

Monday February 5th 2018

We got off to a slow start on a sunny morning. While it started at only 48F the forecast for Grayton Beach was 65F with full sun. In Toronto: 12F to 20F part cloud. Louisville: 21F to 35F part cloud.

The NYTX was tricky and it took David 5 minutes and thirty seconds. Louise flamed out because she had never gone on safari in Africa.

We looked up the beach house at 345 Pine Street, that overlooks the dunes. It was built in 1986 and was listed at \$1 million. It is 1,146 sq.ft. With its rather huge price tag it rents for \$2,400/mo. Half as much as our Little Pearl Cottage, a block away and much older and definitely more rustic.

The headline said “Eagles Stun Patriots in Super Bowl LII”. We were equally stunned not even having known that LII had been played. Why is it LII and not 52?

About 09:45 we drove off towards Pensacola. Louise was wearing her batik tunic that she bought in Portree on the Isle of Skye. We stopped first at the Dollar General to return a mop that Louise deemed surplus to requirement. We bought a couple of sundries – it was a monetary wash.

Then we told the GPS to take us to 11000 University Parkway, the address of the University of West Florida. Instead of going due west, Sue told us to turn north on highway 273 across Eglin Air Force Base. Do you have any idea how much real estate that base controls? In effect Eglin AFB is a giant nature preserve. The area is heavily wooded and must make great habitat for all sorts of creatures.

When we crossed a very long bridge over a bay, it dawned on us that Sue had decided on the scenic route. We paid a \$4 toll to get off the bridge and shortly thereafter we saw a sign that we were on a toll road and that charges would be applied administratively. We passed under an array of detectors/cameras and got off as soon as possible onto Highway 10 – the principal east-west corridor that runs right across north Florida from Pensacola via Tallahassee to Jacksonville. We thought we might get a bill in the mail and alerted our Toronto friend to that possibility. In effect we went in a huge U shape north over Choctawhatchee Bay then west and coming south on the west side of Pensacola Bay.

It turned out to be about a 2.5 hour drive before we pulled into the Visitor Center at the University of West Florida. We went inside and got a free parking pass that we had to display in the van front window. They don't administratively ticket vehicles at UWF, they just tow them.

Louise graduated from UWF in 1971 with a Bachelor's degree and in 1973 with a Master's. So this was a rather significant homecoming.

The campus is unique and unlike anything that David had ever seen. The setting is tranquil with buildings spaced out so that significant landscaping sets a quiet tone. The center of the campus sits atop a high, hilly area, nicely wooded with live oaks and pines. The buildings, with the exception of the library, square and roofed with overlarge Frank Lloyd Wright overhangs. Buildings are scattered about and walkways winding about connect them to each other.

We found the Book Store and were stumped by their cataloging system. It was all arranged by Author

Name with the disciplines intermingled. So, if you wanted a book on butterflies, you had to know who had written such a tome, and other butterfly books could be in aisles B, H, M or Z.

We walked over to the Commons where a student told us we could get lunch. Louise ordered up a Quiznos sandwich and David was lucky enough to snag some root beer. Visiting the Men's Room, David noted that a dispenser offered free condoms - very realistic and responsible. Students having lunch in the Commons cafe were what Louise would call well, if casually dressed, normal in size and not tattooed in the fashion on many campuses today. There's something to be said for a small, upper level and graduate school university in a quiet setting. On most of today's campuses which are ginormous, insanely noisy and nothing but high rise buildings and brick caverns, students seem to go out of their way to make themselves unattractive, if not downright ugly.

After lunch we wandered the campus and managed to get lost. We noted the way the landscaping was casual enough to appear to be natural. There is a Nature Walk area dedicated to Edward Ball, a man responsible for much of the Florida conservation, preservation begun in the 70s. A helpful student finally got us pointed back to the van. Another note here about students, UWF is only junior and senior years and a few graduate school programs. So, you don't get into UWF unless you have already done your Freshman and Sophomore years elsewhere – UWF professors love this. It is geared to the mature student who seriously knows where he or she is trying to go. That makes a big difference. The setting has an impact as well, for sure, so the ambiance is very pleasant.

