

Florida

Spring Break in August

Including :

Gert Vail, our tour guide and gracious hostess;

Janet Vail, daughter of Gert, niece and beloved pediatric nurse

and Edie Rhodes, Gert's younger sister, aunt and our trusted mudslide taster.

Saturday, August 18

Getting ready, never easy. Flying down from Boston, Ma. and renting a car, I arrived at St. Petersburg and we all relaxed and stayed that way for our wonderful week on the Beach.

Sunday, August 19, 2007

Our outing begins...

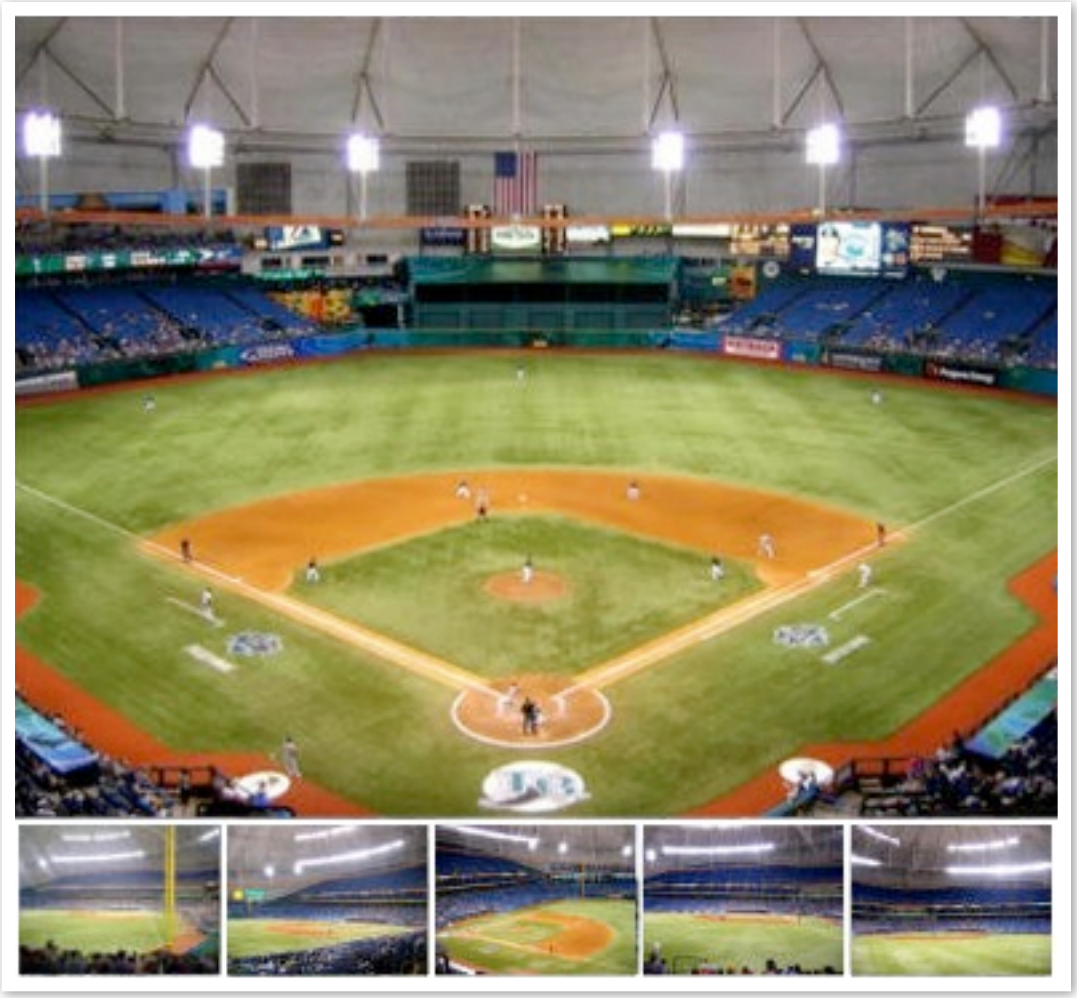
If Gert had never sat on the wrong seat the wrong way at her fancy luncheon, this whole trip would never have happened. But a broken back, in two places, did happen. Gert was heard to say, loud and clear,, "I must have a break from this long recuperation period I have had to endure". Get me a beach front hotel, with a good restaurant, a pool with a waterfall and valet parking. The only spot on

the Gulf Coast to fill her extensive needs was found in Clearwater, Florida. Although it was only thirty minutes from her Condo, it was like another world away. The Clearwater Beach Marriott Suites in Sand Key was the perfect answer to a maiden in distress.

After a short drive, we quickly settled in and had a nice pool side lunch at the Tiki Bar, a dip in the pool and dinner in the hotel restaurant. Janet had a report to finish and so she planned to drive up asap. While at the pool. Gert met her friend, the lady who drives her to the doctors, picks up her meds and generally keeps Gert happy and organized. She lives in that area and hoped to see Gert when she dropped by our hotel. Luckily, she was able to share her pool side mudslide with me, which turned out to be most refreshing.

On Monday, we found a nice boardwalk facing the Clearwater Bay side of the hotel and Gert and I were able to start some early Christmas shopping. Gert was afraid that this hotel was not situated near any shopping places. Boy, were we ever lucky.

