

FISHERMEN'S VOICE

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News & Comment for and by the Fishermen of Maine

FREE

Hot Christmas

It was late. But then again when had we ever experienced a fall like this. Days in a row of brilliant warm sun. Leaf crop so dazzling would bring tears to the eyes. Who wouldn't push the envelope, yet the calendar clock was ticking. Each day we'd plot the weather out for four more days till finally the descending thermometer and first major storm converged on the horizon. Time to go.

Day three, wind was screeching from the northwest with gusts to 55 mph sending surf rollers across the pond to crash against the bulkhead, whipped spray into the air to fall on the tiny lawn and instantly freeze in the 20 degree air. Looked like a Disney scene as I poked my head out the door, tools in hand, to shut the water system down. Had to hammer the ice from around the intake pipe to release lines as icy water slammed over insulated boots and dribbled its way to the toes. Walking on ice was accomplished very carefully with help of metal pole till surf line was passed. Maybe, the thought flashed, we should have left yesterday.

But. We made it. Just a few glitches with the minivan (not sure why it's called a 'minivan' when the two of us pack in enough to keep the average family in food and clothes for a year). Pulled out of the camp road just as odometer turned 160T—good omen. By Sunday evening with snow in the air we rolled into Old Orchard and a fun stop with friends before clearing Maine. Monday, right on time, just as NOAA had promised, the big one from the Midwest rolled in. Only time in recent memory I'd looked forward to enjoying a storm. AJ and I hunkered down, found some good reading material and watched sleet and snow whittle across the beach from a sixth floor windowed condominium. Felt like being in the eye of a storm inside a warm balloon. Wicked.

Next day Harrisburg Pennsylvania, where we discovered a really neat restaurant, 'The Firehouse'. Aptly named, since it had been a firehouse. Interior was original, restored and decorated with myriad old and new firefighting gear enough to make an ex-sandbox wet his pants. Place was fun and food was even better. We enjoyed lump crabcakes (no filler) and salad and agreed these were probably the best crabcakes ever. Great stop on a snowbird north or south.

Morning kicked off clearish. Breakfast in a holdout 'smoking/nonsmoking' diner with grits and sausage gravy on the menu and we hit the road. Not too far along we passed a golf course where two fanatics with temperature at 28 degrees wearing blaze orange vests were playing. Wondered if they made nine holes as it wasn't long before the weatherman had his final lick. We crawled through the Pennsylvania mountains and Shenandoah Valley with a nasty combination of sleet, rain, snow and frozen windshield washers. Finally, just outside Fredericksburg, we knew we were safe and weather devil was giving up when we could see to read the

'firecrackers for sale' billboards. We snuck into Richmond to see a dear Aunt who at 80-plus is simply a treasure to be cherished then swung toward Newport News and an overnight with cousins from Maine.

It was there in the tiny town of Seaford that AJ and I first felt the coming of Christmas and realized we were in warm country for the holidays. Nearby was this rather large house perched on a generous hillside lot decorated from property lines with every light combination and moving Xmas animal imaginable. Never seen anything like it, must have had a generator on a semi-trailer for electric power. Grandbabies would have been mightily impressed. Quite a treat.

Next stopover was Myrtle Beach for a great evening of conversation and good food. Then with sun rising and van thermometer reading 38 degrees, we hit Route 17, ran down through Charleston and out onto I-95. Sun's heat was steadily clicking up with each stop forcing another discard or change of apparel. At the Florida border for annualized pulled-pork barbecue and slaw, we were down to shorts and tees. This was going to be a different Xmas. Already we had the misgivings. 7 pm and 83 degrees, we hit the Englewood exit.

Eleven more days to go. I haven't, as usual, done a lick of shopping. Won't be but a few Xmas cards sent, but the palm trees out front have some lights and AJ has loaded the spotlighted wheelbarrow with fake presents and bows. The brought decorations from home are placed and we're trying to summon the courage to buy a ready-built/ready-lit tree from Walmart. Perhaps on Christmas Day we'll go to the beach, take along a straw hat and big red bow, build a 'Sandman' and call home. It's just not gonna be the same but we'll muddle through. Someone, as the saying goes, has got to do it.

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Here's a seasonal drink for my northern neighbors which I thought most apropos this year. Addition of a good rum and t'would warm the cockles of any but the coldest of hearts.

Cranberry Warmer

1 teaspoon allspice	4 cups apple cider
3 whole cloves	1/3 cup packed brown sugar
2 cinnamon sticks	4 cups cranberry juice

Place first three ingredients in a double thickness of cheese cloth and tie for a spice bag. Place with cider in a large sauce pan. Low simmer, covered for five minutes. Add cranberry juice and heat to simmer. Remove immediately. Serve warm in mugs.

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I received the greatest Christmas present in years the other day when it appears from tests that the Essiac herbal formula I've been taking is fighting my prostate cancer. PSA took a substantial drop. If you or someone you know has cancer, log on to essiacinfo.org for more info.

Heartfelt Merry, Merry to you all.

Lee S. Wilbur