



Holiday Greetings to all, Ho Ho Ho

Dec 2012

Sorry if you are getting this late. It's been a wild year end. Started out good: we had some very nice visits from family and friends during the spring wildflower season; had some nice rains that broke the drought; Linda took some time away in July for a two week driving trip to Alabama and points between to see family & friends; had a great trip to visit old friends from Tucson at their summer home on Lake Kootenay, British Columbia, Canada; and we celebrated 32 years of marriage in Nov.

But the rest of the story: the drought is back and doesn't look good for the future. We cut down a dozen old red oaks and I'm betting that number will grow. In Oct Dog Shiner tore an ACL and required \$surgery. Over the last few years I volunteered with AARP TaxAide, 4 hours/wk Jan-Apr doing free tax returns for the elderly/low income. This year, in a weak moment, I accepted a district leader role, covering 9 sites in a 50 mile radius, and, contrary to what I was told, it has taken almost all my spare time on a near daily basis since September. Also in September, the VA put a stent in my left carotid due to a stricture resulting from my surgery 3 years prior. Then in late Nov I spent a weekend in the hospital after experiencing stroke symptoms.

But all's well that ends well: I did have 5 small strokes but no permanent effects and we're confident (hopeful) its under control - we are watching closely. Shiner is mostly healed and doing well as are all the animals. The demands of TaxAide remain but should slack off in January and hopefully will go better next year. So we are thankful for the good things and hopeful for the coming year. We hope 2013 bodes equally well for you.

And, now, heeeeeerrrrreeees LINDA!



Hello to all and Merry Christmas,

I'm very proud of Chad's helping so many folks through the tax aide program. As to my sometimes arbitrary choice of activities, what can I say, I enjoy what I'm doing and hopefully do a little good along the way. I'm still working on habitat projects. Habitat/native gardening is right up my alley--flurries of activity followed by long periods of neglect. I've planted for birds, bees, hummingbirds, butterflies, and other critters needing refuge and sustenance, and fended off our cat Hannah Rose from snacking on the critters. Though she did eat my favorite anole lizard; bummer. Providing a way station for migrating and nesting creatures is fulfilling. They're having a hard time with the droughts, and many didn't make it to our part of Texas this fall.

Quarter horse Sunny is doing well in her subsidized retirement at the Red Horse Ranch. Appaloosa Tio, who lives with us--well in the stable--is so much fun to work with. Tio and I have a short trick/ground program we've worked up. We think it's great but I have to admit it's not quite ready for prime time.

Other tidbits of non-news this year: Doing some light PR work for the Habitat Steward program; helping out Austin Wildlife Rescue when they ask; hanging out in the hill country with friends; providing a lap-on-demand for three cats when and where they require it; feeding the deer in the evenings; and hooting at the screech owl who lives in the nest box we put up for her (She always sticks her head out to acknowledge my pitiful "hoot." (I'm not sure if it's out of sympathy, disbelief, or disgust on her part).

The best part of the year was seeing family and friends and reconnecting with others long missed. There were hard parts too. We were saddened by the loss of my mother in April. It was tough saying goodbye, but we were grateful for her release from a long struggle with Alzheimer's. And a dear lifetime friend of mine lost her husband this year to cancer. We will miss him and feel deeply for her loss.

Take best care and hope you have a wonderful 2013 (can't believe it!). The welcome mat is always out and we'd love to see you for some nightlife in Austin and porch sitting in the country.

