

**H**ere's a picture of a cute little flower in our garden to begin our 2013 annual holiday letter. And some photos of red & white poinsettias in our garden:



An interesting thing happened here this Christmas at a local market involving Frosty the Snowman. It made all the local news broadcasts, websites and newspapers.



But seriously, we got these nice photos of Ruth's godson Dante & his family. His mother, Sheran, is the eldest daughter of our friends and neighbors Herry & Hildreth Wilson. Dante was 27 months old when the photo was taken. He's happy and precocious and he can sing the ABC song. He and his family live on Antigua.



We had a wonderful experience on the night of December 13, 2012, around midnight. It was time for the peak meteor showers emanating from the constellation Gemini, and the moon was new and the sky cloudless. Ruth and I leaned against our fence and house and look upwards and saw about a dozen "shooting stars", some quite bright and spectacular and long-lasting) in about 20 minutes of watching.

Dominica News Online ([www.dominicanewsonline.com](http://www.dominicanewsonline.com)) publishes a Photo of the Day and on December 17 we found that it had published this photo which I'd been lucky to snap from our veranda. We see a lot of rainbows here. The ones from our veranda always appear toward the east in the afternoon after a shower when the sun is in the west. We've seen many spectacular rainbows in Dominica, including quite a few double rainbows.



Ruth made this cake a week before Christmas. We have Wednesday game nights with a few friends and neighbors, and it was the snack. We had a 2012 Christmas turkey dinner for ten: us, Herry & Hildreth & their children Chelsi, Sheikana, & Tyreese, and our friends Dawn & Louise and Nathalie.



Christmas Day was unusually cool and very dark and rainy, but our home was warm with good cheer. Here you see Sheikana and Tyrese (the lamp behind made him a silhouette), the grown-ups with Dawn that I took, the grown-ups with me that Dawn took, and Dawn, Herry, Hildreth and Louise with pottery gifts that Mathilda made for each of them: Dawn's bowl, Louise's bowl, Hildreth's mug & Herry's mug.



Just before Christmas Herry and I finished making the "Uncle Wiggly" flower garden path and steps connecting it over the retaining wall to our fruit garden. Now Ruth can walk the flower garden and tend each bush without ever getting her shoes muddy and I can reach the compost heap and trash burn location also without muddying my shoes and without having to go out the front gate, up the driveway and back into the upper fruit garden through its gate. Nice.



On the last day of 2012 Ruth completed this set of Yin-Yang placemat quilts. Just what I've always wanted: Quilts up the Yin-Yang! Just kidding, I love them.

And now, damn the Mayans! Onward to 2103.





We started with our New Year's Eve on a Caribbean beach, with dinner, music, a bonfire, and anchored windjammers shooting off flares. Welcome in 2013!



I downloaded Google Earth and found our house. It's at Latitude 15°35'31.46 North, Longitude 61°20'49.23 West. Our altitude is 202 feet above sea level.

A story about a typical day here: Our friend Dawn called us at 10 AM on a Sunday asking whether we had electric power and pipe water. She had neither. The pipe water pressure had dropped and because her house is uphill from ours, while we had some water, she had none. Her electricity was out because of a bad connection up at the pole. So she and I brought our generator over to power her refrigerator until the power company could show up. The generator refused to start. I wanted to test spark plug. Then I tried to remove it, but the plastic plug wrench would only slip because the "sea blast" had tightened the plug. We had to drive around the village to find a metal plug wrench. Then we removed the plug and cleaned it, but all we could do was get the generator to start under full choke, but not to run. Then I contacted friends in the US to find one who can bring replacement plugs. All this took more than half the day. Happily, her landlord knew a power company worker who lives in a nearby village who came over and fixed the pole connection early that evening. And the generator's problem was its carburetor, which I fixed later.

We really had to do a lot of on-line and on-phone work in January to re-plan and re-schedule the 2012 Italy vacation that we had to cancel because of Ruth's surgery. But we saved a ton (US\$5200!) on airfare and managed to secure our 200 Euros from our one reservation, in San Marino, that wasn't refundable, in credit for a new booking.

