

Our 2009 holiday letter comes to you from beautiful Dominica, Nature Island of the Caribbean where we live now, spending some time high-class formal snorkeling. We posted our 2008 letter early, after selling our Westboro MA home of over 30 years just before Thanksgiving. This update begins with our move on November 20, 2008.

We had our first Thanksgiving away from home in 30 years, visiting our daughter Mathilda in New York City. Dinner was a great affair; a gathering of several of her friends with us as guests. On the trip we visited my cousin Bruce (retired NYC teacher now an art photographer



www.flickr.com/photos/brucelivingston) & his wife Linda at their lovely restored farmhouse in Asbury NJ. (Not Asbury Park, the seashore resort; a little town in NJ's northwest hills.) Then we swung down to the central seashore to visit my sister Naomi & husband Larry in Neptune City NJ and stayed with best friends Roger & Rita in Toms River NJ. We dropped off

our 1997 Mazda Miata (above w/Ruth, in front of our former home) which they bought.

Ruth's official retirement date was December 31, 2008, but she used earned time off to make December 12 her last day at the office. Her friends from her US Army Soldier Systems Center office and from her former US Army Corps of Engineers office threw her a lovely sentimental farewell/retirement party. We departed the US December 13 and after an overnight in Puerto Rico we arrived in Dominica to establish our new home Sunday, December, 14.



Work on our retirement villa "Sea Fans" had been ongoing for about three weeks when



we arrived. There're slide shows of the villa, its guest apartment and of building it via links on our Web site www.dan-ruth-tanner.com. Up to early July, we went from what you see on the left to the right. Building was quite an experience. Matthew Martin our



contractor, was great and the workers very skilled, but with anything as complex and personal as a house one must be present personally to ensure that all the details turn out as preferred. Now we're working on landscaping, hoping to be done within 6 months.

We lived in our ground floor apartment during the villa's construction. That was OK the first month because we used the larger of two bedrooms and had plenty of space. But in mid-Jan our household goods container arrived and had to be packed into that bedroom with overflow into all the other rooms plus our newly-built garage area. We were cramped inside, and outdoors was a maze of support trusses, scaffolding, & construction rubble. It wasn't easy to accept "Caribbean time" when our projected move-in date of April 19 passed. But we could see it was nobody's fault, and quality takes precedence over speed, so we made the best of the situation.

Ruth made a wonderful Christmas dinner. Hildreth & Herry Wilson and their children Chelsi, Sheikana and Tyreese shared it with us (before our container arrived).

Then in February came Dominica's Carnival celebrating slavery's end in the Caribbean. A good synopsis can be found on this page (www.lennoxhonychurch.com/africa-dominica.cfm) written by Dominica's author & historian Lennox Honychurch. Carnival here falls around the US

President's Day holiday and school winter break week, so it's good for tourism. The biggest celebrations are in Roseau, an hour and a half's drive from Calibishie. But our village and most others also have music and parades too. Here're a few snapshots.



We also had a wonderful Easter, with a picnic at Batibou Beach. If we'd brought our camera you'd have seen the beach full of Calibishie folk, with soccer and cricket games going on, people swimming and kayaking, and many family picnics. Ruth contributed deviled eggs and cake to the picnic we shared with the Wilsons. How she managed to do that in our crammed kitchen amazes me! Here's a photo I took at Batibou on our 2006-7 holidays that was used in a review I wrote posted on Christophe Joseph's Website. Surf over to www.dominica-weekly.com/reviews/batibou-one-of-dominica's-best-beaches/.



March 21 was our neighbor Simeon's 89th birthday. He runs a little shop near us. We always buy our soda there and I play dominoes with him – he's sharp! Ruth made him a birthday cake.