On the way back Louise decided that Louise knew better than Sue. So Louise dialed in the coordinates of a small town, Gulf Breeze, she knew that would force Sue to go south rather than back up north. En route we stopped to pick up some beer and to ask how to get to Scenic Drive, which winds all along the shore of Escambia Bay to the city itself. It is not the untrammled high ground it was in the 70s. A bit disappointing, but we got a few good looks at the expanse of the bay and sighted a pelican as well. Louise remembered the distance covered by Scenic Drive as much longer than it seemed, but all in all it gave us a lovely road down the west side of Pensacola Bay.

It had been a really nice day and we had both overdressed. Louise did not bring any skirts from Louisville and decided she needed to buy a skirt to prevent overheating. She had seen a GAP store on Highway 98 on a previous outing. Accordingly, as we drove east towards Destin our eyes were peeled for skirt stores.

After striking out at Marshall's and The Gap, David opined that this feminism had gone too far. (Louise opined that these stores are not what they used to be. The merchandise is wretchedly shoddy.) How could men ever chase skirts if stores did not stock them and women stopped wearing same?

We wound up in a factory outlet plaza where the store signs were of a uniform nature to set a mature ambiance. Louise found two skirts, marked down by 80% in Brooks Brothers – who the hell ever would expect to find skirts in a men's clothing store. Those two very well-made skirts were a find in that morass of undesirable stuff.

Louise had been looking for a Winn-Dixie ever since we got to Florida. When one hove into view we did a bit of grocery shopping and got an 18 inch baguette for one dollar.

We got home about 17:30 after driving about 200 miles. A great adventure.

We had warmed over spaghetti and a green salad with a cheap red wine that had to be assisted with ice cubes and seltzer.

After blogging and doing e-mail we watched two episodes of Boston Legal. We were a bit tired. The day had been easy enough, but long. The warmth of the day surprised us. The Boston Legal stories were somewhat sad. The characters have taken shape and the storyline is consistent in observing their behaviors, so it stands to reason that there is an increased sense of the grimness of reality. Alan Shore continues to be the voice of reason, social consciousness, and balance. Denny Crane continues to get weirder, his 'charm' may be fading. More to come . . .

Tuesday February 6th 2018

The stock market continued its dramatic drop, shedding most of the gains since October, 2017. Trump took the credit for the gains, we wonder if he will acknowledge the losses.

The NYTX beat us both.

When we looked across the road we could see that that construction crew had added a top to the cube that had previously constructed. The truss work suggested they might put a second room on top thus extending the whole house significantly.

Weather: Toronto 19F to 24F cloud Louisville 31F to 39F part cloud Grayton 55F to 67F part cloud

We left the cottage about 10:00 and drove to the South Walton Visitors Center to pick up a T-shirt for David and other trophies. Then we gassed up at the Tom Thumb fillin' station.

We continued to the Dollar General to try to pick up another bird house. The lady at the store had misinformed us. The promised bird houses had not been delivered.

Hiding our disappointment we dropped into Publix to buy some lettuce. In the process David picked up some gaudy swimming trunks and an even worse long-sleeved T-shirt made in Guatemala and guaranteed to stop sunburn with SPF 50.

We went to to the Boulevard Shopping Mall at Sandestin – it lay in the shadow of a huge communications tower. We noted a lot of gray wrinklies and an unusual number of electric carts. We also saw the Jeep model Liberty that might suit Louise better than some to the tanks we have been seeing.

Louise then regaled in a long bout of retail therapy. Her credit card took a lot of hits. At one point she was tempted to buy a gray Tilley's hat for \$US 84. David thought that was more than they charged where they made them in Toronto.

We had difficulty finding a restaurant that would serve anything less than a full three course meal. Finally a clerk whispered that there were snack type restaurants on the very periphery of the complex. That is where we found Grimaldi's Pizza. We ordered a 12-inch pepperoni to share with a glass each of draft Stella Artois.

