



e celebrated Christmas 2014 in our new home in Black Mountain NC, enjoying a delicious (as always) turkey dinner with our daughter Mathilda, the first time in the last seven years we could have that pleasure. Mathilda made and gave Ruth a lovely fused glass plate and me a pair of “sacred spiral” nesting bowls that match the cup she made for me the year before.



Ruth presented Mathilda with an apron she made, and Mathilda made this mug for a physician friend of ours who kindly did a great deal to help us through health issues while we were in Dominica. Ruth gave me a couple of harmonicas I'd wanted and a set of pajamas that I will plan to wear for some lounging times before going to bed. Ruth was also given a nice hat and I gave her a sewing credenza that features a gas cylinder lift that lets the sewing machine store in the down position and rise to flush with the surface for quilting or to on the surface for normal sewing. On New Year's Day Ruth completed a bears making a snowman quilt.



Ruth has a nice quilting room in our new house with cubbies for material and a bookcase for her pattern books. It also holds her quilt cutting table, both the Phaff machine in its credenza, her old Singer in its table, ironing board, etc. Coco immediately discovered the cubbies and Lyla watched us assemble them.



But mostly, here in our new home in Black Mountain NC, Lyla likes us to walk her at Lake Tomahawk where we can view the “Seven Sisters”, foothill peaks just north of

the town. A walk around the lake is only a half mile, so we usually make a couple of circuits. We had our first houseguests



of 2015 for dinner on New Year’s Day; our friend (and Mathilda’s) Paula Cooper and her daughter Anna. Paula is the realtor who helped Ruth to find our house. Ruth made one her special Chinese dinners.



Of course we went out for New Year's Eve. A funny thing happened: We went to a place called The Grey Eagle and we noticed that virtually the entire crowd was people in their twenties. Half in jest I asked the ticket seller if Ruth and I would be given senior discounts. Of course he said not. In a fun mood, I said "Do we get a discount because I'm a Grey Eagle." He asked me what I meant, so I quickly explained that is what former employees of Data General are called, especially those who were at DG during development and introduction of the first virtual memory minicomputer system, code named Eagle. I told him about Tracy Kidder's book about Eagle, "Soul of a New Machine". He said he "liked my style" and let us both in for one admission.

Mathilda also went out New Year's Eve, dressed in circa 1920s "Flapper" style. Isn't she stunning?

Ruth and I were married on the 3rd of March, 1973 and we try to go out to dinner on the 3rd of every month. So far, we've managed over 90% we estimate. For January 3, 2015 we went to "Strada" an Italian restaurant in downtown Asheville and had an excellent seafood/pasta dinner with salad, desert, wine, tea and espresso.



On Monday, January 19 (Martin Luther King Jr. Day) we went for a hike in Montreat, the village adjacent on the south to our town, Black Mountain, taking Lyla. In its Lake Susan we saw this colorful, beautiful mandarin duck. It's an introduced bird.



February 8 was Lyla's 11th birthday and my 74th. Ruth took me and Mathilda and her boyfriend Carl to Louise's in Black Mountain for lunch, and gave me something I wanted, a Lee Oskar C-major diatonic harmonica, and something I needed, a new wallet. I have a complete set of Hohner Marine Band diatonic harmonics in the twelve major keys, but the "sea blast" in Dominica managed to ruin them over a six-year period even though they were kept in a case. It ruined the case too! The day was lovely, too. It was sunny and in the upper 60s. Meanwhile, in Westboro MA where we had lived for 31 years, the snow was piling up and the temperature was in the single digits. And, after dinner Ruth brought out a lovely blueberry pie, which she made with fresh berries, *a la mode* with maple walnut ice cream!

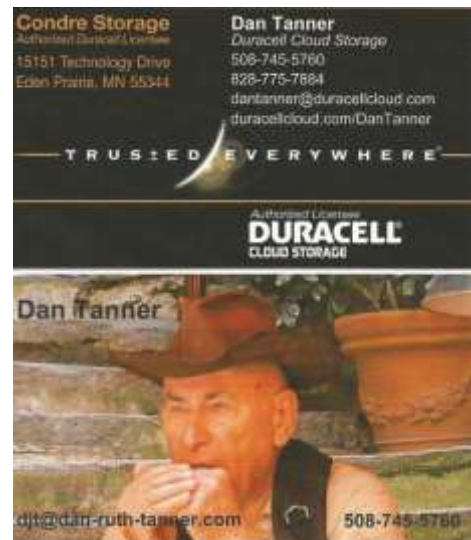


For Valentine's Day Ruth and I had dinner at *Que Sera*, a very nice restaurant here in Black Mountain.



She gave me a harmonica pin, which I now wear on the leather hat she gave me about 41 years ago and which has become part of my persona. I gave her a silly gift: personal cards, with cat quilt she made for Mathilda as background. I have my own too. Here're the cards (Ruth took the photo of me playing harmonica in Vernazza, Cinque Terre, Italy on our 2013 vacation.

On March 3rd we celebrated our 42nd wedding anniversary with a



dinner at le Buchon, a French restaurant in Asheville. I gave her a zip line tour (on May 3) in the Green River Gorge that because she hurt her shoulder we never took (it was refunded and we went to a show instead – see our May 30 activity later in this letter). Ruth gave me a box of chocolate truffles from Asheville's "Chocolate Fetish. While she had her hair done for the evening I went on a morning hike here in Black Mountain. Norfolk Southern is the RR. Before the merger, the original line was the Southern RR.



Friday, March 6 was a red letter day. We finally sold our property in Dominica. We'd sold our car there 30 days earlier.

