

2011

What a strange and curious year. So much has changed, and yet, so much has remained steadfast, constant, and predictable...

For those who don't live in the northeast, you may have experienced cataclysmic weather events of your own, but the northeast seemed to be particularly vulnerable this year. Record snows, rains, floods, and even a token earthquake seem to come at us and destroy much of the fabric of small town suburbia, so many we know have lost so much, some businesses will never recover, and yet a sense of "we are all in this together" prevails. Though some of our lovely specimen trees suffered severe damage and a gutter or two came crashing down in the freak Halloween snowstorm, we came through all of the weather events relatively unscathed, and there are no words for the gratitude we share considering how many are still not able to live in their homes.

Probably the biggest change this year came for Brianna. She finished up her High School years with an excellent record and GPA and 15 college credits under her belt from attending four semesters at the County College while



still in High School. We handled the college search a little more creatively than most, waiting to visit until after she was accepted. Brianna wanted to attend a college with lots of opportunities, live away, major in Animal Science/pre-vet, and minor in Japanese. That last piece ruled out many otherwise promising institutions.

Kevin flew home periodically to take Bri school shopping, a flight to Maine to visit University of Maine where she was accepted into the Honors program, a trip to University of Rhode Island where she was offered a substantial scholarship and she was able to shadow a professor for the day, and a day at University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she made her final decision based on the language program, the size of the institution (20,000 vs

Rutgers 60,000 students), and the size of the farm program and number of different species.

So after working as a full time life guard/archery, sailing instructor at a Girl Scout Camp in NY State, Bri set off for her new life, in Massachusetts, days after Hurricane Irene ripped apart that state as well. All accounts on Facebook and texts and the occasional hand written letter, let us know that it was a good decision and that Bri has adapted well to college life, and that her grades are excellent for her first year away in a rigorous science program. She is in the donkey club, the pre-vet club, and apparently one for Belted Galloway cows. She took a loom with her to college, but has had little time to set it up and spend time weaving.

For Eric, life is slowly and tediously moving into the world of adulthood, much has



stayed the same this year, except that now he is truly legal. Eric turned 21 this past February, with a celebration at a local watering hole, parents in attendance, sadly that watering hole was one of the Hurricane Irene casualties.



Eric looks forward to his weekend warrior drills with the National Guard, and spent a couple of weeks this summer away in Virginia and in Michigan in extensive artillery training. He continues to work at Target, they kept him on after hiring him Fall of 2010 as seasonal help. He works all areas of the store, and hopes that one day they will offer him full time work. Eric continues to live in the basement, now mostly by himself, the "bottom feeders" have all drifted away and moved on to other lives, as it should be. Probably the highlight of the year for him was just a couple weeks ago when he bought his own truck, a 1996 Jeep Grand Cherokee. It is in great shape considering the mileage and the best day for all of us was the day I called our insurance company to take him off our car insurance! Because Eric is still in the house, changes are more gradual, but I can honestly say that I see glimmers of growth and maturity and my little boy is turning into a man, one we are proud of.

For Kevin, it was also a year of change, and yet as he described it once on a Skype call, "Same story, different day..." Kevin did not run again for the school board, when his term expired in the spring, and for the first time in 13 years, he is no longer part of the educational institutions in two towns. It was a great run, and I think he felt like he made a difference, all anyone of us can hope for really. He was still able to hand Brianna her Diploma (with a big hug too), at her High School graduation, it was a moving experience for them both!



Kevin had another year of extensive travel. His work continues to involve consulting on an international level, and unfortunately this year it was constantly and exclusively in Saudi Arabia. International travel can be a great learning experience but after more than 220 days in Saudi with a difficult client the allure has worn off. It

is a good job overall and it helps pay college tuition, but you know you have traveled a lot when the flight attendants on international flights remember you.

He has continued to enjoy a desert hiking and camping group in Saudi (just reached a milestone of 50 outings). The group is diverse with members from a multitude of countries and they share their cultures freely during the hikes and campouts. This year they asked him to be Father Christmas for kids during their annual Christmas campout.