May Day, the first Monday in May is another public holiday. It fell on the 4th this year, putting our 3rd of each month celebration to Sunday on a 3-day weekend. We got married on March 3, 1977. Until Mathilda was born, we went out for dinner on the 3rd of each month. Now that we've retired, we've resumed the practice. We had dinner at Domcan's in Castle Bruce (bay on the left). See www.dominica-weekly.com/reviews/domcan's-retreat-restaurant-and-guest-house/. We visited Dominica's famed Emerald Pool (falls on the left). We first learned about Dominica in a late 70s edition of National Geographic magazine sporting a photo of the Emerald Pool on its cover. We waited 8 years to visit when Mathilda was 10 and could enjoy it and remember it too. That vacation led us to living here.

People often ask, "What's your day like?" Well, there're so many little things to do each day that the time goes by very quickly. It's great that we can have fresh fruits, fish, eggs, and meat here. But we have to go get each of them, and that takes time. We have to walk out dogs, wash our dishes, do the laundry and keep our house clean. Wash and wax our car. Work in our yard. The list of the mundane is ongoing and endless. And then we have some unusual things to do. Finding and repairing a leak in our propane cooking gas line is a good example. We rigged up a foot-powered air pump with a pressure gauge and an ordinary automobile tire valve stem to an adapter to the line. We found the leak inside the downstairs kitchen wall behind a cupboard, where the builder of our original vacation home had placed the copper pipe line and fitted pipes and elbows but hadn't soldered them. We had to chip concrete away and solder the joints.

During the day we did that the "pipe water" failed. We had to switch to our backup 400 gallon rainwater cistern and its electric pump. We also have a generator for when the electric power fails. Yes, we're in the idyllic tropics, but it takes work and preparation to ride through disruptions. Pumping water and powering our refrigerator are important to us. And, rainwater must be boiled for 20 minutes to make it potable. We've lost count of both utilities' failures. We keep reminding ourselves how well off we are, though. Many neighbors carry water home from public taps and live without refrigerators.

Little projects and hobbies keep us busy too. Ruth has her own sewing/hobby room and is in it a lot quilting and making bead and shell items. I do a bit of carpentry for slight improvements here and there. Weekdays during school summer vacation I helped our neighbor's daughter Chelsi with her studies for her final two years of high school; we worked on physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics and English. We studied for one

hour and then she viewed a video pertaining to the lesson that I looked up on the Internet beforehand. Then she practiced her typing skills or quilted with Ruth teaching her.

In the evenings we can watch television, relax to music on CDs or streamed from the Internet or go out and about. Sometimes I walk down to the bay for a drink of rum and some domino-playing. One night I showed Jupiter's four moons to neighbors with our telescope. In the process I undid a lot of damage spread by missionaries.

Late in July there was a cricket match between Bangladesh and the West Indies team at Windsor Park Stadium in our capital city, Roseau. The Prime Minister declared a holiday. West Indies was beaten badly.

"August Monday" the 1st Monday in August was also a holiday and we joined a village crowd from the Baptist church at the beach where scenes from two "Pirates of the Caribbean" movies were filmed. That Sunday we had our friends the Wilson Family over for dinner. We decided that once we'd retired we'd use our "good" china and silverware every day. Why not have some casual elegance? The china was a wedding gift from Ruth's parents and the silverware was purchased with money left by my adoptive father and Ruth's grandmother that they'd saved from money we gave them in their final years. Here's our set dinner table.



On August 6, one of the electrical power failures so commonplace here had spikes and brownouts, destroying the circuit board in our refrigerator. It took 15 days to get the part via FedEx. The cost was over EC\$1500 but the electric company took responsibility and paid. In the interim we fell back on our downstairs unit, which we brought up.

On August 8 we had a housewarming party. We invited everyone who'd worked building our house plus some friends and neighbors. We had barbecue and other food and punch with optional cask rum. I made about a 7½-hour music library for the party of rock & roll, 60s rock, blues, jazz, country, folk rock, calypso & reggae and assorted other genres for enjoyment & dancing. It was declared a big success.

