



Happy New Year
2015!

From the Longs:

Andy and Anna

Tchapo(29) [and Abagaile]

Rosemanie(17) Thaddeus(13)

Dear Friends,

The year 2014 has come and gone, and we send our greetings and best wishes to you: may you achieve all that you hope and desire throughout this blessed year 2015.

Our tale for the last several years (for we callously neglected to contact you all last year at this time) is a long and eventful one. I'll condense it to the Cliff Notes version of things; if you want more details, you'll want to give us a call, or, better yet, stop by for a visit -- we'd love to have you! I leave out many better-known details of our lives in Ft. Thomas, in favor of life in Canada.

I pick up where we left off in 2013: ironically, Abagaile graced that issue as well – so she's been lingering.... Could it be that we are on the verge of something official? Is that possible, sports fans? YES! The biggest news this year is the formal engagement of Tchapo and Abagaile, which Tchapo orchestrated in October. He did a lovely job of making his proposal into a party, which took place on Abagaile's family's ancestral land in southern Campbell County. Thanks much to Lori and Mark Buechel, Abagaile's parents, who hosted the event, and enjoyed facilitating the surprise. We look forward to uniting our two families officially in late July of this year.

Anna, Rosemanie, Thaddeus, and I are back from our year in Canada, during which we devoted considerable effort to creating a farm out of a farmhouse, fields, and barn. Each person had a role: Thad was in charge of the rabbits; Rosemanie in charge of the laying hens and meat birds; Anna took charge of the garden; and I handled the sheep and the horse. Everyone took a turn at getting and splitting wood for the furnace, and we shivered through one of Canada's "good old-fashioned winters", as some of the local folks said. But we did a pretty good job, and managed to come close to providing for our needs. We couldn't have done it without the help of a lot of wonderful friends, however, and I want to mention several. Our neighbors at the end of the road, Ben and Mary Baril, were indispensable in so many ways; so was my horse-

trainer and friend Jake Grove; and the Waram foursome (Michael, Pauline, Gia, and Haley), became a good match for our family. There were many others who helped us survive in the great white north (you know who you are!), including members of the Long branch who made trips up before and during the sabbatical year. Mom and Steve have earned special thanks.

Rosemanie and Thad did well in their smaller schools, and had a chance to do more extracurricular activities than they do here in Kentucky. They enjoyed soccer (certainly!), volleyball, track, badminton, and other fun activities. The community regularly gathered for soccer, even outside of school. Rosemanie represented her school and region in Toronto for the Provincial track meet, in the long jump – quite an honor for a neophyte long-jumper.

Our Canadian church (St. Andrew's in the Pines, United Church of Canada) was an important part of our lives, and provided us other delightful friends and reflections. Anna met with her sewing buddies at the church, too. It was a wonderful home-away-from-home, small and intimate. Thad had a chance to enjoy the UCC summer camp during each of two summers.

The garden was well-kept by Anna, and we learned to can and to make pickles, jellies, and jams. Anna even made chokecherry wine. The kids lent a hand when it came time to butcher chickens, and helped with the sheep whenever necessary. It was a fun experience to have lambs born in our barn (but not quite so fun when we had to send "the boys" – and a few of the girls -- off to slaughter). We still have 20 (mostly pregnant) sheep, Belgian draft horse Kate, and border collie Ace (all being lovingly cared for by our friend and farming-advisor Bobbi Jo). I'll visit over spring break, and then head back up again as soon as school is out in early May. My goal is to return the farm to useful service, with a focus on sustainable agriculture and forestry. I'd love to live up there full time, but at the moment I'm out-voted 3 to 1.

Climate change is coming, however, in a very serious way. I cannot emphasize this enough: **wherever you are, whoever you are, you need to take climate change seriously, and the sooner the better.** We can all do a better job taking care of our planet. There's no downside to living sustainably, and there's a big upside to living the way we currently do (mortgaging our children's world). Suggested reading: Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*.

Thank God for time spent with friends and family. My mom is well, siblings and their families are fine, and we hope that you were able to enjoy a wonderful holiday like we did, out in the former Black-Swamplands of Bowling Green, Ohio. Thad and Rosemanie enjoy time spent with cousins, which is a precious blessing. You might be surprised that I, a mathematician, am chagrined to see so many faces bent down scrutinizing rectangles; oddly enough, I feel that we should be staring up at the heavens or out at the fields and forests that God has put here for our pleasure and sustenance, with which we are rapidly losing touch.

May we rediscover our humanity in 2015, while reducing our somewhat self-absorbed interest in entertaining ourselves to death with technology. Phones and computers are useful; but, as my brother Steve suggests, we might profit from a thoughtful, reflective fast from electronics. What a preachy ending to an otherwise happy tale! Sorry about that: it's just what I see....

