

The Gibson Gazette

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"Good words, good spirits, good friends make for a good life"

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Great Dad, great friend, great expectations

Passages, the movement from one stage to another, filled the latter part of our 2012.

In late November, Malcolm's father, Tommy Aurednick, died at age 90. At the independent retirement community in Lawrence, where he and Malcolm's mother, Marge, lived, many of those who loved and knew him celebrated his life at a memorial service. "He was special because he picked us, and we picked him," Malcolm told the gathering. Officially his step-dad, Tommy was, as Malcolm said, "always just 'Dad' or 'Pops' to me. He was never a 'step.'" (For those with an interest, his obituary can be found at ljworld.com. Just go to obituaries and search for "Aurednick.")

Not too long after Malcolm's Dad's passing, Malcolm and Joyce got word of good friend Charlie Robins' death. Malcolm and Joyce flew to Tampa for Charlie's memo-



Giraffe lamp.

rial at a favorite eating spot, the Colonnade on Bay Shore Boulevard, that reunited a lot of former cohorts from the Tampa Times, where Charlie had been a columnist, and Tampa Tribune. Whenever Malcolm and Joyce made one of their frequent sojourns south, they would always stay a night or two with Charlie and his wife, Carol. Part of the regular itineraries (and fun) were their frequent outings to Tampa's thrift stores (Goodwill, Salvation Army, St. Vincent de Paul, et al.). Once, while the treasure hunters were making the Thrift Store Tour, Mal-



Top: Mom and Dad at a KU women's basketball game. Both were regulars with seats on the front row. Mom still goes with Malcolm and Joyce. Right: My Mom and new Dad (and Malcolm) during a visit to New England shortly after they got married in 1950.



colm stumbled upon a giraffe lamp (that now sits prominently in the living room). Malcolm's find came much to Charlie's dismay because Charlie had prided himself in finding such treasures first (then, usually, passing them along). At Charlie's memorial, Carol said, "Don't be surprised if it's not there when you get back home" because Charlie might have swopped down to get it before heading off to wherever he was headed to.

During the trip to Charlie's memorial, Malcolm and Joyce, of course, had to pay tribute by making "the Tour," where Malcolm found \$4 sunglasses (better than any at the Sunglass Hut) and Joyce discovered — Charlie would be proud — a wall clock in the shape of a toilet seat that made flushing sounds on the hour. (That find, by the way, which cost more to mail [\$10] than it was to buy [\$5], was

our annual gift for good friends Mary and Bill Garrison in Flat Rock, N.C. We trade "tacky" and "cheap" gifts each holiday season. Can't wait to see what they got us! One year it was a George Bush doll with his pants on fire.)

However, Charlie and his wife, Carol, were so special to Malcolm and Joyce for reasons well beyond their frequent outings to Tampa's thrift shops. The two were a very big part of Malcolm and Joyce's ultimate "getting together" more than four decades ago. Charlie and Carol, along with good "couple" friends Al and Jackie Hutchison and Terry and Betty Plumb, formed a "couples quartet." The four couples, all with ties to the Tribune and Times, did a lot of socializing during the courtship. And it was the example they all set that, without doubt, has led to the endurance of Malcolm and Joyce's marriage

41 years ago this December.

Retirement: Yep, come May 31, 2013, Malcolm will officially retire. Many plans are in the works to keep busy, including a planned nationwide tour — in the Miata, top-down, of course — beginning on June 1. So, beware. If you hear a knock on the door, it'll likely be them. They plan to make a big "eastern-half" circle heading southeast, then north, then west back to Lawrence. After doing laundry at home, they'll head southwest (on Route 66 for the trip they missed when Malcolm had his "medical adventure" in 2011), up the West Coast, then back east southeast by way of Montana ("Hello Rollisons") before heading back to Lawrence in time for Joyce to start her job at the beginning of the school year (unless Malcolm can convince her to retire, too). Malcolm plans to

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Is it RV, or is it 'are we,' crazy?

With thoughts of "how it was" back in the '70s when Malcolm and Joyce owned a mini-motor home and spent many wonderful hours RV-ing next to the beach in St. Augustine, the intrepid couple said, "Why not again now that retirement looms?"

They quickly found the perfect one, and a Mercedes-Benz, at that.

It had everything they desired: a queen-sized bed, nice kitchen and bath, a dinette (that, with the push of a button, "slid out" when parked to make the living quarters quite spacious), and a digital TV with programming sucked in by a high-tech directional antenna.

It was wonderful.

Malcolm and Joyce hated it.

A diesel, it got relatively good (and steadily improving) m.p.g.; a Mercedes, it drove and rode wonderfully well. So, that wasn't the issue.



