

We began 2023 with a home upgrade: Our house, when we bought it in September 2022, still had its original 1971 single-pane energy-inefficient windows with decaying wooden parts. The prior owner had installed storm windows, doing little for energy efficiency but making window cleaning even more difficult. Our new windows admit more light, are energy-efficient, and tilt in for easy cleaning from indoors. We documented the project in this slide show: <https://dantanner.jalbum.net/New%20Windows%20for%20Our%20House/>

March 3 was our 50th wedding anniversary. This is a photo I took of Ruth on Grand Cayman in 1976. Slide show link: <https://dantanner.jalbum.net/50th%20Anniversary%20on%20Grand%20Cayman/>. We decided to celebrate it with a getaway to Grand Cayman Island. It did not begin well. We had planned to take our dearest friends Roger and Rita with us, but his bad health prevented that. Then we had a delay in the flight that was to connect with the one to Grand Cayman and had to spend a boring night in Charlotte NC to get the only daily flight to Grand Cayman the next day. American Airlines graciously provided barely acceptable hotel lodging and one \$12 meal voucher apiece. The hotel had no bar, perhaps because it was on Billy Graham Highway. But its restaurant offered only vegan “food” except for a BLT. It did not accept the AA voucher.



This is Ruth on a nearby beach during our holiday. The Tortuga Club of the 1976 photo above no longer exists. But we did find the same beach, identifying it by the wreck of a US Navy-built N3 type ship used in the CIA's 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, which fled and was scuttled on a Grand Cayman reef. I took the photo from the



veranda of a restaurant, Tukka, now on the spot. We also enjoyed a terrific lunch there. Its owners are Australian expats who own another Tukka on the west end, and Parrot sanctuary we enjoyed visiting.



We snorkeled with sea turtles. Our anniversary dinner at the spectacular Grand Old House with fantastic food and ambiance, including tarpon feeding in a frenzy was memorable. We visited botanic gardens/iguana sanctuary and a parrot preserve, plus enjoyed other very fine meals and a



bit of sightseeing.

To be clear, we had a fine time on Grand Cayman in 2023, but in our opinion the island's changes since 1976 have not been for the better. Our hearts sank when we walked the advertised 43 steps from our hotel along Seven Mile Beach to the "beach". When we were there in 1975 (our initial visit cut short on the 3rd day by the passing of my adoptive father), the beach was wide and inviting with very few structures bordering it. Today, the water has undermined the patio steps of the beach hotels, and there is no beach at all.

Human greed, as usual, caused the erosion disaster. Before it happened, beaches on the island were all public from the low water line to the inland vegetation. The hotel and condo owners "persuaded" the government to shrink the public area to simply between the low and high-water lines. Then they built pools and patios on the beach. Karma: The sea claimed them.

Greed underlies all the Cayman Islands problems. The cocaine kings and corporate offshore tax cheats flocked to Cayman as soon as its government stepped in following the US-Switzerland treaty permitting the latter's numbered bank accounts to be unmasked to the former's law enforcement and tax authorities. Huge corporation headquarters and drug kings became post office box addresses in Georgetown, CI. There will be more karma: US tax laws affecting corporate offshoring will change, and criminals can now launder and/or hide money from anywhere using cryptocurrency. (Which, I believe, is crypto's *raison d'être*.)

In the 70s, we navigated dirt roads on a rented moped. Now the island abounds with multi-lane highways, frequently clogged with traffic. The once crystal-clear water perfect for diving and snorkeling are clouded by sand. One can still enjoy the former conditions on Little Cayman Island (pop.~200) or Cayman Brac (pop.~70) – if one can afford to get there, find lodging, and stay there. Mangrove swamps so critical to the ecology have been cleared to make marinas. Wells are now prohibited on the dry island, and its entirety is served by a huge desalinization plant. The cost of living has skyrocketed. Billionaires are not troubled (Mark Cuban has a villa there), but the original locals have had to make changes. The preponderance of workers are from Africa, Jamaica, India, the Philippines, and so on. The minimum wage is an absurd CI\$6.00/hour (US\$7.20). There are, however, plenty of both schlock tourist shops and US fast food outlets as well as upscale restaurants and "if you have to ask the price you can't afford it" shops. At night, light pollution is a problem. God only knows where all the trash goes.

