

Happy Holidays! This year I produced our annual letter on our antique typing machine. (A “typewriter” is its operator.) It’s supported by Microsoft Word 1890. Here are more: www.slate.com/slideshow/arts/vintage-typewriters/#all



We begin our 2011 holiday letter where we left off in 2010, with our Christmas Eve delivery of Ruth’s Christmas cookies to friends and neighbors. On our way we also took photos of Verdan with the quilt Ruth made for her and Arvin’s Dec 19, 2010 wedding.



You can see all Ruth’s needlework art in a slide show at www.dan-ruth-tanner.com/Needlework_Art/ Here’re the cookie delivery photos with descriptions below each row from left to right for each row:



With Verdan and our delivery elves Sheikana and Tyreese, with 92-year-old Simeon our shopkeeper neighbor, and with Etta who lives near the water spring and always makes and gives us chocolate.

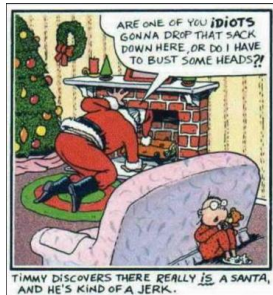


With Florence a neighbor up our road, with Josephine also an up the road neighbor and our “egg lady”, and with Dawn who with her mother and grandmother will be building their house nearby.



Above left is Simeon with a daughter, granddaughter, and great-granddaughter & two grandsons-in-

law. Center, Ruth presents cookies to neighbors Rita (Herry's mother) & her daughter Francisca (Herry's sister). And our neighbor, Seron the welder, wanted to show off his gold chain and joint.



We exchange gifts so kids don't believe a mythical fat man brings them for them to receive in an orgy of greed on Christmas morning. Sheikana, Tyresse and Chelsi hold their favorites, an art set, a racing car, & a trinket box. Below, left to right Herry & Hildreth hold their hammer drill & vase with artificial flowers. They gave us a cute little coffee service set. Nathalie holds her quilt picture. The last photo is Ruth with "Joint" Durban, our neighbor who's returning to Dominica from Totonto.



On December 27 a cruise ship with holiday lights passed by about a dozen miles away. It was a pretty sight from our veranda. Meanwhile, the entire Northeast and Atlantic Seaboard of the United States was experiencing a blizzard. Those poor souls! It was about 80°F here with a pleasant breeze. The Internet reported that it was 18°F even as far south as Asheville NC, where Mathilda and Pete are, and our friend Rita, who with husband Roger from the New Jersey coast wrote that they were experiencing 3-4ft drifting snow, 20°F temperature and 30PMH winds.



There was a surfing contest in Calibishie at Napier's White Sand Beach on December 28-29 involving clubs from Dominica's neighboring Guadeloupe & Martinique. There were about 25 surfers in the water and 50 more watching. And that night was the holiday party of the Calibishie Baptist Church.



On New Year's Day 2011 we finally exchanged Christmas gifts with our friends Dawn, her grandmother Louise, and her mother Beatrice. Ruth gave them (what else?) quilts – in the form of placemats. They gave us a box of chocolates and a bottle-holder from St. Lucia. Later that week we got a visit from our friend Biliana and her son (12) and daughter (7). We met her in Dominica back in 2004. She's a Bulgarian-born classical violinist whose 2nd home was in Cambridge MA, near our then home in Westboro MA. We'd see her perform. She now lives in Berlin, Germany.

And on January 6 we went to a party at our friend Elizabeth's house.

On January 11 we met old friends from Wales, Tom & Jane, as they visited for the day on the cruise ship Azura. We took them to the Emerald Pool, Trafalgar Falls, and Papilotte Wilderness Retreat. It was just wonderful seeing them. We had spent a week with them at their B&B in Angelsey in June 2010. Here they are with Ruth under a rainbow over the Caribbean.

And later that same day, after we saw them back to their ship, we drove home and then to Melville Hall Airport to meet our friends Roger & Rita who came in from the US for a 2-week visit with us. We took them to



dinner at Randy's that night. Here are Roger & Rita the next day, January 12, at Red Rocks. We also explored Napier's Black Sand Beach. Roger was best man at our wedding, and has been my friend since 1961. On the 13th we went to Fort Shirley and for dinner at the Blue Bay Restaurant. On the 14th we went to Kalinago Territory and to the Emerald Pool, where we were also lucky enough to see an agouti and several parrots. We finished that evening by purchasing two 3½ lb. lobsters at the fishery in Marigot on our way home and having a real dinner feast. On the 15th Roger tried his hand at fly fishing in the river at Silks in Hatton Garden while Ruth and Rita rested at Woodford Hill Beach.



On Sunday the 16th we had a jazz in the jungle brunch at River Rush with a swim there afterward, then we visited Sisserou Falls and had drinks and salsa at the Pagua Bay Restaurant. On the 17th we took a drive around the extinct volcano along the Northern Link Road and stopping by the cold soufriere there. On Tuesday the 18th, halfway through their visit, we went to Coulibistrie for a whale watch. We were very close to a cow sperm whale and her calf for a while. We finished the day with a scrumptious dinner at Heaven's Best Restaurant in Savanne Paille. On Wednesday the 19th we took them to Screw's Spa for the hot mineral springs in Wotten Waven, then to Trafalgar Falls, and finally to a great tour of the gardens in Papilotte Wilderness. Then, at home, we made a fabulous mahi-mahi in creole coconut sauce.