Refreshed we drove back east on Hwy 98 and took Hwy 30A south to the beaches. We parked the van at Dune Allen Beach and went for a surf walk. It has heavy overcast and we needed a jacket to fend off the breeze. The USAF or the US Navy, we weren't sure which, were flying F-18 Hornets. But the folks flying kites off the beach were actually more fun to watch. We also watched a rather large slow and low four-engined turboprop aircraft that was covered in antennae and had a very protruding chin. It was later identified as an AC 130 gunship – first used against the Ho Chi Minh Trail. It might have been an AC-130H Spectre or an AC-130U Spooky. Don't forget, Dear Reader, that this is the area for training pilots for the US Military.

We drove further east and found the Chroma studio of Kathleen Broaderick just west of Blue Mountain. We dropped in and had a chat with the artist. She paints a very fierce rooster.

Once we got home David faced a disappointment. His new sexy swimming trunks were designed for a large boy, not a large old man. He consoled himself with a Yuengling Traditional Lager while Louise chortled sipping her Famous Grouse scotch.

Louise had already prepared a tuna salad supper and we experimented by putting a sweet potato into the microwave. The automatic cycle was not able to cook it enough so we gave it a double zap. Mission accomplished.

Then David went back to the Ottoman Empire for a while. Louise prepared for a visit from Yvonne which may occur tomorrow. And back to Boston Legal for three episodes. There are several story lines running, and the very charming last few minutes are spent with Denny Crane and Alan Shore on the office balcony. We have come to look forward to that several moments.

Wednesday February 7th 2018

We got a bit of a surprise early in the morning as we had fog.

David took a long 3 minutes and 51 seconds to complete the NYTX. Louise gave up. We have not been doing well in Florida.

Weather: Toronto high of 24F with snow; Louisville high of 36, partly cloudy; Grayton 71F thunder storms early and late afternoon.

By 10:00 the fog had burned off and we had hazy sun. High above the USAF was converting JP4 into noise.

Yvonne and her daughter Beckie arrived to do a bit of housekeeping and to bring us fresh sheets. They spent about half an hour refreshing our abode.

Out on the back patio we could see that the live oaks were shedding and acquiring new leaves at the same time. This exchange goes on simultaneously in the spring season. That is, a live oak is deciduous, but never a bare of leaves . . .thus: live oak.

About 10:45 we drove off to explore 'Seaside', an upscale totally planned community just to the east of its kissing cousin 'Watercolor'. We wended our way, quite literally, around Seaside and could not help

but notice that more than 25% of the dwellings were for rent. Seaside has a downtown area with what appears to be an open air bandshell, perhaps it serves as an all purpose amphitheater. Shops and restaurants surround this area. There are also several restaurants and a row of aluminum Airstream trailers which have been converted into commissary trucks.

We parked the van at the village common so that we could walk. We saw charging stations for electric vehicles. The temperature was tricky – out in the sun it was too warm, but in shade or with a sea breeze it was too cool. The boutiques in the area were very pricey and full of stuff no normal person would buy. We see this all too frequently and wonder who does the demographics. Or does anyone bother to do demographics? David with his McGill-Harvard-based MBA simply does not get it.

A bit inland we found a quiet quadrangle with a grass center – it was reminiscent of squares we had seen in Lucca, Northern Italy. There was even a large wrought iron gate dedicated to Ruskin the artist. A nice place on this green space cost \$US 1,350,000. This area really was like stepping into another country.

We took a mid-morning snack of pistachio ice cream. We shared a small portion for only \$6.12 – we got the message that this is where wealthy people spent their golden years. The emphasis being on the “gold”.

We checked a real estate board and saw more nosebleed prices. A vacant lot on the dunes overlooking the beach was only \$3,980,000 – BUT, you then had to build a house!

Given that the weather was pleasant, we decided to walk the beach. We took some stairs down from a Shrimp Shack, with a menu with no prices – if you are wealthy you do not need to ask.

In the dunes before the beach a male mockingbird was trailing behind a female. Every minute or so the male would spread his wings in full array. The disdainful female just walked away. The male probably did not pay enough for his dune lot.

