

December 2, 2012
The First Sunday in Advent

Box 796
Sitka, Alaska 99835

Dear Friends,



Retirement eluded us for another year. We moved home from Belgrade (complete with two cats) on December 19. By March 19 Rich had headed out on the first of two trips to Africa to work with Eye Radio in Juba, South Sudan. The station offers on-air instruction and independent news in this "post conflict" country. In April Suzi followed Rich to Africa. Rich worked with the news staff helping them launch a new morning news program that Rich thinks "kicks ass." Suzi worked on grant writing and management policies with the station manager, a remarkable young man in his 30s with a long career in the military, recruited as a child soldier at the age of 9. He now has an MBA and is struggling with the conflicting management styles of a guerilla army and a modern radio station. When we left the staff presented each us with a traditional costume. We extended our African trips to go on safari, tracking big game with small cameras. Following the wildebeest migration in the Maasai Mara in Kenya is jaw dropping, especially when thousands of them ford a crocodile rich river.

Rich made several trips to Tbilisi, Georgia. He's working with a Journalism school helping them set up an NPR station to serve Tbilisi's international community. Rich is also teaching English language news writing and delivery. Suzi joined Rich on one of these trips and we enjoyed the Tbilisi Wine Festival, in this land where wine first tempted the human palate. On the way home from his last trip Rich stopped at the Salzburg and Munich Advent Markets (the pictures above are from Salzburg.)

An emotional highlight was the closeout conference for the Serbia Media Assistance Program. After 15 years IREX (our employer) is leaving Serbia. We did the Serbia Media assessment in 1997 that led to the program. Both of us worked on the project, on and off, throughout its life. At the conference IREX screened a film about 15 years of Serbian media assistance. If you want to better understand what we've been doing please visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHBvyM0k8ek>.

Another highlight was Raven Radio's 30th birthday. Raven held an all station reunion in Sitka over July 4th weekend. Brian, Liz and Liam came up from Minnesota and former Ravens arrived from around the country and beyond. Rich, as founding manager, was one of the Grand Marshalls of the 4th of July parade. He very much enjoyed greeting people all along the parade route.

Although we've enjoyed getting back into the life of Sitka, the music festival, Raven Radio and our church, we've still been away from Sitka for almost half the year, including a trip to Anchorage to see Kevin and Shannon. Suzi traveled to Anchorage for Thanksgiving while Rich was in Tbilisi. All 7 of us, Suzi, Rich, Shannon, Kevin, Brian, Liz and Grandson Liam got together in Minnesota this summer. The 7 of us plan to be together again in Sitka for Christmas. We're enjoying our home on the edge of the Pacific, watching the winter's first snow blow in on this first Sunday of Advent. A year ago we had no idea what opportunities would come our way. Likewise we have no idea what 2013 will bring. We pray for a joyful and peaceful year for your family and ours - and for the world.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays,
Suzi and Rich McClear

