

A day in (November and/or) December, 2015



**Merry, Merry Christmas!**

and a

**Happy New Year!**

*Well, we might say we have begun well this year - these first few words are penned a day or two before Thanksgiving. So we can't say that "Christmas is upon us," as though this needs to get mailed tomorrow. (Well, history shows that may change. **Ah, yes, it did.**) We surely can easily get that impression, though: the stores have been at it since Halloween.*

*An item I (Larry) recently saw in one of these department stores, a DVD entitled **Self/less**, seems another entry of the trope (think that's the right word) of a man seeking to preserve his life by getting a replacement body (presumably someone else's, but I've not seen the show). This theme has been treated before in sci-fi-land by the likes of Lois McMaster Bujold, Robert Heinlein, Frank Herbert, the Star Trek writers, and so on. The common thread is usually that at some risk and expense, a person's life is to be extended by the sacrifice of someone else's. The result generally is (to be honest) a bit weak: the quest is for some species of immortality, but the subject receives at best another mortal body - and can expect, at best, some number of repetitions, each costly to yet another donor. Now, what, you ask, could all that have to do with Christmas!?! Follow on a moment.*

*Why do men seek for immortality? Well, suppose we were made for it. Suppose death is an unnatural innovation to which we are all nonetheless born. As members of a fallen race, we face death, and no artifice can restrain it from us. But the good news is that we can pass from the death we face to an immortality beyond the universe we now observe - at the expense of Someone Else's sacrifice. At that first Christmas, Jesus Christ came to earth as a man to suffer on our behalf, to satisfy God's justice. Unlike every scheme of fiction, His effort was complete and successful, offering not a shadow or suggestion of immortality, but the real thing. And, just like every Christmas present you open, it's a gift - no charge; all you have to do is accept it, receive it. Nor does the fact that it is free to you diminish the cost to the Giver. Christmas is where Jesus Christ, God Himself, embarked upon His time among us as a man, where He came into a world and a station allowing for His crucifixion, this all by intentional plan. He didn't have to do any of it. It was hard, it was costly, and it was to redeem helpless you and helpless me. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift! (II Cor. 9:15)*

*Well, let's let that sink in a moment. When composing this letter, it became hard at this point blithely to move on to share our little bit of news. It is His holiday, His birthday. Not ours.*

*But, being that it's also an occasion upon which we make an attempt to stay in touch, to sustain relationships, we'll share a bit.*

*First, Anne's non-news: no further evidence of the cancer for which she was treated in 2008 and 2009. At her checkup (and also last year), her oncologist shared that, earlier on, he (at that time) had expected it to be back. When Anne asked him what was the longest time after which he'd seen a recurrence, he asked, "Do you really want to know?" When she replied in the affirmative, he said, "28 years." We are quite grateful for the continued absence.*

*Anne rearranged one of our bedrooms (with Larry's occasional help) to include a place to put her Mac, which, via NX, can remotely control our Linux box which captures all the email. (She's only had the Mac for 5 years now, and this is the first regular use it's had.) So why the rearrangement and remote sessions on a machine just across the hall?*

*Well, in the bedroom across the hall that we use for an office, Larry has been working at home for going on 3 months. Back in July, he made plans with his ophthalmologist for a capsulotomy, a common and normally routine procedure after an earlier implant, in his left eye and finally to have an implant inserted into the remaining eye. Lo and behold, immediately following the capsulotomy, the pressure in the left eye went nuts and the plans went flooey. The subsequent weeks and weeks of treatment nearly drove Larry cross-eyed, but did not regularize the intraocular pressure, and Larry was sent to a glaucoma specialist. This really DID drive him cross-eyed, because the solution applied was surgery to install something called an Ahmed valve - which mechanically interfered with the muscles that move the eye around in its socket. So when Larry attempted driving, he'd swivel his eyes to the left - y'know, when you check the traffic over*

your left shoulder before turning right, or merging - and he'd see twice as many cars as really were there. Not wishing to be a traffic hazard, he eschewed his daily commute until this unhappy symptom is/was mitigated. Yes, it's getting better. The implant in the other eye? Not done yet.

But Larry has been able to see "normally" at most angles and has been able to work on his company machine. And Anne felt it might be better for his work if they were in different rooms during business hours. She's right, of course.

This next paragraph mostly for Yankees - Texans know the weather here as well as we.

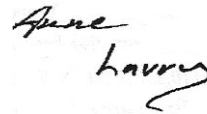
When composition of this letter began, we were deep into the Late Summer of a Texas November. Now that we're in December, Fall has arrived - two of our trees lost almost all of their leaves in a few days; the oaks stubbornly retain many of theirs. We are told this year set a record for rain at just about the end of November. Freezing in November, pushing 80 a couple days ago. It has been suggested that we MIGHT see snow before Christmas, but in any case we do expect to see at least some snow sometime before the 6 weeks of winter are up.

A request:

We enjoy sending out Christmas cards each year, but we wonder whether we'll be able to continue sending quite so many in future. We hope so, because we wish to stay in touch as best we can. Email may be an alternative for some (you may depend on hearing NOTHING of us via Facebook or Twitter; we just aren't doing that). If you don't know for sure that we have your email address, could you send us a brief test message to our email address below? Thanks much!

And by any means, we'd love to hear from you as you may be inclined.

Our love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Anne Larry". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.