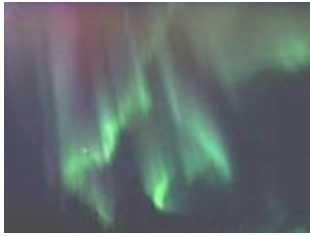


Anchorage, Alaska
First Sunday in Advent, 2004



Dear Friends,

2004 was a year of transition marking, at least, a temporary pause in our travels as we settle down to do something new. Our dateline is

Anchorage. While we still have our home in Sitka (which we're adding onto) we've bought a condo (above, the view from the bedroom) and moved here to run KUDO. (www.kudo1080.com). For the past 16 years we've been part owners of Chinook Concert Broadcasters, which runs KUDO and classical KLEF. While KLEF is successful KUDO has lacked both vision and listeners. We converted KUDO to "Liberal Talk." Rich is planning the programming. Suzi is working on business and features and Kevin does the morning news shift. The motivation for this move came when one of our colleagues in Eastern Europe told us it was time to go home and "fix" American media. So we find ourselves in Anchorage trying to make a dent in both Alaska politics and Anchorage ratings.



Rich maintains a part time job with IREX working on the regional media program. Though we will be doing a lot less traveling next year, this year we made a grand tour of the Balkans. In Sarajevo we helped set up an investigative reporting website (www.investigativejournalism.org), and in Belgrade we worked with a news agency that exposes corruption (www.beta.co.yu/korupcija/eng/). We were in Belgrade for the dedication of the B92 building. We started the drive to fund the building back in 2001 and the dedication brought some of our work to closure. We also attended B92's 15th birthday party and were honored by the Association of Independent Electronic Media (ANEM) for our help in developing Serbian independent media.



In April we traveled to the Caucasus. In Georgia (right) Rich did an assessment of the media and made recommendations about assistance in the country after the Rose Revolution. We also visited Azerbaijan for a look at this crossroads on the Caspian Sea.

In June we crossed the border from Austria to Slovakia without customs hassle and seeing the blue EU flag flying next to the Slovak flag gave us throat lumps. When we moved to Slovakia in 1997 the country was not on the list for the first round of EU accession.



The summer was unusually warm. Rich actually swam in Sitka Sound, not just a quick dip, but a real swim. We enjoyed 13 days over 80 degrees, a record. The warm weather slowed the remodeling of our Sitka house. Because of the fire danger the excavator that was to put in our footings was stuck in the woods for an extra month. The contractor couldn't do our work until Forest Service work was done, and he couldn't do the Forest Service work for several weeks because of fire danger. So the equipment sat in the woods and we enjoyed a summer only occasionally marred by forest fire smoke that blew in from hundreds of miles to the Northwest.

We all (Brian, Kevin, Liz, Suzi and Rich) went to the Winnipeg Folk Festival. Then Rich and Brian drove back to Alaska while Suzi spent time with her Dad. We met up in Sitka where Brian and Kevin started

working on the house. Liz joined us for part of the summer.

Then Suzi and Rich drove the Alcan to Anchorage in the midst of fantastic fall colors (right, in fact you can see lots of pictures of our travels throughout the year at www.mcclear.net) and Liz started graduate school in Minnesota in Recreational Therapy with a specialty in music. Brian left work at Jet Construction in St. Paul to work independently and pursue more theater work.



We're enjoying the cultural advantages Anchorage offers, theater, concerts, the symphony and movies. Kevin has joined the Anchorage Concert Chorus. Our family has also grown by one dog (Merlin, Kevin got him at the pound, at the left.) and a cat, Smite, who arrived, one night, by airfreight. We are still not exactly sure where he came from.

We five will be together in Sitka for Christmas and then we all fly to Anchorage to celebrate the New Year under the northern lights. We hope your Christmas is merry, your solstice bright and your New Year is of full of peace and joy.



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