On Thursday, the 20th we went to Batibou Beach and then to Hampstead Beach, where we managed to avoid getting stuck in the mud like two vehicles we saw. Then we had dinner at the Escape at Red Rock haven. Dinner was great, and ended with the funniest silly thing we've ever seen – a “finger dancing” exhibition.

Friday the 21st saw us relaxing in Prince Rupert Bay at Purple Turtle Beach. On Saturday the 22nd we took them to Chaudiere, our rain forest plunge pool, and to Batibou Beach, and we finished the day with a dinner under the stars at the Calabash restaurant. We went to Syndicate & Morne Diabolo Park on Sunday the 23rd. We had a late start, so the visitor center was closed, but we took a walk around the nature trail amidst the regal trees and we saw some parrots too. We couldn't get to Syndicate Falls because it was too late to find a guide.

Monday the 24th, our friends' last full day, here had bummer weather. It rained off and on all day long. (Wouldn't you know it, the weather the next day when they departed in the morning was nice.) We managed to get in a walk around Calibishie & John Baptist Ridges, have a nice dinner of fish and beef the Hildreth had cooked at the Coral Reef, and reminisce on our veranda. There's a 68-pix slide show of the foregoing at www.dan-ruth-tanner.com/Dominica_2011.

There were beautiful views of a crescent moon and Venus pre-dawn on January 29 & 30.

Ruth gave me a **surprise 70th birthday birthday party** on Feb. 8. Friends and neighbors the Wilson



and Durban families came over as well as Dawn and her grandmother Louise. Ruth gave me a Calibishie t-shirt and a book, “*The Dominica Story: A History of the Island*” by Lennox Honychurch. Dawn & Louise gave me a bottle of absinthe. When I drink some I can talk like a pirate.

We celebrated Valentine's Day with a getaway to Roseau. We also dropped in to visit our friends Christophe & Luidmila and see their son Ocean born last December 6. Ruth made a quilt for Ocean.



Isn't he just adorable? We relaxed at Tia's Spa in Wotten Waven and then stayed overnight at the Ft. Young Hotel (www.fortyounghotel.com), and enjoyed the special holiday diner. And we had Coco spayed.



On the week of February 20 we finally got our driveway fully paved. That makes driving in and out more pleasant.

On the 26th I clipped our dogs & Fluffy let himself be clipped for the first time. Here's Ruth with the menagerie.

On the 27th, my sister Naomi's 55th birthday, I made a 9-pix slide show of some of our garden www.dan-ruth-tanner.com/Spring Flowers 2011.

On March 3, our 38th anniversary, Ruth and I overnighted at the beautiful Papillote Wilderness Retreat (www.papillote.dm & our slide show at www.dan-ruth-tanner.com/Papillote). We plan to return. The gardens & hot springs there are great. And the rooms have old-fashioned charm. Plus, the meals are excellent.



On March 6, Herry & Hildreth's eldest daughter Sherri came to visit her parents and brother & sisters, bringing her son Dante, the Wilsons' first grandchild, born last August 5. Ruth is his godmother. We fetched them at the airport in the morning, and the visit was a surprise for the Wilson children, his aunts and uncles. In the photo on the left Dante is preoccupied watching Ranger, Lyla, Fluffy and Coco. On the right, two days later at a party for his Uncle Tyresse's 8th birthday, he was used to the dogs and was touching them.



On Carnival night, March 7, we ate dinner at Calibishie's Coral Reef Restaurant. We met an American couple, who said they were from Vermont. It was Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin, who's separated from his wife, dining with his younger girlfriend. He came under fire for leaving VT during a snowstorm without saying where he'd be. It turns out that he was taking a secret, anonymous vacation.



The air was so clear and the visibility so good on March 14 that for the first time we could see the main island of Guadeloupe from our veranda.

On March 19 we saw a dead humpback whale visited by a grieving one. The grieving whale jumped near the dead one's floating body in the channel between us and Marie Gallant, making a huge splash. The carcass drifted eastward with the Gulf Stream current. With our telescope, we could make out the barnacles on its pleated lower jaw. By Monday the carcass had washed up on Batibou Beach, dead for over a week. We know that because local fishermen had taken advantage of the opportunity to fish near it. There was a neatly spaced series of shark bites taken from the body, surely after death. The carcass stunk to high heaven, but the government buried it.

We made a trip to 200-ft high Middleham Falls on March 20. Hildreth & Chelsi came along. The walk in and back took just under 3 hours. There's a slide show at <http://www.dan-ruth-tanner.com/Middleham%20Falls/>. Dominica has made a beautiful trailhead facility, a rain shelter with picnic tables, water, and toilets, and the trail is wonderfully well marked and maintained.



