

Well, the big news this year is on the front of the envelope. That's right, the return address is very different.

In July of this year, we moved to Davenport, Florida. It is a suburb of Orlando. That's right, Orlando. So, we are literally a 20 minute car ride from Walt Disney World. We have been averaging about once a week at the parks. Some weeks we go twice, some weeks not at all. It seems like there is always something new, and the magic never goes away.

We are living in a Del Webb community (Del Webb Orlando, or DWO). This is a gated community for active adults, 55 years and over. There is a lot going on here. We have taken part in the bocce ball league, photography club, water aerobics classes, bingo, and chorus. We have also had a blast playing bar trivia on every Thursday night at the DWO tavern, and singing karaoke every Friday night at the tavern.

We still find plenty of time to swim in (or just hang around by) the outdoor pool. If it insists on raining, we will use the indoor pool. The tavern, the pool, the ball room and the meeting rooms are all part of a beautiful club/house community center on Del Webb property.

We have also been to several paid shows in the ballroom, and near the outdoor lake. There have been music concerts, including local original talent, and some good cover bands. There have also been a couple of comedians, and a hypnotist. We have also seen a couple of "Disney Speakers"...people who have had various interesting jobs within the Walt Disney Company over the years. This is all since we got here in July.

Like many of the folks here, we have purchased a used golf cart. We use it around the community, although we can't go outside the gate with it (it's not street legal). Omen really hates riding in it.

Omen is adapting much better than we expected. He lost his big yard (this house and yard are both, intentionally, much smaller than our home in Arvada), and his window seat from which he could watch the street outside. We have also not yet found a corgi group here, although there are plenty of dogs in the neighborhood. But, he has found a new hobby looking out the sliding glass door at the continuing construction behind us. And, he gets walked frequently, and has made a few sojourns to the DWO dog park.

We considered other towns before deciding on Orlando. We had talked about Orlando for years, because of our frequent vacations here. In addition to Disney, we are about 80 minutes from the Atlantic Coast and the Kennedy Space Flight Center. We also have Sea World, Universal Studios Orlando, and other local attractions. Plus, we are about two hours from Tampa bay, which is on the Gulf Coast, and has a Busch Gardens, among other things.

And we got rid of our snow shovels. Plus, we moved into house with absolutely no stairs. And, this is a brand new semi-custom house, built just for us.

After we had pretty much decided on Orlando, we found out about DWO from a couple who lives here. We met them on a Panama Cruise. Through Facebook, we found out they had just moved to Florida at the end of last year. We contacted them, just to ask if the Florida move was a good idea. They couldn't stop raving about DWO. So, we took a look, and we were hooked.

Speaking of cruises, between setting up the house build in February and moving in July, we took a cruise in the spring. We finally made the transatlantic crossing! We sailed on the Disney Magic from Miami Florida to Portugal and Spain. This was Debbie's first trip to Europe, and only Joe's second. We spent a couple of days in Barcelona, Spain (where the cruise ended). We flew from there to Paris, France. We went to Disney Land Paris, and stayed at a Disney Vacation Club (DVC) property there. We were able to use our DVC points instead of renting a hotel room. We only went to DLP one day, and use our room at DVC as a base from which we could travel around the rest of Paris (their rail system is really good, although insanely crowded). We managed to see the Louvre, Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower, and other Paris sites. In addition to the train, the Hop On Hop Off tour bus was a great tool. We flew back from Paris direct to Denver.

On the cruise, we stopped at Ponta Delgada in the Azores, Lisbon in Portugal, and Cádiz, Málaga, Ibiza, and Barcelona (all in Spain). We got a nice taste of both Portugal and Spain. The most interesting port may have been Malaga. The downtown includes a beautiful, modern shopping area, with tile streets, and wonderful sidewalk cafes. but, on the bus tour, we visited an outdoor Roman arena from the first century, and a Phoenician excavation that was hundreds of years older. The highlight, though, was the Moorish castle that was over 800 years old, and provided both a trip back in time, and spectacular views of the city.

In addition to the wonderful ports of call, we enjoyed a total of 13 nights aboard the wonderful Disney Magic. The entertainment was again amazing, as was the food and service. Our verandah 5 stories above the water provided fantastic views of the ocean and the ports of call.

Nick is still living in Colorado Springs, and working at Oracle Corporation's office there. He is doing quite well there. The work is in the field where he earned his degree, and the company seems like a great place to work.

So, after 14 years consulting, and 40 years in the engineering profession, Joe is finally retired. I guess that was kind of obvious.

Happy Holidays to all of you, and best wishes for 2018.

The Obrins