



Greetings to you all! Above are five Fall photos (!) from Nova Scotia, and here are the “*check-ins*” I’ve received for this month. Don’t forget you’re encouraged to communicate directly with the senders or email me a response that I can include in the next newsletter.

from Rebecca Hogue

Hi Anne, Here is my checkin: Scott and I arrived home safely on September 16. Since then, we have moved everything back into our house. We struggle with all the stuff that we have – it is difficult to re-enter a life of stuff!

My big news is that I got a job. I am lucky in that I found a good job much faster than I anticipated. It is different work than I have done before, and challenges me in areas where I was looking for the challenge. So far things seem to be working out well. I arranged to work alternating days for the first two weeks, then full time. The transition back into full days is tiring, so I am very glad that I have two weeks to get used to it. The weather has also allowed me to ride my bike into work most days, which provides a nice bit of exercise as well as time to contemplate the day before starting and decompressing afterwards. Unfortunately, the weather is not apt to hold out much longer – I won’t ride in wet or frozen conditions, so I will be lucky if I can ride for a couple more weeks.

Cheers, *Becky*

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from Janet Vickers

Well we, my husband Tony, have been house-sitting on Gabriola Island. I am still here until November 15th. The weather has been mostly very good. Watching the sun rise, watching the eagles, the full moon on the water, getting in touch with friends we met when we rented last year. We have also been looking at houses for sale and found one, put an offer in, but another offer was accepted not ours.

I have started a publishing company - a micro press - poetry chapbooks. It's called Lipstick Press. Have been busy with that, and some work for the CUC, and working on my own poetry.

For Christmas, Tony and I are booked to stay with son, daughter-in-law, and two grand-children – we are really looking forward to that. Then in January we'll have our daughter from South Africa home for a few months and also a friend who will visit for two weeks.



Berry Point Road (Gabriola Island) in Autumn

Best regards *Janet Vickers*

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from Maureen Killoran

Busy, happy, and completely frustrated with mega computer problems – this for someone who lives with a keyboard attached to her fingers (almost). But hey, November in Florida is pretty good. I'm looking forward to being in Ottawa for the UU minister's convocation later this month (if I can just find a warm enough coat).

Maureen Killoran

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from Lloyd Ryan

Hi! I find it horrendously difficult to talk about "*myself*"! Stuff that I am doing, stuff that not having to do with what's inside that hard shell of self, is easy. But, when it comes to what's inside that shell aw! that's a toughie!

I have just come back from the hospital to which I had to take my wife by ambulance at 4 o'clock this morning. The hospital is in lock-down mode because of the H1N1, so I am not able to visit her. She had radiation therapy all last week in an attempt to combat specific manifestations of leukemia, and her physicians have brought on GVH (Graft vs Host) disease in attempt, also, to combat the leukemia. The trouble is, the GVH can be as deadly as the leukemia, so it's an effort to strike the right balance. Her doctors say "*It is a matter of walking a fine line. As long as we can keep one in check by the other, then life can proceed in the manner that is normal for these circumstances.*" When she is, otherwise, feeling better, she is hard at work at her sewing machine doing quilted wall hangings and baby quilts.

One of my methods of trying to maintain some sort of even keel is to pretend that I am learning to p[lay] the concertina and button accordion. I am also teaching myself to repair these instruments. And, I need parts, so if anybody out there has an abandoned accordion or concertina of whatever type, I'd be interested in acquiring it. I have an old Hohner type - maybe 40s vintage, which is in need of a button board for example.

I have also discovered the Chemnitzer. Wow! It is an orchestra in a small package. A Chemnitzer (pronounced Kim-nitzer) is a type of concertina which costs in the \$10,000 - \$12,000 range (yes, folks, that is thousands!) for a new one. I am hoping to find a good used one which is within my rather modest budget range. There is probably no more than a half dozen of these instruments in Canada. I have read that they are a "*real bitch*" to learn to play, but I am "*brain hungry*" so I need that kind of challenge. Just go to You Tube and enter "chemnitzer music" to get a taste of this fabulous instrument. And, one of these days, I will post a video of myself playing Beethoven's Fifth! Just you wait and see.

I am still writing. I am now in process of telling a story which sits some contemporary values on their ends. Today, we protect young people, especially girls, in the belief that they have to be provided certain opportunities. Given certain cultures and certain times, it wasn't quite like that. In my own ancestral culture the generally stated belief was "If a maid is big enough to look down a flour barrel, then she is big enough to get married." So, my story (based on real events) is an attempt, to some degree light-hearted, to have the reader realize that mores and values are very much time specific and culture specific. Puts the issues at Bountiful, BC, in another perspective!

One of the additional themes in the story has to do with maintaining the purity of the human line. There was a science fiction novel used in our schools, some years ago, the name of which escapes me, at the moment, but the theme of which was a future society's efforts to maintain the purity of the human line because of mutations brought about by radiation (if I recall correctly). Well, in my ancestral culture, a child had to be perceived "perfect" in order for it to be permitted to take its first breath for the "thing" that just came from its mother's body was not a person until it took its first breath, and with the first breath, the soul entered the body and it became a person. If it wasn't whole, complete, and otherwise not visibly deformed, then it was an abomination and could not be permitted to live.

Horrified? I passed muster! An older sibling did not (so it used to be whispered!) and was a "still birth". One of my cousins just barely made it. My grandmother was the midwife. The girl child was born with six toes on each foot. Grandmother, an absolutely pious Wesleyan Methodist, was in a quandry. Should this otherwise perfect child be permitted to live. She decided to defy the values of the community and slapped the baby on the bottom so that it would gasp and allow the soul to enter its body. That girl is now mid 60s. She's still perfect!

