



Merry Christmas 2002



Dear

17 December 2002

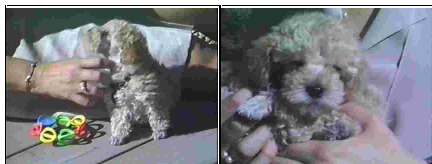
Christmas greetings! We have experienced an event-filled second half of 2002. There was much fun and travel, but sadness as well. It has been difficult preparing to write this letter since Pico our "son" and traveling companion for over 70,000-mile is no longer with us.

PICO (21 AUG 1987 – 23 OCT 2002)

Pico was born on 21 Aug 1987 in Truth Or Consequences, New Mexico. He was an American Kennel Club (AKC) registered apricot-colored Toy Poodle. He came to live with us on 15 Oct 1987 when he was 6 weeks old. He was so small we could easily hold him in our hand.



With Linda in October 1987.

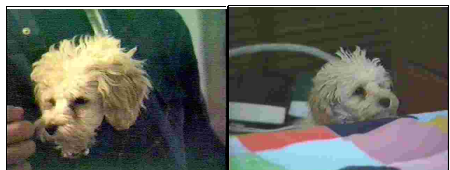


Other October 1987 video tape images.

Pico chewed on a few things like this slipper. He also chewed some of our dining room carpet. Therefore his full AKC name became Pico Der Teppichfresser. (The carpet chewer).

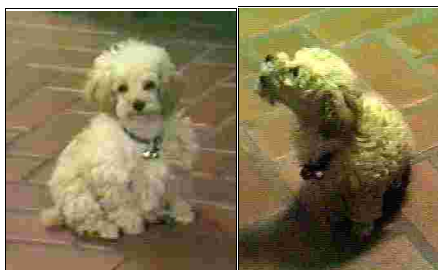


The slipper that was sacrificed.



In Robert's shirt, and looking onto the bed.

He was so small that he wore a cat collar and a bell so that we could hear him and not step on him. Here he is in the kitchen with his bell in November 1987.



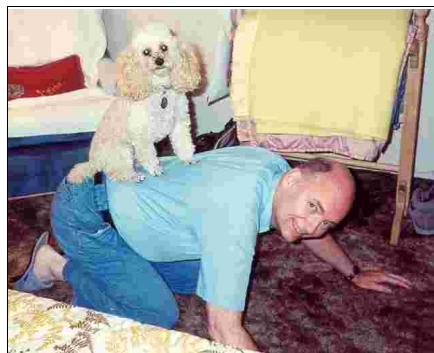
In the kitchen wearing his bell.

(He eventually grew to 15 pounds.) He always enjoyed "pulling" games, and would often bring us a pull toy demanding that we play.

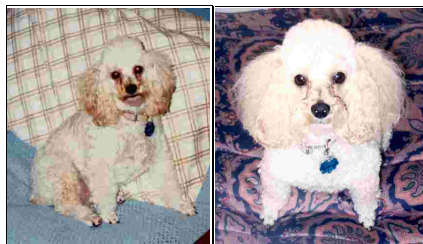


Pulling on Linda's shoelaces.

All his life he loved to play with Robert here on the bedroom floor.



Favorite playground.



On our bed 1990, 1994.



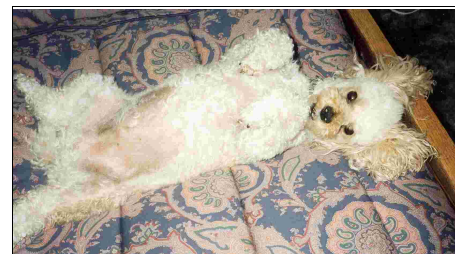
Christmas 94

On the bed 97.

He was multi-lingual. When he was very young he learned "Spazieren gehen" in German in addition to its English equivalent, "go for a walk". He also spoke pretty good poodle, and was always trying to boss around any other dog he met, regardless of size. He had better luck at that with smaller dogs like his friend, Tiffany, who lived in Las Cruces, NM.

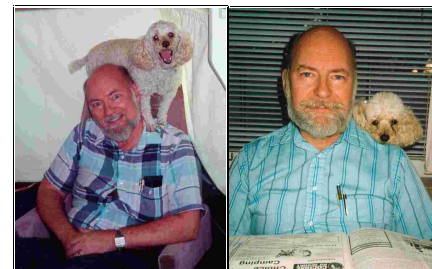


Pico (left) with Tiffany.



Being submissive, Nov 1995.

Pico loved to travel. We bought our first motor home in 1991. During 11 years he traveled over 70,000 miles. He visited 21 US states and Alberta, Canada. Sometimes he didn't want to leave the motor home when we arrived back home.