Down on the beach there was a strong onshore breeze that was bringing in waves of airborne spume so David kept the Nixon under his rain jacket. Every once in a while he would sneak it out to grab a shot.

We drove back to Publix for a couple of items. Among them we bought a \$6 wrap that was big enough for both of us for lunch.

We left to weave our way west back through Watercolor to our cottage. Watercolor obviously has a different clientele from its nearby cousin Seaside. The houses are different, too, no beach pastels, but instead a uniform off white, grey, bisque on the wood frame houses, nicely sedate. We saw no 'for rent' signs and no signs proclaiming the names of the owners and their hometowns, as we had seen on almost every house in Seaside.

Back home we had a lunch of wrap and beer.

About 13:40 we started to hear the distant boom of thunder, with a concomitant darkening of the sky to steel gray. Within minutes we had downpours. The crew adding the rooms to the house across the street moved from the second floor down under cover and continued work until the foreman gave up

and pulled the plug on the compressor providing pressure to the nail gun.

Now for a quiet afternoon, of reading and listening to the rain, a good ole Florida downpour and the occasional rumble of thunder. We hope we are in for a period of warmer weather than this past week. The cottage is snug and cozy and much nicer since Yvonne and Beckie visited. By the way, Floridians pronounce Yvonne as “Jee” von.

David's book on the Ottomans was winding up as the Ottomans were under increasing pressure to westernize. It was amazing that von Moltke, the future Chief of the German General Staff was a consultant at some point. It was also interesting that the last Sultans had experimented with many of the reforms that Mustafa Kemal imposed from 1923 onwards after founding the Republic of Turkey.

The rain pounded away most of the afternoon. Having some free time, we explored the history of Pensacola via the Web. It is a rich story under five flags – Spanish, British, French, US Union and the Confederacy. Pensacola has been hit by numerous hurricanes, its location makes it vulnerable.

To lift the gloom of the rain, Louise made some cheerful popcorn.

BBC: Germany is set to emerge from months of political deadlock after Angela Merkel's conservatives (CDU/CSU) finally agreed a coalition deal with the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD).

US budget hawks have labelled a bipartisan plan to hike defense and domestic spending as a debt-ballooning "monstrosity". Republican Senator Mitch McConnell and his Democratic counterpart Senator Chuck Schumer have agreed to the two-year, \$400bn agreement. The bill needs to pass the Senate and House of Representatives, where it is expected to face opposition.

Today's launch of the world's most powerful rocket - the Falcon Heavy - has garnered plenty of reaction, from awe to some gentle ribbing. The behemoth lifted off successfully from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. The vehicle was designed by US company SpaceX, and can put up to a maximum of 64 tonnes in low-Earth orbit. SpaceX CEO and chief designer, Elon Musk, says this is more than double that of the world's next most powerful rocket, the Delta IV Heavy.

[We wonder what Elon Musk does in his spare time!]

CBC: The national anthem is now officially gender neutral after legislation altering the lyrics received royal assent Wednesday morning, Heritage Minister Mélanie Joly told reporters.

Former prime minister Brian Mulroney, sitting before a committee of United States senators last week, neatly and diplomatically peeled away the Trump administration's aggressive assertions that NAFTA kills American jobs.

BUT: NAFTA stands for the North American Free Trade Agreement. If indeed free trade were the objective, Canada and the United States would simply open their markets to one another, and allow untrammelled —free— trade. But that would bring lobbyists racing to Ottawa (and to Washington, D.C., albeit in lesser numbers), threatening massive job losses. Our protected retail sector would declare that Canadian merchants, forced to compete on level ground with American merchants, would have to fire hundreds of thousands of workers. Our protected wine industry would talk about professional suicide. Our protected dairy and chicken farmers would demand billions in compensation

from the government. [And so it goes – negotiating NAFTA must be quite a challenge].

We had a Knorr ground chicken and rice offering and green salad for dinner. We went three rounds with Boston Legal – all good episodes.

