

December 2015

Dear Friends,

It's been a year of steady work, mostly good health, numerous visits with friends & family, a few modest forays into the world, and a happy time on the personal front.

Accenture kept me busy for most of the year with "user experience design" projects at various corporate clients. In January I finished up at Caterpillar (see left). Sadly, we didn't get to play with those giant vehicles and had to focus instead on the software that monitors their every hiccup. Traveling to Peoria in January provided my worst travel delay ever (2 days instead of the usual 5 hours). The next gig was with a holding company that wanted their existing utility companies to have websites matching the 3 new ones they wanted to buy. That took me to Philadelphia and then to Baltimore, where Alice joined me for mini-getaway. From May to November, work took me to Bank of America in Charlotte, NC. After a ramp-up, I traveled there every other week, which was very comfortable. In September, when Alice was busy, I went south early and spent a weekend in Charleston SC, which was delightful.

I'm now part of the "Fjord" group, which has 700 people in 17 studios around the world. We are big on declaring trends in digital design – search on "Fjord Trends" if interested. Half the group had a retreat in a luxury resort in Palm Springs, CA. The catch was that we didn't see much of the area beyond the conference rooms.

Alice had a busy first part of the year. In addition to her normal bookbinding business, she taught a course in the subject at SUNY (State University of New York) New Paltz from January to May. Preparation time gobbled up a lot of time each week, but she hopes it will moderate when she teaches it again starting next month. Alice also gave a talk at Gomez Mill House (left), a local historic site revered by book lovers as a home of Dard Hunter, pioneer of hand-crafted papermaking.

In kid news, Sanford (31) moved from Phoenix to Encinitas (near San Diego), where he and long-time girlfriend Courtney announced their official engagement – apparently with a press corps following them around Catalina Island documenting the proposal! Having previously lived together in Pasadena and Phoenix, they reckon the third time's the charm!

Emma (29) remains in Phoenix, but she changed jobs from Saks to Nieman-Marcus (aka "Needless Markup"). She finds the new job a big improvement. I like it better, too, because in November it brought her to New York, where she connected with old friends, and we met up for breakfast. Emma and her boyfriend Ryan are still going strong after three (or is it four?) years.

It's been a good year for catching up with friends and family. Some old friends stopped over here (Jeannine, Loren). In my trips to Charlotte, I met friends from Newburgh and a second cousin living in the area. I also connected with two friends in Charleston. Alice's daughter Hannah visited in May, then again in June, and she's back as I write! Son Winston stopped by a few times this fall. (Alice saw son Newton on a quick trip to L.A.) We also had a delightful visit from cousin Wouter & his wife Anneke from the Netherlands – we were happy to be included in their carefully planned month-long trip up and down the east coast!



At the Caterpillar museum in Peoria



Alice giving a talk at Gomez Mill House (May)



Sanford & Courtney



Emma in 2015



Wouter & Anneke



Alice and friend Piper at Penland bookbinding course



A couple of my drawings from the portrait class



Birthday party at Penland



Alice in her new studio (before the stuff arrived)



Post-Thanksgiving with Linda, Nelva, Jim, Wayne

A highlight of the year came in June, when Alice was assisting in a bookbinding workshop at Penland School of Crafts near Asheville, NC. It turned out that Hannah would be assisting in different course (metal). Then another couple decided to come and take workshops themselves, just to hang out! (Alice has that effect on people.) Naturally, not wanting to miss the action, I tagged along, signing up for a workshop on portrait drawing. My rudimentary skills no doubt tried my instructor's patience, but Penland happily welcomes all levels.

So, we had two weeks in June in the hills of North Carolina where the only agendas were pursuing our crafts, enjoying great food, and passing the time with friends old and new.

My birthday fell within those two weeks, but as it happened, we were able to share the celebration with Wout & Anneke, whose itinerary happened to put them in nearby Asheville on this day, and with Linda Bradford and Jim Jenkins, close friends who live across the river, who just happened to be passing by on their way to Georgia! (My niece Janna & her partner Barb couldn't make it, but we met up earlier, on my way from Charlotte to Penland.)

In October, I tagged along again to Cleveland, where Alice attended the Guild of Book Workers annual conference, while I happily explored Cleveland's great museums. By coincidence, Paul Schrader was in town prepping with his crew for a movie shoot, and they turned out to be staying in the same hotel!

In September, Alice moved her studio operation from a large, shared space to a smaller, private space. The new space has half the floor area but very high ceilings, so that meant building a loft for storage. She is in a building with a dozen other artists, architects, crafts people of all kinds – she feels the "buzz" of all the creative types discovering Newburgh and moving up here from Brooklyn.

A big change of another ilk came in November, when Alice lost her footing on the stairs in her apartment building: she fell and fractured her pelvis. This was a painful accident; the only cure is to rest and wait for the body to heal itself! She has moved into my place, and I've taken time off work to help out, which is mainly just making meals (or rather serving the 7 soups brought by friends!) and taking her to the doctor and the physical therapist. She is a model patient, and I am not so secretly pleased to have had all this time together. Still, she is now more than halfway along the recovery path, getting ever better. She goes into the shop every day, and this week she graduated from walker to cane. I'm afraid she will likely escape my clutches by New Year's Day.

Alice was not quite so mobile at Thanksgiving, so we stayed home with a smoked turkey sent by Alice's kids. The next day, friends Wayne & Nelva, along with Jim & Linda, kindly brought their feast to us – we dined on those leftovers for another week!

The sadness of Colin's death remains with me every day. We mourned the loss of dear friend Belinda and some others in the extended family. But, all in all, we give thanks, and wish all the best to you.

Jim (& Alice)