

## 2021 General updates and some news

We are well. And have just completed a year in our “retirement community”, which has, all in all, worked out very well for us. The biggest irony is that although we chose to make the move for several reasons, perhaps the most important was that it would provide a social setting where there would be ample and on-going interactions with other residents here, counteracting our (and particularly my) tendency toward hermit-like **lifestyle**. The pandemic, of course, took care of that in short order.

Which was, to me (the primary hermit), not a bad thing, as I have been very busy with my solitary pursuits, freed from the distractions of necessary interactions with other people. I completed three steamboat models in the first six months and then deliberately started a bigger project, a whale ship, which required extensive research and the creation of a set of plans, making up the line for the rigging, etc. before even starting it. Although I have finagled with the management here to allow display of the steamboat models in the common areas of the community center, which has relieved the space crunch in our apartment, the pressure is still on. And so, the current project will, I hope, keep me occupied for another nine months or so.

Since the ship modeling was getting problematic, I bought an etching press, after persuading the management that they should provide me space to establish a print-making studio. (yes, there is a pattern ) And I am busy since the arrival of the press in mid-December re-learning etching and related copper-plate techniques. During one of our many down-sizes preliminary to making the move here, I got rid of my previous press (22” x 44” bed) several years ago, and also all the supplies and ancillary equipment, so I have been gradually re-acquiring the support material as well as the skills. The new press is 15” x 30”, so there are economies of scale. I even have a couple of fellow residents interested and the little studio is getting quite active. I have plans (big plans) to add additional printing techniques to the repertoire over the next year, so perhaps by 2022 we will have quite an operation going.

Ellen is also enjoying the time to pursue her interest in fibre arts, without the distractions of social contact. (One cannot characterize living with me as “social contact”.) She does really excellent needle work and has been making various projects, some of her own design, which we frame and hang on the walls (among the prints) or give to family and friends. (since no one wants a ship model). She has developed cataracts over the last years and now finds they interfere with needlework, so will be getting the first fixed in the spring, and maybe the second shortly thereafter. She is still able to do her work presently, but it will be much easier and better after improving the vision. If I get back to re-building our web site, I will be sure to show off her work. She also reads voraciously, mostly mysteries.

Otherwise we mark the time mainly by noting when we re-fill our weekly pill dispensers. Fortunately they are named by day, so we usually know at least what day of the week it is, if not the date. Unless, of course, we miss a day’s dose and then we are “off-by-one”, as the coders say. But with two of us, we usually catch the error quickly. Of late, we are getting a bit restive, as the “winter”, and a bit of arthritis, has restricted our daily walking. So we have just started to make weekly drives over the bridge back to the “East Bank”, or New Orleans proper. Although here in Algiers (the “West Bank”) there is plenty of shopping and such, it is not the same as the old neighborhood. So, we re-visit there and do some shopping at the local bakery and at Whole Foods and Terranova’s. Just enough of a “getaway”. Although lately there has been King Cake involved. ‘Tis the season.

Stay well. And stay home. Let us pray the “Uncle Joe” can straighten out this mess.