It was hard to get to sleep what with rain falling on the tin roof and wind causing live oak branches to scrape away.

Thursday February 8th 2018

Toronto: 16F cloudy to 21F Louisville: 21F to 37F sunny Grayson: 48F to 65F cloudy with sun

Louise did the NYTX in 2 minutes 11 seconds. David was slightly slower at 2 minutes twenty seconds.

After that good start, we had a breakfast of prosciutto, scrambled eggs, sliced banana, toast and orange segments.

We left the cottage about 09:30 and made a beeline west along highway 98 to the Publix store to return David's swimming trunks. We purchased meat balls for supper two nights in advance. Louise, the Florida veteran, had brought along the mini ice chest with freezer bags.

Then we drove to the Dollar General store find out if a certain gift item had been restocked. It had been so we bought a couple.

In the Sandestin area, we passed the Hurlburt Air Base (Air Commandos, Special Operations) we saw the special Hercules gun ship taxiing out.

Hurlburt Field is a United States Air Force installation located in Okaloosa County, Florida, immediately west of the Town of Mary Esther. It is part of the greater Eglin Air Force Base reservation, and is home to Headquarters Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), the 1st Special Operations Wing (1 SOW), the USAF Special Operations School (USAFSOS) and the Air Combat Command's (ACC) 505th Command and Control Wing. It was named for First Lieutenant Donald Wilson Hurlburt, who died in a crash at Eglin. The installation is nearly 6,700 acres (27 km²), and employs nearly 8,000 military personnel.

We needed to get off highway 98 and onto Santa Rosa Island. So, we aimed at the town of Navarre and turned south taking a bridge south to highway 399. In effect, we were on a long, very long, series of barrier island sand dunes going due west towards Pensacola.

Louise was astounded at the amount of development since she last saw the area about forty years ago. Significant beach houses where before there had only been shacks or cinder block bungalows or more honestly nothing. Navarre Beach remains a real beach . . .no convenience stores, no Publix groceries, no shops whatsoever! The island has been well protected and works as a real beach island retreat.

After about five miles we came to a nature preserve and found a parking lot. We got out to admire the emerald water. The extremely white sand under the water picks up the blue of the sky to create a stunning emerald color. In fact, the area is known as the Emerald Coast.

We had a lovely walk and found a lot of beautiful small sea shells. There was a flock of seagulls resting in the middle of a barren stretch of sand. We surmised they were taking a coffee break after some hard fishing. There were half a dozen beach visitors, but the gulls did not ruffle a feather! Really! We walked near them and past them. They were totally unresponsive.

These beaches have been developed in a responsible way. The dunes are pristine and gloriously beautiful. We had an offshore wind today, so no breakers whatsoever! The water and sand and the color was stunning.

We drove on and as noon approached we found a 'Shrimp Basket' at Pensacola Beach. Louise had been hankering for some shrimp ever since we left Louisville. We ordered two Yuengling beers and shared a basket of coconut breaded shrimp with hush puppies, cole slaw and fries.

After lunch we set our sights on the historical part of Pensacola. First we had to cross the long bridge from Pensacola Beach north to Pensacola. They are sinking all sorts of pylons beside the existing structure in order to add more lanes.

Louise had spotted the word “lagniappe” at a store. A lagniappe is "a small gift given a customer by a merchant at the time of a purchase". The word is used in the Gulf Coast region of the United States and in other places with historic links to French Creole culture. Louise remembered it as a small gift a merchant gave the first customer of the day.

We listened to Sue, the woman who lies in the GPS, who told us thus and so. But gradually Louise's memory of living in Pensacola chimed in and we found ourselves in the old neighborhood of North Hill. Louise saw some familiar houses and a wonderful sense of how the neighborhood has been maintained was pleasing to see.

We aimed at Ferdinand Plaza that Louise remembered as the center of the old town. We parked and then strolled and took pictures – some of a statue to a Confederate soldier William Dudley Chipley. Then we walked due south on Palafox to the end of the old pier. It had been hit head-on by Hurricane Ivan in 2004 and had been extensively remodeled. At the end of the street we found a monument to the establishment of Pensacola by the Spanish in 1559, making it the oldest European colony, much earlier than Jamestown of 1607.

