

26 December 2008

Happy New Year! I hope your year went okay, and that you, like I, am looking forward to the new year. For for the first time, in QUITE a few years, I'm feeling hopeful about the future of our country and the world, in spite of the horrendous economy. At least as long as TIAA-CREF holds up we can survive!

This has been a strange year for us. First of all, I'll say that we are all in reasonably good physical health, and except for Lincoln, in good mental health. Sons and daughter fine, grandchild Sarah burning up the track in music and art and ballet and soccer and heaven knows what else. And we've gotten a new young Siamese, to complement the one we got last year, and we all adore watching them race around the house. It's been years since we've had young cats around! I highly recommend it!

Now: about Lincoln. He definitely has dementia; we assume Alzheimer's but it isn't following quite the pattern that the neurologists lay out. Physically, he does pretty well with his bad leg, and as long as he remembers where his walker is, he can get around the house fairly well. But he forgets where he's going from one room to the next, forgets what order to put on clothes or what clothes to put on unless I'm there to prompt him, etc. His delusions include remembering many friends from CalTech days, whom he assumes will be attending the ceremony there where he will get his award. Not sure what award. BUT: with meds, not a lot compared to many, but some, and with fairly constant watching to keep him from being frustrated by the "holes in his head," he manages most of the time to stay on a fairly even keel. If you talked to him in a casual setting, he would still be LINCOLN, not some vacant eyed stranger. He laughs, remembers who I am most of the time (and is polite to me even when he doesn't), enjoys watching classical music and opera videos (thank heavens for Netflix), enjoys the antics of the cats. And I am finding a quiet peace in just relaxing and being home.

A quiet peace, and a LOT of boredom. I've finished up my stint as president of the Monhegan Associates, the land trust there, and spent the last three months helping the new president to get our application in for recognition as a 501c3. And still plan to go out there next summer. I'm also involved in the local Barrington land trust, which gives me something to do that doesn't involve much leaving the house but does keep me connected with people outside the home. I have a CNA come in once a week so I can get out to the zoo, and Jeannette still lives with us and is home enough mornings that I can run out as needed. And Lincoln's slow moving; I can dash over to the market for an hour or so without him (usually) escaping the house or getting into much trouble. Of course, I've been accustomed to running the household (with Jeannette) for years, so he can just sit back and be demented!



I've made a connection with an online discussion group which I can recommend and encourage you to recommend to those you know who might find it helpful, much more than doctors and much more than in-person "support" groups: it's called [thealzheimerspouse.com](http://thealzheimerspouse.com), and it is run privately, with no religion, no politics, and no insults allowed. A lot of good pointers to other sites. From it I have definitely learned I'm not alone, and indeed that we are fortunate that the dementia really didn't manifest itself until Lincoln was well into his eighties. The 24x7 care of a spouse can be pretty depressing, but I can honestly say I'm NOT depressed, and I don't think Lincoln is either. The endlessness of it, though, is of course a drag!

I'm better at email than snail mail, so send me a note at [clare@briegull.com](mailto:clare@briegull.com). HAPPY NEW YEAR!