

Christmas 2005

On October 16th Mum fell in her suite at Hecate Lodge. No broken bones, but she ended up spending the night on the floor before being found in the morning. It appears she was suffering from pneumonia before the fall, but was easily cured of this within a few days. It is now December 15th as I write this and Mum is still in the hospital, albeit in a Transitional Care facility called Dufferin Place. She has not bounced back sufficiently to return to Hecate Lodge. The staff at Dufferin Place have evaluated her as needing nursing care, so we will have to find a new place for Mum to live. At the moment I'm favoring moving Mum to Victoria, since there is about a one year waiting list for Residential Care in Nanaimo. There are many more facilities in Victoria to choose from, and they appear to have much shorter waiting lists.



I suppose I should get the other bit of bad news over with. We had to have Sylvester, our white Manx cat euthanized on May the 8th. As I mentioned last year, he had a terrible time living with Cryptococcus, a fungal disease that cats and dogs on southern Vancouver Island seem to be highly susceptible to through environmental exposure to tree fungus growing in our area. He was suffering toward the end, so we were forced to make the decision all pet owners dread.

On the other hand, Sheba, our black longhair four year old cat is fat and happy. Tucker, our eight year old Jack Russell Terrier is still acting like a puppy...although we notice he is taking more naps between those squirrel-chasing walks we go on regularly! www.jocarr.ca/photogallery/Pets/

I have not traveled during 2005, however next March I will be embarking on a *real adventure*. On March 29, 2006 there will be a **total Solar Eclipse**. The track for this eclipse starts on the coast of Brazil, goes across the Atlantic Ocean and over northern Africa and central Asia, where it will end at sunset in northern Mongolia.

I decided to join an Eclipse Expedition to Libya being hosted by The Toronto Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society. We will be observing the eclipse from deep in the Sahara Desert. As it turns out, the chosen location is optimum: offering over a 90% chance of a cloud-free day, and it is also very near to the maximum duration for totality – 4 minutes and 3 seconds. <http://toronto.rasc.ca/content/eclipse2006.shtml>

We will spend a week in Libya, so there will be time to see Sabrata and Leptis Magna, the largest intact Roman ruins to be found anywhere, as well as other sights. The itinerary also includes a week in Italy, where we will see both *astronomical* and the regular sights in Rome, Florence, Venice, and Milan. I have also added an extra week to this trip by arranging to stop off in Athens, Greece so I can just kick back and relax...and see a few of the sights in Athens as time permits. Believe it or not, this will be my first trip to Europe, so I'm really looking forward to that portion of the itinerary.

I continue to enjoy taking astrophotos, and I'm developing better technique as I go along. This year I acquired a very nice Canon 400mm telephoto lens, which I can piggyback on my big telescope to take wide field astronomical images. If you browse my website www.JoeCarr.ca/Astro you will see the results of my efforts for this year.

On the personal front, Kirk and I are both reasonably well...yet another year older. Where does the time go? Tucker motivates us every day to get outside and take him for walks, even when we don't feel like it. In addition to my astrophotography, I also enjoy *regular* photography by getting out and about with my camera. Sometimes I'm capturing the antics our pets get up to, and sometimes I'm being creative by taking images of the wonderful nature that surrounds us in this part of the world.



On November 1, 2007 I will officially retire from the BC government after 30 year's of service. I expect to actually depart from the office well before that date...perhaps in early 2007 depending how things work out. I'm looking forward to retirement, and although many retirees say they will travel and don't, I expect to take at least two trips a year abroad after I retire...and I'm confident that will happen, assuming my good health continues. I'm also looking forward to gearing up my interest in astronomy after retirement. This is the golden age for astronomy, and professional-amateur collaboration is now easily achievable, so hopefully I can participate.

As is the case every year, Kirk has already setup a Christmas tree in the living room, and has decorated the house inside. I've put up the outside lights and helped a bit inside, but generally I'm more of a *Christmas Grinch* than a Christmas helper. Nonetheless, we plan to bring Mum down to Victoria for a few days over Christmas, so once again our little family will be together over the holidays.

We hope you and your family have a wonderful Holiday Season!

***Kirk & Joe
Tucker and Sheba***