With all the traveling, Kevin still managed to get in a few ski trips, and a couple golf outings (one during his 60th milestone birthday), but alas he did not have time him to putter in and enjoy his garden other than some rudimentary weeding. He was able to make it home for the important things like; college visits with Brianna,



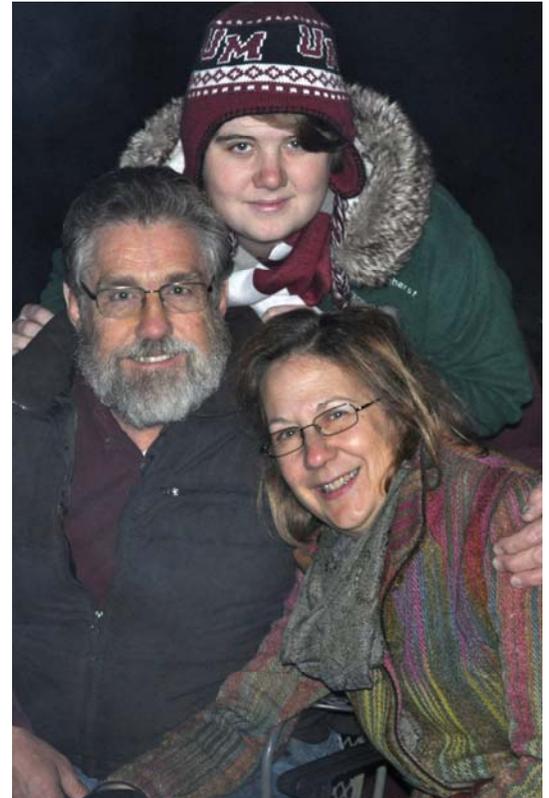
Bri's graduation, taking Bri to UMass for the start of her freshman year, family Thanksgiving and Christmas. Hopefully he will have more time to be in the US next year to spend time with family and friends.

I'd like to say that I had my most successful year professionally, and that I traveled more than in previous years, reaching 30,000 miles, but that will always pale when compared with Kevin's extensive air miles. Never the less, the difficulty this year was maintaining the status quo at home, with Kevin in exile, and me off to some exotic parts of the country or Canada on any given weekend, leaving only Eric and the dog in charge. To his credit, Eric managed to keep things moving forward and even deal with the dog when the dog unexpectedly fell ill and couldn't walk, (Lyme Disease). I'm not sure I could have done what I did this year without him.

I love to travel, and I love new opportunities that have come my way, from teaching a fibers class for a semester at the local community college, to new venues like the American Sewing Guild, online classes through Weavolution.com and articles for Threads and Notions Magazines. I'm constantly developing new workshops and acquiring new equipment for teaching them. I've grown out of my studio, filled the attic, and am slowly taking over storage space in some of the vacated bedrooms in the house. I took a couple of major awards for some of my work, and continue to blog and generate new subscribers. The highlight of my professional career came with an opening a couple of weeks ago at the World Financial Center Courtyard Gallery in NYC, just a block away from the World Trade Center construction site, overlooking the Hudson River, where one of my pieces proudly hung along with some of the work from some very respected names in fiber. It was a glorious night, and my only regret was that my friend and lifetime partner was half way around the world and couldn't share it with me.

In spite of all the misery in the world, the distance between all of us, the unstable economy, and the weather disasters, we have been particularly blessed this year, and as I write this, Kevin is in the air, heading home to be with all of us until the end of the year when he will have to return to Saudi. Brianna arrived with a carload of laundry and drama, on Friday after finishing up the last of her exams. It will be good to all be together, if only for a brief time...

I have begun to appreciate the word "uneventful". In these challenging times, "uneventful" means that all went easily and as planned and that nothing got in the way of doing what I need to do to stay centered, happy and productive. May the year 2012 be an "uneventful" year for all of you, keeping you safe, centered, happy, and healthy.



The Lancaster Family