On March 23 we received sad news. Our friend of 42 years Jean Bartik had died. Jean was the last surviving WWII ENIAC programmer. She was a great friend and great person and a great of the "Greatest Generation". Read about her here: http://www.dan-ruth-tanner.com/jean_bartik.html

A US phone! We got a Magic Jack for our computer. We now enjoy a US phone number (508-745-5760) and can speak with friends & businesses conveniently practically for free. Now if we could only get decent TV. The “Caribbean package” TV here is dreadful. And the cable has frequent problems. (In September Netflix rolled streaming movie service out to the Caribbean. We signed up only to learn that the content is a small subset of the library and available only dubbed into Spanish!)

On April 2 we attended the grand opening of the EatWell Restaurant in Calibishie. We had large, healthy-eating, tasty meals there and also appeared in the MARPIN TV coverage of the event. On Sunday, April 3, a satire on my cousin “Harry Connick, Jr. Dies in Piano Fire” appeared in *The Onion*. Considering how vigorously he can play and his total dedication, it’s on the mark. On April 6 we attended the inaugural meeting of the newly elected Calibishie Village Council.

On Easter Monday holiday here, we went to Batibou Beach with Hildreth and the children. It was a beautiful day and the water was warm, with the sea gentle. To avoid a crowd we went at 10:00 AM and that was a mistake – which I’d anticipated – because I became somewhat sunburned. Still, a good time was had by all. **Egg-dying→**



It rained without letup from late afternoon Monday April 25 (putting an early end to the Easter Monday picnic at Battibou Beach) to the morning of Sunday May 8. The nation’s only central trans-insular road became blocked by a landslide in the village of Belles, just west of the Central Forest Reserve. At first, the Calibishie pipe water system didn’t fail due to blocked intakes up in the mountains. A day later it failed, after it rained, often heavily, but always steadily, for 7 of the last 8 days. The water was only off for a few hours, but was cloudy and unfilterable when it came back on.)

Later on Tuesday a landslide took out the village’s water pumps. We started the fun & games of conserving. We have a 400 gallon rainwater storage tank, but never know when it will refill or have any idea when the pipe water pumps will be repaired. We also collected drainpipe water a bucketful at a time, using it to refill the toilet tank, wash floors, & fill the dishwashing. We also have 12 gallon jugs of spring water for drinking, cooking, making icecubes & toothbrushing. (Filtering rainwater doesn’t remove bacteria.) And when it rains the path to the spring is uncomfortably steep and slippery. In a pinch, we can boil rainwater for potability, or get pipe water elsewhere and filter it. It took until Friday until a backhoe could be sent up the road to deal with the landslide. The word on Friday was that the repairs would take until Tuesday or Wednesday of the next week. The backhoe came back down the hill the same afternoon, meaning that the landslide wasn’t so large. There was damage to the pumps. Most Dominicans were raised in homes without running water, so they know how to deal with the situation. With constant rain we have a full tank and bucket collection. We did laundry when it rained so that the tank filled as we used water. Amazingly, our solar hot water lasted (albeit with conservation and only not-cold at the end) all the way through showers (once with Ruth washing her hair, the 2nd time she used the electric showerhead heater in our ground floor apartment).

This is what days of 100% humidity do: Mayflies stuck to condensation on our refrigerator’s freezer door. Finally, at 5AM on Sunday, May 7 (Mother’s Day, the 13th day of rain) the Dominican Weather Service published this: *“Melville Hall Airport recorded 104.1mm (4.1 inches) of rainfall in a 6 hour period. For at least another 24 hours periods of light to moderate rain with some occasional moderate to heavy showers are expected. Residents in areas prone to landslide or near rivers should remain alert and take necessary precautions. Motorists and other users of the roads should exercise caution and look out for falling rocks as roads may be waterlogged and rocks may become loose due to saturated soils.”*



The pipe water finally came back on Tuesday a week plus a few hour later, then went off again. It was on (reduced pressure) for about 18 hours. It came on again after several hours, with low pressure.

The new Whitchurch supermarket in Picard near Ross University is so great for us. The drive is only a half hour, not an hour and a half. Parking is ample and free. (Astaphan's in Roseau has a parking lot, but it's only free for one hour with shopping validation.) Now we don't have to visit the crowded little Whitchurch in Roseau, which saves us time and the usually impossible task of finding a parking spot near that store. The aisles are spacious, the store is well-lit and air-conditioned. There are two ATM machines at the store. Because of the demographic of affluent Ross medical students of American origin with diverse backgrounds* the store is stocked with the types of items that were formerly difficult or impossible to find – and then only possibly in Roseau. And Whitchurch should be causing the James Store in the area, formerly a monopoly, competition that may cause it to reduce its often exorbitant prices. There's a persistent rumor that the owners of the KFC franchise (in Roseau and Picard) which also owns a Save-a-Lot supermarkets franchise, may also build in Picard – it's now where we go first in Roseau.