People there were really nice to us. On our first day we lugged snorkel gear on a public bus to Cemetery Beach. We didn't bring our credit cards and brought little cash. Finding it too windy and rough to snorkel, we sent on to Turtle Bay, to snorkel with sea turtles in the artificial pond there. Arriving, we found we did not have enough money with us for that. The lady ticket seller, hearing from us that we were celebrating our 50th, let us in for less than half price as a gift. Our hotel's restaurant band kindly let me sit in for three numbers, with me leading on one, harmonica and vocal on "Summertime." The restaurant also gave us a complimentary anniversary dessert. On our 50th Anniversary dinner, the Grand Old Manor restaurant graciously gave us the very best table, over the sea, from which we could watch the tarpon feed and we also had a spectacular view of Saturn and Venus, just after a conjunction, set over the sea. And when we went to East End, and hour's drive away, on a Sunday, we had to arrange a ride back because public busses would be scarce. We were put in touch with a local man who owned a taxi and tour bus. Learning we had been on Grand Cayman in 1975 and '76, he was fascinated, wanted to talk with us, making the normal US\$255 ride only US\$40 for us. The lady at the Parrot Sanctuary

drove us to and from the beach about ½ mile away. And, the sanctuary admission is free to those over 65. Nice people, all. We recommend <https://caymanfriendlytours.com/>. Mention us to Captain D.

A good outcome: We will not re-hash the horrid experience we had with Colonial Van Lines last year when we moved here to Cape Cod. In the end, we prevailed over CVL. We had to file a claim for damages in Small Claims Court. Meanwhile, our former, very stupid, bank in North Carolina paid our credit card bill to CVL, doubling the damages. We negotiated firmly with CVL, back and forth, its offers and our holdout refusals for about eight iterations until CVL pledged the money. Then we negotiated more, because we would not agree to withdraw our court action unless CVL sent us the money, and then not until the deposit cleared in our account. The entire affair consumed eight months.

In lighter, more appealing news: We have been working on our yard landscaping. We have had several huge oak trees taken down. Some we felt endangered our house. All inundated us with leaves in autumn, plus shed twigs year-round. Their flowers in spring caused me to suffer sneezing and itchy eyes, especially after mowing. Their removal filled our back yard with light and made it appear much larger.

The back yard was ringed with thicket, full of invasive bittersweet vine, thorny bramble, and “weed” scrub oak, wild cherry, and holly trees. Working a bit at a time and using a 2nd-hand battery-powered 10-inch chain saw, I gradually cleared it all back to the fence. Then we gradually carted the pile of composting leaves to the rearmost corner of the yard. We also got rid of troublesome overgrown weed trees in the front yard, plus clearing it of invasive choking bittersweet vine. We cleared out leaves and “nip” bottles thrown into one shrub bed and under the rhododendron. Ruth planted annuals.



For décor, we obtained an old dinghy (free!), drilled drainage holes in its bottom and painted it (free paint left here plus a \$1.37 throwaway brush), put in gravel and soil from the yard and compost from the pile, and left behind peat moss (all free!) and made a brick-bordered bed in front of it which Ruth planted with low annuals and decorative ground cover. We had the seashells (free!). The watering can has solar powered multicolor LEDs that appear to cascade a sprinkle. Neighbors are admiring it.



The half-hull window boxes, shown here just after early spring planting, are another “thrif” story. We were searching the web for boat motif window boxes and were discouraged by prices of \$400 each and up. But I had heard that someone, somewhere on Cape cod made boat motif windowboxes, so I did a deep web search and found them for \$80 each. Shipping would be another \$60, for a total of \$220 plus tax for a pair. Noticing that they were locally made here on Cape Cod, I called the phone number I found on the web site to inquire if I could come and get them. To my surprise, the number turned out to be the mobile phone of the guy who makes them. He asked me what they sell for on the web site. I told him, and he told me that the guy who built the site for him (mind you, it is not well-placed; takes a deep search to find) makes more than he does on their sale. He volunteered that he would sell a pair for \$40 each, and his sister, who lives in our town, would deliver them for free if we could wait about a week! No tax, a cash transaction. The gentleman saved us about \$155!

Ruth found the little rowboat planters on either side of our front door at a flea market. That curved brick stone front walk was buried under about an inch of lawn. All I had to do was dig it out.