Malcolm and Joyce strike an American Gothic-like pose in front of their "folly" — the Mercedes-Benz/Forest River motor home on the day of the purchase in May.

To break it in, they spent one night at a lake in western Kansas, which was beautiful and serene, and, a couple of weeks later, two nights at American's Best Campground (it wasn't) in

Branson, Mo. (a town Malcolm had vowed to avoid and wished he had).

On the Sunday as they prepared to head home, Joyce took care of the inside, making the bed, washing the dishes, and stowing this and that; Malcolm spent that hour or so taking care of the outside, unhooking this line and that and stowing this hose and that.

Oh, and flushing, sanitizing and stowing the four-inch rubberized tube connecting the RV's septic tank (that had to be flushed, too) to the campground's septic system.

Malcolm affectionately (a bit of sarcasm, folks!) dubbed it the "poop chute."

On the way back home, Malcolm and Joyce didn't have to say a word when collectively asking themselves: "What the hell were we thinking?"

With no hesitation, they took it back to the dealer, who sold it almost immediately...of course, at a loss (to us, not the dealer).

It's back to the Miata and B&Bs, where someone else can make the bed and serve breakfast and clean the toilet.

No more RV.

And no more "poop chute."

China, Niagara, ‘Oh, no, Canada’

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take the fall semester off (to work on some writing projects) before likely becoming an adjunct professor in Spring 2014.

China and “Oh, no, Canada”: China, once again, beckoned. Malcolm and Joyce headed to Shenzhen, China, for spring break to hook up with Li Honghai (“Hai”) on an “official” week-long visit representing the School of Journalism. Hai, as you might recall from last year’s missive, is a Chinese documentarian who’s climbed Mt. Everest (and stayed with Malcolm and Joyce for a few weeks). They visited Hai’s documentary/TV facilities and had a great time socializing with his employees, including a lavish dinner at a local restaurant that featured both great food and traditional dancers. Malcolm and Joyce also got to know Hai’s parents, his sister and her daughter (whose English was so good she likely could help him teach his grammar class this spring semester), and Hai’s young son, who cornered the cute market. Malcolm and Joyce also got to spend some time with Mr. Wang Shi, the Donald Trump of China (though Mr. Wang is nice, socially and environmentally responsible and, actually, more successful than “The Donald”). Mr. Wang had stayed with Malcolm and Joyce during a visit to Lawrence, Hai, by the way, is going to the top of Everest again to shoot more film for his documentary.

Other trips included Malcolm driving solo to California. It included a literally death-defying Garmin-induced “wrong turn” that took him and the Miata along a rock-strewn, serpentine dirt road for 80 miles in Utah while heading to Ely, Nevada, for the eye-popping, awe-inspiring trip on Route 50, dubbed the Loneliest Road in America. It was all it was hyped up to be — and it was paved. Joyce, stuck in school, flew in a few days later. They spent a week with Ian and Andrea. While there, Malcolm and Joyce stopped by the hospital in Alameda to see the emergency room doctor, Eric Otani, who saved his life by ordering the CAT scan. Malcolm and Joyce were glad to see him, and he was happy to see them (and Malcolm doing so well). They, along with Ian and Andrea, also had dinner with two of his very special rehab specialists from the hospital: Caitlin (nee Newkirk) Cooper and her new husband, and Rhonda Shively and her daughter. Before heading home, Malcolm and Joyce stopped in to visit Andrea’s parents, Angel and Lucia, in Modesto.

Joyce and Malcolm then headed west, stopping for the night in Las Vegas (they both hated it). The next day, they headed north through Utah (they both loved the beautiful ever-changing vistas at every turn) before turning east to Kansas.

In July, it was a road trip inter-



Malcolm’s brother, Ken, and his wife, Diana, visited Malcolm and Joyce and Mom and Dad this summer. Below: Joyce and brother, Kent, in Tampa in December.



Above: Rachel, Chris, Adam and Jennifer in Salem, Mass., this summer. Right: Ian and Andrea “enjoy” a game of Bingo with Grandma Marge and Joyce at the independent living retirement “village.”



rupted by a month because Joyce stayed there to help Jennifer, Chris and Adam get settled into their new home in Nashua, N.H. Malcolm and Joyce had driven the HHR (stopping at the “always spectacular” Niagara Falls, which the family had visited about 30 years ago). Malcolm flew home, alone, to teach his summer class; Joyce stayed to paint rooms and do yard work with grandson Adam’s help. In late July, Malcolm flew back to New Hampshire to fetch Joyce for the drive back. They had planned to stop to see Paul and Corky Smeyak in Ohio, but Malcolm had been delayed getting to New Hampshire because his Dad had been in the hospital for a time. So, because of time constraints, they scratched that part of the trip, heading to Cooperstown, N.Y., for the Baseball Hall of Fame (“disappointing”), then directly to Michigan to see Andrea Billups and her companion, Steve Miller, both great journalists. (Malcolm and Andrea are working on an oral history project.)