* Ross has many Asian, Indian, & Hispanic American students, so many ethnic goods available. The students purchase local fruits and vegetables & fish they recognize, shrink-wrapped at high prices. They shun what they don't recognize or those requiring extensive preparation. We get our vegetables and fruits for free or nearly so (given to us, foraged, or self-grown) and our fish at the local bay fisheries, much cheaper than in stores.



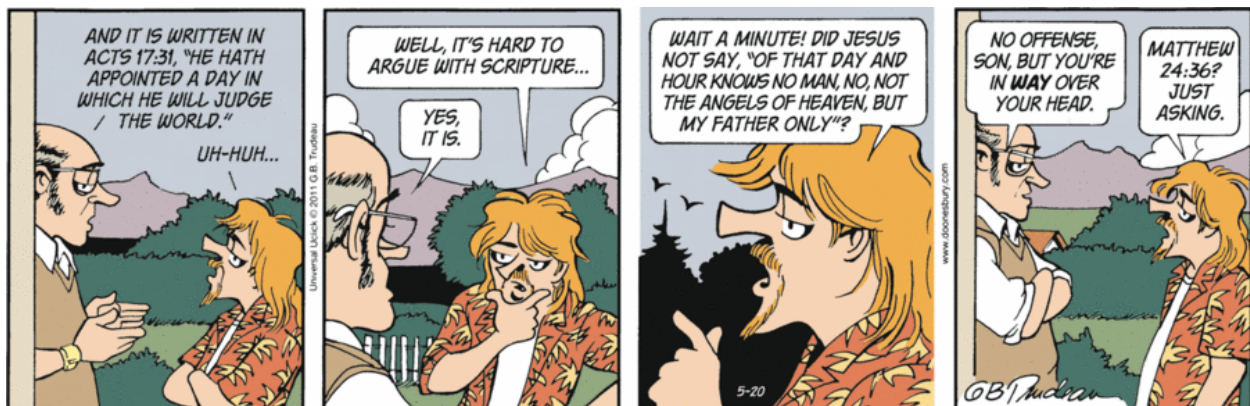
On May 13 we harvested the first pineapple (right) to ripen this year from among a dozen growing in our yard. It's far from the largest of them. It had seven "babies" growing around that Ruth planted for later yield. Mmmm... Chinese food. Desserts. Pineapple pancakes!



And here's Ruth with EC\$10 (US\$3.72) worth passion fruit (left). Wonderful juice & a "base" for smoothies with pineapple, papaya (paw-paw) &/or banana.

May 22 came and went. We survived the "rapture". What a load of crap! Then it was changed to Oct. 21. Good: After our vacation. Bad: Before the vacation credit card bill due date. "Doonesbury" author GB Trudeau had it right (below). Oct. 21 also came and went without incident. This bozo had also predicted "rapture" in 1994. Why do news reports call him a "prophet"? A prophet makes predictions that come true. This fraud, a former engineer, keeps blaming "math" errors calculating from the date of Noah's mythical flood. He was off the air on Oct. 21

(<http://news.yahoo.com/radio-prophet-gone-airwaves-judgment-day-eve-011922225.html>). Bozo!



"But of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Bible, American King James Version. I'm not a believer, but were I I'd counsel people to try to be righteous

all the time because the end will come without warning and God knows who's been righteous and who hasn't.



Ruth squints in the vertical sunlight as she holds up a sweet fragrant lily in our east garden. This is the end of May. The sun goes north of vertical on May 5 and remains there until around her birthday, August 21. Behind the fence a huge pineapple is nearing ripeness. Yum!

Here's a closeup photo of the leaf on one of our houseplants "Devil's Backbone" or "Mother of Thousands" that our friend botanist Steven Hill identified for us. It's listed as poisonous, but he says it's not in his experience, and from Madagascar, so how we got one here is a mystery to us. See www.blankees.com/house/plants/backbone.htm, www.succulents.us/kalanchoes.html, and www.vizi-husevonoveny.hu/Nagykepek-egyeb/Bryophyllum_zold.jpg. It can grow very large and be invasive in our climate. Speaking of climate, or at least of weather, the last 26 days were unusual. First we had twelve days of rain; then we had fourteen hot days without rain.



I've tried to advertise the apartment we have to rent in Dominica on eBay. There are 30 countries (including the Bahamas & Trinidad/Tobago in the eBay list even though they're, strictly speaking) not in the Caribbean and the non-island countries of Central & South America aren't listed. eBay lists 7 Caribbean island countries. I got no inquiries about our apartment because Dominica isn't listed. Still, eBay charged me \$1 for their stupid listing. I've called twice and e-mailed them 3 times. They don't reply (except generically, with a no-reply message) and won't learn geography. We tried FlipKey/TripAdvisor next on a 60-day free offer and got no useful inquiries from the few generated.