On August 21, Ruth's birthday, Chelsi completed her first quilt, under Ruth's tutelage. A lot else happened that day. Our refrigerator part arrived from the US. Our east retaining landscaping wall was completed & our driveway started. We bought Mathilda's Christmas present, air fare for her to visit us Feb 4 – Mar 4, 2010. She'll be here for my birthday, Carnival, & our 37th anniversary. She's left teaching in NY City and is launching her career in art. We're overjoyed & will write about in next year's letter.



That day was also tinged with sadness. We learned that Kathy Brault our dear friend and former neighbor in Westboro had died earlier that week, victim of a particularly aggressive cancer. It was about five weeks from discovery to the end. Kathy was always sweet and cheerful. You can see her in Ruth's needlework art slide show, helping by holding quilts for display. See www.dan-ruth-tanner.com/Needlework_Art/album/.

On August 23rd we went to a new place, River Rush, for Sunday brunch for Ruth's birthday. We swam, ate, and had a musical jam session. (See www.dominica-weekly.com/reviews/river-rush-resort/.)

On September 2 we spotted a 20-25 foot basking shark from our veranda. We got a good look at it using binoculars. The image is from the web because we don't have that much zoom in our camera. This is what it looked like (right):



Heavy rain from a tropical depression made electricity and water fail and kept us in September 3, so we went out on September 7, Labor Day in the USA, instead. We took a day-long drive to Riviere Cyricue and descended the many steps to the "Secret Beach" on the Atlantic. (There's also a "Secret Beach" on the Caribbean coast.) We drove to La Plaine and Morne Jaune. We found Citrus Creek Plantation and Riverside Café (www.citruscreekplantation.com) on the Taberi River near one of the sea turtle nesting beaches. It's was closed Mondays. We also visited a protected turtle nesting site at Rosalie Bay. We'd planned to eat dinner at the Islet View (a/k/a Rudy's) in Castle Bruce but found it was closed for the month. Domcan's also in Castle Bruce was closed (Monday!). That caused us to find the Beau Rive Hotel & Bar also in Castle Bruce (www.BeauRive.com). It normally serves dinner to guests only, but will prepare its table d'hôte dinner for non-guests who reserve a day ahead. We plan to do that in days ahead. Here're some pix from our day-trip:



Moss on a stump (Atlantic Secret beach).



Camera-shy hermit crab with a pretty house.



Taberi River at Riverside Café.



Ruth at Rosalie Bay.



Atlantic from Riviere Cyricue.



Water-sculpted black sand.

On September 8 I heard the nicest thing from my friend and former work colleague David Hill. He’s published a book Data Protection: Governance, Risk Management, and Compliance and in an e-mail wrote “Dan, I listed your name on the Acknowledgment page in appreciation of all that you did to help me over the years”. *Beau geste!* Surf to <http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Data-Protection/David-G-Hill/e/9781439806920> to buy the book, you tech-types. That night we had a “Dominica moment”: A plague of gnats of biblical proportion. We had to sweep and vacuum their bodies up the next day.

We had a great day at the beach a few days later; nothing unusual about that. The water



was warm and calm. We also did some beachcombing. A photo of some shells we gathered that day is on the left, and of what Ruth is doing with some shells is on the right. She sorts shells into matched pairs for earrings, and also makes



necklaces and bracelets. A slide show of her shell jewelry is at <http://dantanner.jalbum.net/Shell%20Jewelry/>.

I don’t (as I once planned) go to work at a banana “garden” as a substitute for a workout. The walk there alone would be more than the workout I’d be after! There’s one downside: One banana farming activity is called “de-flowering”, and I’d like to do that.

September 16 was Herry’s 53rd birthday, and Ruth made him a banana cake and we all had it with ice cream and chocolate cupcakes over at our house. Hildreth’s birthday is in November. We celebrated the couple’s birthdays jointly together with a River Rush brunch in October. It was a school night, so the celebration had to end early, but on Saturday they’ll return & we played the movie “Honeydripper” through our PR onto or TV & surround sound system. The movie has a nice sound track featuring gospel, blues, boogie-woogie and rock & roll.

