

Being a woos-baby, Mark's collapsed lung in December 2009 made it such that we didn't do a whole lot worth mentioning until May when we returned again to New Zealand with 23 college students and another professor. With us this time was Holly (a.k.a. kid #4) who took the opportunity to go sky diving while Mark and I took a helicopter to the highest portion of a glacier to play on blue ice with crampons. It was while standing on the glacier that I saw way below us this thing that looked like a brown mountain goat wearing a rug and sporting horns. The guide said it was a tahr and that people will spend lots of money hunting tahrs without ever seeing one. Sadly, thinking a wide-angle lens was better for glacier photos, I failed to bring a zoom lens for photographing distant tahrs.



The flight back from New Zealand will go down as the most interesting of flights, due to the wee bit of turbulence that proved that airplanes can indeed wiggle up and down and sideways at the same time. It was on this flight that I questioned serving peas on airplanes, given that eating them required mashing them into mashed potatoes and lamb. And I must question serving dinner at all when people have to chase their forks up and down, while others are losing their dinners into tiny, little bags.



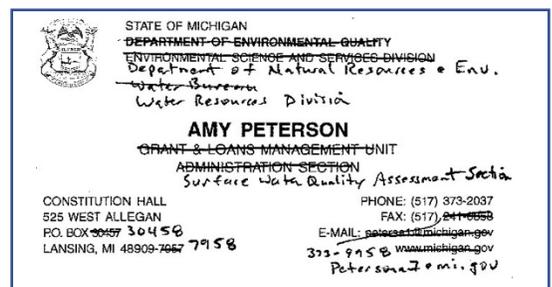
Over the summer I got to see my oldest niece, Emma, graduate from high school in New Jersey, and later, my brother and family came to Michigan to visit. While enjoying the Jackson County Fair, we witnessed a piglet fly out of the birthing end of a sow, hit the straw and bounce onto the ground in less than a second. When he was picked up moments later, he waved to all the onlookers, then went wee, wee, wee all the way home.

I also got to see my sister and her family for a few days this summer, and this fall went to the MSU-Purdue game with my Dad, Arthur and Mark, all of whom went to MSU, one of whom went to U of M and Eastern before finally getting is Ph.D. from the right university.

Mark really is doing fine, though has reached the phase in his career where silly things frustrate him, like the kid who took his exam and upon handing it in, asked if he could take a different one later because he didn't feel like studying over the weekend. Mark was also bothered by a student who failed to show up to class for a few weeks because she hadn't made any friends and found partying to be more fun than studying. When she asked Mark what she might do to get back on track, Mark suggested showing up to class might be a good start, which she did for a few days before dropping out. She went weep, weep, weep all the way home.

In the world of more inspired kids, Willi (kid #1) is still providing social services to people in the tri-county area around Lansing, while Arthur is working at the Capital Area Literacy Coalition helping people that can't read or rite atall. Becky (kid #3) left GM to work for a company that provides engineering services to the automotive industry and sending her to Germany for 6-12 months, fulfilling one of her dreams. Holly went to California and is soon en route to Uganda with Alma College's Students for Free Enterprise, which is a group of students that do business kind of things like with other students in other places, or something like that anyway.

I worked for the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) in 2010, a point worth mentioning only because in 2009 I



worked for the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). One rumor has it that in a bid to help Lt. Governor Cherry run for Governor in 2010, Governor Granholm decided to combine the Department of Natural Resources and DEQ into the DNRE, which, as my brother pointed out, eliminated the word "quality." Cherry decided not to run, but no politician in their right mind will change it when it makes sense to do so, hence we munched on, creating a new logo, new letterhead, new ways of tracking finances, and many other important things...only for Governor-elect Rick Snyder to announce that he will separate the departments again in 2011. Having been moved from one division to another in 2009, into a new department and back again, and as a result of 4,000 employees retiring, my job duties continue to evolve to the point that I never know what I'm doing. The good news is that because my boss doesn't know what I'm doing, I continue to exceed her expectations. My business card needs work, though.



In other news, a large flock of great egrets hung out at our lake this summer, and Mr. Gawky the mute swan returned in February with his sweetie to raise several signets, all of which chirped happily whenever they stumbled upon a daily appearance of lake-side corn. None of these birds like ice or snow, apparently, and quite rudely, did not call out or wave as they flew away for the rest of the winter. Not that I should expect much communication from a mute swan.

In other news you may not know, our ferret Hoppie went hopping off to ferret heaven, and Little Buddha, the cheek-stuffing hamster, is our latest kitchen addition. Dusty, our angel pup, has finally worked his way from the foot of our bed to the pillows, perhaps figuring that 12 years of guard service qualified him for such. Little Dipper, also 12, continues to turn everyone into a belly rubbing slave, while Purrkins, 6, has taken to waking us up in the wee hours of the morning to announce the arrival of his hairballs. Lincoln, the 8-year-old guinea pig doesn't oink much anymore, but still runs off merrily with grapes and dandelion greens. Most recently, we have discovered that female opossums make great use of leftovers, and that items such as old turkey legs are quite portable for an opossum while a ball of leftover spaghetti noodles, not so much. Also, if given the choice between chocolate cake and leftover ham slices, a female opossum will take the cake every time. Now, if you *do* know all this, you probably have been secretly living with us and should be paying rent.



I hope your 2010 was fun and that you are surrounded by adoring human, furry and feathery pals. Best wishes for a happy 2011.

