

October 2013, A Good Month to Write About

Written November 7, 2013



October 2013 marked 10 years of writing an entry in my online journal for every single day since October 19, 2003. That's over 3,650 entries! To me the details of life are important; they reflect the fabric of our existence and the more moments recorded, the more complete the adventure of life. I really do like to write and have this belief writing keeps the mind sharper (well maybe not so much for this 67 year old, but surely it helps). Plus, I have this idea if I write consistently I may yet write that novel bumping around inside my head. Or at least, maybe even write a monthly or seasonal update now and then.

So here is a monthly update for October 2013. Albeit not a novel, it is like a short story and surely that's a step in the right direction, yes?

October included a trip to Austin, Texas, a party for Chris, who turned 43, pumpkin patch outings, barn painting, a Sacramento dog dancing presentation, a special POP, and new glasses for me.

Okay the party for Chris wasn't really in October but since I am writing this several days into November it gets to be part of my update.

And well, yes, maybe getting new glasses isn't all that newsworthy but the fact I got them because I had cataract surgery back in September makes it worthy in my mind for mention. Not only that, wait till you find out where I bought them.

Read on!

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One big pumpkin patch outing for all three grandkids and one small pumpkin outing for Sierra brightened the Halloween season for us this year. If it wasn't for pumpkin patches we would be in the dark when it comes to Halloween. No children ring our doorbell for candy. We live in a quiet, isolated neighborhood.

Our first pumpkin patch outing was Punky's Pumpkin Patch in Petaluma with all three kids. We arrived at lunchtime and were sure the kids would be hungry after an intense morning of soccer games. Nope. they were too excited to stop for food. They just wanted to do things!

First off, there were two mazes and it was the larger one we went through knowing Rylan would prefer it. Right away Aubrey decided she didn't like it, and said, "This is boring. I just want to get out of here." Right away Sierra didn't want to walk and ended up on Robert's back or shoulders where she stayed for the rest of the time we spent going up and down and around the paths through the maze. We were in the maze for at least a half hour or more before finally finding our way back out the way we came in. Rylan was the one who led the way most of the time and managed to find four of the letters, N, K, Y and S, in the words carved into the corn maze that said, "PUNKY'S SAYS THANK YOU." The corn was impressively tall and was infused with huge piping along the ground for the watering

system. Squash plants and weeds were embedded amongst the stalks. At one point, when trying to figure out where we were, Rylan had to climb up on Robert's shoulders to see over the top of the stalks. Before he could, Aubrey insisted she try first. Neither of them could see a thing.

After the corn maze all three were ready to do the big bounce house located at the far end of the corn maze. The bounce house was followed by going down a giant slide. They each were only allowed three times on the slide; too bad because they all absolutely LOVED the slide.

After the bounce house, slides, and haystack climbing they were ready to eat. There was food served right on the grounds and tables to sit at to eat.

After lunch purchased on site (yes they finally admitted they were hungry) the kids were up for going through the haunted house. All three kids went through. Sierra wasn't too sure about going especially after a goony came walking toward her, Rylan and Aubrey with a frightening mask carrying a huge fake spider. Robert asked if he could go in with her and was able to without using one of our very expensive tickets. Sierra liked it even though she did say it was scary. She didn't like it enough to go through a second time after Rylan and Aubrey begged to go in again. Of course Robert, the good Grandpa he is, bought them more tickets for them to do so.

The last activity at Punky's was a pony ride for Aubrey and Sierra. When we left,

continued





after letting the kids walk through the pumpkin retail area each ending up with one small pumpkin, Robert and I felt overwhelmed (and very impressed) with all there was to do at Punky's.

Our second pumpkin patch outing to Stanley Pumpkin Patch in Napa was a Sierra only outing. We took her on a Tuesday, the day she stays at our house on her own each week.

Sierra went crazy over the huge pipe slide inside the haystack pyramid. Upon arriving we stopped to momentarily look at the

goats and pigs then she was totally ready to go up the hay pyramid and, without hesitation, go down the slide. Once at the bottom, she headed right back up to go down again. She did this a number of times before Robert talked her into checking out other things thinking she would want to climb on some of the tractors. She was willing to stick her head through the pumpkin painted board but when shown a tractor she could climb she wasn't interested. She just wanted to go back to the hay pyramid and slide. Off she went to climb up and slide through several more times. Robert then talked her into going over to look at the graveyard. Okay she did that then was ready to once again go up and down the pyramid and slide. On another break we were able to get her to walk through the pumpkin market and then look at the animals again. As we were standing looking at the pigs she told us she wanted to stay at the pumpkin patch forever. I asked her if she would leave to go to tumbling (she really, really likes her tumbling class) and she said no. She went down the slide a few more times. After that she was so tired she could hardly walk. She

wanted her water which Robert left in the car. When he returned with it she was ready to go home. She never asked us to buy her any pumpkins; doing so just wasn't on her radar. She was asleep by the time we were back at our house.