In our Tioga motor home.



Marble, CO, 1993

White Sands, NM, 1994.

Motor home travel was fun because he was able to be close to us almost all the time.

While on a motor coach rally last year he got to see where he was born in Truth Or Consequences, NM, at El Rancho Poodles.



His birthplace in T or C.



He learned to drive the motor home.



A messy eater.

Pico had congestive heart failure and cataracts, but he didn't let that stop him from enjoying life. We had thought that he would be able to finish the travel year with us, but he fainted one day in Hutchinson and twice more after we came home. On 23 October, he was having a very hard time so we took him to Dr. Elliott and held him as he died.



Last photo with Samantha 23 Oct 2002 & his print.

Goodbye, faithful companion and "son".

TRAVEL OVERVIEW

We enjoyed four trips in our motor home since July. In July we were busy preparing for the Kliever family reunion that was held in Fairview, Oklahoma, on the first weekend of August. In early August we went to the reunion, and then after a couple weeks at home, we left for Salt Lake City, Utah, and Dolores, Colorado. In late September we went to Oklahoma and

Kansas for a motor home rally and convention. In late October we headed south to enjoy two weeks in southern Arizona.

KLIEWER REUNION 2002

Linda's mother was the older daughter of John and Anna Kliever. John was the last of eight children born to Abraham and Wilhelmina Kliever. John, however, was the first to pass away. When he was dying of stomach cancer in 1932, the family held the first reunion. The family has held reunions every five years. This was the 70-year reunion, and Linda was chairperson. The reunions are held in Fairview, Oklahoma, where the family homesteaded when the Cherokee Strip was opened. We are very much indebted to the family members in Fairview who made all the local arrangements for the reunion - especially Leonard and Leona Vogt. Earlier this year we were gathering names and addresses and mailing out announcements and reservation forms. Robert was busy tracking down addresses for the mail that was returned. He was able to find about half of them. Robert also took the 1992 Kliever genealogy data base and began updating it. From it, he made wall charts of the family tree containing over 1,000 Abraham and Wilhelmina Kliever descendants and their spouses. We also made nametags for the attendees. Linda prepared a family history talk that covered the John Kliever branch of the family. That was quite a job as we digitized about 200 old photos, and Robert put together a PowerPoint slide show for Linda's talk. Earlier this year we got a digital projector that can project a computer screen image. It worked great for us. Robert was busy building the slide show as Linda drove the motor home on part of the way to Oklahoma.

We left Albuquerque on 29 July and spent a night at Palo Duro Canyon State Park in Canyon, Texas. We arrived in Fairview the next day, and camped close to the reunion site. That was four days before the reunion, so we had time to meet some family and catch up on any last-minute things to do. We also took some photos that we included in the computerized slide show. Robert composed and printed the cookbook we had promised to publish using the attendees' recipes. (We also took a scanner and two printers with us on the trip.)

When Linda's mom passed away in March, Linda inherited part-interest in two farms at Fairview. We were able to visit the Farm Service Agency, the Grain Coop, the bank, and Alan Boehs, who farms the land for Linda. On Friday, Linda's brother and his family arrived. They camped with their trailer at Canton Lake, 20 miles south of Fairview. We drove down to visit them that day.

On Saturday the reunion began. All activities were held in the Mennonite Brethren Church.



At the Kliever Reunion.

The Klievers were Mennonites who migrated from Holland to Danzig, Prussia (Gdansk) to Rudnerweide in the Molotschna colony in Ukraine, then to Rostov-on-Don, Russia. From Rostov, they came to Lehigh, Kansas. Then when the Cherokee strip was opened in Oklahoma, they, and their fellow church members, moved to what is now Fairview. John Kliever was the only child of Abraham and Wilhelmina born in the US. Abraham died shortly after that.

On Saturday we got to meet each other and share family photos and memorabilia. Linda led a group in baking Zwieback and later gave her talk about the family, and then we had choir rehearsal. The family led the church service on Sunday morning. Leonard Vogt, dressed as the Apostle John, gave the message and the large Kliever choir sang the "Hallelujah Chorus" and "The King is Coming". Later, at Faspas, we got to eat the Zwieback.

On Monday, we joined James, Norma Jean, Stacy, and Chris at Canton Lake. On Tuesday, as they headed home, we drove to Oklahoma City and camped on Tinker AFB. We spent three days there and visited friends and saw the



Western Heritage Museum, Bricktown, and the Oklahoma City National Memorial. This magnificent sculpture is one of the great pieces of art in the museum. The memorial is on the site of the Alfred P. Murrah federal building that was destroyed by a truck bomb

on 19 Apr 1995. It is a very moving memorial.