Back in the USA, our daughter Mathilda was busy making inventory for 2013 tourist season sales. These



cups and bowls have little clay potter baby sea turtles (in her hands) at the bottom. In Dominica, we took a hike with our friend Dawn and her cocker spaniel Calypso and our miniature schnauzers Ranger and Lyla to the summit of the Cabrits, the hill where Ft. Shirley overlooks Prince Rupert Bay and the town of Portsmouth. Dawn snapped this photo of us next to an 1835 King George cannon that defended the west (back) side from Caribbean Sea approach.



February 8, 2013 was my 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday (and the 9<sup>th</sup> for our black miniature schnauzer Lyla). Ruth made it a wonderful one for me not only by baking me a blueberry pie, but also by having gotten me something I'd been wanting – a Hohner "Little Lady" mini harmonica to replace the worn out one I'd had on my keychain for years – and now this model comes in a plastic case to hang on the keychain to prevent damaging the instrument. We also went out for dinner and I had a man's meal; prime rib and mashed potatoes, with an Irish whiskey on the rocks before and Irish

coffee with the blueberry pie dessert. And just when I went to pay for our meal I learned that we were being treated by our friend Dawn.



On February 23, from our veranda, I saw a humpback whale breach in the Guadeloupe Channel between us and the island of Marie Gallant. It looked exactly like the stock photo here. We've seen this before, often many whales and sometimes both breaching and sounding, but it's



always a thrill to see. I was lucky to be looking over the channel at the right moment. I saw another the next day. And Ruth spotted a Jaco parrot (stock photo here) from our veranda too.



Our friend Dawn has two cats and had a huge cat tower for them. But her tom cat decided to start "marking" the tower base, so she decided to get rid of it (the tower, not the tom cat). We found that we could deodorize it and that our Coco liked it. Coco is fortunate indeed; we'd



never spring for such a costly item. For all we know, it's the only cat tower in Dominica!



On March 3 we had a wonderful 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner at the "POZ" restaurant of Calibishie Gardens

(<http://www.dominica-weekly.com/poz-at-calibishie-gardens-a-delightful-full-service-restaurant/>). Our guests were friends and neighbors Herry & Hildreth and Dawn. Ruth wore a new dress she'd purchased for the occasion in Portsmouth, plus new shoes. We'd previously



arranged for our dinner of callaloo soup, boiled lobsters (actually tropical saltwater spiny crayfish, not the New England type of lobster, but tasting about the same) with rice and vegetables, salad, pumpkin cheesecake and white wine, plus drinks and coffee or tea. I gave Ruth a psilomelane (manganese oxide) pendant wrapped in gold wire by Mathilda's friend Carl Coleman (the "Crystal King", find him on Facebook). Shortly after we returned home Mathilda called wishing us a happy anniversary, and we also had many well-wishers on Facebook.



We gathered on our veranda for Tyreese's 10<sup>th</sup> birthday. We gave him presents of a Spiderman nerf football and a glider. Ruth made him a cake and presents from her US last trip. He's wild about Spiderman. He watched a Spiderman cartoon on our TV via Netflix streaming. Spiderman had some funny incidents when he was a boy, according to his mother...





Crested hummingbird

One morning in March Ruth took a walk through our (really her) garden doing two things: Taking photos of her favorite blooming plants and familiarizing herself with our new Canon PowerShot G12 camera that we used later in Italy.

She got this great shot with a feeding crested hummingbird in it, which I



photoshopped out. Coco was napping instead of watching. The full slide show is here:

<http://dantanner.jalbum.net/Our%20Garden%20in%20March%202013/>



March 21 saw the 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday of our friend and neighbor Simeon. Friends gathered to celebrate the event, as usual. We and several others brought him pre-made meals and Ruth and another lady each made him a cake. Ruth's meal for Simeon was mahi-mahi, breadfruit pudding and pumpkin squash, with salad and biscuits and passionfruit juice, and the cake was a pumpkin cake with chocolate icing. In this photo, Simeon sits among his female admirers, Nonia, Ruth, and Karen.



