



Near Chicago, March 2012



Colin, 30, NYC, November 2012



View from condo

December 2012

Dear friends,

My apologies for skipping last year in the holiday letter department. I can write about it now, because things appear to be on the mend, but last year at this time was something of a “darkest hour” in my son’s involvement with drug addiction. This situation had been building for a couple of years, with all sorts of negative effects on his life as well as mine. It has been quite a saga, and hardly the stuff of holiday letters, but the good news is that Colin is now in rehab and (after several starts) appears to be committed to recovery. Of course, I would do anything for him (that was part of the problem), but only he can do what needs to be done. Nothing about the future is certain in such matters, but I see more signs for hope than at any time in the last two years. Thanks to “al anon” groups (locally and in my travels), the challenges of this period have also showed me a path to personal and – dare I say it - spiritual growth.

As it happens, Colin was able to spend a couple weeks with me around the time of his 30th birthday. It was nice to mark the occasion on a cautiously optimistic note. He had recently reconnected with a high school friend, whom he was visiting in New York City (with a nice view of the George Washington Bridge) in the photo at left.

Meanwhile, I continue to enjoy working for Accenture as a “User Experience Architect” (a lofty title that can usually be translated as “web site repairman”). The work is varied, and I enjoy traveling to the various places the job takes me.

Way back in 2111, a banking project took me Charlotte, North Carolina, for much of the summer. Fortuitously, that work kicked off with a trip to the UK, where I was able to take time to see Dot & Roger in Macclesfield and visit good friends in London and Cheltenham. For most it had been a while, so it was a great pleasure to see them again in person. (Another highlight of last year was a delightful February visit to friends in Key West. To all (you know who you are), many thanks for the hospitality!

Sidebar: I continue to enjoy living in my condo next door to Washington’s Headquarters – and why not, given the splendid view shown here! Plus, this year a brewery with tasting room opened up a block away! I can open my building door and simply roll there downhill. (Of course, the trick is rolling back up.)



Four siblings & Marv – Michigan, Sept 2012



With Sanford in Jerome, Arizona – July 2012



Wendy & Emma visit during Hurricane Sandy



Alice Vaughan

Meanwhile, back at work: Toward the end of last year, I enjoyed designing some “apps” for the iphone and the ipad! This year, the job took me to a vitamin company on Long Island – I’m still working my way through the souvenir bottles of Vitamin-C and fish oil!

My current project is interesting, challenging and topical: I’m helping to design the implementation of the Affordable Healthcare Act (aka “Obamacare”) – initially it was for a generic version, but now it is specifically for the state of California. This stuff is maddeningly complex, and the treks to Sacramento every other week are tiring, but it’s nice to work on something that may actually benefit real people.

The first phase of this project, between April and October, often took me to Chicago. This was delightful not only because Chicago is a great place to visit (as long as it’s between April and October), but also because Helen & Marv live there – we had many dinners and a weekend together. In August, I took a weekend to stay with David & Susan and attend a high school reunion in Michigan. And in September, Dot blew into town, so the four siblings met halfway between Chicago and West Olive for yet another unscheduled “sibling reunion.”

Events allowed me to catch up with other family and ex-family members this year. I had a great visit with Sanford in Arizona over 4th of July weekend (we are in a wine tasting cellar in the photo). Hurricane Sandy came in October, but up here (60 miles north of NYC), we didn’t even lose power, though many people did for days in areas not far away. As it happened, Wendy and Emma were in NYC in a trendy downtown hotel. When power, phones, food and water went away, they commandeered a limo up to the Hudson Valley and spent the night here before heading out the next day. Between the endless calls to reschedule flights, we had a couple of good meals and a nice visit.

Despite the challenges and “excitement” of the last two years, I have to say that, today, life is good! That’s partly because the troubles have brought me some personal growth. But another factor is my new friend, Alice. Now I know that some would say such “fresh” news should not appear in a holiday letter until it has seasoned for a year or two and perhaps been approved by friends & family. OK, on that principle I’ll hold off on the full bio for now, but just in case I shuffle off unexpectedly, I’d like the record to show that I went out as a happy camper.

Best wishes and happiness to all!