We wandered back into town and suddenly hands darted out of a women's clothing store and grabbed the unsuspecting, now tired Louise. David spent some time chatting with one of the female owners who had visited Quebec City during its Winter Carnival – David had done that about 1970 and froze his, well, you know. Louise tried to shop. All winter wear on sale. But now fatigue had taken away the fun and also a slightly overwhelming sense of 'jamais vu' in a place where it might well have been 'déjà vu'.....

We tried to find the church that was purported to be designed by Sir Christopher Wren. We found Christ Church and took some photos of the outside. Then we headed back south to Gulf Breeze and then onto highway 98 east.

About 15:00 we stopped at a Subway to grab a cup of coffee. The parking lot was full of mothers

sipping coffee, looking at their iPhones while waiting to pick up their kids from Gulf Breeze High School. It took about twenty minutes to get the coffee as two budding NASA scientists tried to figure out why the Keurig coffee machine was not working – the first clue was that it was out of water!

We passed Hurlburt Air Base just as one of the AC 130 Spectre gun ships came in on short final – he went right over our heads about 250 feet above the highway. We spotted another one coming in on final after making his circular pattern to the landing strip.

We got back to Grayton Beach at 17:30 just as the sun was setting. We could not imagine where all the traffic on Highway 98 was coming or going.

We had a Happy Hour of scotch and bourbon to celebrate our fantastic day. Then we cooked tacos for supper.

We blogged and then had a Boston Legal party.

Friday February 9th 2018

Toronto: 14F to 16F snow ; Louisville: 32F to 55F part cloud ; Grayton Beach: 59F to 63 F cloud

Louise made us a breakfast of French toast. After that we had a very lazy early morning, reading all the web-based new sources.

The crew across the road had made significant progress on the addition while we were visiting Pensacola. David went out before the workmen arrived to snap a photo.

NYT: The riotous market swings that have whipped up frothy peaks of anxiety over the last week — bringing the major indexes down more than 10 percent from their high — have virtually no impact on the income or wealth of most families. The reason: They own little or no stock. A whopping 84 percent of all stocks owned by Americans belong to the wealthiest 10 percent of households. And that includes everyone's stakes in pension plans, 401(k)'s and individual retirement accounts, as well as trust funds, mutual funds and college savings programs like 529 plans.

We spent some time looking at temperatures in Florida. Northern Florida has remained chilly on both the Atlantic and Gulf sides, while South Florida seems too hot. Clearwater, on the Gulf north of St Petersburg seems to be about right – the Goldilocks Solution.

About 11:00 we decided to walk to a group of shops about half a mile north of the village. The walk proved to be warm. The group of shops proved to be basically uninteresting to us. They were the typical little starving artists and crafts people places. One is reticent to go in where she/he will be the only customer and the wares will be, let's say, nothing new on the scene. The restaurants were closed with the exception of one, where a man was barbecuing ribs on an outdoor grill.

On the way back we dropped into 'Lululemon', an upscale athletic clothing purveyor. The photos on the wall showed svelte young women in very painful yoga poses. 'Tomale', of the Toronto Maple Leafs, attracts salespeople just like a puppy.

But we had a nice, hour-long walk and enjoyed stretching our legs. As we came back, the work crew were putting 4 by 8 plywood sheets on the roof of the addition. These guys are working very quickly.

CBC: Three separate weather systems are making their way across southern Ontario and into the GTA starting Friday morning, bringing with it quite a bit of the white stuff. The result would dump a total of four to eight centimeters of snow on the region.

For lunch Louise heated a Publix spicy red hot beef & bean Chimichanga. Normally, David would not be able to be in the same room with such spicy food. However, with the cooling effect of a Yuengling beer, he found it quite tasty. Louise barely noticed the spiciness as she has a Southern mouth lined with asbestos. A scoop of butter pecan ice cream cooled things off.

