

# Happy Holidays from the Kaubells

December 22, 2012

This has been a mercifully uneventful year. Most of our “news” is about work, which we mostly enjoy, although we are thinking more about retirement.

The software that Matt has been working on for more than 20 years, which is the ACL2 theorem prover, is getting quite mature. This month UT (The University of Texas, where we both work) approved changing the ACL2 license in a way that may lead to its increased use in industry. That’s a big deal, because much of Matt’s motivation on this project is a desire for his work to have value to others. His department at UT is getting a new building and Matt will be moving into his new office after the first of the year, a move that Matt is ambivalent about: fantastic new space and fine view, but he’ll miss the funky atmosphere of the old UT Tower’s 20<sup>th</sup> floor.

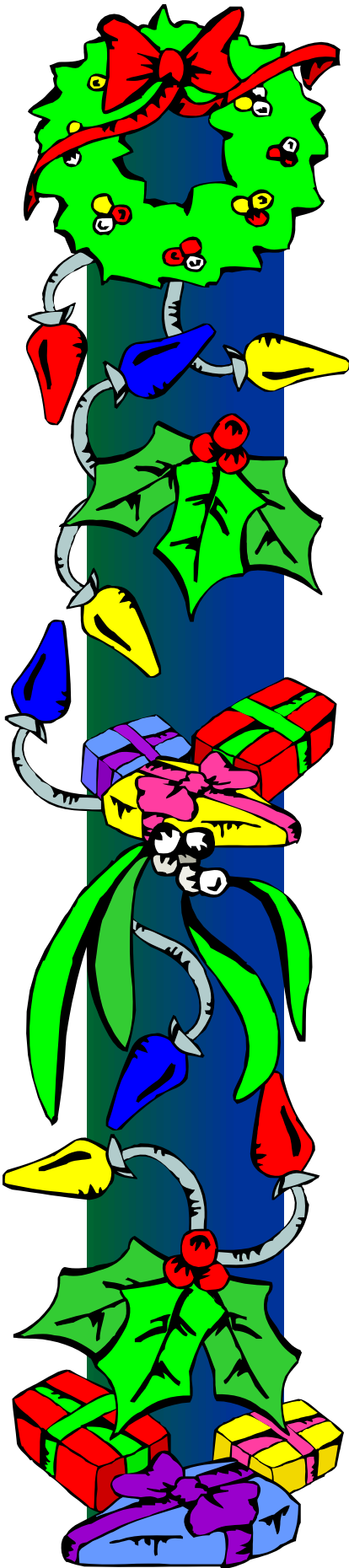
Matt’s favorite Vietnamese restaurant went out of business recently, and the replacement is not as good. He used to feel silly going to the same restaurant so often, but now he has experienced this as some kind of spiritual lesson: Things come and go, so when something is good, take advantage of it.

In their spare time, Holly and Matt enjoy reading. Matt’s current favorite is the Jack Reacher series by Lee Child. Holly’s two favorite books this year were *The Magician’s Assistant* by Ann Patchett and *Olive Kitteridge* by Elizabeth Strout.

Thankfully, there is nothing left of the breast cancer Holly had last year except a pesky scar. Matt had his own milder cancer scare this year. He had an elevated PSA, but after a course of antibiotics, it went down. And the so-called “free PSA” test looked good, too. So never mind! Hey, he turned 60 this month, so naturally there’s gotta be some talk about health ailments, right?

Since we spent our vacation last summer with Holly having surgery and radiation treatment (uh, more health talk!), this summer we took TWO vacations. We spent two weeks in North Carolina, with Holly attending a workshop and then together spending time in Asheville visiting with Candice and Richard (Matt’s step-sister and brother-in-law) and friend Shanti. Then in August, we went to Seattle and Port Townsend, Washington, where we visited with friend Freida and her husband Hank.

This spring, the book Holly had been working on (and reporting in a number of holiday letters) was finally published. It’s called *Community Lost: The State, Civil Society, and Displaced Survivors of Hurricane Katrina*. Holly continues her work as a program evaluator on several projects, in particular one designed to provide greater access to breast and cervical cancer screening for rural Texas women. All the projects require some travel, so Holly has been gallivanting all over Texas.



On the creative side, Holly's attempt to learn the cello was cut short by a shoulder injury. However, we've had a couple of performances with the ad hoc Bevo Glee Club (Bevo is the UT mascot), a group of Holly's colleagues from the School of Social Work. Matt continues to contribute to songs for events, like a performance at the annual talent show (with choreography!) and one for a colleague's going away party. It's not often that Holly gets to wear a feather boa at the university, so this has been fun.

We are still getting together with our movie buds (now renamed Mudds), though less regularly. We just recently celebrated Matt's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday together:



The interminable presidential campaign occupied a lot of our attention this year. Matt enjoyed it the way men enjoy football season. Holly was thoroughly disgusted, though ultimately happy with the outcome. We both coped by watching debates with the Mudds and throwing marshmallows at the TV (a trick we learned during our visit with Freida while watching the conventions). As a break from political reality, we enjoyed the liberal fantasy world of the HBO show, *The Newsroom*. In a completely different vein, we just discovered the show, *Breaking Bad*. Although being completely anti-social at our age has its appeal, it seems like a mid-career change to meth cook is not a very good idea.

We got a personal trainer to help us get into shape this summer. So far the shape has been mostly a dumpling. Our devotion to this discipline has been somewhat intermittent. We still walk in the neighborhood and Holly has her weekly walks with friend Carol.

Just this month we purchased "new" cell phones – older iPhone models (3GS) -- so now we can text and watch YouTube videos while we drive. We're now up to 2009, technology-wise.

We have no complaints and no wisdom to impart here. We're grateful for our health, our work, and our friends and family. We wish you all the best in the coming year.