

December, 2011

Holiday Greetings to all our family and friends, wishing you all the Joys of the Christmas Season.

We are most pleased to report all is well at the Swedberg "ranch". We count ourselves very fortunate given the record heat and drought that plagued central Texas this past year and caused so many tragedies. Over 1500 homes were destroyed by wildfires within 30 miles of us. Our boarded horse, Sunny Girl, was evacuated twice from her ranch 10 miles away. Though we were never directly threatened, just the extreme potential for wildfires impacted us all. There was a time when the threat of wildfire literally governed our lifestyle; most folks kept the car packed and ready to go. Recent rains have helped a lot but the long term forecast says this unfortunate weather pattern may be with us for a few more years. Aside from the wildfire threat, our biggest concerns are our beautiful oak trees and our well. The trees are clearly stressed, and we've lost a few, but kudos to our well which has performed above and beyond.

The animals, knock on wood, are well. We had a false cancer scare with dog Shiner but he is now doing fine. Linda's new horse, Tio, a big & beautiful Appaloosa, moved in with us in April and it seems the donkey and goats have adjusted to the new leader of the pack. Linda has been riding more and hopes to start trail riding with Tio when the weather improves next year.

Linda retired her pet sitting business to devote more time to riding, habitat restoration, and wildlife rescue; remember last year Linda was certified by the National Wildlife Foundation as a Habitat Steward. Too bad that happened just as her business was taking off but the original rationale for the business was to help fund those other activities that she now had no time for. Catch 22.

Chad's activities were much the same as last year, volunteering with the AARP tax preparation program for elderly and low income folks, and with the Missing in America Project to locate and inter, with honors, the abandoned cremated remains of veterans. And of course tending to the "ranch", which for the last half of the year was nearly a full time effort trying to water our trees.

Some great trips! Two fabulous weeks in April in Argentina (Buenos Aires, Iguazu Falls, and the Pampas) with good friends Paul & Kathy. In May, Chad went to Ely, MN for a fun "guys" fishing trip with brother Gary, brother in law Gary, and nephews David, Doug, and Nathan. At the end of that trip Chad went to Sycamore, Illinois for a mini-reunion with high school friends and to visit with family, highlighted by his new grand-niece, Liberty. In June Linda and sister Judy visited niece Dana, who was running a charity race at the world renowned Tomato Festival in Crystal Springs, Arkansas; how could you not have a great time?! Barely recovering from that excitement, Linda then traveled to Savannah, GA, in Oct with long time friends Carolyn & Sue; such a beautiful and historic town. In Nov we had a fun weekend in New Orleans with friends Peggy & John; Linda and Peggy grew up together and New Orleans was always the hot place to go. Its amazing how different, fun, and interesting New Orleans can be when you don't spend the whole time in Bourbon Street bars.

Next year, we have no specific plans but, save for the drought, hope for more of the same: more riding, volunteering, and habitat restoration. Most of all we hope for more great trips and many visits from family and friends like you!

Wishing you a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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P.S. No photos in the newsletter this year, but please visit our web site at www.swedtex.info where we have lots of photos for your viewing pleasure, For ease, we created a separate "New for 2011" gallery – that will be especially helpful for returning visitors.