That's enough for this month. I thought that i would make up for the past couple of months.

Lloyd

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from Noreen Smith

Hi To All: Not too much going on right now for me. I have been enjoying driving the WOW bus. I love talking with the parents (many new moms), and showing them all the resources available in FSJ, and helping them chose books for themselves and their children. I have attached a photo of me with the bus (I am squinting into the sun though so don't zoom in too close!).



Would be interested in knowing what others are doing to explore their spirituality (through literature, life actions etc.).

Take care all. Noreen Smith, Fort St. John

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and something more than a monthly check-in, from Kathryn McIntyre

Hi There, Anne has asked that I share my story. I am happy to do so. It has proven to be a positive experience for me and may motivate you to think about a possibility for yourself.

In the fall of 2008 an idea popped into my head. "*I have two kidneys and only need one.*" I am an introvert who is intuitive and muddles ideas around for awhile and then acts. I couldn't think of a good reason for not giving a kidney away. My children are young independent adults who could survive my demise if anything extreme and unlikely occurred as a result of surgery. They were unlikely to ever need one of my kidneys. If I kept them much longer they wouldn't be good for anybody. Too old. I am good with pain, anaesthetic, and heal well.

Once I decided to give a kidney away I had to find somebody who wanted it. Hamilton Health Science didn't and referred me to Toronto General who was delighted to hear from me. They wanted to know who I wanted to give it to. I said a young parent if I had my druthers. It turned out that they prefer to use folks on the list and that was fine. I am not comfortable with direct charity and would rather somebody tax me well and look after the masses. I have no need to decide who gets what. They wanted to know if I wanted to meet the recipient. I said I would rather not but if they had a need that would be OK. I wanted my kidney to have a happy home. (As it turned out I received a lovely card from somebody who thanked me for saving their life. That was remarkably significant. High school Visual Art Teachers usually get to influence lives, not save them.)

Over the spring of 2009 I was tested and tested. It turns out that I have very healthy innards. I offered them a chunk of my liver but they declined. I could choose a three hour laparoscopic surgery or one hour six inch incision surgery. I chose shorter time. There was a determination by a social worker and a psychiatrist that I was just eccentric, not crazy. Since I am a Unitarian Universalist that was not unexpected. I have to say that my faith was the compelling factor. Sometimes you just have to walk the talk. Our principles of the “*Inherent Worth and Dignity of All*” and the “*Interconnected Web*” seemed to suggest giving away a kidney was a reasonable thing to do. If I would risk my life to save a drowning person why wouldn't I assume minimal risks to donate a kidney? A remarkable outcome was that my gesture triggered four transplants. People who were waiting and had willing incompatible donors were paired up and received from similar folks. They call it Domino Surgery. My kidney started the chain.

So there it is. On Nov.19 2008 I went into TGH and left five days later. I was able to attend meetings two weeks after that and have no ill effects. I was a little fatigued for six months. I wouldn't presume to recommend this for anybody. It is a very personal decision. It is for me a logical extension of blood donation and has to fit your time of life, risks and comfort level. It has given me my fifteen minutes of fame and a sense that I have done what I could for awhile.

"*Stay Calm, Be Brave and Watch for the Signs.*" Kathryn kathmcintyre@sympatico.ca

and from me, Anne Treadwell

John and I were in Hamilton, Ontario, for Thanksgiving (I gave the talk that Sunday at the Hamilton church) and the following week, during which we celebrated my 70th birthday and my grandson's 8th. It was a wonderful time for me in many ways, especially because my daughter Sara had flown in from Calgary and my granddaughter Emily from Boston to be with us. My dear friends of many years, Elizabeth and Gordon, had made a superb festive meal, and during our stay in the area I was also able to see many other old friends – this was where I lived for the longest stretch of my life, and where I discovered Unitarians!

Unfortunately, since returning to Nova Scotia I've been sick (for three weeks – enough already!) with something that might be 'flu or just a nasty long-lasting cold/cough. I finally feel close to “normal” today – and it's been an absolutely beautiful day (Monday November 9th), adding to my enjoyment. During a walkabout on our place, I saw a pretty piece of “driftwood” in one of our little glades – picked it up and it was an antler from a white-tailed deer. I like to think of a deer resting there last winter and shedding its antler – wonder if the other one is somewhere around

Anne

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You may have noticed Noreen’s hope that she might discover “*what others are doing to explore their spirituality (through literature, life actions etc.)*” Kath McIntyre’s story certainly reveals the extent to which she links spirituality with action. For me, as you may have picked up over the year, spirituality is more contemplative, though it’s also intimately related to my actions. I explore spirituality in my gardening, in my appreciation of my environment, in my reading, in my writing. **Would others of you be willing to share your response to Noreen’s question?**

(And if it happens that the word “*spirituality*” is unhelpful to you, perhaps you could suggest an alternative word which expresses for you something of the inward life which is more than intellectual – perhaps the aspect of you which responds to music or art, for example.)

To end with, here’s a couple more Fall photos (by John, as usual) – not from our garden this time, but from elsewhere in our small community. Thanks to all of you who contributed this time, especially Janet and Noreen who sent photos – and keep those emails coming!

Anne



larch (or tamarack) tree, November 9th

Traps readied for the start of lobster fishing season on November 30th

