



Leslie Turek 2013

Dear Friends,

I'm sorry I missed a holiday letter last year. This year I'm running late too, but I'm hoping to get these out before 2014!

Travel

The highlight of 2012 was a cruise along the inner passage of Alaska with Alex and a group of friends right around the summer solstice. We took a 1-week cruise on a small boat (not a huge cruise ship), so we could get into narrow inlets right up close to the glaciers, and plenty of time to stop to go hiking and kayaking. It was an amazing experience to see the fantastic scenery and abundant wildlife of Alaska, although we did have some bad luck with the weather (lots and lots of rain!).

A few other short trips filled out the year. A weekend reunion of some of my college friends in the hills of West Virginia was full of nostalgia. Then a week in Chicago for the World Science Fiction Convention, where I learned how to get through the TSA after your wallet has been stolen and you've lost all your identification. And a long weekend in Philadelphia in December, attending the convention-runners convention, Smofcon.

In 2013, we had a lovely June weekend getaway in Nantucket, the World Science Fiction Convention in San Antonio in Sept., and Smofcon in Toronto in Dec. Also went down to my 50-year high school reunion in Stratford CT., and made a day trip to lovely Monhegan Island in Maine in the fall.

Work and Volunteering

My part-time job as Healthy Aging Coordinator at Springwell ended in 2012. The problem was, I was too successful! Our grant got renewed in August, but it was increased to cover a half-time person who would be in the office most days, which is a level I didn't really want to go to. So I found my replacement, and after helping with the transition, I "re-retired" and am now back to being an occasional workshop leader, which I enjoy. My favorite workshop is Diabetes Self-Management because the participants who attend are very motivated to make changes in their lives.

Last winter I started helping with tax preparation for low-income people in Waltham. It was a lot to learn, but very rewarding. It also comes at a good time, when a lot of my outdoor activities are in a lull. So I'll be doing that again this year.

I also continued as a volunteer guide and member of the Education Committee at Garden in the Woods, one of my favorite places to be in the spring.

Home

I'm still very much enjoying my condo in Lincoln. I continue to serve on the Landscape Committee, as we try to stretch our limited budget to improve the plantings in our community. I have my own vegetable garden plot, which keeps me in fresh veggies for a good part of the year, and I get out to enjoy the many trails on Lincoln conservation land on a weekly basis in the spring and fall. This year, I updated my kitchen with new appliances, and also replaced my ancient dining room table and chairs.

Pets

Some sad news on the pet front, as I lost my 13-year-old black cat Machinka in October after a very brief illness. I didn't enjoy living without a cat, so very shortly after, I adopted a pair of 7-month-old rescue cats, Jasmine and Pekoe (not related, but fostered together and very close friends). Jasmine is a tortoiseshell and is just a little bit crazy, but I'm working on gaining her confidence. Right now, she will cuddle on her own terms, but will not allow me to pick her up. (It'll be interesting when I need to take her to the vet.) Pekoe is a tiger, and is just the opposite in temperament. Totally friendly and unafraid, I can pick him up and handle him and he just keeps purring. They've been fun to have around, although the houseplants are suffering from getting climbed on and knocked over repeatedly.

Health

I'm doing fine with my health. I spent some time last year going through physical therapy for an achy upper thigh that never did get better, so that's slowed me down a bit, but I carry on. I was also diagnosed with vaso-vagal syncope, which sometimes makes me feel dizzy sometimes when I exercise intensively, but isn't really dangerous. As a side effect, I got a number of heart tests to rule out cardiac problems, and learned that my heart is actually in pretty good shape. In spite of these various issues, I did actually manage to lose a little weight over the past year, thanks to spending a lot of time working out at the Y. I'm still a participant in the long-term research study, the Diabetes Prevention Program, and so get a pretty thorough checkup from them twice a year. Now in its 13th year, more than half of the original group has developed diabetes, but so far I'm not one of them!

Some things to look forward to

I was very excited and honored to learn that I have been selected as one of the guests of honor at Sasquan, the World Science Fiction Convention to be held in Spokane, Washington in 2015. So I'm looking forward to finally making my first trip to the Pacific Northwest! And for 2014, I've got tentative plans for a trip to a South African game park with my high school friend Karen, plus the London Worldcon with Alex in August. So it'll be a busy travel year.

Happy Holidays!

I've had a good couple of years and I hope things are fine with you, too! Please keep in touch – you know where to find me:

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(And here's a picture of my new additions, Jasmine and Pekoe, watching the birds from one of my back windows....)

