

## *Tanner Family holiday letter, 2008*

**O**ur life in retirement in Dominica commences December 14, when we arrive on the beautiful bountiful Nature Island. To the right is a picture I took of “Devil’s Gate”, a Calibishie Bay landmark. Another village landmark is Hampstead Beach, the locale for the scene where the “Black Pearl” is aground in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> “Pirates of the Caribbean” films. My photo won 1<sup>st</sup> prize from Nature Isle Tropical Gourmet.com., a basket of Dominica condiments and spices.



Our house is on a plateau above Calibishie with a view over the bay to the Guadeloupe Group island of Marie Gallant. In mid-April we’ll finish building our villa above our present 2-bedroom ground-floor house with Ruth’s dream kitchen outfitted with cabinetry pre-fabricated at Lowe’s, along with imported US-made appliances set up for 240V/50Hz AC power.

Most of this letter is a wrap-up of our last year in the US. Ruth officially retires on December 31, 2008 but we depart on December 13, using her accrued time.

2008 highlights: We began the year on vacation in Calibishie. We dined at the Blue Bay Restaurant in Lagon, Portsmouth, Dominica with our neighbors and good friends Herry and Hildreth. We celebrated our 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Westboro with a dinner at the Mandarin Restaurant with our daughter Mathilda and her beau Pete, cousin Jason and his wife Colleen, our neighbors Ron and Kathy (who gave us a farewell dinner at the Mandarin in November) and my friend of 59 years Dr. Ron Abramson and his wife K. In April during school vacation Ruth visited our daughter Mathilda, a NY City teacher. They took a river cruise under the Brooklyn Bridge and around the Statue of Liberty, danced at a “speakeasy” private night club, saw a stage play and shopped in support of Ruth’s quilting & beading.

In July we joined our friends Roger & Rita (Roger and I met in college; he was best man at our wedding) on Martha’s Vineyard. They rent the cottage we’d used for the past 15 years, and they’d sometimes been our guests. This year and last they returned the favor. Mathilda was also on MV for a working vacation at Chilmark Pottery, where she’s been for 13 of the last 15 summers. We also had a nice dinner with Mathilda joining us with MV friends Doug & Irene. Leaving “the Vineyard” for possibly the last time was bittersweet. Mathilda visited us in August for Ruth’s birthday, and also for her birthday Ruth and I drove to Cape Ann, Massachusetts to have a “lobster-in-the-rough” dinner at Woodman’s of Essex.

Our house sale in Westboro MA closes on November 25. We’ll visit our Mathilda instead of the other way around for Thanksgiving for the first time. Besides Thanksgiving with Mathilda, Pete, and their friends in NYC, we’ll drive on for a brief visit with Roger and Rita & to drop our Mazda Miata off with them; they’re buying it. We’ll also visit my sister Naomi, her husband Larry, & sons Larry Jr. & Stephen. Back in MA, Ron & K will graciously host us for between Nov. 20 and our departing.

Our email addresses are now [djt@dan-ruth-tanner.com](mailto:djt@dan-ruth-tanner.com) and [ret@dan-ruth-tanner.com](mailto:ret@dan-ruth-tanner.com). I tend to check email daily; Ruth doesn’t. Our mobile phone in Dominica is (767) 277-3958. We’ll get a 2<sup>nd</sup> mobile phone here, & when our villa’s complete we’ll get hi-speed Internet & a US number phone. We’ll include those numbers in next year’s letter. Our Dominica address is “[Dan & Ruth Tanner, Calibishie, Dominica](#)”. If you write “[USPS Country Code 152](#)” along the envelope’s bottom the US Postal Service may not mistakenly send it to the Dominica Republic. Letters take about 10 days to reach Calibishie, & then sit in the part-time village post office until we drop in or the postmistress spots us and calls us in, or spots a neighbor or friend of ours whom she will tell to let us know that we have mail. It’s casual but it works. There’s no hurry.

We’ll miss some things about Massachusetts, but not winters! Hiking in fall foliage (right) as we did one last time on Mount Wachusett was fun, but now we can walk any day, with a choice of mountain, seashore, or rainforest. Our favorite fresh local seasonal fruits, June strawberries, July blueberries, August corn, September peaches, & October apples will be replaced by Dominica’s mangoes, pineapples, bananas, passion fruit, grapefruit, oranges, coconuts, almonds, and about seventy other fruits and vegetables that we love. New England lobsters will give way to Caribbean spiny salt-water crayfish tasting about as delicious, and there’s abundant fresh seafood year-round in Dominica.



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Avid quilter Ruth would miss her favorite fabric store if it hadn't gone out of business thanks to the Bush



economy. Ruth made the moose theme quilt for her work friend Stephanie & her husband Steve (left). They treated us to a nice dinner. Before we left for Dominica she completed the baby quilt with Beatrix Potter motif (right) to give to Mervin St.Luce and his wife Esther who expect



their baby in December. Mervin is Nathalie Ferrol's son; she's our first friend in Dominica, who we met in 1987. Mervin & Esther were married on March 3, 2007; coincidentally on our 34<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.