Over lunch we browsed a real estate brochure that established the fact that we have no desire to join this market.

We had to get some groceries for the weekend. The forecast was for rain so we thought we would get ahead of the curve. We drove to the Highway 98 Publix and did our shopping. Since we did not BBQ all last year, we thought we should make use of the BBQ at the cottage. We bought all the fixings. The nearby Publix is a good, clean, well-stocked store. It is a real Florida large grocery store with fresh fish and lots of Latin offerings.

Louise wanted to visit the Sand Dollar Rental agency to arrange a cleaning. We drove to their office on County Road 363 and found the office locked even though the sign said "open".

We drove back to Grayton Village and parked outside a restaurant/beach wear store. Louise had seen a tunic she liked. So, she walked out with a pair of shoes but forgot the tunic. We asked when it would get busy and were told next weekend.

We drove the van back to the cottage and unloaded the groceries. Then we went for a fairly long walk on the beach. The cloud deck was total and quite low. The wind was not very strong and there was practically no surf. It was high tide, which did not leave much beach for shelling. Even the birds were absent for most of our walk.

The Sanderlings are very amusing. They have three-toed feet with no webbing and they can run very quickly. They dart along, stop on a dime, sift the sand and then blast off again. They are in search of tiny mollusks and bivalves exposed by the wave's action.

We did not get back to the cottage until 16:30 and immediately washed our meagre collection of shells. It was Happy Hour and we had a sip while starting dinner.

As darkness descended, across the street the construction crew lined up beside the honcho's truck to get their Friday pay packets.

Dinner turned out to be a very tasty spaghetti and spiced meat ball dinner in ragu sauce with warm baguette. On the side we had a salad of baby arugula and fresh avocado. Lit by a candle, we both loved it.

Boston Legal has moved into Season Three. New actors have been added, the format has not changed much, but there was no Denny-Alan tete a tete on the balcony for the first episode. We like the balcony tête à tête and hope it will continue. It is always poignant and profound.

Saturday February 10th 2018

Weather: Toronto: 24F flat snow Louisville: 42F to 44F rain Grayton Beach: 62F to 69F T-storms

Saturday is the big crossword in the NY Times. David was a bit slow at 9 minutes and 8 seconds.

BBC: North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un has invited South Korea's President Moon Jae-in to Pyongyang.

We had taco scrambled eggs and toast, followed by fresh Florida strawberries and blueberries with yoghurt.

The hammers pounding away alerted us that the crew across the road was working on Saturday. We guessed they wanted to get the critical roofing done before the afternoon thunderstorms arrived.

NYT: It would appear that electric cars will switch to a 48 volt standard with experts expecting the technology to make its way into one-fifth of all cars sold globally by 2025.

It was gray and somber outside so we stayed put most of the early morning.

David started a new book, "Memoirs of Hadrian" by Marguerite Yourcenar. It has special significance because Hadrian was born in Italica, Hispania. David & Louise met on the trip to Andalusia in May 2014 and visited Italica together, taking photos of the Roman ruins.

David seems to be suffering from sciatica. From the Web he got some back exercises to stretch his back muscles.

We went out for a long morning beach walk. As soon as we got to the sand dunes we took off our flip flops and went barefoot – great exercise for the feet and the sand rubs off dead skin.

We went west towards Blue Mountain and found the shell pickings very thin. But, we did find some samples to add to the mirror table centerpiece. We could tell it was the weekend as a man was sweeping the beach with a metal detector.

We got back about noon and Louise spent some time trying to solve the NY Times crossword. Nuff said.

Lunch was leftover chicken and rice: it was nice. We sinned and had a small bowl of butter almond ice cream: what a dream.

While Louise spent time researching possible stock purchases, David was with young Hadrian with the Roman Legions in the Upper Danube and Dacia (Romania and Wallachia).

Louise broke out her watercolors and used a photo taken on the beach as inspiration. In less than thirty minutes Louise had a memorable image of a trio of sandpipers feeding in the surf.

