



THE HUNTER-MARSH HERALD

The Holiday Newsletter of Beckie Hunter & Neil Marsh

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DEAR FRIENDS & FAMILY:

Greetings from Cambridge! Sorry our annual Holiday letter is late this year. Things have been pretty hectic and we've only just had time to get to work on it. At least you'll actually be getting news of our exploits right up to the end of the year!

2003 was a "bad news, good news" sort of year for us, a prime example of the Chinese curse "May you live in interesting times":

- Beckie got laid off and was unemployed for six months, but has a great new job!
- Neil qualified for Social Security disability payments after a three year fight.
- The former minister at church was suspended for sexual harassment of a student minister, and Beckie was the point person to deal with the fallout from that.
- Beckie was part of the search committee that brought in an amazing new pastor, who started in November.
- Beckie was diagnosed with diabetes in March, but dieted and exercised her way out of it.
- Beckie's church friend, Lois, broke her hip in July and then her wrist in October, so B is helping her and learning about elder care options.
- Neil broke his foot in November while helping the new minister move in to the parsonage, spent 4 weeks in a cast, but is getting around now.
- Neil & Beckie bought a car, the first they've ever owned together! They are the proud owners of a burgundy 1998 Dodge Grand Caravan that a neighbor's brother sold to them.



ON THE WORKING FRONT

After nearly three years of jousting with the Social Security Administration, we were scheduled for a hearing in January to determine if Neil qualified for disability. With advice from a church friend, we got an amazing letter from Neil's psychiatrist for his medical record. After reading it, the administrative law judge ordered Social Security to grant Neil disabled status and pay him retroactively – without him having to attend the hearing at all! It took until April for payments to start, but it has been a great relief, providing Neil with some income, while allowing him to work on his projects during his good days.

Neil's put most of his energy this year into a book about the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's radio series *Nightfall*, a controversial supernatural/horror anthology that ran on the CBC from 1980-1983. He's had a great time doing the detective work to find the writers, actors and production people who worked on the show, then interview them. Most are amazed that anyone is interested in their work of 20 years ago, but are happy to reminisce. He's also been doing extensive research through the on-line databases of the National Library and Archives of Canada, Concordia University's Center for Broadcast Studies, the Toronto Star and others. Neil has been invited to do research in the archives at CBC Toronto and plans to make a trip there. There may be trips to other cities in Canada in 2004, depending on finances. While most *Nightfall* episodes were produced in Toronto, many were produced at CBC facilities in cities from St. Johns, NF to Vancouver, BC, and production records for those stories would only be found in those cities. It's a big undertaking, but he feels up to it. Neil's begun building a website about the book, which you can see at <http://AudioBoy.net/Nightfall-25>.

Beckie started her 19th year at Ropes & Gray in March, but was laid off in April. It came as a complete shock, and she went to an employment lawyer to discuss suing – the lawyer felt she

had a very good case along age/gender discrimination lines – but she decided against it. It was scary being unemployed for the first time since college, but Beckie really enjoyed it! She joined a gym with her sister, Elizabeth, and lost 30 pounds! She became certified as a Reader for the Blind and Dyslexic, recording textbooks onto CDs for the visually challenged. She did a lot of church work, facilitating the search for a new pastor and holding the church together during the controversy over the suspension of their former minister. She was also free to help her church friend, Lois, who broke a hip in July. Beckie took a job-hunting course to bone up on fun stuff like resume writing, interviewing and networking, but none of that was needed, as a friend from church talked her into taking a temp position at Harvard University, which led to a full-time position! She was very lucky to have four months of severance, two months of temping and then be re-employed six months to the day after leaving Ropes & Gray.

So, Beckie is now the Program Coordinator for the Derek Bok Teaching and Learning Center at Harvard University. You can check out the center on-line at <http://bokcenter.Harvard.edu>.

She supervises 14 work-study students, two assistants, and helps the center staff improve the quality of teaching at Harvard through teaching conferences, class videotaping and practice teaching. It is very-low key compared to the law firm, has better benefits, and she can walk to work! She was astonished to have 16 days off in a row between from Dec. 20 – Jan. 5 instead of the two days off she'd been used to downtown.