On September 18 our friend Nathalie, who we met in 1987 on our 1st trip to Dominica and her son Mervin and his wife Esther came over for dinner. Mervin and his mom had visited us in Westboro MA nearly 20 years ago. He and Esther got married on our 34th anniversary. Nathalie had to miss our housewarming because she was in the USA at the time. A teacher for 29 years, she has just been promoted to be a school principal.



We add flowers, mostly gathered as cuttings and nurtured by Ruth as we landscape. We saw a red & yellow canna lily and were able to get a piece of root. This one is growing in our yard now. We have red, yellow and salmon-pink cannas, but had never before seen one like this.

Dominica enhances fertility. In late September, after we'd

been here 9 months, Ruth surprised me with a couple of kids (photo right). On October 3 we went to Red Rock Haven here in Calibishie for a really great dinner followed by a stroll on the beach under the 1-day-from-full moon. The cliffs and foam from breakers shone in the moonlight and there was enough light to see through the clear water and see the reef in the shallows. But best of all was the sparkle of moon light off crystals in the beaches patches of Dominican black sand.



October 5 turned out to be a big day for my youngest brother Eddie. It was his 62nd birthday and his first grandchild, Charlotte, was born. (And Charlotte has a cousin born on the same day 3 years earlier.) We learned of the event on October 8, and we also saw news on MSNBC.com (www.msnbc.msn.com/id/33220540/ns/entertainment-celebrities) that day which made us very proud of my cousin Harry Connick Jr. He was a celebrity judge on an Australian TV talent show and one contestant group did a Jackson Five impersonation in blackface. Harry gave the group a zero and said that if that were tried on US TV the show would not have been aired and that had he know what the group was going to do he'd have declined to be on it. (Now, my prediction: The day will come when male comics' skits in drag, like Monty Python's will be considered equally offensive.)

More about our daily activities: (Besides house- & yard-keeping, or going for a swim whenever we want to, that is.) I make small improvements, such as mounting a fan or our electric toothbrush charger, or hangars for displaying Ruth's quilts, and fool around on



the computer. Ruth has a few hobbies: quilting (as always) gardening, working on a Martha's Vineyard cottage dollhouse, and making shell jewelry. And she cooks up a storm! We completed a Martha's Vineyard puzzle.



Shopping or banking here is time-consuming, because it generally involves a 1/2-hour drive each way to Portsmouth or Marigot, or a 90-minute 1-way trip to Roseau. And I don't like driving here. (The photo is a joke, but not far off.) I got lucky on October 15: I was about to go to the credit union in Marigot and I called ahead to arrange for a letter to use on the 19th in Roseau with our 3rd year residency application (after 5 years we can be permanent residents; until then it's annual). I learned the credit union was closed that day for International Credit Union Day.

They love holidays here! It was announced on the local radio, but we weren't listening.

October 22: Dominica named one of the top ten ecotourism hot spots in the world. Surf to www.msnbc.msn.com/id/30440379/ns/travel-destinations?pg=9#Travel_Shermans_Top10EcotouristHotspots.

The first week in November is Creole Week with November 3 being Independence Day. 2009 marks 31 years of independence. Women wear the colors you see Ruth and Chelsi in. Women wear either a plaid dress or a skirt with white blouse or plaid top with white skirt trimmed in plaid. Tyreese is wearing the traditional men's garb, the colorful vest, black trousers and a red sash belt. Sheikana decided to wear a matching blue dress and headband. Next year Ruth will have made me something to wear but she already knows I won't wear long pants in this climate. On November 3 Ruth and I had an outstanding dinner at Heaven's Best (www.heavensbestguesthouse.com). On the 8th we went to River Rush for a swim & 4 hours of jazz at its grand opening.