OK City Memorial. Each chair commemorates one of the 168 bombing victims.

We returned home from OK City for a much-needed rest. It was a short rest, as we departed two weeks later for Salt Lake City.

SALT LAKE CITY

We have been visiting the Family History Library in Salt Lake City annually since 1994. We spent 4 days there at the end of August and early September. Linda found some more information about her Kliever family. Robert found ancestors mentioned in the records of Trinity Episcopal Church of Philadelphia. The family of his great great grandmother, Eliza Shubert Malseed were members of the church, and Eliza and Andrew Malseed were members as well. Records include their marriage and births of children. We now know for certain that they had several children who did not survive childhood. On Sunday we visited the Hill Air

Force Base Museum. It has been expanded since our last visit in 1999.



Robert meets an old "friend".

There were several Maverick missiles on display that were "left-overs" from the DDT&E test program 30 years ago. Robert was a member of the DDT&E test team.

DOLORES RALLY

From Salt Lake City we drove down to Dolores River RV Park in Dolores, Colorado. There we met our friends in the Chaparral Chapter of the Family Motor Coach Association (FMCA) and spent three days enjoying southwest Colorado.



Visiting Rico, Colorado.

We returned to Albuquerque on 9 September. The following weekend we were able to make our annual visit to the state fair which is held only about a mile from our house. As usual we enjoyed lunch in the Hispanic Village and the Indian fried bread.

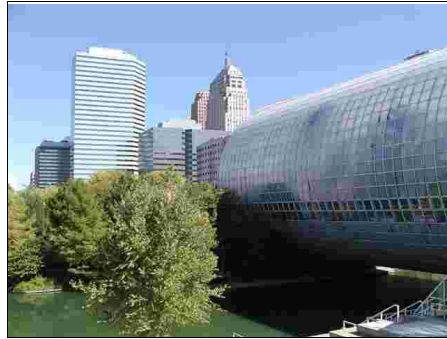


Lunch and native dancing at the NM state fair.

SAFARI RALLY IN WINFIELD, KANSAS

This year's "Summer" FMCA convention was held in Hutchinson, Kansas, in October so we decided that it would also be a good opportunity to visit family and friends in that area. We have also wanted to visit the Cosmosphere in Hutchinson. The Safari Chapter of FMCA held their pre-rally in Winfield, Kansas, so we also planned to go to that. (Pre-rallies are chapter gatherings held just before a convention.) We left home on 22 September, stayed one night in Amarillo, and then drove on to Oklahoma City. While there we visited our friends, Skeets and

Sylvia Miller, and were happy to see how well Sylvia was doing after recent surgery. We also visited the art museum and the Myriad Botanical Gardens in the city.



Myriad Botanical Gardens in OK City.

Our next destination was Winfield, KS. We arrived there along with 132 other Safari coaches. The weather was wonderful, and we had a great time. There were many activities and excellent food was provided. We visited a Cherokee Strip museum. (See reunion article above for significance of the strip to Linda's family.) We also visited a candy factory where they were busy making Christmas candy, and we visited a dairy farm.



Linda with a calf at the dairy farm.

We spent four nights at the Winfield fairgrounds with our Safari friends. There were several Safari dealers present at the rally with new coaches on display. Several were sold, and friends of ours from Farmington, NM, ordered a new Panther coach. When the pre-rally ended, 93 of our coaches traveled in a caravan to Hutchinson for the convention. People in some small towns came out to watch the "traveling art show" pass through town. Safari coaches are noted for their hand-painted murals. Our coach, of course, has a giraffe mural. (See the picture below taken in Hutchinson.)

FMCA IN HUTCHINSON, KANSAS OR SURVIVING THE KANSAS QUAGMIRE

We arrived at the Kansas state fairgrounds in Hutchinson on a beautiful Sunday afternoon.



Parked in the Fairgrounds before the deluge.



Over 4,000 coaches at the Fairgrounds.

Monday was an open day, so we went to the Cosmosphere. We highly recommend a visit there. It is one of the best space museums anywhere. Many display items cannot be found anywhere else. Many items from Russia are included. The displays are arranged chronologically beginning with the Nordhausen V2 assembly plant.



Cosmosphere. Robert cleans V2 hardware.

