

Happy Holidays 2009

Chip is practicing piano as I write this on Christmas Day. He recently began to take lessons after a 25-year gap, with Felix Chan, who taught our kids piano for 12 years, and comes by once a week. It's wonderful now to hear the piano more often. The only thing holding him back from a professional career is an injured shoulder, hurt falling on ice about 11 months ago. He waited too long to do the surgery that was eventually required in September, but much therapy has moved things along. You can learn more about what Chip is up to by checking his blog, where he ruminates on the state of the world, his work, and some family events.

<http://chipbruce.wordpress.com>

Emily is midway through her third year as a History PhD student and spent the summer doing research in an archive in Berlin. Yesterday she finished grading forty-one 12-page papers written by her Minnesota freshmen, so she's learning how to work as an academic---anywhere and everywhere, round the clock. That is, when she's not distracted by singing with Vocal Essence, and hanging out with assorted other burdened historians. She's finished her coursework and now "just" has to propose a topic, do some research, take exams, and write a book.

Stephen landed the only Americorps job requiring Russian in the US, and has been working as a patient navigator at a clinic in Vancouver, Washington, just across the river from Portland. He's learned a lot about medicine and the health care system as he works with immigrant communities there. And he's exploring Portland's famous food carts and taco trucks. He's also thinking about graduate school, perhaps in Russian History. His current work is not nearly as hard as resurfacing our driveway and hauling water out of our basement, which is what he did last summer.

Earlier in his senior year he traveled to Montreal and Québec with his Russian Chorus, where he was interviewed on the radio, in French, about their music and Cold War politics. (If you'd like, you can see his description and link to the show at <http://fwd4.me/9f0>.) As a last blast he also traveled to Argentina and Brazil with his Glee Club just after graduation, and before real life intruded.

I continue to work at our jail libraries and help to keep the Books to Prisoners Project afloat. A few weeks ago that involved cooking tapas for 50 friends at a fundraiser. We received a Governor's Hometown Award for volunteerism, so I got a hug (see photo) from our current governor, Quinn, a much nicer guy than the infamous

former governor, who was much in the news last year.

We are indeed sad to report that we lost our dear Grandaddy, Bill Todd, in May. This was the weekend Stephen graduated, so only Chip was able to attend the funeral, which was a beautiful service. Bill had many, many friends, a loving family, and is missed by all of us. Chip's mother has decided to move to Austin to be closer to her daughters and grandchildren, twin great-granddaughters, and a new great-grandson on the way. We gathered with much of the family in the Texas Hill Country in July, for a warm few days.

My mother continues well, still in her lovely adobe, going on 62 years in the house she and my dad built. I've been to see her in California a number of times. Emily will join me on a brief trip there next week, and then we'll meet up with Chip for a few days in Fort Worth.

This was not a year for international travel, with Chip doing much of his international work via his many and diverse students, and lots of virtual meetings with Dublin via Skype. I did manage to get to Paris for a January week, evidently my time to go. And it seems there will be too many trips in the coming year. I'm voting for boat or train, with air travel becoming such a chore.

Our best wishes to all of you in 2010, scattered from India, to France, the UK, Ireland, Canada, and across this vast country. Let's see if I can get these addressed by Valentine's Day.

Susan, on behalf of all the Bruces

Photos: a few of Stephen's graduation. Emily hugging a bear in Berlin. Stephen in the window well helping drain the basement. Emily and Chip playing a duet. Susan with Governor Quinn and colleague Yvette.