Christmas for Herry & Hildreth came on June 5 because of a change in plans. We were going to give them a dining room set that Herry and I would make from plywood using plans I got on-line. We would have had to wait until our neighbor "Joint" came with a container of goods in November. I found that 3/4-inch plywood with both sides of finish-grade hardwood would have had to have been special-ordered and be very expensive – and then shipped to Joint. Then we'd have had to make it skillfully without experience and also buy dowel pins, polyurethane, and some tools. But we lucked into a dining room set left behind here in a house in our village whose owner had died. The table had fallen to pieces but would cost far less and be prettier if we could repair it. And it would even be slightly larger. Repairing it took us only a few days using materials on-hand. It has 2 arm chairs and 4 plain chairs. Nice, eh?



I made a wind chime from a graduated series of conch shells and a piece of limestone coral. It looks all right, but takes a bit of breeze to move it much because of its weight. So I hung some metal on each side of it as clappers. Now it rings often & pleasantly.



Here's the biggest pineapple we harvested in our yard garden, from the first pineapple plant. It weighed 8.9 pounds and had a circumference of 23 inches and was 9 inches tall. After harvesting it we still have the original plant and 5 "babies" from around the fruit to plant. They're genetically identical, so we should get more big pineapples. The leaves on the top are one baby, and there were four others around the bottom stem.

Ranger suddenly grew an egg-sized lump low down on his right hind leg early in June. It wasn't there on an evening when I combed him but was the next night. We feared cancer, but it seems to be benign. We took a photo of it, but haven't put it in this letter because it was gruesome. A local veterinarian's assistant of Dr. Thomas tried to aspirate and lance it, but it was solid & bled a lot. And Dr. Thomas was leaving Dominica for several days. We had him seen by another veterinarian, a

young woman trained in Trinidad. She also diagnosed Ranger with “tick fever”, which reduced his platelet count and made bleeding increase. That was cured with antibiotics. There are different types of ticks here in two distinct seasons, and the preventives from the US aren’t very effective against them. There are small brown ticks abundant from late April through May and in June there are nearly microscopic whitish ones. Once Ranger’s platelet count returned to normal the lump was surgically removed by the woman vet and her fiancée, also a Trinidad veterinarian graduated a year ahead of her, at their surgery in Roseau, keeping him for two nights and returning him. Often, surgery on animals is done here in fields and homes. We thought was good to have Ranger’s surgery done in Roseau, because the doctors had a cauterizing machine on-hand and they said the surgery was complicated by presence of a large blood vessel and a nerve & took five hours! After a few days the stitches broke, because the woman vet & her fiancée used dissolving sutures. Ranger’s surgery wound was awful and then the woman vet made three appointments to see Ranger, all of which she broke – and then she stopped communicating altogether. She called on a 4th day with conflicting “excuses” and a tissue of lies. Fortunately, Dr. Thomas’ assistant saved the day, coming to our house and stitching Ranger’s leg wound closed. Twice! We tried to use my inflatable airline neck cushion as a collar to prevent him from licking his stitches, but he defeated that. We made a plastic cone, rather confining, attached to his collar. That worked. Our neighbor Harvey (who was coming from the US to his vacation home) brought us a proper cone collar. The woman vet gave us the biopsy results (after a diatribe) six weeks later, and only then because of the urging of Dr. Thomas.



Chelsi graduated with merit from Northeastern Comprehensive School on Thursday, June 30, 2011. Above (l-r), she receives her diploma, with her mom & dad, with us, shows the shell & charms bracelet Ruth made for her and our gift card, poses with her mom & dad, younger sister & brother and (pink blouse) cousin Cadian Mayers, also a merit graduate on the same day.

On July 10 our friends Dawn & Louise took us into Portsmouth to see the Sixth Form Sisserou Singers present “Choral Treasures” <http://dominicanewsonline.com/news/all-news/entertainment/sixth-form-sisserou-singers-choral-treasures-a-hit/>. Normally the concert is only given in Roseau, a 1½-hour drive away, but Portsmouth is only a half-hour away. The concert was in two parts, a classical/sacred/secular section and after intermission an 11-song folk story. The evening was most enjoyable.



We vacationed mid-July to mid- August in Western North Carolina www.dan-ruth-tanner.com/Travel/WNC/WNC.html where we took in upper & lower Catawba Falls (video at www.dan-ruth-tanner.com/Catawba_Falls/MVI_4786.MVI), Chimney Rock (pictured here) with Hickory Nut Falls, Grandfather Mountain, Graveyard Fields with upper & lower Yellowstone Falls, Lake Lure, Montreat, the NC Arboretum, and the UNC & Western NC Nature Centers. On our visit to Western NC we stayed at the home of our daughter & her fiancé Pete and saw one of Dan’s aunts. We also visited Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley www.dan-ruth-tanner.com/Shenandoah_Valley/ where we descended into the amazing Endless Caverns, explored the scenery of Skyline Drive and enjoyed a B&B suite once used by Franklin Delano Roosevelt. On the drive from NC to VA we stopped for a dinner visit with Dan’s cousin Suzanna & her family.