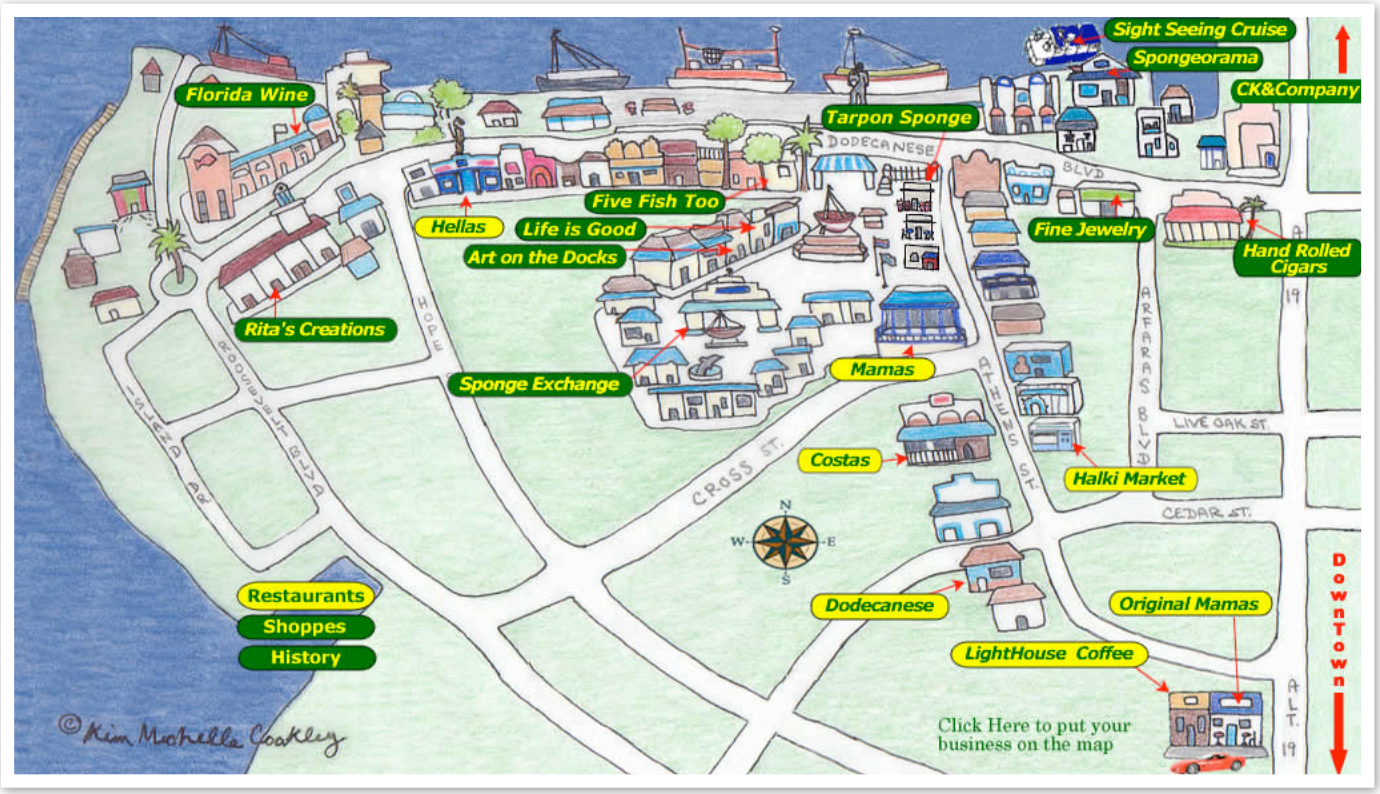
Janet arrived early on Tuesday and we had so much to show her. Our deck, the pool, the nice restaurants and lovely new Tommy Bahama sneakers for Gert. That evening Janet and I went to the Tropicana baseball stadium in St. Petersburg and watch the Boston Red Sox play the Tampa Devil Rays. We saw Manny Ramariz playing for Boston. He is their most colorful player, with his hitting skills,



his dreadlocks and his relaxed uniform. I wanted Janet to see him since her cousin is writing a book about Manny. You just never know. Boston won. One interesting part was that there were so many Boston fans in the stands. So many Red Sox shirts. I wish I had brought mine with me.

On Wednesday we drove to historic Tarpon Springs, Florida's Sponge Docks. We looked all around, bought some sponges but it was beginning to get very hot so we quickly returned to our air conditioned digs. The next day I noticed the the sponges I bought were damp and had a slight aroma of the sea bottom, where they grow and are cup away by deep sea divers. I put them on our deck in the sunshine to dry out. That very afternoon Gert was resting and thought she heard a racket on the deck. Lo and behold , many sea gulls were on the railing, demanding Gert throw overboard the fish entrails she was collecting.

She brought the sponges in.



On Thursday, Janet and I went to Clearwater Marine Aquarium . In addition to training dolphins, they are into rescue, rehabilitation and release of animals. Gert sent me an interesting article on how they were fitting a new tail onto an otter. We plan to go back there sometime and go out into the bay on their observation boat.



Thursday evening the hotel had cocktail party for all its guests in the lobby. We actually had lobster pasta and many other delicious snacks. Later on, the three of us still went nearby for Cuban Tapas and Sangria.

Friday we reluctantly headed home. Saturday I flew back to Boston and on to Cape Cod for a week. I understand Gert slept for two full days. But she survived very well, her back seemed fine, and she was moving along with the best of them. Everyone knew Gert by the end of the week, she is such a friendly, outgoing person. We never did go to the Gulf beach, across the street from our hotel, it was just too hot and the hugh expanse of white sand we had to cross over looked like a dessert.

Gert thinks she has recently broken a rib . I only hope she needs a rib recovery vacation .