



The Tolopka Tattler

2009 Valentine's Day Edition
"All the News It Gives Us Fits to Print"



Mr. Toad's Wild Ride

That sounds like an apt description of 2009 for us. For those of you who read about our antics in our 2008 newsletter (which came out well into 2009), you may recall that we started out 2009 with a BANG! by marching in the Presidential Inaugural Parade on 1/20/09. That was such an insane time! We scurried around like gerbils in an exercise wheel to get the band ready and to make it to the show.



Janet hits the Streets of San Francisco

Before we accepted the invite to the Inaugural Parade, the band had already booked a trip to [San Francisco's Chinese New Year Parade](#) in February to help usher in The Year of the Ox.

That parade was the opposite of the Inaugural Parade – we didn't have 47 pages of rules to learn, we could take however many folks we wanted, we didn't have to march with a minimum of 9 musicians per row, etc. In short, we could let our hair down and be the crazy band that we are. And the weather was about 30 degrees warmer! The parade was exciting,¹ and when we weren't parading, we had a great time roaming the Streets of San Francisco (made us feel like Karl Malden).

Shortly after returning from SF we learned that GAL had been awarded [1st Place Adult Marching Band](#).² All



Director Steve calls a tune

the parade awards were given out at a big banquet in Chinatown ... so what the heck; three of us went back to San Francisco in April to pick up our trophy and spend another relaxing weekend. The 10-course Chinese banquet was fabulous³ and we got to meet [Willie Brown](#), former SF mayor and legendary Speaker of the California State Assembly.



Meeting Willie Brown (GAL's Tom Higham at right)

Because of all the publicity the band got from the Presidential Inaugural Parade, Get a Life was in demand this year; in addition to Washington DC, the band performed at least 22 times in the states of Washington, Oregon, & California. Steve figured out that the band performed at least once in each month of 2009 except for June – which we sandwiched with parades on May 30 and July 4th.

After all of this it's hard to believe we hold down full time jobs. When people at work hear about what Janet does, she tells them that she comes to work to get some rest!

Wild? We'll Show You Wild!!!

Because you just can't have enough bands,⁴ last summer we kicked off a new one. Nine sax players (and one percussionist to keep us in line) played Portland's



Our newest band

¹ And LOUD – those Chinese drums and gongs are ear-splitting!

² And yes, there was more than one adult marching band. Shame on you for asking!

³ Amazingly, it was more food than even marching band people could eat!

⁴ See Mode, Depeche, *Just Can't Get Enough*, 1981 and Tyau, Kathleen, *A Little Too Much is Enough*, 1996.

first-ever [Sax in the City](#) at Pioneer Courthouse Square, Portland's "Downtown Living Room".



Janet explains group sax on the air



We had a nice audience of 60-70 people⁵ at the gig and a wide variety of saxophones for the show (sopranino, soprano, alto, tenor, bari). We even got coverage on the evening news!⁶ Check out the group and see Janet's KGW interview at www.saxinthecity.org. As a result of that gig, the group was hired to perform two outdoor holiday shows in December (BRRR!).

We also continued performing with our jazz band ([Second Wind](#)), our rock 'n' roll band ([Treble in River City](#)), and our concert band ([Portland Community Wind Band](#)). These groups weren't as busy as GAL, but we still played farmer's markets, a county fair, retirement homes, a couple of music series, and a pumpkin festival. Along the way we formed our own holding company (Horns Aplenty; <http://www.hornsaplentymusic.com>) to make it easier to manage the bands we run.

Is a Hilltopper a Rare Variety of Toad?

Portland hosted part of the NCAA basketball tournament this year and both of our alma maters (Purdue and Western Kentucky) not only made the tournament but made it into our regional.



Trust me, that's us!

We sat with the WKU contingent and cheered them to a first game victory, then got to return two nights later when *both* teams were playing their second round. We "Boilered up" for the first game in old gold and black, then whipped

⁵ Some of whom we didn't even know!

⁶ As one of our buddies said, "We got [newscaster] Tracy Barry to say 'group sax' on television!"

our red-and-white duds out of a briefcase to wear for the Tops in game two. We even made it into *The Oregonian*! A fun night, even though Gonzaga spoiled WKU's tourney by winning that second game.