Ruth and I will exchange seeing seasonal birds for other year-round ones and spring peepers and summer bullfrogs for year-round peeping frogs and seasonal flowers for every-day floral abundance with seasonal variations. Instead of red squirrels in our hemlock trees (left) we'll see hummingbirds on our flowers. And best of all, we'll swap a few days of summer swimming for swimming anytime!

I'll miss playing softball like Charlie Brown would miss kite-flying & place-kicking. My last few softball seasons were so frustrating! I went 0-for-4 in my final game never hitting the ball out of the infield! (I'm like a boy imaging himself at bat:



“Here's Danny, with two outs in the bottom of the ninth — the pitch — a drive — it's gone!”) There's no softball or baseball in Dominica. (No golf courses either, but we've never golfed.) I'll treasure the signed softball the guys gave me.



People ask if we have a car. Ours is a '96 Suzuki Escudo Nomade (“Sidekick” in the US market) imported from



Japan, which also uses right-hand drive. It had only 30,000 miles on it. It's a V-6, “loaded” with 4-wheel drive and high ground clearance enabling it to take us to beaches, etc. We use the a/c about once a month when we shop in Roseau.

Getting there wasn't half the fun! American Airlines tightened service dog



qualifying rules. Our doctors' new specifically-worded letters qualified them. To go as pets under our seats in carriers they'd have to be under 20 lbs. and under 9" tall (Ranger is 24 lbs & 16" at the shoulder; Lyla is 20 lbs and 15") and to go in kennels with the luggage the plane couldn't be on the ground with temperatures below 45°F (right – Boston in December!) or above 85°F (San Juan, Puerto Rico – they'd die in the luggage storage!). And one pays to transport pets. AA is nasty but we triumphed! Ranger & Lyla will fly for free, no kennel at our feet. *It serves AA right.* Importing them also took time-consuming, expensive, extensive veterinary tests and fee-based US Dept. of Agriculture certificates. Dr. Thomas, the very nice Chief of Veterinary in Dominica's Agriculture Ministry has been waiving

the usual US\$100 per dog import license fee. Ranger has been there 3 times; it's Lyla's first trip.

With our pre-fab kitchen we had use a 40-foot container not a 20-footer. A 40-footer gets to Calibishie Bay, but can't make the hairpin turn up to our place; everything must be trucked up. And, AA's schedule now makes it impossible to depart Boston & arrive in Dominica the same day – we'll overnight in San Juan, PR.

Selling our house in Bush's economy was a saga. In April, using ISoldMyHouse.com, we got an offer in 3 days. It was too low and the buyer wouldn't negotiate. We declined. Then the economy tanked faster than the little coward Dubya ran for the Air National Guard during the Vietnam War, and we got no more offers. We listed it with a realtor in July. He brought us an offer 4 hours before his listing expired. Horse-trading got us near the old offer. If we'd taken the April offer we'd have had to move twice (Ruth's retirement date



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got pushed back to 12/31/08), store our goods for 6 months, and take an apartment, so it came to about the same. It's a long story mercifully made short, but we'll tell the long version to anyone who cares.

**About Dominica:** Columbus first saw the island on Sun, Nov 3, 1493 on his 3<sup>rd</sup> voyage, so he named it "Sunday" in Spanish. Fearing mutiny, he didn't come ashore. It passed from the Spanish to the French; then a few times between the French and English. The flag (left) features its unique Sisserou parrot. Dominica got independence from the UK on Nov 3, 1978 on the 385<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its "discovery" by Europeans (Arawaks & Caribs were there first; the latter still are) It's a parliamentary democracy. The majority party chooses the Prime Minister, who chooses cabinet ministers. The President is ceremonial head of state. There's no income or property taxes; but a VAT (value-added tax) on goods sold in stores and title taxes & import duties.



We'll remain US citizens, filing US income tax returns & renewing our US passports. We can vote for MA federal offices (Pres/VP/US Rep/US Senator). In 4 years Dominica will confer citizenship on us, not affecting our US citizenship. We won't vote in Dominican elections (that can jeopardize US citizenship).

We'll be busy in 2009 building, settling in & adjusting to our new life. Every day will be just another day in paradise (sigh). **Keep well 'till next year.** I'll write then with a cask rum drink next to the keyboard.

**Yes We Can!** We send a warm welcome to President-elect Barak Obama, Vice President-elect Joe Biden and the now more Democratic (pun intended) Congress. Below is our good riddance to George W. Bush who, with Cheney shamed us by doing horrible things in the name of the USA:



*Dubya sent his dad to evaluate Hurricane Katrina.*



*CNN got the caption right!*



*Yeah, sure: "Mission Accomplished"*



*"D'oh, I meant to vote for Gore!" My thoughts exactly.*



**'Bye for now.** We hope you'll drop us an e-mail. But until we complete our villa and add Internet access will be infrequent. Please be patient. , Thinking about visiting Dominica? Let us know, please.

To visit us virtually, surf to [www.dan-ruth-tanner.com](http://www.dan-ruth-tanner.com). For our Dominica slide shows, click the "Our Travels" link on the page's left-side menu, and on the Travel page's menu, click "Dominica". You can also access Ruth's needlework art, Mathilda's art and much more through our Web site.

Excuse me, I'm going to use the "Bushinal" (above, right) now...