

# Christmas



# 2010

It's that time of year again – time for decking the halls and decorating the house, for hanging perfect wreaths and finding the perfect Christmas tree, for signing perfect Christmas cards and picking out perfect stocking stuffers, for making the list and checking it twice, for wrapping presents and tying bows, and time to pen the annual Christmas letter to friends and family in far-flung corners of the country and the globe. Merry Christmas, friends and family! Lynn and I hope this letter finds you safe and secure, happy and healthy, and looking forward to a prosperous and enriching 2011!

For the most part, 2010 has been a pleasantly quiet and uneventful year for us on most fronts – no weddings, no house purchases. The economy has been a worry for most of us, but Lynn and I are still gainfully employed (knock on wood) so we're doing okay so far, and we hope you are too. We've enjoyed the house up in Maine that we bought last year, I've made a few business trips of note during the year, and we've welcomed a few visitors from distant locations.

We were able to get up to the **Ballot Box** (our nickname for the house in Maine) about every other weekend this past year, with holiday weekends allowing us to squeeze an extra day or two into the plan. We even kicked off the New Year in Maine, traveling up the day after Christmas last year and staying up through the New Year. We tried to host a New Year's Eve party at the Ballot Box, but it got snowed out – the only guest who was able to make it was Audrey, who took about six hours to drive up from Woburn in a blizzard, a trip that usually takes 3 hours or less on dry pavement. We've had occasional guests visit us up in the Maine woods by the sea, some even staying over, and Lynn was able to spend the entire months of July and August up there for an extended quilter's getaway and vacation from the hectic bustle of life in the suburbs of Boston! She's planning on doing the same during the coming January.

I've been able to cut back a bit on my business travel, with the folks who work for me doing the bulk of the miles, though there were two memorable trips in April and June to Vicenza Italy (a city of about 120,000 people, situated just south of the Alps). Vicenza is about 45 minutes west of Venice (an easy train ride), so I was able to spend a weekend day wandering the alleys and promenades of the famous water city on the Mediterranean, eating my way from one side of the city to the other!

An ill-timed and poorly-executed sprint through the Frankfurt airport on the way to my first flight to Vicenza precipitated a six-month battle with tendonitis in both my Achilles tendons and arthritis in my left knee. The initial flare-up was excruciating and impacted my mobility for quite a while, but a few months of physical therapy and a stretching regimen has slowly put the fire out in my tendons, and the arthritis in the knee has become manageable for the most part. I know I won't be sprinting through any airports anymore! It stinks getting old!

On the genealogy-front, I haven't made any new discoveries or found any long-lost relatives this year, but I did branch out into a new segment of the hobby – that of genealogical lecturer! It started in 2009 when I put together the story of my research into the VOGT family tree, and was asked to present it to an interested group at the local library. A member of the local chapter of the Massachusetts Society of Genealogists (MSOG to us insiders!) was present and asked me to give the talk to their chapter, which I did in April 2010. The president of MSOG was in attendance at that

presentation, and asked me to give the talk at MSOG's annual state-wide conference in November (which I also did), AND at the New England Regional Genealogists' Conference in April 2011 in Springfield MA (which I am scheduled for). It's a lot of fun, and I do enjoy sharing the work I've done and the discoveries I've made!

Lynn really enjoyed her two-month getaway in Maine last summer, appreciating the family of hummingbirds that spent the entire summer at the feeders on our deck, and basking in the quiet sounds of nature we enjoy at the house (the singing birds, the wind in the trees, the babbling stream on the border of our property). She was and still is a regular at the Friday-night drop-in sewing lounge at the quilt shop about 5 miles from the Ballot Box, and had fun making new friends in the area and finding interesting stores and friendly merchants. The Ballot Box is bright and cheery and just the right size for the two of us, not too much to clean and take care of. In both houses Lynn says she likes the closeness of the trees for the birds, and being able to see the sky and enjoy the beautiful and ever-changing sunsets. Lynn wasn't as productive in Maine on quilts this year, focusing more on gardening, and that has rekindled an interest in the horticulture of gardens and landscaping. She looks forward to the next trip to Maine (probably the week after Christmas again, leading into her month's escape in January), with its relaxed and slower pace, and the quiet but scenic landscape.

She's still working and teaching at the quilt shop in Cambridge, always trying to think of new techniques to share with interested quilters in her classes. She really enjoyed completing a few quilts this year by renting time on a long-arm quilting machine, big enough to do whole bed quilts. Long-arm quilting machines can be programmed to follow a specific stitch pattern, but Lynn prefers to add her own creativity to the quilt by doing what's called free-motion quilting, where she steers the stitching anywhere she wants it to go, forming whatever pattern suits her at the moment. It's akin to doodling with thread! She's looking forward to another quilt-filled year, with all that that entails.

A former exchange student who lives in Bremen Germany and his then-secret fiancé came to visit for a week in March. Rumor has it he proposed to her during the trip. We had a great visit, and I brought them up to Maine for a grand lobster dinner and a night at the Ballot Box. In October, through the marvels of internet technology we got to watch their wedding ceremony in Bremen on-line! Ain't technology *wunnerful*?!

Our beloved Red Sox had an interesting season last year, having an unbelievable array of injuries to key players, but managing to stay in the thick of the race until almost the bitter end, ending up in 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the AL East, and out of the playoffs for the first time in a number of years. I was lucky enough to get to two games at Fenway Park last season, both against the hated Yankees! The recent acquisitions should rekindle the interest and make the oft-repeated phrase "Wait 'til NEXT year!" have some serious meaning for 2011!

The girls are doing well. Megan and Dan celebrated their first anniversary in October, are still working for Bose, and having fun in Lowell. Audrey has a new job as a product support specialist at *PetEdge*, a family-owned company providing wholesale pet supplies and dog grooming products. She's also keeping her hand in the grooming field on weekends at *PetSmart* in Woburn.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all! ***Go Pats! Go Celts! Go Sox!***

Love,

***Lynn & Gene***

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**Web sites:** <http://www.FamilyTreeHouse.net/> & <http://BallotBox.FamilyTreeHouse.net/>

**On-Line photos:** <http://www.flickr.com/photos/genevogt/sets/>