On Nov. 18 we experienced a tiny earth tremor at 8:49 AM. It lasted 1 or 2 seconds. We were having our breakfast, and it felt as if someone had shaken our chairs. No damage. According to the Public Seismic Network, "Preliminary estimates show that the quake's occurred at 8:49 am, was centered around 12 miles NE of Portsmouth or 6 miles NE of Calibishie, was 12 km deep, magnitude 3.6 and was the biggest quake in the sequence of events which has been affecting Northern Dominica." It was felt more strongly in Portsmouth, shaking items off shelves. In Nov 2004 a quake toppled a centuries old stone Catholic church in Portsmouth (no injuries, it was a weekday) and another in Ville Casse the latter being the first built here not long after Columbus' time. It also cracked the foundation columns of our friend Nathalie's house in Paix Bouche.

On November 20 the Prime Minister called a snap election to be held on December 18. On the 21st the majority Dominica Labour Party held a big rally in Calibishie, right at the bay-front at the junction of our street, Calibishie Ridge. Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerit spoke. He's one of the 10 youngest heads of government in the world. He was born June 8, 1972 and assumed power on January 8, 2004 when the then PM, Roosevelt Douglas died. After earning degrees in English and psychology from the University of Mississippi and New Mexico State University, respectively, Skerit became an instructor at a Dominican community college. Elected to Dominica's parliament in 2000, he eventually became the education minister of the poor Caribbean country. When former Prime Minister Pierre Charles abruptly died from an apparent heart attack, Skerit was selected by his Dominica Labor Party to replace him. Shortly thereafter, he revoked his country's recognition of Taiwan and established formal relations with China. The Chinese government had offered \$122 million in aid, about \$1,700 per Dominican.



In the "small world" department: We went for a swim at Woodford Hill Beach on 21 Nov and met a girl whose parents were Dominican (father) and Puerto Rican (mother) and who was born in and raised in Worcester MA (and graduating from Clark Univ. there),

10 miles from our Westboro MA home of 31 years. More coincidentally, she worked, as I did, in hi-tech. Remember Sid Caesar & Imogene Coca's "Small World" routine?

Monday, November 23 began Thanksgiving week in the



USA. Last Friday marked a year to the day we moved out of our Westboro home. That Wednesday was the 1st anniversary of our closing the sale of our house there. I didn't do a



thing Monday except sit around on our veranda. It was breezy and pleasant and I watched squalls form in the Guadeloupe channel between us and Marie-Galante and watched rainbows form. No pot of gold, though. It beats working and looking forward to a long holiday weekend!

November 25 is also Chelsi's 15th birthday. Ruth made her a cake and we had it with some ice cream. Ruth finished this Christmas table-runner the same day.



On Saturday, November 27 we took Chelsi to Portsmouth to choose a birthday gift dress. That night & again on the 30th we watched the International Space Station cross the sky.



On December 17, on the eve of the election,

I was returning up our road, Calibishie Ridge Road, from Marigot after having dropped off the men who were installing our new garage gates. It was a neighbor's pickup truck just above me ascending after the hairpin curve. As I rounded the hairpin the pickup rolled backwards towards my car, and then went over the embankment. I stopped and rushed over to see if the driver was all right. At first I couldn't see him and feared he'd been tossed from the vehicle, but the doors were closed. Then I saw him slumped in his seat. I asked if he was all right and got no answer, and feared he was unconscious or dead. But he was only passed our drunk.



Here's a look at our Xmas tree. It's artificial; we brought it and the ornaments here with



us. We bought the lights here. Sheikana and Tyreese “helped” Ruth decorate it.



And above are a garlanded bush and a red poinsettia in our yard. No little potted poinsettias needed here! The low temperature is about 76°F. It was 4°F in Westboro MA on December 18.

The Dominica Labour Party won a resounding election victory on December 18.

On December 19, our friends Christophe Joseph and Luidmila Domenova, who publish www.dominica-weekly.com got married. We went to the wedding at a small but very pretty chapel at Loubiere, just south of Roseau, the capital and reception at a place called Mero about a half-hour’s drive north. The reception was at an estate atop what must be a 1500 foot high mountain. The views over the Caribbean to the west and the central mountains to east were spectacular. The ceremony was sweet and the reception was friendly and had great food. But it sure felt good to get home and out of my suit! I hadn’t worn socks or shoes, an undershirt, a long-sleeve shirt, or long trousers, and certainly not a suit jacket and tie for over a year.



