

Merry Christmas, 2019

Dear friends and family members,

We hope this [slightly late] letter finds you well and happy. We went from four of us living in a self-inflicted construction zone to The Kids getting their own place having done much of the work to make this old place nicer.

It was not all work; we went over to Marin several times and down to Monterey and Santa Monica as well.



First, the old ramp for the Jag I no longer own had to go; easy with a chainsaw.



That made it so we could push Button farther back. That's Analisa with the umbrella and Bear with the raincoat beside the Airstream.



One cold morning at Año Nuevo, you could even see your breath – and so could the Elephant Seals.



One cold evening you could barely see the Moon; there was a lunar eclipse.



The neighbors framed in their old opening that faces our yard.



Their new wall gives us a larger and private space.



So we set to work using that space to move the 18-foot Airstream back and add an 18-foot electric gate.



An 18-foot gate requires a 36-foot rail.



It's a little tricky getting Button out into the driveway. Will is better at it than Michael.



Here is another of many before-and-after shots showing how we kept busy this last year. Removed old bathroom sink valve.



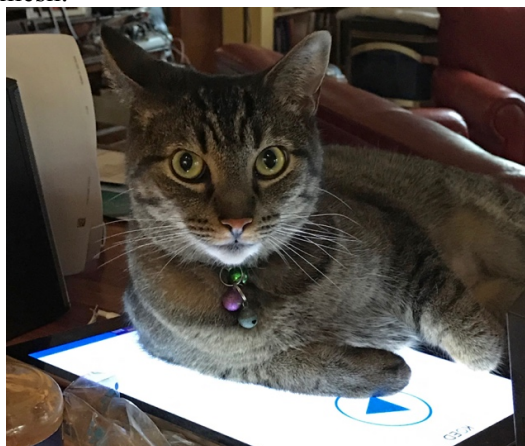
Installed new valve.



Then the water heater sprung a feeder line.



So it now has two new lines with stainless-steel wire mesh.



Rajah likes to listen to KQED while all this work is going on.



Will built a temporary gate with a Bear-nose hole.



The Kids still got to work on the BMW E30.



And our mama hummingbird fledged her chicks.



Meanwhile at USGS, our new offices at NASA's Ames Research Center were still under construction in April.



They were completed a few months later.



We had a full-blown ribbon-cutting in July.



Speaking of July, where were you on July 20, 1969 – fifty years ago? Dad was working on the Apollo Project [that's not his phone].



The next thing that broke was the kitchen faucet.



It just needed to be taken all apart and remounted better.



The floor of the greenhouse window in the kitchen was a little worse.



I cut a template then matched it to a new base, sealed it, and painted.



There was always time for another trip to Point Reyes. Bear supervises while Mattie excavates.



The next thing wanting attention was the gas valve on Button's water heater.



This unit is slightly improved over the old one we got about 12 years ago. Perhaps it'll last longer.



We tore out the old walkway to the front of the Little House.



Before putting down new stone, I extended a 20-amp circuit underground adding outlets for the fountain and the barbeque rotisserie.



Will put down new stonework both on this walkway...



and down the slight slope to his new gate.