On Tuesday the convention began and we spent the day at seminars and displays. On Wednesday, the rain began, and it rained several inches that day and continued until we left on Friday. While going to the ice cream social on Wednesday we ran into Linda's cousin, Carolyn, from Tucson. We did not realize that she and Nelson would be there. That was a pleasant surprise. On Thursday, it was still raining and the dirt fields where we were parked were saturated. Some coaches were already bogged down in the deep mud that was in some places. We decided to move out of the fairgrounds that day. Fortunately we were parked on higher ground and were able to make a run through the mud that separated us from the road. We joined Carolyn and Nelson at a parking lot in town. They had arrived there earlier after being towed out of the fairgrounds by members of their Conversion Coaches chapter. We left on Friday. The rain ended then, but some motor homes were stuck at the fairgrounds over the weekend. We moved on to Hillsboro, KS, where we saw a couple of Linda's cousins who live there. Then we drove over to Salina, KS, where we visited Aunt Sue and Reese and Donna Baxter. Our next destination was Fairview, Oklahoma.



Wheat and oil on the farms.

We spent a couple nights camped at Leonard and Leona's house. Visiting Linda's farms, we saw that the winter wheat was up and looking good.

We pray that it survives the winter better than last year when most of it was lost.

From Fairview we drove to Tucumcari, New Mexico, and visited the Mesalands Dinosaur Museum. It is an excellent paleontology museum. We arrived home on 9 October just in time for:

KIEV ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS VISIT

We had been looking forward to the visit by the Kiev (or Kyiv), Ukraine, Symphony Orchestra and Chorus. Our church was hosting their visit to Albuquerque, and we would be housing one of their members in our home for two nights. The concert was very enjoyable.



Kiev Orchestra and Chorus at our church.

Luba Kaniuka, mezzo-soprano soloist, and professional opera singer in Kiev, stayed at our home.



Luba in concert and at our house.

Linda's brother and his family hosted a man and wife who sang in the chorus. We all had a great time together and it was sad to see them all leave on Saturday morning.

Now it was time to think about our next trip. We have long wanted to visit Kartchner Caverns in Arizona, and we had to cancel a couple visits to Yuma because of Linda's mother's poor health. The Southwest Region of the Safari International FMCA chapter was holding a rally in Tucson at the end of October, so we decided that it would be a good opportunity to make that trip to Yuma and also see Kartchner Caverns.

SAFARI MEETING IN TUCSON

We left Albuquerque, and drove down to Las Cruces where we spent a night with our friends, Kent and Julie. Then we went to Tucson and spent a night with Linda's cousin and heard about their adventures after they had left Hutchinson. Then we went over to Beaudry's RV resort where about 62 Safari coaches met for a few days of fun, food, sightseeing, and seminars. We made a return visit to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum – a place we always enjoy. It was nice to see what has been added since our last visit about 5 years ago.



Linda with friends at the rally in Tucson.

YUMA

On 1 November we finally made the drive to Yuma. Many, many folks go there for the winter. We saw RV and mobile home parks all over the area. The weather was beautiful. Here is a sunset seen from our RV park.



Sunset in Yuma.

We visited the Yuma Crossing State Historic Park and the famous Territorial prison. Both are there along the Colorado River.



Yuma Prison.

We visited with Robert's distant cousin, Kathy Brown, a descendant of Charles Malseed. We just do not know how Charles and Robert's ancestors were related.



Robert with Kathy and Dave Brown.



With Martin Staigle.

One of the "snowbirds" who spend the winter in Yuma is Martin Staigle of North Dakota. He is the father-in-law of Robert's second cousin, Randy Leinius. We enjoyed spending an evening with Martin.

We went sightseeing up along the Colorado River and also drove through the US Army Yuma Proving Ground where we watched a tank driving across the desert at high speed, and watched parachutists.



Tank leaves a trail of dust.

KARTCHNER CAVERNS

On the 7th of November we finally achieved our goal of visiting Kartchner Caverns about 10 miles south of Benson, AZ. This cave is among the most pristine caves that you can visit. Its existence was kept a secret for many years until protection could be guaranteed by making it an Arizona State Park. It is a wet cave in a hot, dry climate so elaborate measures have been taken to keep the cave wet. These include airlocks and a misting system. It isn't a large cavern, but is pretty and undisturbed. Not all of it is open yet. We want to go back when more of it is ready for visitors.

After a stop at Las Cruces, we arrived home on 9 November. The motor home is now winterized, and we can only plan for our 2003 trips.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

We are currently preparing for our Christmas musical presentation at church. That is 15 December, and will be over by the time this letter is completed. It has been a very busy holiday season.

AT WORK

Robert continues to care for the computer network at Hoffmantown Church. There are usually plenty of things to fix when we arrive home from our trips

THE BOTTOM LINE

We continue to be thankful for the Lord's providing for us in all ways. We trust in Him, and pray that you will do likewise and enjoy a blessed Christmas season and New Year as well.

Love,

Robert + Linda

and Samantha

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