For inside our house: I found the window charm at a second-hand shop. We love hummingbirds. Offered at \$8, they gave it to me for \$4. I hung it using monofilament line, which is invisible through the sheer valance curtain. There is a wrought iron hanging pole for a hummingbird feeder in the yard directly behind it. And another in the front yard. Did I mention that we love hummingbirds?



Cape Cod Senior Softball: I joined the CCSS League, which fields about 350 players, overwhelmingly men, but a few women also, ages 57 up, into five divisions, I through IV, plus “Masters”. It is all highly organized, with a 28-game summer schedule, tryouts, a player draft, and “pool players” who opt not to commit to a team or schedule but who are available on-call for substitute playing opportunities.



At 82, I learned at tryouts – and this is a technical sports term – I truly “suck”. Besides being physically out of shape, what skills I had possessed were atrophied by a 15-year absence from the game. Besides the league membership payment, I had to buy a glove, shoes, a bat, and batting gloves. The bat was a shocker. It had to be an officially sanctioned American SSL bat, and was quite costly, plus being hard to find. Surprisingly, it tended to transmit considerable shock to the handle when the ball was struck, and I had to buy the batting gloves because of that. I had about a month of pain from the injury to my arm, which was bruised from hand to nearly my shoulder. After I recovered, all I did was bend low to catch a low warm-up toss and threw my back out. I learned that I was the oldest newly signed-up player, by 25 years! In the end, I was able to sell my bat and glove and I donated my shoes and batting glove and “hung it up.” At least I tried.

Late in May we went to the Heritage Gardens and Museum 2023 Rhododendron Festival. Here is a slide show: <https://gallery.jalbum.net/en/browse/user/album/2079674>



In mid-June I was bowled over when musical/cultural historian and singer/songwriter Jon Waterman (right) called me up and invited me to perform with him at his show for the Sandwich Center for Active Living. I played along to “Streets of Laredo” and both played and sang on “Saint James



Infirmary Blues” and “Red River Valley.” The room was semi-dark, but Ruth managed to get this photo. I may use the close-up from it.



We had our doorstep fixed. It really needed it! The repaired doorstep is on the left; the “before” photo is on the right. The bricks were uneven, ragged and several were loose. We feel safer for ourselves and for visitors too. Plus, it was an eyesore.



On June 18, we visited the Dexter Grist Mill (which still grinds cornmeal) and Hoxie House in Sandwich: <https://dantanner.jalbum.net/Dexter%20Grist%20Mill%20and%20Hoxie%20House%2C%20Sandwich%20MA/>.

They are left and right, respectively, in the photos below.



Later in June we took an afternoon jaunt to the Cape Cod Lavender Farm, Harwich (Cape Cod) and to the Harwich Harbor: <https://dantanner.jalbum.net/Lavender%20Farm%20and%20Harwich%2C/>





In July, we returned to the Heritage Gardens for its Hydrangea Festival. Here's another slide show link:
<https://dantanner.jalbum.net/Hydrangea%20Festival%202023/>



This is something nice: When we cleared our yard, we gave a neighbor, who turns wood as his hobby, a few cedar logs. He presented us with this bowl he made, which we have filled with shells we collected in the Caribbean, and now we keep it on our coffee table.

Our neighbors are nice. Another gave us some lobster trap buoys that he gathered on beaches where they had washed up, something he does while fishing.

On July 28 our neighborhood association held a camp-out night for members' kids at its beach on Spectacle Pond, and I led a campfire sing-along. This "poster" was from the LHPOA (Lakewood Hills Property Owners Association) Facebook post. The beach night was lovely.



I took the summer off from going to open mics, but meanwhile tried to do things like this, plus trying to get a music performance group going at our town's senior citizen's center. Our first (organizing) meeting was in August. Neither effort panned out. The campout was poorly attended, and modern kids do not know any traditional campfire songs; they get their music, such as it is, through videos.

At the Senior Center only a few interested parties showed up. One guy only played an 8-note mini bagpipe and was only interested in Celtic music. A couple with some talent decided they were too busy, and opted to join a for pay monthly *a capella* choral class featuring "simple lyrics sung in rounds." They had that when I entered school in 1945, and even then, at age four, I preferred Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw. If I were to be sat at it in nursing home, I still would not like it.