About 14:30 we decided to risk getting wet and have an afternoon walk – we took an umbrella as insurance. We stayed inland to keep out of the cool, brisk seas breeze. We walked the back alleys and saw many cute names of weathered cottages, one as old as 1938. The live oaks really make a very ornamental tree in a funny way.

We got back without getting wet and spliced the main brace. Louise cooked up a pot of popcorn.

David read his book on Hadrian and got as far as the earthquake at Antioch and the death of Trajan. Trajan had designated Hadrian his successor. Louise spent some time working with her watercolors and produced a lyrical reminiscence of the sandpiper shore birds in the surf.

Friends in Toronto sent us photos showing very high snow banked up on their BBQ. We respectfully declined their invitation to dine on the back deck. The Torontonians took it in good grace.

Just as the light was fading, it started to rain. We split an acorn squash in half longitudinally and popped it into the oven.

With the sound of thunder, we decided to do an internal hamburger meal, with toasted buns, sliced tomato and onion garnished with diced pickle and Dijon mustard. The squash was served on the half shell with butter. We had slices of orange drizzled with scotch for dessert.

After supper we read for a while and then tuned on Boston Legal. Instead of commercials, we had a full blown thunderstorm to provide background. We went to sleep with heavy rain drumming on the tin roof.

Sunday February 11th 2018

We were awakened at about 02:30 by a full-blown artillery barrage, aka as a thunderstorm. Somehow we managed to get back to sleep and at first light it had stopped raining. We did stretching exercises to work on David's sciatica.

David set up the coffee to brew and while it dripped he completed the NYTX in 2 minutes and 9 seconds. Later, Louise matched at exactly the same time.

Note: The locals call Grayton Beach “Grayt”. When it rains it sure is Grayt.

Weather: Toronto 26F to 29F with freezing rain and snow Louisville: 39F to 38F rain Grayt: 66F to 68F rain and thunderstorms.

Louise lit up the radar map on the iPad. To the west was nothing but green slime in a huge bank that was moving east towards us. From the other sources we knew we were going to get clobbered. There was a lot red on the map showing local flooding.

The Winter Olympics are underway in Pyeongchang, South Korea but we have barely noticed.

CBC: One recent study concluded that, after more than a century of pushing the boundaries of our bodies, a plateau has been reached for both sexes. Simply put, our bodies have peaked. And that may mean fewer world records will be smashed in the coming years. The most lasting images of these Olympics may be the taped faces. Skiers from Slovakia and other countries are strapping sticky athletic tape across their cheeks and noses to protect their skin.

With Niagara Falls pouring down on the tin roof, we had a Sunday Sundae for breakfast. Thunderstorms rolled in behind the rain. Louise had not thought of a Sunday Sundae, but an old fear erupted unbidden: the storm raging overhead prompted her to think of a way to avoid using electricity.

David was about to jump in the shower when Louise told him not to even think about it. Louise had lived on north Florida axis of Pensacola, Tallahassee and Jacksonville and was quite accustomed to the lightning problem. David looked it up on the Internet and Louise was quite correct. Lightning can hit water pipes and electrical cables and, if the human body is part of the circuit, it becomes smoked meat. In fact, even touching a water faucet to fill a kettle is dangerous. So, instead of hot tea or coffee, we had to drink cold scotch and bourbon.

Given our limited options in the thunderstorm, we started looking at the map to plan our return to Louisville. We used the Internet to come up with various alternates, with route distances and travel times. Louise did the calculations using the 'handraulic' method she had perfected when traveling to various schools in the South and the Northeast when recruiting for North Carolina State. David used Louise's laptop to create a spread sheet. Amazingly, we both got the same result. Having worked out the framework, we decided to let it mature for a few days before booking hotels.

Louise continued searching for stocks. David does not have enough confidence to pick individual stocks.

For lunch Louise came with Manhattan chowder and grilled cheese sandwiches. Since the rain continued unabated, we decided a bottle of Australian Jackson Creek Chardonnay would add a little sunlight.

Stuck indoors, we read all afternoon until a supper of ...

We watched a lot of Boston Legal, going to bed after 22:15 hrs