

## THE 2013 VOGT FAMILY CHRISTMAS LETTER

Season's Greetings to all our friends and relations during this festive time of year! Our wish for you and yours during this holiday time is for good health and happiness, and peace and prosperity during the coming year.

Our family is doing well; no complaints (no-one would listen, anyway!). **Audrey** is still working at PetEdge<sup>1</sup>, but it's been a turbulent work-year for her. Due mostly to two simultaneous cold-turkey conversion projects (moving from an old DOS-based order entry system to a new GUI-based RDBMS, and rebuilding the customer web site from a simplistic 2-dimensional design to an integrated system of systems) the company took quite a blow to the bottom line and had to have a significant layoff. Audrey got laid off from the marketing department, and less than an hour later (before she could leave the building) she got re-hired into the web sales department, where she now works on the new web site. It's been a roller-coaster of a ride for her.

**Megan and Dan** are alive and well and living in Lowell MA, where they bought a house over a year ago in a downtown section of the city that puts them conveniently close to all the amenities of that moderate-sized city. Megan is still working at Bose, and Dan still works for eBay doing intelligent communications targeting for clients.

**Lynn** is still in love with all things quilting<sup>2</sup>, though she made the decision this year to leave her job as a sales clerk at the Cambridge Quilt Shop. She was getting more and more frustrated with the inertness of the shop's creativity and their apparent inability to see the effect. She still teaches an occasional quilting class at the shop, but after the holidays she may explore what some of the other shops in the area can offer. Not working on Thursday afternoons makes it easier to hit the road to the Ballot Box at an earlier hour, so we're not arriving at the house after midnight!

**Gene** is still at MITRE (26 years and counting), though the government shutdown in October had a significant impact on the FFRDC<sup>3</sup>. MITRE was able to carry everyone during the three-plus weeks of shutdown, but if it had gone any longer they would have started internal furloughs and layoffs. As far as projects go, I'm still working on the design and deployment of secure video teleconferencing capabilities among MITRE sites. I continue to putter on my genealogy research, getting occasional "cold" emails from folks visiting the FamilyTreeHouse web site and asking about common relations (we found more than one new cousin that way - one all the way from Sweden!). [TECHNO-BABBLE WARNING:] On the geek front, I decided to build myself a muscle-bound top-of-the-line workstation made from the shell of my previous computer. I kept the chassis, the video card, the CD/DVD drive, and the Media card reader, and added an Asus motherboard with an Intel Core i7 processor, an 850 Watt power supply, 16 GB of memory, two 1TB SATA internal hard drives in RAID-0<sup>4</sup> configuration, two hot-swap racks for additional SATA drives, and a 22" Hi-Def 16x9 LED Monitor. The 5-year-old workstation got quite a new lease on life!

Lynn and I have had a mostly quiet year, with only an occasional excitement to spice up our existence. Our hands-down highlight of the year was a **10-day trip to Scotland** in early May for Lynn's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. Lynn has Scottish roots on both sides of her family, and her maternal grandmother (a *COPLAND*) was born in Glasgow. That line extends back into Denny near Stirling, and Aberdeen.

Aside from the first day and the next-to-last day in-country, the weather was abysmal, but we had fun in spite of it. More than once I was told, "*Ye don't come to Scotland for the **weather**, laddie!*" We touched toe and/or tire in Glasgow, Denny, Pitlochry, Dufftown and Elgin in the Highlands, Inverness, Loch Ness (no Nessie sightings), the Glenfinnan Viaduct (think *Harry Potter*), Oban, Kilmartin Glen, Port Ellen and Port Charlotte and Bowmore on the Isle of Islay, Tarbert, Inveraray, the bonny bonny banks of Loch Lomond, and Edinburgh. Nine days in-country - far too much to see and do in such a short amount of time.