As our villa looks now: (Wrought iron grillwork and garage doors are being added. Also some additional landscaping and decorative fence.)



View from the northwest.



Our veranda.

Postscript for Animal Lovers: Ranger and Lyla are now fully Dominican. It was a hassle getting them here, because of restrictive airline rules and the veterinary testing needed for the import permit (although, many



thanks to Dr. Thomas who waived the customary import license fees) that they'll never leave. They've adapted well, learning to take mid-day siestas and frolic in the cool of evening. And, they've become big favorites of the village children. (L-R: Lyla, Fluffy, Ranger)

Fluffy: This 7-pound poodle started playing with Lyla and Ranger within a week of our arrival. He'd never been clipped or groomed and his hair was so long and matted that he could barely see or walk. He was neglected and sometimes abused. We got permission to clean him up and care for him. It took us 3½ hours working with scissors to de-mat him. He's afraid of electric clippers, but loves being combed. Ruth made him a collar and I taught him some tricks. He'd get bitten by larger males whenever a female nearby came into heat, so we got permission to have him neutered. He lived with us for 9 months. Projections from our veranda hold large flowerpots. Fluffy loved to sit on them, day or night, in what Ruth & I called "full gargoyle mode".



The people took Fluffy back & keep him inside tied up all the time – we hear him crying. They also have a schnauzer/poodle mix female "Bling-Bling" they don't care for. She comes to play with our dogs. We do nothing special for her because she'd probably suffer Fluffy's fate. But they saw it come see Ranger & Lyla and now they tie it too. On October 28 Fluffy reappeared at our door. On the 31st they came for him. We have not seen him since. Bling-Bling also got out and came by once, horribly matted.

Tipsy: One morning Ruth heard a mewling outside and found a 5-6 week old tabby kitten. Perhaps someone left it hoping we'd take it in. We might have, but we knew that not long before, our friend Verdán had been given a little calico kitten that was only about 2 weeks old. Despite her best efforts to care for that kitten, it died. Verdán was thrilled when Ruth gave her the tabby. She named it "Tipsy". I'd have named him "Chancy" as in the novel "Being There". But we must turn a blind eye to animals in need here, or we'd go crazy (and bankrupt) trying to feed, shelter, or aid them, and we could never change the culture regarding how animals are treated.



Watch the Kitten: That's an apposition, not an imperative. We got this little black tom-kitten from Gus Austria at the village general store and Ruth presented him to Simeon, who first named it "Watch" (what it will do for mice). Later when he realized it's a male he changed it to "Tommy". He's since changed it to "Coral", after the Coral Reef restaurant at Gus's store (where we told him it came from). I'd have named it "Reefer". Then he renamed it "Brandy". Simeon likes cats & was thrilled to get this one. He even says he'll have him neutered so that he always stays around. In mid-December Simeon told us the cat's name is now Willie, which Simeon claims was the name of the Virgin Mary's companion cat.



We don't follow US news much.

Important things here are the weather, crop yield, & fish catch. I had an accident in April in this bereft third-world country. A cement block fell and skinned the back of my right leg. I cleaned and treated the abrasion, but developed a slight infection. I went to the nearest hospital. Treatment was prompt and free, as were the prescription antibiotics and follow-up daily dressing-changes by our village nurse in the local clinic for two weeks. I also received treatment for a blocked ear in November. They even gave me a syringe to use if I ever had the problem. I was never even asked to pay or if I had insurance.

Our friend & neighbor Herry needed eye surgery that he could never afford. He was flown for free round-trip to Cuba where the surgery and convalesce were also free.

Why can't the US do nearly as well?

Photos of our last days at the office before we retired: (*Apologies to "Mad Men".*)



Ruth (blue dress) and Dan (short-sleeve shirt) say their farewells at the office.