She still ended up with pumpkins though. Later in the day we harvested our *entire* crop of three pumpkins from our garden. She happily painted one using bright acrylic paints.



Painting The Barn Red

Before our Austin trip Robert pulled out leftover barn paint he surprisingly found to be still good after, we are guessing, at least 10 years and set to painting the east end of the barn. Somehow the time he set aside to paint both the east and west side of the barn before heading to Austin slipped away. That and he ran out of paint; he really thought he would have enough but the barn wall being so weathered soaked up the paint like it was dessert! Have you shopped for paint lately? The last time we did so, paint was around \$20 a gallon. Now it is up to \$50 a gallon! We headed to Home Depot to discover we could at least buy paint in a five gallon bucket lowering the cost to \$22 a gallon. "Mix us up some barn red," we told the paint guy. "Sorry, I don't have the tint base for barn red," he replied. When he saw disappointment in our faces, he quickly added, "But I can give you five one-gallon buckets for the same price." With one day left to paint and lots of paint on hand, we both dug in and finished the west end of the barn. I was also inspired to paint our old shabby looking barn bench as well.

We now have enough paint to cover the south and north sides of the barn—something we said we would do after our Austin trip. Well, guess what? The new paint is still unopened in spite of the threat of inclement weather around the corner.





True we went to Austin for the Austin Families Association of America (AFAOA) genealogy convention thus such an event should be considered the highlight of our trip and yes, there were some wonderful speakers at the convention but for me, the true highlight of our trip to Austin was Esther's Follies in downtown Austin.

We arrived in Austin a few days before the convention so had the opportunity for a little nightlife in downtown Austin. Thanks to Janelle Taylor, whom we had lunch with, for turning us onto Esther's Follies. It was totally delightful, entertaining and FUN! Some of the Texas political satire went over my head but it didn't matter since the performers were so energized and the singing was well done. The venue was very intimate; folding metal chairs sat on built up platforms to face a small stage positioned in front of windows looking out on the street and sidewalk. Passersby could look into the window and often you'd see their faces filled with awe and wonder as to what was going on inside. The entertainment sometimes occurred outside the window. The finale was mostly all outside and included boats and waves made of wood with performers dressed in 20's swimsuits fake swimming back and forth outside the windows. Before the show started, an elderly man standing outside the window balanced a daisy on a stick held in his mouth and from time to time was spotlighted in different parts of the show doing silly things. There was even a magician, which I enjoyed the most, who was extremely funny and performed exceptional magic tricks. I loved the two dogs included in his acts.

We also enjoyed some sightseeing while in Austin. We visited the Austin Nature Science Center, Zilker Park Botanical Garden, the Umlauf Sculpture Garden and Museum, and of course, being on this trip to find our roots, we visited the Texas State Cemetery where Stephen F. Austin (1793-1836), known as the Father of Texas, is buried. Both Robert and Stephen F. Austin are descended from Anthony Austin (1636-1708). Anthony is the great, great grandfather of Stephen F. Austin and the GGGGGGG Grandfather of Robert. Stephen is 3rd cousin 5x removed of Robert. Robert's great grandmother is an Austin.

And get this, both Robert and I have Austin lineage. My GGGG Grandmother is Rebecca Austin. However, unlike Robert I cannot lay claim to being related to the famous Stephen F. Austin—a good thing, right? Robert and I are from different Austin lines as indicated by AFAOA's DNA project.

We became the shuttle service the day we went to the cemetery. Because there was another convention in town (much, much bigger than ours) there were no regular cars for rent at the airport. We had no choice but to rent a 12-passenger van! At least we were able to put it to good use!





I belong to Gold Coast Freestyle Guild, a dog dancing guild in Northern California. Mid-October, after many practice sessions with Mayo, a fellow dancing dog, and his mom, Debbie, Dakota and I headed to the California Automobile Museum in Sacramento to perform for Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue's annual auction event known as Kibble and Bids. The theme for this event was "Dancing With The Dogs." The organizer of the event found Gold Coast Freestyle Guild, of which both Debbie and I are members, online through the parent organization: Canine Freestyle Federation. Organizing and choreography of our routine was enhanced by a third member of our guild, Marcia Barkley.

