

Hello Everyone,

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Greetings for 2022 & 2023 from

Bob and Judith

We are well and looking forward to a visit by new type of Saint Nicholas for 2023. He is expected to bring our belated Christmas presents in February or March 2023

There will be two presents - each with four white legs, grey body and white beard. They will be our new lady miniature Schnauzers. They will join us after a break as a no dog household for the last 5 months, having lost both our miniature schnauzers in March and August this year. It has been a quiet house these last months with no walks to take, games to play, barks to respond to or pats to give. They had long and we hope good lives retiring at 13.3 and 15.5 years. A visit to the nearby park yesterday (the first since August), where the dogs often walked was surprising. A dog, a long time "friend" of our schnauzers, came up to me and nuzzled me, looked up at me quizzically - where are they? This dog had never paid me any attention, just focused on the dogs, in fact he was a bit of a nuisance always trying to chase them, and I often told him to go away, but he wanted me to know he missed them. A curious canine encounter.

Our doctor's bills have lessened a little this year - Bob's way of saying no hospital visits in 2022 and he has experienced generally good health, other than some anaemia and an iron infusion. Bob's got his jousting gear at the ready and thinks there is a reasonable chance he will reach 96 come June, 2023 and Judith is looking forward to another year of us both avoiding coronavirus.

Unfortunately, we have not avoided a major cyber-attack on our private health insurance provider, which has resulted in our data, along with millions of other customers, being published on the dark web. So far no evidence of impact however we have become even more alert to any strange events or possible security weaknesses. The digital world just

becomes more complicated and riskier, for all its positive aspects. We are keeping our fingers crossed.

Now that Bob's memoir is ancient history (published in 2020), Bob is having a look into what new types of writing is all about - specifically about 'poetry'.

When he was in the US Navy, he was given the auspicious rate of Journalist Third Class but wasn't given training as a journalist. So he became a self-taught typist and writer of stories. That worked out well until a friend recently sent him a book of poems that he had written. He was impressed and found it opened another door in the world of writing and he has decided to try some poetry. To find out what poetry is all about, he Googled 'poetry' and found out that one is pretty much on your own when writing poems. So, he got started and shares this short poem about the ocean.

Thump, thump, thump!

Clocks tick and wait for no-one!

With only 15 minutes to go - hurry up.

Now inside and tap, tap, tap. We go down

Sit behind the window - shadows outside,

All is dark except for the little creatures

That give their effort burst,

And flash like thousands of Christmas lights.

Beautiful, simply beautiful!

This poem resulted from Bob going aboard an oceanic research ship looking at small planktonic animals hitting the ship's bow at the water line. He was inside looking out a window.

Let's see what 2023 brings in poetry!

The summer season is now with us, and the country is having its third El Nino system in a row, resulting in very wet and generally cooler weather.

Thankfully where we live, we have not experienced any extreme rain and thus flooding etc, but many people in rural areas have experienced serial floods this year, horrendous experiences. The mighty Murray River is slowly devouring /flooding Victorian and South Australian farmland, rural areas, as all this water makes it way to the sea- the extraordinary force of nature.

Today a large South Australian rural town announced it was evacuating patients at the hospital because of the risk of flooding as the water rises.

The irony is that currently there is not a lot of rain, and the days are generally sunny, but all the accumulated rain, captured in the all northern rivers that feed the Murray, are delivering the rain of weeks past. I found this video of the region https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Yqt8K_KuUA - RIVERLAND FLOODS - Murray River flooding in South Australia- if you are minded to, have a look. It has some good drone footage that gives a perspective and some commentary.

At 38A all this wet weather means weeds in the garden, abundant blooms and mosquitos and spiders all over the place.

We are planning a short break in mid-January, the first since our last visit to Hawaii in 2019. Bob's mobility limitations and general stamina limit longer journeys these days; however we have located lakeside accommodation, in the countryside, an hour or so from home, that provides facilities for those less able - flat surfaces, no steps, bathrooms with rails etc. We are looking forward to a break away for a few days prior to becoming dog owners again. Hopefully we'll be able to share a photo or two of the adventure in our 2023 Christmas letter!

Memories of Kayla, Aysha and Bobby - our beautiful schnauzers -
gone but always with us.

