

## ***OUR BRILLIANT HOLIDAY IN NORTH CAROLINA***

**By: Yoshiko Holleran**

As far as I am concerned, I think I pretty much played it by ear during our Christmas vacation in North Carolina, which was actually amazing because I think I am the last person to be spontaneous. Up there my family and I had a nice place to stay for free and had many friends to talk with. In spite of being in such a fortuitous situation, I was slightly uptight in the beginning because I could not plan anything. Usually, that sort of “uncertainty” gets on my nerves. My husband’s friends, Tom and his wife, Mary, have three houses in Hendersonville. They generously offered one of their houses for us to stay in while we were visiting and even suggested we could move in. The house is located in the prettiest area of Hendersonville, so we call it “our beautiful mountain home.”

Let me explain our little adventure. First of all, our schedule was totally up to Mary, who was our hostess. She gave us a call everyday and tried to get together with us. The problem was, however, she kept changing the meeting time or place. I think she is the busiest and the most spontaneous lady I have ever seen. On the other hand, she is very dedicated to supporting her husband, Tom, who is a pastor. Apparently, she takes care of most of the things which they need to do for living, so Tom can concentrate on ministering. We also found out that Mary had muscle surgery on her arm last November, which left her somehow disabled. As a result, her main house located on the other side of town, was a total mess, which we discovered when we got there for our first visit.

Since Tom and Mary had been so nice to us, we kind of expected to have a cozy dinner with them on Christmas day. They, however, decided to visit their own relatives down in Georgia. Their quick decision was made two days before Christmas. As a result, they got really busy preparing for the family trip. We ended up helping them in various ways: we cleaned their moldy van, wrapped their hundreds of Christmas gifts, assisted in their tape ministry, stayed at there main house for two nights to take care of their dogs, and organized their entire household by a thorough cleaning. They were delighted when they got home!

Although we could not have a Christmas dinner with Tom's family, we happily set up a meeting with another friend for Christmas day; Richard, a kind doctor in Asheville, invited us to their family dinner. It was wonderful! Sad to say, I had a horrible sinus problem all day long; I kept coughing and sneezing. I think I simply bit off more than I could chew. Especially, cleaning a moldy van, which took approximately three hours, was not my cup of tea. I was getting drained from so many jack-in-the-box type events and feeling like I was a common laborer rather than on holiday.

My thoughtful husband, Joe, the leader of the family, took care of my melancholy immediately. He took me to Greenville, South Carolina, and Knoxville, Tennessee, in order to explore the beautiful mountainous area—precisely what we wanted to do during the vacation! In addition, we found an active international club in Greenville with delightful people and made some good business contacts. I was euphoric over the trip, so my husband was off the hook after all. Moreover, on the way back to Hendersonville, we saw the most gorgeous sunset we have ever seen. It was truly magnificent! At that moment, we were still on the Tennessee side and about to go through the famous Great Smoky Mountains. Even though we needed to make our return as early as possible, Joe decided to stop by a locally produced log home situated way up a hill to get some utilitarian information.

Soon we found ourselves on the road again. While traveling along the hilly, curvy road at dusk, I felt as if we were being tailgated by the darkness of night. I suddenly realized that it would be wise for us to move up to these lovely highlands before we get much older. Then we would be able to swim through the challenges of life more effortlessly. Although the vacation started with unexpected work, it ended with the joy of discovery. Also, I developed the skill of coping with the uncertain and learned to trust my “dream-chasing” husband. This was a brilliant holiday after all! At that moment of realization, I saw the bright full moon of hope rise up from behind the Great Smoky Mountains.

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