis on trips “together?” Because we also took separate trips. **Jenny** flew to Wisconsin in June to attend the 50th wedding anniversary of **Gerri and Harry Nune-macher** – she was the bridesmaid, but claims to have been the flower girl. **Charlie** made a quick trip to visit his sister in April. These 1,500 mile trips hardly count.

One of the benefits of so much travel is the coveted elite status on the airline, normally earned by flying “paid” miles. At this point we had achieved **platinum status** on American Airlines for the next year, by buying all our tickets. With platinum achieved, we can now use some of the many miles we have earned for free travel.

In December we attended a conference called “Frequent Traveler University” in Washington DC. We thought traveling over 50,000 miles per year was a lot, but not in that crowd. One of the speakers travels so much he does not have a home – he lives on airplanes and hotels all over the world, traveling 400,000 miles per year (most in first class). Another speaker had met his goal of visiting every country in the world – all 193 – and had

pictures to prove it. Another couple makes a game of collecting “free” miles for travel, largely from the bonus for signing up for credit cards – and normally collect more than 1,000,000 miles per year to use for flights. Since a one way first class ticket typically “costs” about 50,000 miles, this gives them 20 free first class flights per year. No travelogue for this “free” trip, but we had fun, and were exhausted by the speed and amount of information that they shared. We ended the trip with a visit to Charlie’s sister Rita, and **Dave & Shelly Hawksford**.

Enough travel.

After 8 years with a continuous backlog of work (sometimes as much as 6 months backlog), **Charlie’s furniture business** went dry for much 2013, and was slow for the first part of 2014, but the backlog of work seems to be returning. The project currently in the shop is a dining room table built from mesquite (very heavy, expensive wood), 18 feet long and almost 4 feet wide. There are 8 more projects waiting for shop time after the table is finished.

Jenny’s CPA clients have needed fewer hours of work, even though she still serves around 25 different businesses. Therefore she has more time to sew. Our church has a group that makes small quilts that are given to sick people, so Jenny has become expert in quickly making small quilts – sometimes several in a day. I tell her that if she is going to crank out quilts like a factory, she will have to learn to speak Chinese.

Mark was not able to adopt his daughter Chelsea – her biological father would not approve, even though Mark’s wife, Stacey, had full custody. When Chelsea turned 18 (legally an adult) she asked to have her name changed to Plesums. She said, “Mark has been my father for many years; my friends all know him as my father; I would like to have his name.” We are honored and thrilled that our granddaughter is now **Chelsea Marie Plesums**.

Mark had changed jobs last year after his company was sold, but his new job had a very long commute, and required working in their office. This year he found a new job, closer to home, as part of a very friendly group that also allows him to sometimes work from home.

Stacey also changed jobs this year, and is now in business travel sales with the Hilton Hotels rather than the Intercontinental Hotel group.

Chelsea is in her third year of college, heading towards pediatric nursing. She got a job in a day care center, but it was poorly managed, so (like her parents) she changed jobs too. She found a day care center that was better with their employees. She is now working almost half time, in addition to carrying a full academic load.

We wish you health and happiness this Christmas season and pray that you have a very Happy New Year.

Jenny and Charlie