One guy was 89 and unable to remember anything. Some people expressed interest but never showed up. One lady was boxed out of her available time by the Center's assignment of a time and room slot. The only enthusiastic person was a nice lady who played fiddle, but she could not play by ear.

A new grandnephew, Ace Nicholas Sauer, was born weighing in at 8 pounds, 1 ounce at 4:59 PM on Thursday, October 12, 2023 to Larry Jr and Tina Sauer in Morristown NJ. Their second son. My sister Naomi's fifth grandchild.



On October 17 I reached the 63rd anniversary of my Honorable Discharge from the US Navy. Here I am early in my Navy days, all spiffed up for liberty ashore from the USS Lloyd Thomas (DDE-764). I was still a Seaman Apprentice not long out of boot camp. I made Seaman on the Lloyd Thomas and later Electronic Technician Third Class before discharge. In 1959, the year of this photo, we sailed through the Cape Cod Canal. Now we live near the Canal and frequently walk along it. Note my rakishly angled cap! My waist was about 7 or 8 inches slimmer then and I weighed about 45 pounds less. I am still the same height, however.



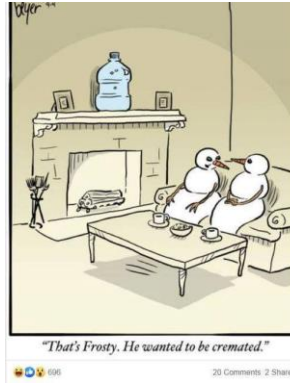
On a rainy October Saturday, we streamed "Godzilla vs. Kong." This photo of "Godzilla vs. Moxie" is a lot scarier, trust us. Especially with Moxie's "flash eyes" (emitting deadly krypton gamma rays) unretouched.



On October 25 we started work on our home addition. It is chronicled in the slide show at this link: <https://dantanner.jalbum.net/Addition/>. We will be adding to the slide show as work progresses. We expect to finish in 2025. Our downstairs living space will go from 928 square feet to 1,572 square feet; 644 square feet more. That matches what we had in Black Mountain NC, plus we will have an attached garage with extra storage space so that we will not have to descend basement stairs, and an attached garden room. And we still have Ruth's sewing room, and extra guest bedroom and a full bath downstairs plus more closet space including a walk-in closet in the master bedroom that is larger than our old one. And our basement is larger, has a concrete floor, and has internal and external bulkhead access.

Random pix: Our boat planter in autumn, and a Monet-like rainy day autumn view through our new picture window. And Moxie does not understand what Coco finds so fascinating about a grocery bag.

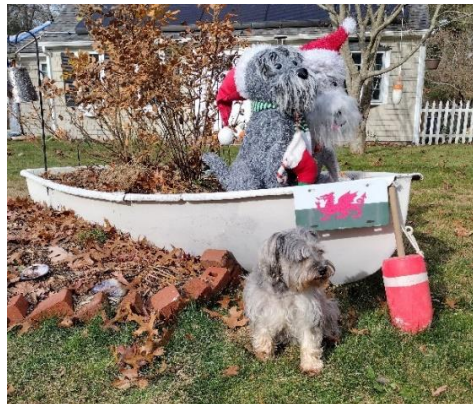
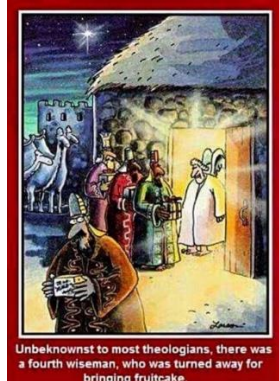




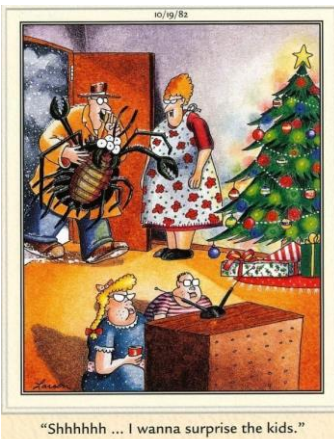
Water, H₂O, is H₂ ash!



Wrong? Better!



