



Solstice Reflections 2011

Long before this season became about enhancing retailers' bottom line, or giving a 'vitamin shot to Wall Street,' and even before it was about the birth of the Son, the winter solstice celebrated the wonder of the Sun.

As its light diminished in the northern hemisphere this time of year, our ancestors worried that the Sun's light would go out all together, and the source of all life would vanish. And thus, over the eons, humans have kindled lights in the darkness for Diwali, Hanukah, Christmas, Kwanza.

Light is often used as a metaphor for learning (i.e. to be enlightened, or "that sure sheds some light on the topic," etc.) As we thought back over this past year, we asked ourselves, did last year's life experiences teach us anything new? Here's what we came up with.

A year ago, for our first winter solstice together, we celebrated the wonder of the Sun with solar powered Christmas lights. We were so delighted watching them turn themselves on at dusk and off at dawn (after another sunny day in Las Vegas) that one thing led to another; we learned we could live more sustainably, and by the summer solstice we'd put solar PV panels on the roof in Denver.

Next we learned it made sense to just exchange energy with the earth to warm and cool our house - so a geothermal heat pump was installed that got us totally off fossil fuel at home. We are no longer burning our planet's finite reserve of fossil fuel - the Ancient Sunlight (coal, oil, natural gas) and dumping carbon dioxide, mercury, sulfur into our atmosphere. Current Sunlight powers everything, from air conditioning and heating to computers to washer and dryer. (More details plus pictures can be found on our website/blog www.nowforourturn.org).

We learned that the transition away from fossil fuel is actually very easy - quite a moment of enlightenment for two elders.

The sun's importance continues to fascinate us, and our year reflects that. The summer solstice found us in Charlotte, N.C. for the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly, where Gail officially retired from active ministry. (She continues to preach and consult with a small fellowship in St. George, Utah.)

While back east, we visited with Gail's daughter Shawna, husband Chris and their daughters in South Carolina. Granddaughters Alex and Addison kept Milt busy, trying to stay ahead of their curiosity. (Their brand new baby brother Liam was born in November.)

Then it was on to Florida to spend time with Milt's son Ben and his wife Heather and their three dogs. Observing Miles, their blind Lab negotiate his new world without sight, gave us an added appreciation of his courage and our sighted blessings. Walking the Gulf Coast beach, just a few blocks from their home, at sunset became a treasured ritual.

Back in Denver for the rest of the summer, we'd have periodic breakfasts together with Milt's son Sean and his wife Kayla, as well as daughter Ches and her friend Eric. Everyday walks were often replaced with hikes in the Rockies with *sunshine on our shoulders* and snow beneath our feet, looking for (and finding) fields of blue columbine (Colorado's state flower).

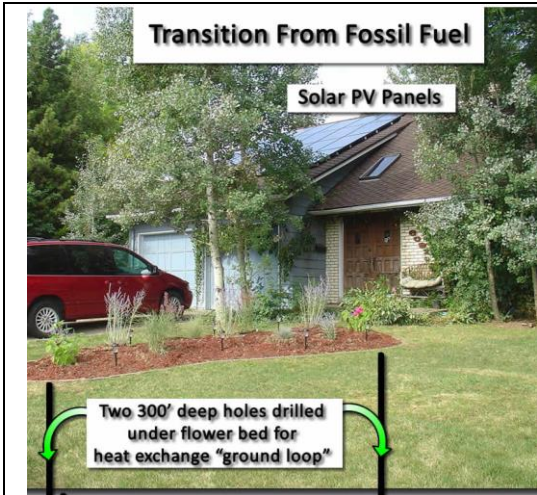
We also enjoyed hiking in Sloan & Rock Rock Canyons in southern Nevada, & Zion and Bryce Canyon National Parks in southern Utah. Catching a sunrise and sunset over the hoodoos was a highlight.

Before coming back to Las Vegas for the winter, we co-created and facilitated a weekend retreat/workshop at First Universalist Church in Denver: "Awakening the Cosmos Within." (See our website for more info). We closed the event with these words from Carl Sagan:

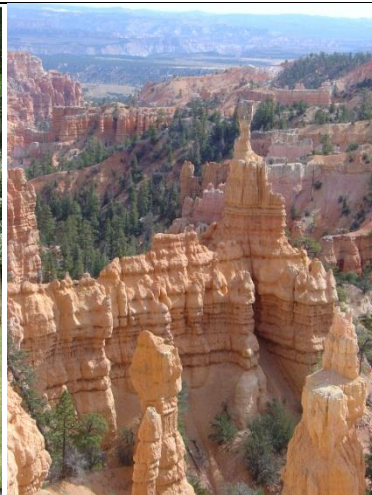
"We are the local embodiment of a Cosmos grown to self-awareness. We have begun to contemplate our origins: star stuff pondering the stars ...tracing the long journey by which, here at least, consciousness arose."

And so, for this winter solstice, may you stand still, stand still with the Sun (which is what solstice means after all) at dawn and dusk and consider our Star. May its light become your enlightenment, its warmth become your wisdom, and its energy fuel your joy throughout the coming New Year.

Peace, Love & Light, **Gail & Milt**



Home in Colorado – Solar Powered



Bryce Canyon Utah



Gail's Tent @ Occupy Las Vegas
(under the Luxor light)