

Dec 2001

Happy Holidays from the Texas Ranchita

Happiest greetings from our home to yours. Hope you have a warm and peaceful holiday.

In starting our letter this year, I'm reminded of the Scandinavian legend of King Canute, who astounded his subjects by holding back the tides of the sea. My own Scandinavian has managed admirably to hold back the tide of animals these several years, but the tide has now broken free. In the name of having a "herd"—so one of the horses doesn't go equine-psycho when the other one is ridden off the property—we (?) acquired a small dysfunctional group of animals to keep each other company.

THE HERD now includes the two horses, two Nubian goats—crazy Mad Maxx and prissy Goldie Fawn, who doesn't like to get her hooves muddy—and Lupita Anna, a Sicilian donkey who's a bit grumpy most of the time, understandable since she's in the eleventh or so month of a thirteen to fourteen month pregnancy. THE HERD is augmented by five white tail deer—two does and three fawns—that we feed twice a day. I cut a devil's bargain with them; they don't eat my plants inside the picket fence; they get deer corn twice a day. I'm sure this bargain will not hold through the spring.

As for most of us in this life, the year has brought a combination of sad and happy events. We lost our dog Tejas to cancer, but he was active and a character to the end. We'll be going to the Animal Shelter this week to choose a new companion for Solomon, our Rhodesian Ridgeback. Taco, our Chihuahua/terrier mix, isn't really a dog, but more an elf, so he doesn't provide much doggy companionship for Solomon.

On the bright side of the street, we've had some wonderful trips and visits this year: to Denver for a fun family gathering and wedding of nephew David and Tammy, with a side trip to Colorado Springs to see several long time friends from the Academy and military days; a relaxing vacation with cherished friends to Belize, a beautiful and varied country of beaches and coral reefs, Mayan ruins, and rain forests; special treats of visits from sister Lu and husband Gary at Thanksgiving, renewing contacts with several dear friends from near & far that we hadn't seen in years, and a too short visit by one of Chad's closest friends, Jim Hix.

No exciting news on the ranch front. Don't ask Chad if he agrees, but I thought it would be a great idea to have a stone fountain inside the picket fence, close enough to the front porch so you could hear constantly running water. I have the ideas; Chad always gets to do the digging, this time, an electrical line to the pond. It's a fun addition, although folks sitting on the porch do seem to go inside a lot more to use the bathroom. Must be all that running water.

Work has brought similar challenges to Chad and me this year. Chad was considering moving to a new job but was induced to stay since no one else wanted to take over the work he was doing. Chad's current nemesis is his involvement in activating an e-commerce site for the Tax Office. I similarly was enticed to stay in my job, by remuneration (translate, "greed"). I'm still working on the statewide conversion of child support cases to a centralized system, while keeping my hand in a little antique dealing and taking computer small business courses to prepare for the exit from state government.

Work pays the way but real life begins at home and is enriched in spending time with friends such as you. Please know the Texas Ranchita is open 24/7 for visits and porch-sitting (listening to that new fountain!). We'd love to see you. Hope you enjoy the photos. Love, Linda and Chad and the Critters. - Horses, Dogs, Cats, Donkey, Goats, and (why not) - the fish.