

December 1, 2019
Advent Sunday

Dear Friends,

This year we traded our old cat for a new grandson. It was a good deal. Welcome to the world Elias Lambert Fionn McClear, born May 8, 2019 in Anchorage; Kevin and Shannon's son. Elias is named for Mt. St. Elias, the second highest peak in Alaska. He is a smiley happy kid.



Our 17-year old white long-haired, rag-doll cat Matzi died of old age; but he will always be with us. Strands of his long white hair still appear on any dark fabric that we may ever want to wear. We handed our second cat, 14-year old Kossa, to the Minnesota McClears (Brian, Liz, Liam and Fiona) because we'll be traveling a lot in the coming year. Liam has quite taken to Kossa and, even more importantly, Kossa has quite taken to Liam, although she is still leary of Milo, their 100-pound husky mix. Kossa hisses as she slinks past Milo, who just looks puzzled. This is not the first time Brian has taken on one of our felines. He knows an air compressor can really mess with "she who hisses."

While in Minnesota we enjoyed Thanksgiving with the extended family at (Suzi's sister) Nancy's place and, following family tradition, the day after Thanksgiving we went out to the old farm to cut Christmas trees. This year we decided not to test TSA by taking one home to Newcastle, sorry Sitka, as checked luggage. We have done so in the past and TSA left us a note.

The family (minus cats and dogs, thank you) took a "Ski Chalet" in Girdwood, Alaska for a week in July, all 9 of us. We spent a week doing Alaska stuff, with Liam and Fiona both taking the oath of "Junior Ranger" in a ceremony as a part of the glacier cruise. Fiona loved swapping the role of little sister for older cousin.

This spring we took a cruise to Northern Europe visiting friends along the way, including Lisa, Suzi's AFS sister, a friendship started in the 1950s.

Rich retired for the third time, dropping his daily "Problem Corner" show on KIFW. Is this the last time? Don't bet on it. Both of us continue to volunteer at Raven and for a while this summer we were on the air opposite each other on different radio stations.

This year it will be the two of us at Christmas, both sets of kids spending time with the other in-laws. Rich is getting ready for his annual Christmas Eve broadcast, "The Battery Exchange." This year he's making up, or rather re-remembering, new stories from his childhood prompted by pictures and gifts (including animals carved from lumps of coal) from his Aunt Janice who gave up her flat and checked herself into an extended care facility. We visited in November and she is really looking good.



In January we're off for a 4 ½ month world journey heading to Antarctica, among other places. No cats. We hope you all have a blessed holiday and a New Year full of wonders.

Take Care, and happy new decade.

Suzi and Rich McClear

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Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year