

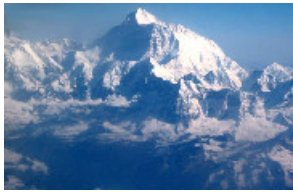
# **The *Classical* Hargrove Annual Report for 2003:**

## **Best of Times, Worst of Times**

Despite terrible events in much of the world, we had a wonderful year. In March, after much debate and soul-searching, we traveled to Bhutan, arriving in that storied land of medieval tranquility just as Operation Quagmire got underway in Iraq. We also managed extended weekend jaunts to New Orleans (over Memorial Day, where we met Charles and Amy), Annapolis (Labor Day and Christmas), and New York (Thanksgiving).

### ***Bhutan***

Bhutan was lush and peaceful, with a country-wide emphasis on conservation and non-violence. Buddhist don't even kill animals, much less people. The slogan, "Nurture Nature, Save the Future," adorned most schools.



A Victor Emanuel Nature Tour guided by David Bishop and Dion Hobcroft began in Delhi, India, where we spent two days getting over jet lag while birding, tallying our first views of wild Peafowl as well as many other great birds, including some spectacular newly-arrived Asian Paradise Flycatchers. Then a short flight dropped us at the most beautiful airport in the world, in the "city" of Paro, Bhutan. We started birding immediately, catching a rare view of the elusive Black-tailed Crake displaying in a roadside marsh, and the lovely Ibisbill feeding among the rocks on the river.

Next, we set off in our 20 passenger bus on the "main highway," a quarter-century old, twisting, one-and-a-half lane road linking the country west to east. With a curve about every 9 seconds, we did well to average 20 km/hour. Fortunately, we weren't in a hurry. Waited on by a large and attentive staff, we took most meals in the field, camped out a total of eight nights and spent the rest of the time in rustic guesthouses... and one modern hotel, the only place with Internet access we found in all of Bhutan.

Stunning scenery, range after range of "hills" (anything less than 6000 meters in height) covered in forests of pine, oak, and rhododendron, competed with the abundant wildlife for our attention. The birds included the spectacularly beautiful Himalayan Monal and the Wedge-billed Wren-babbler, perhaps the ugliest bird in the world, and many other rarities. We also saw several interesting mammals, for example, Golden Langur Monkeys, and loads of flowers. Thanks to digital photography, we came back with many photos, including this magnificent view of Everest shot from the window of the plane. The Bhutanese culture, architecture, and people's unfailing courtesy added immeasurably to the pleasure of seeing the wildlife.

### ***New Orleans***

Over Memorial Day weekend, Jim postponed his attempt to average 50mpg in his new Toyota *Prius* hybrid. He and Linda invited themselves to join Charles and Amy in New Orleans. We hoped to catch sight of a ghost or two. We had booked rooms in a French Quarter hotel known for its spectral population. Alas, none showed up, so we added New Orleans to our list of cities that have failed to produce evidence of unhappy spirits. At least we had fun touring the area, checking out some hidden courtyards, the grave of famed Voodoo queen Marie Laveau, and many other *previously haunted* houses. We consoled ourselves with several excellent meals ranging from red beans and rice at a pub in the *Vieux Carré* to a stupendous Sunday brunch at The Commander's Palace. On Memorial Day itself, Charles and Amy flew home early, while Jim and Linda attended a cooking class featuring the classic RB&R dish, as well as corn bread, pecan tarts, and pralines.



### ***Annapolis***

Charles worked for several months on a contract with the Smithsonian organizing the papers of Nobel-laureate Riccardo Giacconi, then took a full-time job with the Carnegie Institution of Washington, archiving papers

about Geomagnetic Survey work. He commutes four days a week. Amy works at a birth center in Annapolis, and provides women's health care at a local clinic. They rent a nice house located within walking distance of Quiet Waters Park, site of one of the best dog parks in existence. The park is a favorite spot for Molly, a nice mixed breed dog from the local SPCA, about whom the entire household revolves. Charles and Amy have done an amazing job training her. The area offers many opportunities for birding and the butterfly viewing, as well as spider and slug photography. We enjoy a first class neighborhood restaurant, The Wild Orchid restaurant. As always, The District, with its plethora of museums beckons, a short train ride away. We spent a fun evening there with old friends Len and Mary Frossard Gallagher and new friend Tiffany Hamm, dining on Ethiopian fare. No wonder we visited twice!



### ***New York***

We took advantage of Claire's last year of residency in NYC for a repeat Thanksgiving Day visit. Linda's sister, Leslie, joined us as we reprised our traditional orgy of overeating and watching a computer animated film, *Finding Nemo*. The weather was outstanding, cool enough to make walking a pleasure, warm enough to make you feel like walking. We hiked across Central Park early Thanksgiving Morning, saw the Macy's Parade for the first time ever, and returned to feast with some of Claire's friends. We took in two Broadway plays, *Moving Out* and *Cabaret*. Linda added another off-Broadway *Exonerated*, true stories of unjustly imprisoned Death Row inmates. She recommends it highly. We also overate in two outstanding restaurants, *L'Impero* and *Aquavit*, and spent a day and a half in the Museum of Natural History and Rose Planetarium.



### ***Borrowed Children***



We arranged with our former foster-daughter, Rosalind, to have her kids visit from Colorado for two weeks in July. The kids spent weekdays at Lost Creek Country Club Day Camp and weekends with us, watching videos, making kites that crashed immediately, swimming, and boating with friend Beverly Weeks in Lake Austin. Rachel took to photography in a big way, borrowing the digital camera to capture portraits of everyone and their cats, while Grant cooperated more than you'd expect from an older brother.

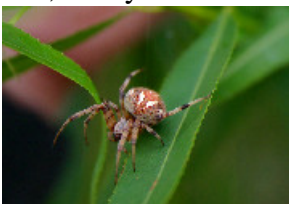
### ***A New Addition to the Family***

While doing her round of house calls, Linda felt something on her leg, which turned out to be a small, skinny, gray tabby begging for attention. Never able to resist helping an emaciated feline in distress, Linda rescued the beast and brought it home, where it quickly took over the vacant position of *Top Cat*. Forced to choose a name on short notice, Jim suggested *Skinny Minnie*. The name proved to be decidedly inappropriate after a couple of weeks feeding at the Hargrove trough. She is no longer svelte.



### ***Jim Goes Nuts over Spiders***

Jim, always an arachnophile, discovered how well digital photography fits with capturing images of the cute little beasts, such as this shot of *Neoscona arabesca* (or whatever it is. Identifying spiders is difficult.). Some of his favorites are on view on the web site, [www.hargrove.org](http://www.hargrove.org), along with a longer version of this report. Check it out!



Linda is no longer working on Friday; long weekends are available for visitors or short trips. Please come visit the beautiful Texas Hill Country.

We hope that your year was as fun as ours and wish you the best for 2004. ***Jim and Linda***