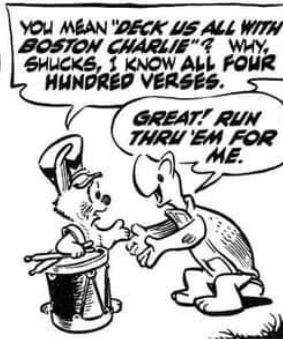
‘Twas the Night Before Christmas	
Original	Legal Version
‘Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;	Whereas, on or about the night prior to Christmas, there did occur at a certain improved piece of real property (hereinafter "the House") a general lack of stirring by all creatures therein, including, but not limited to a mouse.
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;	A variety of foot apparel, e.g. stocking, socks, etc., et al., had been temporarily affixed by and around the chimney in said House, with appropriate care, in the hope and/or belief that St. Nick a/k/a St. Nicholas a/k/a Santa Claus (hereinafter, "Claus") would arrive at sometime thereafter.
The children were nestled all snug in their beds, While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;	The minor residents, i.e. the children, of the aforementioned House were located in or around their individual sleeping locations, or beds, and were nestled and engaged in nocturnal hallucinations, i.e. dreams, wherein visions of confectionery treats, including, but not limited to, candies, nuts and/or sugar plums (without and not meeting FDA labeling requirements) did dance, cavort and or otherwise appear in said dreams.
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap, Had just settled down for a long winter's nap,	Whereupon the party of the first part, (sometimes hereinafter referred to as I ("I")), being the joint owner or tenant-in-common in fee simple absolute of the House, with the party of the second part, (hereinafter "Mamma"), and said Mamma had retired for a sustained period of sleep (at such time, the parties of both parts were clad in various forms of headgear, e.g. kerchief and cap) for a long, seasonal ("winter") nap.
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter, I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.	Suddenly, and without prior notice or warning, there did occur upon the unimproved real property adjacent and appurtenant to said House, i.e., the lawn, a certain disruption of unknown nature, cause and/or circumstance ("clatter").
Away to the window I flew like a flash, Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.	The party of the first part ("I") did immediately arise and rush to a fenestration ("window") in the House to investigate the cause of such disturbance. In the process, the party of the first part ("I") mistakenly tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below,	The party of the first part noticed the moon, in full phase, on the topmost part of the new-fallen snow. The party of the first part was informed and believed, and based upon such information and belief, alleged that said moon gave the lustre of mid-day, otherwise known as noon, to objects below.
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear, But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,	At that time, the party of the first part ("I") did observe, with some degree of wonder and/or disbelief, a miniature sleigh (hereinafter the "Vehicle") being pulled and/or drawn very rapidly through the air by approximately eight (8) reindeer.



“DECK US ALL WITH BOSTON CHARLIE”



*Deck us all with Boston Charlie,
Walla walla, Wash., an' Kalamazoo!
Nora's freezin' on the trolley,
Swaller dollar cauliflower alley'garoo!*



*Don't we know archaic barrel,
Lullaby lilla boy, Louisville Lou?
Trolley Molly don't love Harold,
Boola boola Pensacoola hullabaloo!*



*Hunky Dory's pop is lolly gaggin' on the wagon,
Willy, folly go through!
Chollie's collie barks at Barrow,
Harum scarum five alarum bung-a-loo!*



*Duck us all in bowls of barley,
Hinky dinky dink an' polly voo!
Chilly Filly's name is Chollie,
Chollie Filly's jolly chilly view halloo!*

*Bark us all bow-wows of folly,
Polly wolly cracker n' too-da-loo!
Donkey Bonny brays a carol,
Antelope Cantaloup, 'lope with you!*

*Bark us all bow-wows of folly,
Double-bubble, toyland trouble! Woof, Woof, Woof!
Tizzy seas on melon collie!
Dibble-dabble, scribble-scrabble! Goof, Goof, Goof!*



I remember reading this in a newspaper! I loved Pogo. And Lil 'Abner. Opposites politically, both funny.

Another pastime I had in 2023 was collecting Trump cartoons: <https://dantanner.jalbum.net/Turd/>.
More on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2650312661859103/user/61550990610195/>.

We end with a Trump/Christmas cartoon! PhotoShopped – he is much, much fatter.



Happy Holidays and Best Wishes for your 2024! Love, Ruth and Dan Tanner