Ruth discovered in January that Ranger, then nearly 13, had a cataract in his right eye; the poor old fellow. Ranger turned 13 on Feb. 12. Soon after, he became incontinent, wetting himself while sleeping, lost weight, became weak in his hind legs and developed several fatty tumors and his eyes



became cloudy. It was diabetes. Clearly he was suffering. We had to put him to rest on April 4. He was a clever dog who taught himself to pick his expanding leash by its handle and performed some 15 tricks at shows and even on television. And he was super-gentle. He once pushed a baby chipmunk with his nose, and when Lyla was puppy she used to chew on him and he endured it. We buried Ranger in our yard and planted a special red and yellow canna lily on his grave. Lyla pined for him for three weeks and now seems to cling to us more than she had ever.



Dominica is a small country and typically doesn't make the US news even on slow news days. But from April 17-21 we had five days of intense, heavy rain. There were serious floods in villages and the towns of Castle Bruce and Portsmouth. About a dozen or more towns and villages have no "pipe water"



supply. Several homes were lost to landslides and/or flash floods (one flash flood caused by a landslide river diversion). Worst of all, a huge 40-foot deep chasm that had to be bridged later opened up in the central road and in the predawn hours a car carrying four members of the national soccer team to the airport for a match plunged into the gap, killing two of them. The government reported on 30 significant landslides from April 17-20, mostly in the southern part of the island, mostly on the east (Atlantic windward) side. Later rains caused "pipe water" outages due to blocked intakes and rockslides like this one on the island's main road along the west coast.



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In May we took a 3-week vacation in Italy (<http://www.dan-ruth-tanner.com/Travel/Italy/Italy.html>) and the little enclave Republic of San Marino (<http://jalbum.net/en/browse/user/album/1366620>). What a wonderful, relaxing time we had! We saw beautiful places, sights and art, and dined like royalty. Our itinerary was: Fly from Dominica to St Martin, and then to Paris, and on to Milan. Spend two days in Milan adjusting our biological clocks and shopping for a few clothes, plus sightseeing. Then we went to the coastal resort Cinque Terre region for several days. Then we went on to Pisa, and Florence. We next visited Montepulciano and San Marino. Working our way back to Milan to retrace our flights back to Dominica, we stopped in at Modena and Manarello to visit the Ferrari museums because my late cousin Hans was associated with Ferrari ([http://www.dan-ruth-tanner.com/Tanner\\_Family/Hans/hans.html](http://www.dan-ruth-tanner.com/Tanner_Family/Hans/hans.html)).

In June we put our house here in Dominica up for sale. We're not getting any younger and we figure it might be best to sell when we want to rather than when we must. And, our income situation has improved since 2008 when we moved here. Finally, we now know that Mathilda will settle near Black Mountain NC, so we know where we will want to be living in the USA.



We "discovered" a great restaurant at Mero Beach on Dominica's Caribbean (west) coast and on June 3 we enjoyed the beach and a fine dinner (duck w/mango sauce and leg of lamb), with jazz playing over the 'net.



On June 9 we had a visit from Tropical Storm Chantal. Power was knocked out from 9:30 AM to 4 PM and the winds were about 60 MPH. The eye of the storm missed us, passing some 60 miles south

directly over St. Lucia. But our ground was saturated from frequent and often heavy rains ever since April, and the wind blew over our west fence, which had lima bean vines increasing its wind resistance, over. Wind also uprooted a huge 8-year-old cactus plant and seriously loosened three jasmine bushes that we hadn't trimmed back because they were in bloom and we enjoy the jasmine perfume at night.