Now that I'm 68 and retired, I can look back. Here (right) is a



photo of a car from my birth year – a 1941 Lincoln Zephyr V-12 coupe. Cool, huh? Our Suzuki 4WD is on the left. It's a 2-litre V-6 with 4WD and a/c. We've added tropical window darkening and



installed a roof rack since the photo.

Auto Repair in Dominica

In October I discovered that something was leaking down the inside bottom of the rear tires of my car. Bad rear axle seals were allowing differential gear oil to leak. My car's a 1996 Suzuki Escudo Nomade. This Suzuki model is very popular in Dominica and except for body changes, the car is also produced as the Asüna Sunrunner, Chevrolet Tracker, Chevrolet Vitara, Chevrolet Grand Vitara, Geo Tracker, GMC Tracker, Mazda Proceed Levante, Pontiac Sunrunner, Santana 300/ 350, and Suzuki Vitara.

That's eleven models overall; probably 50% of the vehicles here. Axle seals are very small, inexpensive parts. And they're vitally important – drive a car with differential gears un-lubricated and you'll have an expensive repair job and a car that won't run. Thus, one would think that auto parts stores and any new car dealer would stock them.

But no. I tried every auto parts shop in Portsmouth and Roseau and the parts counter at the new car dealer and learned that.

So, I ordered the parts, opting for the “by sea” delivery, because FedEx delivery would be too expensive. Meanwhile (I was told delivery would take a month), I did the “Dominican thing” –topping up my differential gear oil (not an easy thing to do, and the village gas station and auto repair shop don’t keep any on-hand) and a jury-rig stopgap “fix” for the seals. That is to remove them, soak them for 5 minutes in a diesel oil/gasoline mixture to swell them then wash them in detergent to stop the swelling, and re-install them. It cost me labor and replacement differential oil, brake fluid, and axle grease. And didn’t work.

So I went to the next stop-gap jury-rig solution – the same as the first except this time put PVC cement around the seals. The costs were the same – and so were the results. (I later learned that the top-up was done Dominica-style using motor oil, which is far less viscous than gear oil, which is why it leaked so badly.)

After about a month, the shop where I ordered the seals called me, saying “Your axle seal is here.” I said “Seal? Don’t you mean ‘seals’? I ordered two.”

They checked. They’d placed my order for a pair, but the supplier sent only one. I was told the next day that by way of apology the supplier was sending the missing seal via FedEx. Days later I called the auto parts store, because they’d not called to say the part had arrived, and was told that the supplier sent Dominica’s package to the Bahamas and vice-versa. They’ll arrive “later” – which in Dominica can mean much later. The Bahamas store wouldn’t send the Dominica package until after the Thanksgiving weekend. Even though Thanksgiving is a US holiday. Good grief! I wondered what else could go wrong.

When parts arrived I had to top-up the differential oil again (after sending to Roseau for them and for actual gear oil). And pay again. The repair was done in our garage on the 40th day after the problem was noticed. There’s almost something biblical about the 40 day wait.

Bonus: Jack-In-The-Box Jack Nicholson, reviving a very old, but still funny joke: www.youtube.com/watch?v=iom_sYQgAg&feature=player_embedded. During the Great Depression my mother had to quit high school to help her family by taking a job at a bakery. (At 16, she had great buns & cupcakes.) When I was in 7th & 8th grades she returned to high school to finish. At 32 and then a mother of two, they excused her from home room, gym, health, and home economics. But she took other academic classes, graduating in 1954. Jack Nicholson was in some of her classes. (He also sometimes attended Manasquan HS and had my Uncle Ben as a biology teacher.) Upon graduation he left town from the Asbury Park bus station, saying “I’m going to Hollywood to become a movie star”. He waited tables for years and made a show-stealing appearance as the mortician’s assistant dentist’s patient in the original B&W “Little Shop of Horrors”, but his real break was his role in the 1966 “Easy Rider”.

Until Next Year

We wish you and yours Happy Holidays and a wonderful, happy, and healthy 2010.