The smiles reflecting enjoyment, appreciation, and wonder as we performed at the Homeward Bound* Kibble and Bids event in Sacramento on October 19 were most gratifying. The many thanks and compliments we received afterwards were so heart-warming.

Within our allotted fifteen minutes Debbie Crain and I first demonstrated basic movements with our dogs, Debbie then performed a very polished routine with Mayo, and Marcia Barkley, paramount in making this all happen, talked to the audience about CFF; origins, background, philosophy and how CFF differs from other dog dancing venues.

As people made their way past auction and appetizer tables, many of them stopped to watch videos Debbie had playing on her laptop on a table near our performance area. Brochures and information were provided for them to learn more about CFF and our guild.

There is no question the venue was a challenging one for both my Dakota and Debbie's Mayo given the level of crowd noise, the number of people, the commotion, and numerous loud announcements over the PA system. And not only that, there were food tables everywhere to serve the huge number of attendees at this very gala event. Happy to report both dogs handled all the commotion like champs, they stayed away from the food and performed really well even with the over abundance of distractions!

I for one feel very invigorated after this presentation and am ready to do more! There is nothing like performing in front of a live audience, doing it with success, being appreciated for what we have accomplished and sharing the joy of performing well with a special partner!

Debbie, Marcia and I had a wonderful time and we wish you all could have been there to see us!

Starbucks POP



During the month of October very special POPs popped up in airports all over the country. In this case POP stands for Point of Purchase. Special because the POPs are from Starbucks' Coffee and my Mom is shown in them!

Every fall Starbucks promotes their Pumpkin Spice Latte (PSL) drink. For the past three years my Mom has been in their online commercial for PSL. The first two years she talked about the quilt she made depicting her husband. This year she talks about the mural she made of her husband, which she calls "First sip."

The commercials are produced by the same producers of the movie, "Apart From That," my Mom starred in. To see this year's commercial go to Starbucks' YouTube channel and type in PSL 10th Anniversary. My Mom is about 23 seconds in.

And if you are in an airport soon, be sure to take a picture of yourself by the POP!



The only thing dead about Chris' birthday party celebration were the skeletons. Instead the party was quite lively what with four little ones (Rylan, Aubrey, Sierra, and Briana) bouncing around; at one point entertaining the grown up party goes with dancing and singing skits.

The skeletons were actually sugar cookies, eight of them stuck to a white cake with chocolate frosting and the rest, decorated by Chris and Sierra, served up on plates. Because Halloween is over by the time November 1, Chris' birthday, rolls around I didn't really want to have a spook and goblin theme. Online I discovered Day of the Dead is celebrated from October 31 to November 2 (don't ask me why it isn't called Days of the Dead). I saw a lot of Day of the Dead google images were skeletons and decided skeletons were a perfect imagery transition from Halloween day to the day after Halloween.

To make the cake more Chris, I used Fruit



the eyes on the skeletons. If you don't know Chris and his unique eating habits, then you won't understand the Fruit Loops. The leftover box of Fruit Loops went home with Chris to join the Sugar Pops, Trix, Lucky Charms and Captain Crunch boxes of cereal in Chris' kitchen cupboard.

Four Eyes

I am now sporting new spectacles. This has to be the first time in my life I have secured a new pair in less than three years. I wouldn't have done this except I had cataract surgery in September; my second and last one. (No one ever has more than two do they?) Therefore I didn't have any choice to at least get new lenses. I opted for both lenses and frames because I have never been happy with my last frames—they have always been too heavy. With both my eyes now close to 20/20 I could easily go to a lighter frame (no more thick lenses now). The downside was I didn't like the idea of putting out close to \$700 bucks so soon again. I usually keep frames for 5 or 6 years.

A couple of months ago I saw a newscast on ABC channel 7 reporting about buying glasses online. I really liked the promise of paying a lot less and receiving glasses a lot faster. I decided to give it a try. The online glasses company I chose, 39DollarGlasses.com, included an option to print out styles at full size to see how they work on your face as well as the option to overlay images of frames on a digital image of yourself. My new glasses arrived in seven working days! Free shipping was even included. I usually have to wait at least 15, sometimes more—not easy when I would only buy lenses and had to do without any glasses at all until my frames were returned with the new lenses.



I was able to purchase frames with progressives, transitions, and protective coating in a very lightweight and bendable style (the last two being the most important to me). Even with extra costs for add-ons, the total cost was over \$600 LESS than what I would have paid if I had ordered them from my optometrist here in town! One more bonus: Because I liked 39DollarGlasses.com on facebook I received an additional 20% off my order!