

Dear Friends:

December 1999

Hope the year has treated you well and that 2000 brings you much joy. Y'all come to Texas sometime/anytime so we can sit on the porch and catch up in person.

Life is good at the ranchita. Chad built a fenced, raised-bed, soaker hose-equipped garden this spring. Chad builds; I garden. It was so successful (the tomato plants grew to over seven feet), it aroused skeptical interest from friends & neighbors, one of whom is certain we used nuclear soil; he calls it "The Love Canal II Garden."

The fence keeps the deer at bay, but the raccoons have foiled all efforts to keep them out. They're particularly fond of cantaloupes: so far it's Raccoons 12, Swedbergs 1. I'm almost ready to rethink my "be gentle with all living things" philosophy.

Also of questionable charm to at least one of us is another abandoned kitten I brought home. "Fargo" is a seal point Siamese with electric blue eyes and an unfailing ability to create mayhem wherever he goes. Chad has posted my picture at the local pet shelters with a sign, "Do Not Adopt Out Any Animals to This Woman."

1999 has been our Year of the Crash. Chad's 85 Bronco II came to the end of its long and useful life in May, upside down in Austin rush hour traffic. Chad was fine; the Bronco was not. Not to be outdone, a week later I was hit by a truck running a stop sign. Extensive truck repairs; no damage to me. But the grand event occurred on a birthday trip I took with a friend shopping for antiques around Asheville, N. Carolina. Our rental van was hit from behind on a narrow mountain road by a truck with no brakes. We went airborne, hit and went over a parked car, then over the mountain side. A grove of trees stopped our descent. Although four vehicles were totaled, everyone involved walked away with no more than bruises. Folks who came to help us looked around for the angels they were sure had been traveling with us. Chad & I are firm believers in seat belts, air bags, and Plymouth Voyagers!

With less drama but much more fun, Chad and I took a trip in May to south Florida meeting up with old Tucson friends. We greatly enjoyed the eclectic population and art deco of South Miami Beach, the amazing ecosystem of the Everglades, the quiet solitude of several days on Sanibel Island (near Ft Meyers), and the comfort of good friends. From Sanibel we flew north to Ft. Walton Beach for a reunion of Chad's Air Force flight training class, renewing many friendships after a long lapse. It is amazing how much and how little people can change in 30 years!

Work continues with little change. I'm still with the Texas Attorney General Child Support Division, primarily because my "new" boss is the woman who hired me into the AG's Office in 1989. So many good people (and good friends) who left under the previous regime (ousted in last year's elections) are returning that I've agreed to stick it out for at least one administration. Not sure why I subject myself to such stress. A paycheck, perhaps? And I'm still working my side business with hopes of leaving state government before I turn 100. Chad still nurses computer systems for the county Tax Office. I call their AS400 mini mainframe "Lucille," -- tho she reminds me a bit of "Hal," calling Chad at home when she is having technical problems. This worries me.

Will close for now with the very best wishes to you from the crew on Trails End: horses Bingo and Jet; dogs Solomon, Tejas and Taco; cats T.K., Bartlett, and Fargo; goldfish Gladys and the Pips; and humans Chad and Linda. Happy 2000!

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