ADVENTURES IN TRAVEL

Despite the upheaval with Beckie's job, we did get away a few times this year:

March: We planned to attend the annual gathering of the Half-A-Dozen Lemmings in Washington DC, but a series of blizzards kept us at home. Beckie and Elizabeth drove down later in



the month for the World Figure Skating Championships. It was tough to be at an arena six blocks from the White House with the tension at the beginning of the Iraq war, but they had a lovely time seeing the best skaters in the world, visited the National Zoo, and saw Julia Child's kitchen at the Smithsonian!

April: We took the train back to Indiana to attend a reception in honor of Neil's dad as he was granted an honorary doctorate from Indiana University for his service to the Chemistry Department. Neil admitted he had never known much about what his dad did, but he learned a little about it that day and was very proud! It was great to have a big chunk of time with Neil's sister Debbie for the first time in years, to see his mother again, and to catch up with Neil's *Doctor Who* friends at two parties!

June: We drove to Beckie's parents' home in upstate NY for her Dad's 81st birthday! He and Mrs. Hunter have had a very good year. They are still into all sorts of local activities and preaching regularly. We also made a side trip into the back hills to do some research for Neil's *Nightfall* book, meeting the sound effects wizard Tom Clack and his family at their home.

July: Neil hosted "NeilCon 3", the third annual gathering for his friends on the IRC chat group, #DrWhoChat. The usual suspects came from New York, Florida and Toronto to attend, but this year saw the first intercontinental guest as his friend Eva's fiancé, Ash, joined her in Boston from the UK. Everyone enjoyed the local sites, sounds and flavors, as well as overdosed on *Doctor Who* and other British sci-fi programs.

October: Beckie and Elizabeth drove to Reading, PA to see the Skate America competition. They spent four days watching skating, with a couple of breaks to visit the famous outlet mall and see the covered bridges of Berks County.

MOVIE RECOMMENDATIONS

Beckie enjoyed "Bend it Like Beckham" and "Chicago", Neil was completely absorbed into "Return of the King", the final installment of "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy, and both highly recommend Pixar's "Finding Nemo".

FAMILY MATTERS

Our beloved cats continue to entertain us. The lovely, and very poofy, Vanna seems to be working on a book of her own, entitled "The Art of the Paw", regarding her specialized limb display techniques. Winston, our oldest and often sickly cat, has actually improved. A change in diet and the addition of medicine for his joints has made him into a new cat. He still has bad days, but he's no longer hiding in the closet all the time.

Neil's Mom moved to a new apartment this year. She'd been in a senior housing complex, but had a chance to move and enjoys her new spot. His brother, Shawn, was laid off from Sotheby's in NYC but got a great new job with a company that deals in Japanese art. Neil's nephew, Tanner, is doing well at Washash College, while his folks, Debbie and Gary, continue to coach swimming at the University of Indianapolis. His brother, Tim, runs a business out of his home, and likes not having to travel as much.

Beckie's family had a good year. After two years living in London and traveling all over Europe and North Africa, Elizabeth and Jason settled into their new home in Arlington, MA.

They're starting a community theater company at Beckie's church, called "Theatre@First", and asked Neil to design the website for them, which you can visit at <http://www.TheatreAtFirst.org>. Jason was in a couple of community theater productions in the Fall, and they learned enough from that experience to go off on their own. Jason continues his work with RedHat, a computer software company, developers of one of several popular brands of the Linux operating system. Elizabeth records books for the Blind & Dyslexic, and also works a few hours a week at Harvard scanning in textbooks for the visually challenged. She and Jason went to Florida to see his family for Christmas, so the Hunter clan gathered at Neil and Beckie's on Christmas Eve before their departure. Anne and her partner, George, made their annual pilgrimage to Block Island in August. Anne continues working hard at MIT and George is still at Lincoln Labs. He has had a hard year on the health front, with a never-ending headache, a bad back, several bouts of the flu and then what looked like a heart attack in October while Beckie and E were away at Skate America, but the doctors at Mass General checked him out completely and found nothing wrong.

CONTACT US

Let us hear your news! We continue to do most of our correspondence over the Internet and would love to hear from you! If you are on-line, you can send e-mail to:

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Visit our website for pictures, stories and more at:

<http://www.AudioBoy.net>

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OUR WISHES FOR YOU

We hope for peace around the world and a better economy here at home. We hope that 2004 brings you unexpected joy!