Godzilla in the downstairs apartment shower! Ruth screamed, but out of sync with her lips. I couldn't find a radioactive bullet to kill it with, so I chased it out with a mop. Our cat Coco was petrified by it, but our miniature schnauzer Lyla wanted to play with it. Our Japanese tourists fled in terror and our prop doll house collapsed. (This one's a female – all green/no wattle. It's the first time one has ever come into our house. Yeah, the shower looks a bit dirty, but that's because we haven't had anyone in the apartment for the last three months.)



At night our jasmine bushes flowers open and fill the tropical air with fragrant perfume. We have three such bushes strategically placed so that the pleasant fragrance wafts into our house. The flowers are closed during the day, but the bushes look spectacular at night.

Ruth took a trip to the US in August-September and visited Martha's Vineyard for "Grand Illumination" at the Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association. Here are some views: <http://jalbum.net/en/browse/user/album/1413029;jsessionid=yqcqlp9o9zcs10bmu1gglsuga>. She also saw some marvelous sand sculptures at South Yarmouth on Cape Cod that you can see on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=348017538667020&set=pcb.348018105333630&type=1&heater>

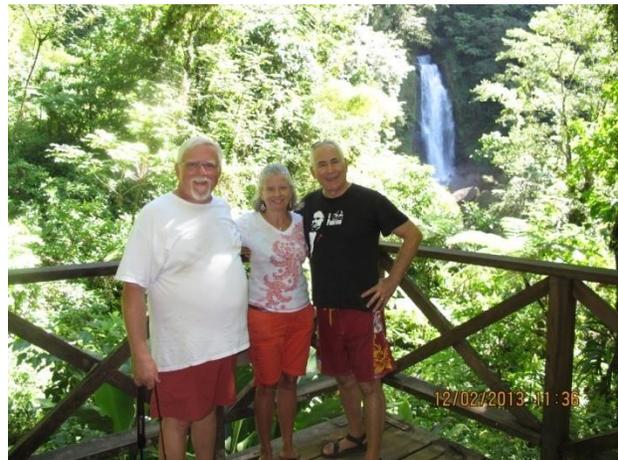
On September 24, we experienced our first personal instance of theft here. And we first came here in 1987 and vacationed here many times, bought land here in 2004, built in 2005 and came here twice a year until 2008 when we moved here permanently. We were alone at Woodford Hill Beach and someone grabbed our beach bag while we were in the water. A passerby forced him to return it. It had nothing of value in it. Earlier in the summer we met a honeymooning couple about our age who had been here before and were planning to buy and/or build here. But her cell phone was stolen during their first week here and then a thief broke into their rented car and took everything inside: wallets, cell phones, cash, camera and her US\$2000 platinum/diamond wedding ring. Police recovered it and after using it as evidence, returned it to them (they claim) via FedEx. But the ring wasn't in the package. Everyone believes court officers stole it. The thief got 3 month in prison, and a 4<sup>th</sup> for another crime.

Three gratuitous photos below: A bouquet from our yard, some different-color sea urchin skeletons that I gathered on a Dominica beach and some semiprecious stones Ruth panned out in the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina.



Batibou Beach, October 27, 2013: A first for us. We saw hatchling sea turtles crawl to the sea. We didn't have our camera with us, but the beach's owner sent us the upside-down video in this link which will let you download the 59-second QuickTime clip: <http://www.dan-ruth-tanner.com/Videos/turtles.mov>

On Thanksgiving Day Ruth made a traditional Thanksgiving turkey dinner and we had our friends Dawn and Louise over as guests. On December 2 we had a visit from old, dear friend Tommy Downs, who was in Dominica for only 6½ hours aboard a cruise ship. His wife Renee was with him, but wasn't well and didn't come ashore. We took Tommy to the Emerald Pool (left) and Trafalgar Falls (right).



There may still be time for you to get that last minute gift. How about ceramic art by Mathilda? Contact her on Facebook. See samples here:

<http://jalbum.net/en/browse/user/album/1432108;jsessionid=8dkilbwwlqzkm5nfbpvrxxq>



**Happy Holidays and a wonderful 2014 to you all! May 2014 bring peace.**