



The Birman Letter 2005

Merry Christmas

Happy Chanukah



This is the season for catching up on one another's lives during the past year and for reviewing our own activities. We, for example, have a collection of these letters (begun by Rosemarie long before we married in 1968) that comprise our history. When we try to recall what year was it that we did whatever, we consult the saved back issues of this annual letter.

As we sit down to compose this, we are back in Florida, cleaning up from the ravages of Hurricane Wilma which arrived a few days after we did and destroyed an estimated 30% of the tree canopy in the four-county area centered around Fort Lauderdale. Five windows on the north side of our apartment were sucked out (not blown out, sucked out—the wind was from the southwest.)



Cardboard covers the blown out windows

There was extensive water damage to the carpeting and some built-in bookcases and cabinets. The carpeting is scheduled to be replaced in 2-3 weeks.

Some 98 percent of the homes and businesses in this area lost electric power as whole rows of concrete power poles were snapped like toothpicks. It took 2-3 weeks to get electric power restored to most places. Our apartment building was luckier than

most. We only spent two nights cooking over Sterno burners, and lighting with candles. We were without water pressure for an additional day. Paul carried buckets of water up from the pool to flush the toilets and drained the water heater to obtain water for washing. We had bottled stuff to drink.

Entrepreneurs were selling 5KW generators from the back of rented trucks



L-R Barry, Sylvia, Marj, George, Rosemarie and Paul

that they drove down from Atlanta and points north. Almost all of the traffic signals were inoperative. Those that were not blown away were without power. Every intersection became a four-way stop. There was no gas. Actually there was plenty of gas, just no way to pump it. Our car arrived from NY by truck a few days later. The fuel tank had been siphoned dry!

At our yacht club, the docked boats provided power from their on-board generators and some outdoor parties were staged using the gas grill to BBQ burgers and steaks. Our own boat escaped damage, having been hauled out for bottom painting a few days before Wilma blew through.

Cousin Enid and Morty suffered extensive roof damage at their home a few

miles west of us. Parts of their ceilings collapsed. From our windows, we can still see lots of blue tarps covering what remains of tile roofs after they were stripped off by Wilma's winds.

When 2005 began, sister Sylvia and Barry Cooper joined us at the yacht club for a festive black tie party to welcome the New Year. This has happily become an annual event.

In April we flew to Los Angeles for Passover with niece Jean and her family. Cousin George and Marj Ansell were in town, too, and we arranged a nice lunch reunion.

When we did the snowbird thing and flew north to Cedar Beach for the summer, we undertook an extensive refurbishment of our Long Island waterfront home. The entire outside was repainted a more pleasing shade of red, all of the trim was refinished, the roof was removed and a new roof installed, the fence around the property was repaired and our ice-damaged dock pilings were re-set in the creek.

Having been elected a governor of the Florida yacht club, Paul found himself commuting back to Ft. Lauderdale once a month to attend board meetings.

The job has proved to be very time consuming, but it is fun to be involved in the decision-making processes.

August, 2005 marked Paul's 70th

birthday. At the end of July, a few days before the actual date, we threw a party for 80 friends and family in a local Inn. People came from as far away as Los Angeles

tively quickly. Rosemarie joined a group taking a bridge course and enjoyed relearning old skills, Paul enjoyed a number of opportunities to indulge his ham-radio hobby, an activity he's been doing since 1954. There is an active local group that meets regularly and participates in local and national events.

Although we are both nominally retired, we find ourselves busier than ever with various projects typically involving publishing, computers and consulting, not to mention all of the volunteer work that we both do.

Although we did not do any expedition travel this year, we have a nice long spring cruise planned for the spring of 2006 aboard Lindblad's *National Geographic Endeavour*. We will cruise from Easter Island to Pitcairn Island to Papeete, Tahiti and on to Bora Bora and Rarotonga, along the Tropic of Capricorn in the South Pacific. God willing, we will tell you about it in next year's "Birman Letter." If you check our website, www.pbirman.com, you'll likely get an earlier look.

We wish you all the blessings of this holiday season and hope that 2006 will bring peace to this troubled world.

Rosemarie and Paul



and Florida and Chicago to help him celebrate and dance to the music of the 60's and 70's with a local band. We had a lovely weekend with people representing many different phases of Paul's life. Neighbors from Flushing, Queens where he grew up, and where Rosemarie and he lived for many years, colleagues from work and friends we met on some of our travels, plus our many groups of friends from

Long Island's delightful wine country, the North Fork.

The rest of the season passed rela-