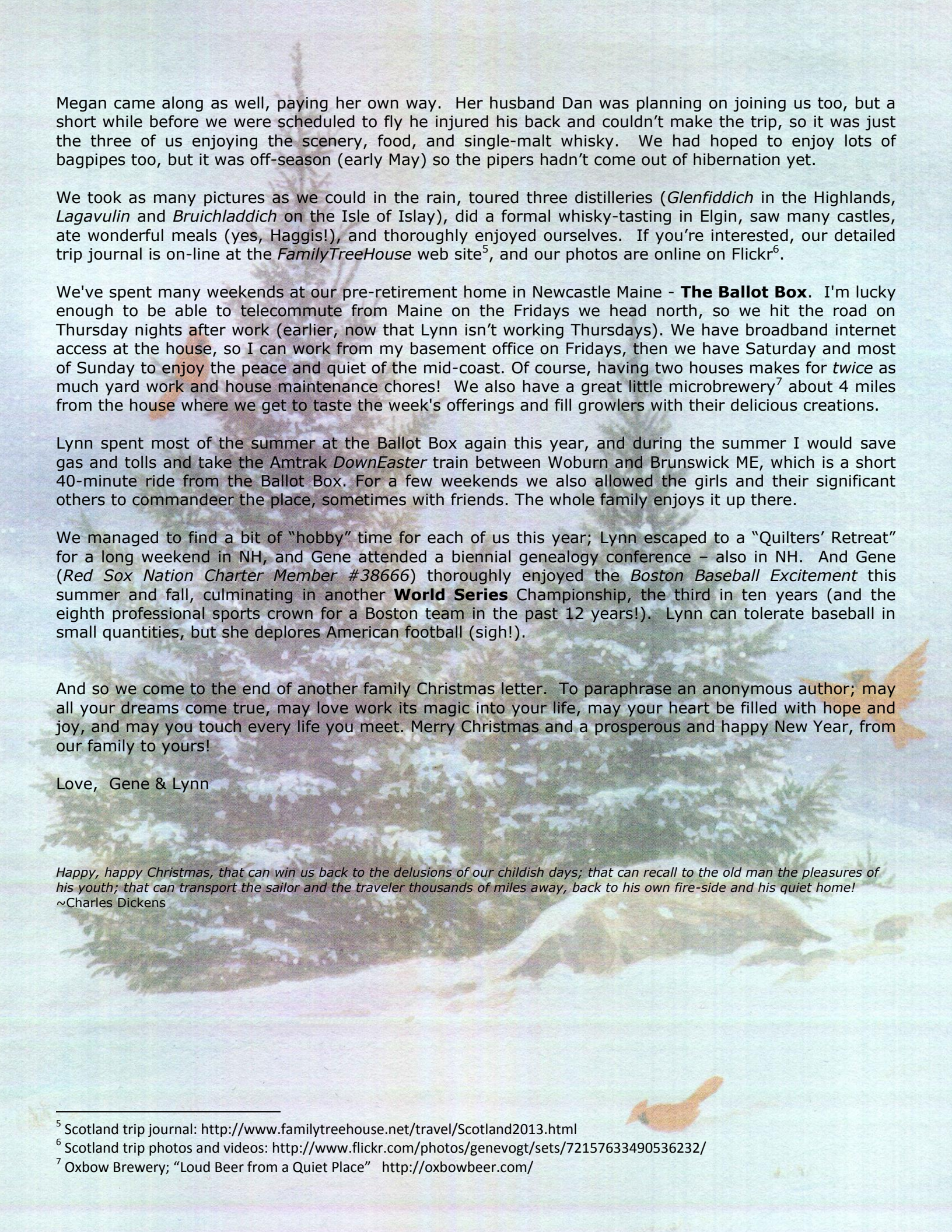
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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.petedge.com/>

<sup>2</sup> Some of Lynn's quilt creations can be seen at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/genevogt/sets/72157632846123697/>

<sup>3</sup> Federally Funded Research and Development Center - <http://tinyurl.com/be2375t>

<sup>4</sup> What's RAID-0? [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standard\\_RAID\\_levels#RAID\\_0](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standard_RAID_levels#RAID_0)



Megan came along as well, paying her own way. Her husband Dan was planning on joining us too, but a short while before we were scheduled to fly he injured his back and couldn't make the trip, so it was just the three of us enjoying the scenery, food, and single-malt whisky. We had hoped to enjoy lots of bagpipes too, but it was off-season (early May) so the pipers hadn't come out of hibernation yet.

We took as many pictures as we could in the rain, toured three distilleries (*Glenfiddich* in the Highlands, *Lagavulin* and *Bruichladdich* on the Isle of Islay), did a formal whisky-tasting in Elgin, saw many castles, ate wonderful meals (yes, Haggis!), and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. If you're interested, our detailed trip journal is on-line at the *FamilyTreeHouse* web site<sup>5</sup>, and our photos are online on Flickr<sup>6</sup>.

We've spent many weekends at our pre-retirement home in Newcastle Maine - **The Ballot Box**. I'm lucky enough to be able to telecommute from Maine on the Fridays we head north, so we hit the road on Thursday nights after work (earlier, now that Lynn isn't working Thursdays). We have broadband internet access at the house, so I can work from my basement office on Fridays, then we have Saturday and most of Sunday to enjoy the peace and quiet of the mid-coast. Of course, having two houses makes for *twice* as much yard work and house maintenance chores! We also have a great little microbrewery<sup>7</sup> about 4 miles from the house where we get to taste the week's offerings and fill growlers with their delicious creations.

Lynn spent most of the summer at the Ballot Box again this year, and during the summer I would save gas and tolls and take the Amtrak *DownEaster* train between Woburn and Brunswick ME, which is a short 40-minute ride from the Ballot Box. For a few weekends we also allowed the girls and their significant others to commandeer the place, sometimes with friends. The whole family enjoys it up there.

We managed to find a bit of "hobby" time for each of us this year; Lynn escaped to a "Quilters' Retreat" for a long weekend in NH, and Gene attended a biennial genealogy conference - also in NH. And Gene (*Red Sox Nation Charter Member #38666*) thoroughly enjoyed the *Boston Baseball Excitement* this summer and fall, culminating in another **World Series** Championship, the third in ten years (and the eighth professional sports crown for a Boston team in the past 12 years!). Lynn can tolerate baseball in small quantities, but she deplores American football (sigh!).

And so we come to the end of another family Christmas letter. To paraphrase an anonymous author; may all your dreams come true, may love work its magic into your life, may your heart be filled with hope and joy, and may you touch every life you meet. Merry Christmas and a prosperous and happy New Year, from our family to yours!

Love, Gene & Lynn

*Happy, happy Christmas, that can win us back to the delusions of our childish days; that can recall to the old man the pleasures of his youth; that can transport the sailor and the traveler thousands of miles away, back to his own fire-side and his quiet home!*  
~Charles Dickens

<sup>5</sup> Scotland trip journal: <http://www.familytreehouse.net/travel/Scotland2013.html>

<sup>6</sup> Scotland trip photos and videos: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/genevogt/sets/72157633490536232/>

<sup>7</sup> Oxbow Brewery; "Loud Beer from a Quiet Place" <http://oxbowbeer.com/>