And I also got in some performances www.dan-ruth-tanner.com/Open_Mics_2011/ at the White Horse (<http://www.whitehorseblackmountain.com/>) in Black Mountain NC with James Kamp (<http://www.myspace.com/jameskampmusic>) and at the Green Rock Tavern in the Port Richmond section of Philadelphia PA, the latter with old, dear friend Kenn Kweder (http://www.dan-ruth-tanner.com/Tanner_Family/Miscellaneous/kk.html) and new friend the beautiful & talented Suzie Rosetti (who is also a dog trainer – and doesn't have a music page, but should (<http://www.soozypooch.com/default.asp>)).

We saw my sister Naomi & visited with our best friends Roger & Rita for a week, going to the beach, out for dinner, barbecuing, and enjoying a female-version "Odd Couple" starring former "Laugh-In" comedienne Jo-Anne Worle that they treated us to and a live Paul Anka show at the Ocean Grove Auditorium. Ruth stayed in the USA ten days longer than I going to MA to see old friends from work, staying at her friend Sandy's house and with Sandy, going to Martha's Vineyard, and shopping. She also had her hair cut by her old hairdresser, a school friend of our daughter's.

On September 14 our 5th year of annual residency permission came through. Now we can apply for permanent residency. (We'll remain US citizens, only residing here.)

Triple whammy day! On September 17 we set out with Dawn to go river tubing on the Concord River. But work activity nearby had turned the river into a muddy stream. So we decided to instead check out the new Secret Bay Resort and take a swim at Secret Beach. On our way there a tire blew out. Then we learned that the resort is only a housekeeping lodging with no beach bar or access to the beach. For US\$588/night! And we couldn't go to the beach because the weather turned bad.

Southern and western sections of Dominica were pounded on September 28 rain by the remnants of Tropical Storm Ophelia, some 300 miles to the north at the time. We hardly noticed the storm here in the northeast other than that the rain and cloud movements were unusual, from the west instead of the dominant easterly trade wind direction. There are lots of photos at <http://dominicanewsonline.com/news/all-news/general/photos-heavy-rainfall-causes-flooding-across-dominica/>. Fortunately, no lives were lost. We were cut off on road access, lost power for a while, and lost cable TV for a day, that's all.



On October 8 Ruth and I and our friend Dawn got to go tubing on the Pagua River. Lots of fun! The roads here are tough on cars, especially tires and brakes. I've had to replace both a bit over two years on, despite driving very little. I've also added an air-horn so that when I round a blind hairpin curve I can sound like a truck to anyone coming the other way. Self-defense!

We paid our "house rate" (property tax) in October. House rates simply hadn't been collected here since 2005 when we first built on our land. The rate is EC\$5 (US\$1.85) per year for any house regardless of size. Land here isn't taxed. We paid seven years of house rates, EC\$35 (US\$12.96); there is no interest or penalty here for paying late. The house rate is paid to the village and the collected funds are then matched by the national government and used within the village. In the US, our annual property tax was approaching US\$7,000.

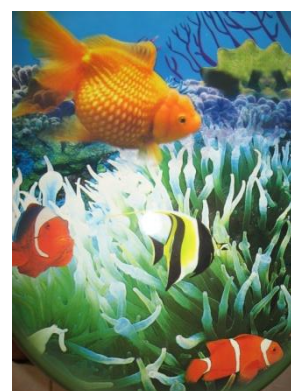
Hands across the Sea (<http://www.handsacrossthe sea.net/>) sent a 528-box, 19,000-pound, 23-pallet shipment that includes 51,336 new and near-new books and 88 boxes of teaching resources and school supplies. It arrived in early November. We contributed. Two boxes of books & supplies are for Calibishie, which is also getting a new school building with library to house the volumes. Meanwhile, 50 gallons of donated paint will brighten the present school building. Please help children's education in Dominica and other poor, small former colonies now independent Caribbean nations. Surf to <http://www.dominica-weekly.com/hands-across-the-sea>.

Our best friends Roger & Rita became grandparents again for the third time on October 15, but it was the first child, a boy, Joseph, of their daughter Theresa. Ruth made little Joey the Beatrix Potter theme quilt below:



We had very heavy rains on October 24 and during the night the load on our roof rain gutter on the north side became too much and part of it fell down, the first storm damage to the house coming a bit over two years and two months after its completion. Repair was complicated, involving building a scaffold. The rain also caused failure of the village “pipe water” system the next day.

A funny, apocryphal story about the way things happen here: Ruth’s kitchen timer died. So, she used the microwave as a timer, which the instruction book said to do by running it with the power set to zero. But then we couldn’t get the power to come on again. We took it to Courts, the appliance dealer, for repair, after finding that the microwave manufacturer doesn’t even have a web site. Courts in Picard sent it to Roseau, which told us that it needed a new high voltage transformer, which they did not have. I called Sam’s Stores where we’d bought the microwave (a 220V unit) on-line in the US before moving here. They said that it would be extremely unlikely that they’d have the part. We asked Courts to send it back, and then they said that they’d fixed it. Sure enough they had, but how? There was no cost other than the standard estimating charge of EC\$80 (US\$29.85). We went to Picard and got it. It’s worked fine since. We were so glad that we did not have to buy a new microwave for EC\$879 (US\$328) that we “celebrated” by picking up a new toilet seat to replace an old scratched one. Only in China would they make a toilet seat design like this one. Notice the three salt-water fish in the background. Why is a huge out-of-proportion fresh-water goldfish superimposed in the foreground? Well, at least the color & theme match our bathroom curtains.



