

A snapshot of 2010, from the Bruces:

Chip writes a new definition of retirement.

In September our big event was a festschrift to honor Chip's work, which was appropriately billed as his "Once and Future Work," to mark a first retirement. Many friends and family came to talk about his contributions, their work, and the intersection of the two---some dating back to the mid 1970's, which seems not that long ago. It was a wonderful weekend. But it hasn't really led into retirement, because he still has several students, goes in to regular meetings, spends time writing daily, and has a calendar of work internationally that stretches well into the future.

For example: Turkey, Sweden, and China.

In October we traveled to the World Universities Conference in Canakkale, Turkey, and then spent some time in a very small cottage in a vineyard, above the Aegean, with extraordinary views. We had no hot water for a week, but it's amazing what one will give up for those views. We loved Turkey; if I were offered another small car, next time we might drive to the Syrian border. We saw only a small part of the west.

We then flew from Istanbul to Stockholm and suffered culture shock for a few days. But we grew to love Sweden just as much. Chip taught a short PhD course in Gothenburg, and we spent time in a cabin in Småland, with hot water, and the forests of southern Sweden just outside the door.

This might have been enough travel, but on New Year's Eve we headed to China for a month, to work at four universities, mostly in Shanghai and the region nearby. We were last in China in 1996 and this time saw a very different country. We didn't find a cottage or a cabin, but at the end of our time stayed in a guesthouse run by a Swiss expat in the far Southwest in Yunnan Province, above the Lancang River (called the Mekong as it flows into, Laos, Burma, and Vietnam).

Stephen launches into graduate school.

Stephen just finished his first semester of a PhD program in Russian History here, at the University of Illinois. When not working, he's learning the balalaika as part of a Russian music group, and planning how to get to his college glee club reunions on a grad student salary. He's living about a mile down the street from us, in a house with two other grad students. It's wonderful having him back in town, after his six years in Belgium, Connecticut, and Washington State.

Emily begins dissertation work.

Emily passed her written and oral exams in European History in the spring (ask her anything, she knows it all), taught a course in the summer at University of Minnesota, and is beginning to focus on her dissertation. She's spending 5 weeks in Germany this winter doing research, and hopes to go back next year. In August I watched this process of archival research first-hand, when I kept Emily company in Paris. We had a wonderful three weeks together; she worked at the French National Library and I wandered about my second city.

With all of this travel, I decided to pull back from my involvement with Books to Prisoners, though I continue to work in our jail libraries from time to time. Otherwise, I seem to spend my time planning travel, recovering from travel, editing Chip's work, chasing deer, and keeping it all together.

Together and separately we have had some good trips to Texas and California to visit family. Both mothers are doing well, mine going on 94 and Chip's celebrating her 90th this spring. We feel very lucky that they are doing so well, and are so confoundedly wise.

Planning Chip's retirement celebration brought into sharp focus the importance of keeping in contact with distant family and old friends, if only through an annual letter. We send heartfelt greetings and best wishes for all in what's left of 2011.

Susan, on behalf of Chip, Emily, and Stephen