Do They Have Toads in Alaska?

Last summer, Steve's mom came out for a visit and then we all joined brother Ken, sister-in-law Sharon, and nephew Kris for a relaxing cruise to Alaska. We all had a great time cruising the glaciers, eating, visiting ports, going on excursions, eating, watching the



Mom livin' the good life in Glacier Bay National Park



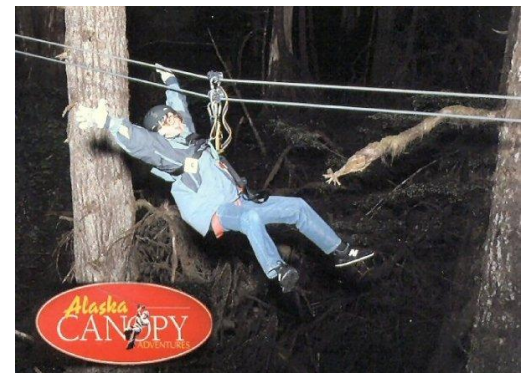
Adventuring requires (ahem) a steady hand

nightly shows, eating, pan-ning for gold, eating, eating... Janet tried something new that she had never heard of—ziplining. She was unable to convince any-

one else in the family to try it, so she braved it alone. I guess if an 8 year old can do it, so can someone ever so slightly older like herself (ha, ha, ha). So, I guess Mr. Toad did make an appearance for the zipline in the Alaskan forest canopy.

Mr. Toad Rides Again!

Once vacation was over, it was back to the craziness of 2009. As we do every summer, we also played co-ed softball. We came in 2nd



Yaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!!!!

Place this summer. We were quite pleased about that because we heard through the grapevine that the first team we were to meet in the play-offs referred to us as a bunch of old geezers.⁷ (They had beaten us during the regular season.) Them were fightin' words! We crushed them

⁷ While truth may be an absolute defense for libel, it still counts as trash talk!

soundly, beating them by 10 runs. Oh...they were not at all happy (snicker, snicker, snort, snicker).

The last half of the year, we kept busy with, you guessed it, more band stuff. The concert band (Portland Community Wind Band) started its 5th season and seems to keep improving each year, despite Janet serving as President of the PCWB Board. The band finished off the year with three holiday events—two at retirement communities and one at a church. We did something a little different this year—small ensembles performing in addition to the full band. Our sax ensemble received lots of compliments. One of the pieces is stuck in Janet’s head even now, days later (a jazz arrangement Oh Come All Ye Faithful). We also got props for Steve’s mash-up arrangement in 5/4 time of *What Child Is This?* and *Take Five*, which he called *What Up With Dat Child?*⁸

Is Mr. Toad Dizzy?

Mr. Toad’s head is definitely spinning after this crazy, thrilling year! Who would have thought that when we returned home from Christmas break last year we would be thrown onto a wild ride that would last throughout the year! But we wouldn’t trade that experience for anything. It was (and is) absolutely exhilarating. COWA-BUNGA!

So, to get our bearings back, we headed to the Big Island of Hawaii for the week between Christmas and New Years. Pretty low key – we did a little hiking,⁹ a little sightseeing,¹⁰ and a fair amount of snorkeling,¹¹ but mostly focused on rest, relaxation, Mai Tais, and definitely some good eats. Great way to end the year!

You might think the *Tattler* would have been written immediately upon our return¹² ... but you’re not reckoning with the January 2010 band trip to California where Steve got to meet – but that’s a story for next year ...

With love,

Steve & Janet

⁸ Yes, that whirring noise you hear is indeed [Paul Desmond](#) spinning in his grave.

⁹ Down a cliff trail to a black sand beach.

¹⁰ Even spotted some whales!

¹¹ Do you have any idea how surprising it is to discover a [green sea turtle](#) peering at you from about 8 inches away?

¹² Though frankly that means you don’t know us very well!



That's, er, a horned toad



Ta-ta from Waipio Valley

Wanna see full-size versions of the *Tattler* photos? Check out the online version at www.tolopka.com. Our web page also has pointers to all the band websites, where you can get audio, video and more pix. And drop us your email address; we're steve@tolopka.com and janet@tolopka.com.