On Thanksgiving Day Fluffy was hit by a car and killed. There was nothing we could have done to prevent it. Fluffy could always enter & leave our house and yard by squeezing through the gate bars. He’d run free for years. Ruth and I seemed to be more saddened than Fluffy’s owners, one of whom simply flung Fluffy’s body into the bushes. At least his time with us was happy.

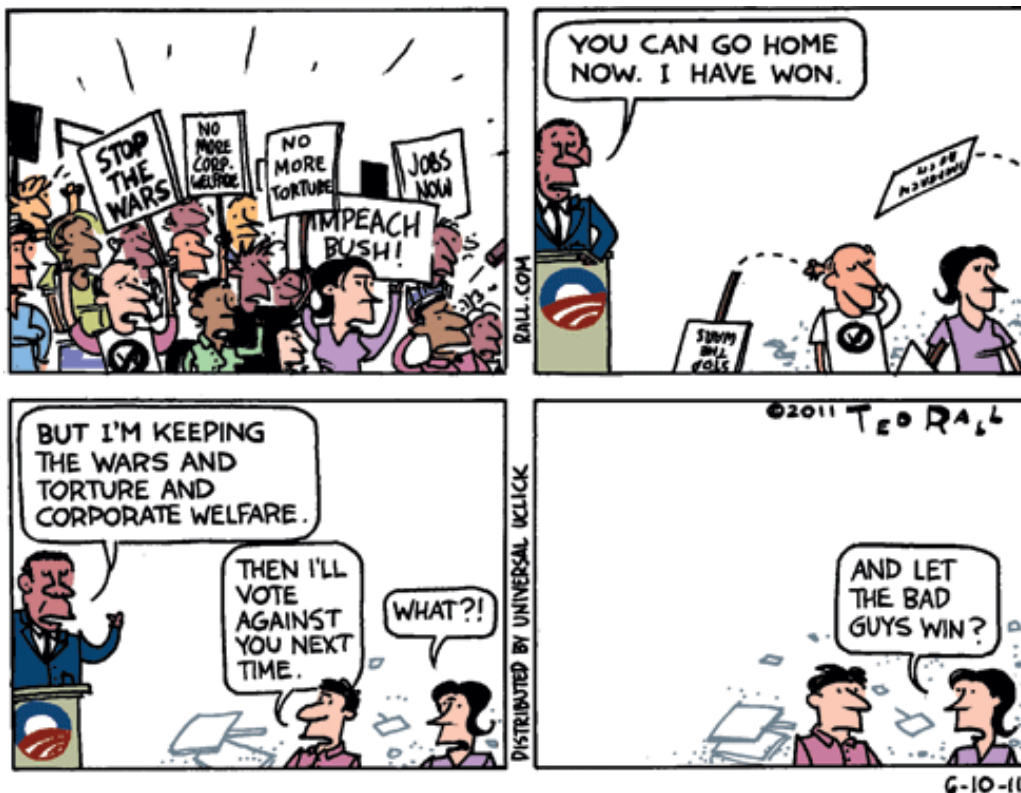
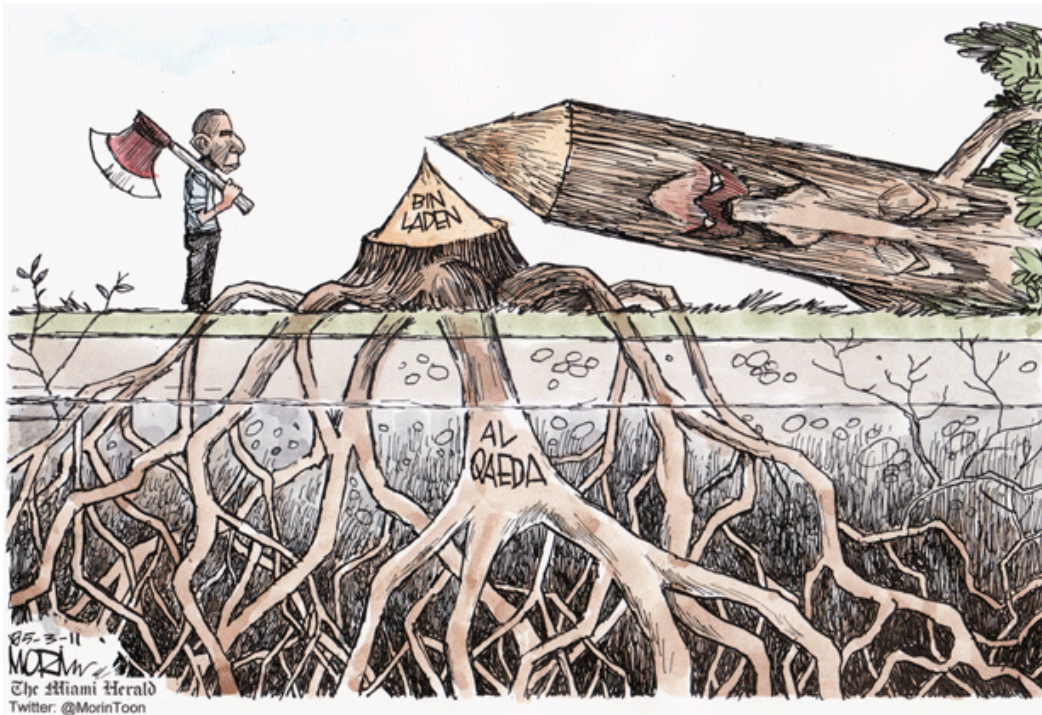


