

You'd think by now Christmas wouldn't be able to get the drop on me but, 'lo December has jumped out and and decked me with holly and festive spirit once again.

It has been a big year around our little house on Wollaston Street; a year full of changes, most for the better, some still waiting for the recount. Right now I feel like there's a cat in the middle of the plans I'd carefully laid out at the beginning of 2012 and it will take the first half of 2013 to untangle it all.

Mark is still traveling a lot and working hard at that weather thing he does. After this many years you'd think I'd be better at explaining it to people when they politely ask. Nope, it still takes 5 minutes more than they really expected and no one is any closer to understanding it. I just say it's weather stuff and leave it at that.

Nicole is out in the working world, finishing off a few things before her criminology degree will be complete. After that she can get a job doing whatever it is she has in mind. I don't know, she doesn't tell me anything and Mark just shrugs when I give him the "well, she talks to you more" look.

Something happened when I wasn't looking--yes, I know, I seem to have spent life tying my shoes while history dances by with a band and jugglers--and she is now an assistant manager at the Nygaard store in Tillicum Mall. A little more pay and a lot of relief for me: she's not going to be alone in a store downtown at night.

Yes dear, mother worries. It's what mother does.

Rachael is in the 2nd last year of her history degree at UVic. We've been informed she is planning on keeping the house when it's all over and we can find a place to live on our own. We haven't told her yet that the bank and Visa own the house right now. I thought we could let that be one of those special moments of discovery along the yellow brick road.

Rachael seems to have caught the travel bug from her parents. This spring she high-dee hived off to New York and Washington D.C. with a few of her little friends. There were some shows the girls wanted to see and, despite the best efforts of nature and West Jet, they managed to see most of them.

Mark and I managed a bit of a get-away ourselves. I'd show you a few pics but apparently I killed the internets when all the photos were uploaded. Choked to death or a mercy killing, depending on who you ask.

In Four weeks we went from Scotland, through England, Amsterdam, Paris and ended in Portugal. It was planned by Blaseckie the Hun. I think it's his Ukrainian

Tartar ancestry: show him a map of Europe and he is seized with the need to cut as large a swath through it as possible. I'm just glad he doesn't ride a horse.

In Portugal's Algarve we met up with friends of ours from Axys: Tony and Elaine Ethier. They were just completing a year of globe trotting and this seemed a great place to wind it up. They were right. The food, the people, the region were all wonderful and full of surprises. It is definitely at the top of my list for places to revisit.

The trip started off with closing the chapter in my life entitled 'clerk at Hub Storage'. When it came time to fill in the tourist visa enroute to the EU, Mark put "writer" in the space for my occupation.

Stop laughing. It isn't funny, it's terrifying but I've run out of options and excuses.

My first project is recording personal life stories and creating a written timeline. The edited voice files will be accessed through links on that timeline. I'm practicing on Clarence and will start on Joyce in the New Year.

It's all thanks to Tony and Elaine. They got me started with a request to compile an oral archive of Elaine's dad's stories. In all honesty I can't believe my good fortune in this. It is fascinating to listen to the stories and to learn so much precious personal history.

That's life so far. I've got to get moving here, there's a whole lot of fussing, worrying and generally spinning wheels to do and only a few days left to do it all. And don't forget packing! It's another windfall year with a family trip to Mexico thanks to Joyce taking the whole famn damily to her favourite resort in Puerto Vallarta. Sorry, she's not adopting any more children.

I hope you are happy, doing well and exactly where you want to be, whether it's with friends and family or simply curled up in a cozy place until all the madness blows over for another year.

Stay safe, stay warm and we'll talk in the New Year.