Ah, April. Ah, Spring! But early in the month the nighttime temperature can still dip into the frost region. However, our camellia bush starts to bloom, tadpoles hatch, and salamanders appear.



April 6 was Mathilda's birthday. We took her to Louise's here in Black Mountain for brunch and she and Ruth also went out and had pedicures. We gave her a potted plant and Ruth made her favorite, Rice Crispies with marshmallows. And we gave her a pair of gargoyles, which we knew she wanted and which she just loved. I'd spotted them in November while we were antique shopping for our own furniture.



Ruth has started taking Mathilda's ceramics class at the Black Mountain Center for the Arts. These are her first objects.

We had a great day on May 2. We went to the season opening of the Black Mountain Farmer's Market, where while Ruth picked up fresh vegetables and generally looked around, I played with a bluegrass band. Then that late afternoon we went to a two-night baseball game, a treat of my cousin Steve, where we saw the home team Asheville Tourists get pounded 12-3 by a team from Lexington KY. But it was a beautiful afternoon and evening at the ballpark.



On May 3, Ruth and I took a long Sunday drive up and down the Blue Ridge Parkway to the town of Little Switzerland. Along our way we stopped at various overlooks and also took a 1.25-mile each way hike to Crabtree Falls. And we took many pictures of woodland flowers and went to Emerald Village, a gem mine where we screened for gems. A slideshow of our entire trip is at [http://dantanner.jalbum.net/Trip to Little Switzerland/](http://dantanner.jalbum.net/Trip_to_Little_Switzerland/) and here are a few photos:



And here are some photos of gemstones we screened at Emerald Village (they're in the slideshow too).



Mid-May is peak mountain laurel season. We also have a dogwood hanging on blooming. And we also went to a Dr. John Concert.



On May 26 we hiked to Catawaba Falls, just east of us, on the east side of the eastern continental divide.



On May 30 Ruth and I went to the NC State Theatre at Flat Rock to see "Always", a play about a pen-pal friendship enjoyed by Patsy Cline. The show included 27 of her songs.

In early June Ruth began making root beer. We found a little (perhaps a foot long) ring-neck snake (they grow to about 15") took advantage of the sun-heated bottle warmth. Butterflies began to appear. And Ruth made a lovely garden plaque. One night a bear got to three of the plastic root beer bottles.



Ruth and Mathilda gave me a great Father's Day. We had brunch and went hiking.



A dragonfly visited on Labor Day and Ruth made holiday scarves for Coco & Lyla. We work done on our house, encapsulating the basement/crawl space & changing from a propane heating system with clunky A/C to a modern heat pump HVAC system. The propane tank you behind Ruth's right is now gone.



Ruth and Mathilda visited Martha's Vineyard in September. Here's a link to a slide show of their visit:
<http://dantanner.jalbum.net/Martha's%20Vineyard%202015/>

Here's a photo of me & some friends playing "Me & Bobby McGee" & links doing "Ballad of the Old Cowpuncher" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QLb0f32kMs> and "House of the Rising Sun": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ME8dK--9QUl>



On a lovely autumn day, October 20, Ruth and I (with Lyla) took a drive to Linville Falls and hiked a bit.



A slide show of our jaunt is at <http://dantanner.jalbum.net/Linville%20Falls/#>

And two days later we went up to Mt. Mitchell, the highest point east of the Mississippi River.



And here is a slide show of that trip: <http://dantanner.jalbum.net/Mt.%20Mitchell/>

Halloween here was fun too. Black Mountain has “Howl-O-Ween”, a costume parade in which people and their dogs compete. Ruth was a witch who had changed Lyla into a frog. Lyla got better. And Mathilda was a lovely vampire.



On November 11 we signed a contract to remodel our house. You can see the before & after and the during at this slide show: <http://jalbum.net/en/browse/user/album/1672534>.

On November 21, I had the privilege of playing a bit with Virginia & the Slims while we were out celebrating Mathilda's boyfriend Carl's birthday. My friend James Kamp (w/sax) is out on the dance floor tooting Ruth & Mathilda.



Thanksgiving was a treat because although only Ruth and I were home (Mathilda went to Washington DC with her boyfriend Carl to his recently-widowed mother's home), we were invited to share Thanksgiving dinner with our friends Kate and Gus Vigo and her mother Ann Gray's home. How nice! And the following day we attended a memorial dinner for Dan's late Uncle Ben, hosted by Ben's children and grandchildren. Dan is the only person left in the family who knew Ben before Ben was married.

Because there's space left in this missive, here are two additional photos. On the left, Mathilda discovers her birthday gargoyle. On the right Ruth and I went for a hike at Lake James.



A look in the rear-view mirror

In retrospect, our move to North Carolina has been good. We are near our daughter Mathilda, and that makes us very, very happy. Our house is situated in a safe and blessedly quiet neighborhood. We're at the end of a dead-end road and, mercifully, haven't been bothered by proselytizers. But we miss the fun of having trick or treaters drop by on Halloween.

The area offers us many hiking and cultural opportunities for enjoyment. Ruth can quilt to her heart's content and is also taking pottery lessons from Mathilda. I can fool around with my music at open mics and jams and may even move up to having a group to perform with. We're improving our house and we believe we'll be truly pleased with the results.

No place is perfect, of course. We live in a "red" state where the majority consistently votes against its self-interest because one party mouths the "social conservative" lines that appeals to the masses. Taxes here are regressive, there are too many guns, too many bible-thumpers, and so on.

But it's paradise compared to Dominica, where we spent the prior six years. We were so fortunate to have emerged relatively unscathed from our big mistake in going there. So, now we're looking forward.

We wish you and yours happy holidays and a fantastic 2016!