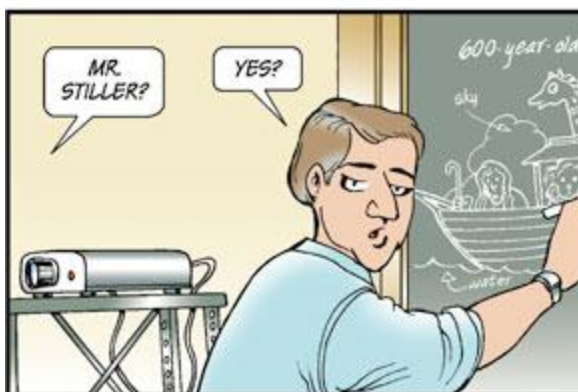
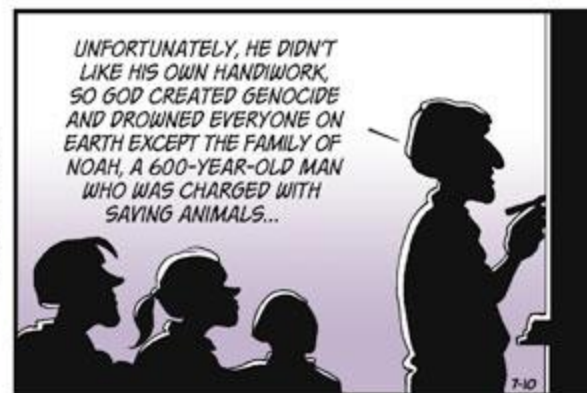
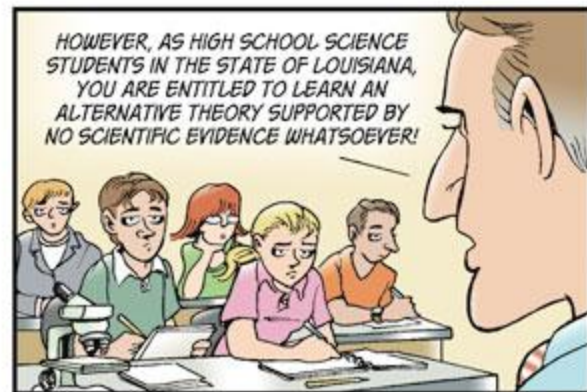
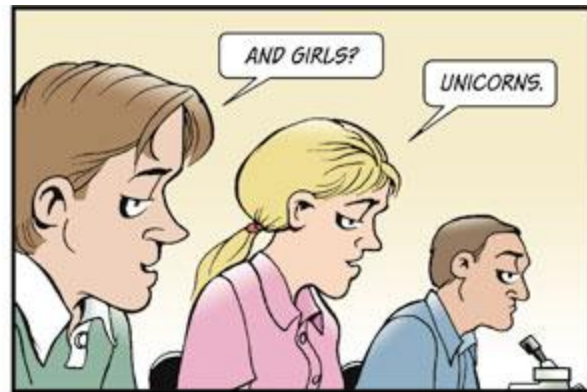
Our friend Hildreth injured her finger at work, getting it smashed at the nail bed in the rack that holds propane tanks for sale. She’s now on medical disability leave from her kitchen job. Here in Dominica, her employer pays as much as he can of her salary and the government makes up the rest, to 100%. And there is no income tax. And medical care is free. Her job is preserved. She does not lose the right to sue for employer negligence. Compare that to the USA: A person disabled on the job receives 67% pay, not subject to tax. (It does not matter if the wage is so low that the person can’t live on 67% of it and isn’t subject to income tax, or even withholding anyhow.) Medical care is not free. The disabled employee loses all employer contributions to benefits (health insurance, retirement). When the employee’s disability ends, he may find that he’s been replaced on the job. If he accepts disability benefit pay he waives any right to sue his employer for negligence that may have caused the disablement. Which country is civilized, at

least with respect to such matters? But in any event, here's another reason we live here now (it's about Panama, but living here is even cheaper & Dominica is English-speaking):

<http://redtape.msnbc.msn.com/news/2011/11/21/8934895-cant-afford-to-retire-in-the-us-theres-always-panama>

Here are two editorial cartoons and a *Doonesbury* comic strip from 2011 that we found apropos:





That's it from us for this year. Have a great 2012 youself!—Dan & Ruth