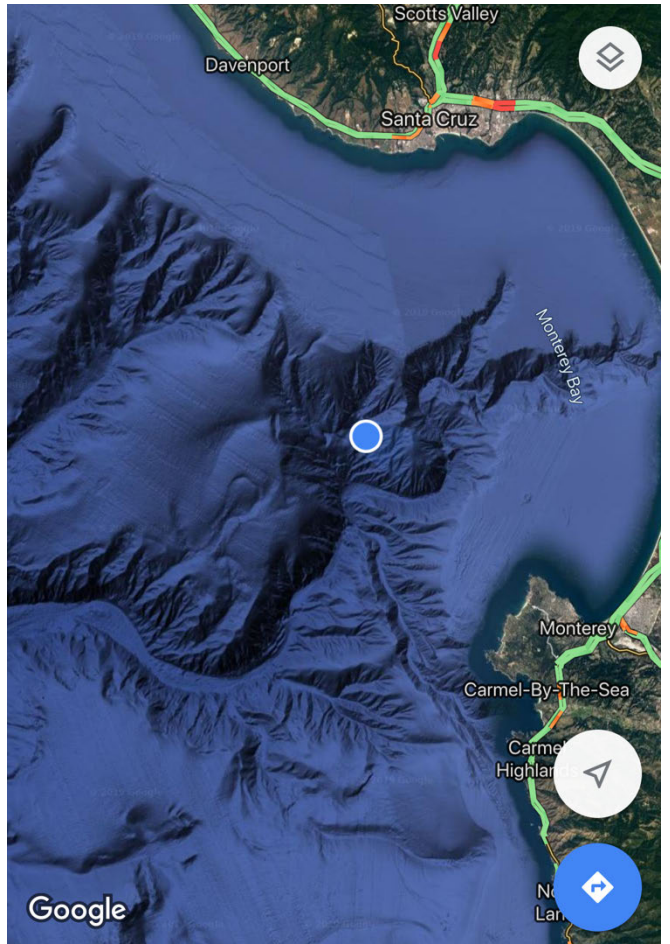
Deanna and I went out to Monterey Bay for whales, birds, and fish.



Here is a Humpback sounding. There was a visit by Blue Whales and an Ocean Sunfish...



and a visit by your friendly neighborhood Sooty Shearwater.



I could plot our position over the bathymetry of Monterey Canyon.



Deanna bought a new spray gun and painted the garage and the front of the Little House.



She went clear around to the back...



...and also pressure-washed the back fence.



She stained and sealed both sides of both new fences and the new gate on the south side.



Now that there are new stones in the far back, Deanna used the old ones to level and extend the walkway past Button's new parking place.



Mother-Daughter act.



Deanna, Maurie, and Will met up with Auntie Janet to visit David and Judy in Minnesota; it was David's 85th birthday.



Bear takes Halloween seriously.



As does Leia.



Mattie is not so sure.



But Deanna is.



Time to remove the old finish from the hewn graded-bedding sandstone bathroom tiles...



and replace it with new sealer.



Time to remove the old sump pump...



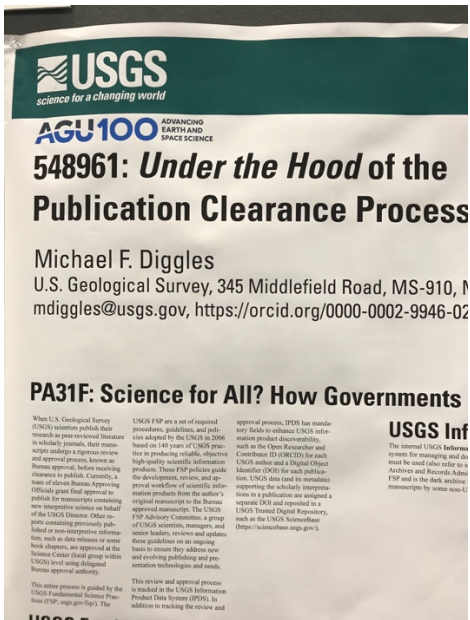
and replace it with a new stainless-steel one.



Time to remove the old, crashed, 4-TB iMac drive...



and replace it with a new 8-TB drive.



It must be early December. Time for the American Geophysical Union conference in San Francisco. Twenty eight thousand Earth scientists attended.



Governor Jerry Brown was on a panel discussing climate change.



New friends Dipro and Ashish from the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi



It must be late December; time for an outing with The Kids. They got their own place on the beach in Alameda – perfect for running Leia and close to Maurie's [new] job.



It is also close to a pet store that had these two adorable sisters called Cinnamon and Nutmeg. Merry Christmas, Deanna. We took 'em home.



Maurie and Will with our tree and the angel on top. Have a safe and wonderful Christmas and New Year, --Michael, Deanna, Maurie, and Will, YoYo, Mocha, Rajah, Cinnamon, Nutmeg, Mattie, Bear, and Leia