Ms. Garmin, again, led to some unplanned consequences by sending Malcolm and Joyce through Canada, the shortest route to Andrea and Steve’s Michigan home. That led to the possibility that they, not by choice, would have to become Canadian citizens because the U.S. didn’t want to let ‘em back in the good ol’ U.S. of A. Not planning to leave the country, Malcolm and Joyce had traveled sans passports. The Canadian government let ‘em in Canada, sans pass-

ports, with barely a whisper; the U.S. border official didn’t want to let ‘em back in without such proof of citizenship. “We hadn’t planned to come into Canada,” we said. “What’d you do? Make a wrong turn?” he retorted. “No, the Garmin just sent us this way.” After holding up the cars behind us in line for 15 or 20 minutes, the rather grumpy U.S. Immigration guy found a record of our passports (and citizenship) on his computer, and announced, coldly, “Do know that they expire in February?” before allowing us back on U.S. soil.

Mom and Dad: Mom and Dad, celebrated their 62nd wedding anniversary in their Mom is doing relatively well, considering that, since Dad’s retirement from the Navy more than 50 years ago, they had done virtually everything together. She’s moved into a smaller, but very “homey,” one-bedroom apartment at the same retirement complex. And she’s “on the go” with activities there, as well as with Malcolm and Joyce, where the three can be found on the front row at KU women’s basketball games. She also was excited/anxious to fly with Malcolm and Joyce to spend Christmas and New Year’s with Jennifer, Chris and Adam in New Hampshire with planned trips to see two of her sisters in Massachusetts. **Note:** Malcolm, who’s been writing essays for the Virginian-Pilot in Norfolk, Va., where he grew up, wrote one about his Dad that celebrated his teaching Malcolm to appreciate beer, at age 9, and to manufacture sounds of

“passing gas” using his armpit, among other important lessons and skills every son should know. (If interested, go to pilotonline.com, then search for “Malcolm Gibson.” Links to four essays, including the one on Malcolm’s Dad, should appear.)

Jennifer, Chris and Adam: The big news for them is their new home in Nashua, N.H. It’s warm and roomy, though it (and they) experienced — suffered, really — a bit of a surprise when a stone wall next to their driveway collapsed after heavy rains. Unfortunately, Jennifer’s car was next to the wall, with much of the stonework falling on and in her car. It was totaled. The wall has been replaced. Another setback involved Chris, who found himself in the hospital in December for gall bladder surgery. His stay was extended when he also developed pneumonia. He’s on the mend as we write this. For Jennifer, her job remains busy, and she’s taken on some part-time work, too, at the local hospital. Adam continues to grow (he’s 5’8” at this writing) and started high school in August.

Ian and Andrea: The big news from California is that both Ian and Andrea have new jobs. Andrea is working in finance for a firm in San Mateo, and Ian just picked up a gig — he starts Jan. 7 — as a “treasury analyst” for eBay in San Jose. They’ll be moving that way soon, and Ian won’t miss the commute he’s been making by train each day into downtown Frisco.

More weddings: Malcolm officiated one wedding (his 15th) for a former student this summer, and he’s got another on tap for a former student this coming August.

Visitors: Malcolm and Joyce again played host to a gaggle of family and friends this year. His brother, Ken, and his wife, Diana, visited for a week and spent some quality time with Mom and Dad before heading back to Florida. Ginny Marso stopped by during a visit from Minnesota, along with son, Andy, a former student who now covers the Kansas Legislature for the Topeka Capital-Journal. And Jerry and Valerie Rollison visited on their way from Virginia back to their Red Lodge, Mont., home. (And, as noted earlier, they can expect a visit from Malcolm and Joyce this summer.)

Ian and Andrea came for Thanksgiving. It was a special time, allowing Ian to spend some time with Grandpa Tom during his Hospice care. Ian and Andrea were a great help during that difficult time, helping Grandma and Malcolm and Joyce throughout Grandpa Tom’s final days. It was touching and telling about the relationship he and Grandpa Tom had. When he was a toddler, Grandpa Tom would take him to work at Cone Bros. Construction, allowing Ian to sit atop all the big road-working machines. At home, at the sound of a train whistle, Grandpa Tom would whisk Ian to the nearby crossing to watch the trains go by.

Y’all come: The Gibson “B&B,” is open to all. And, as they always say, “All y’all come.”

For Malcolm’s blog, “Going Over Sixty,” go to malcolmgibson.blogspot.com

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