

2012 was as uplifting as an anvil tossed overboard a large ship, because heaven took away my father "Pete," my female dog Little Dipper, a pet bird named Billie, two hamsters, and one discus fish. My father was diagnosed with mesothelioma in 2009 and the typical longevity is 4-18 months. So it is only because of great doctors and nurses, family, friends and neighbors that we can attribute having the privilege of having so much time to spend with my dad, shooting at the indoor shooting range where my dad worked, watching movies and eating at IHop (which, it turned out, neither Mark nor my dad really liked all that much but tolerated because each thought the other guy really liked going there). The photo is of my brother, sister and I saluting our Navy veteran father, a gentle man who left us with a good sense of humor and lots of great memories.



The loss of pets is another thing altogether and rather than dwell on the losses, I shall instead dwell on what I gained in 2012, which, in addition to a few pounds, includes my first step-son-in-law. It all happened when Kid #1, Willi, married a nice fella by the name of Brian on a Lake Michigan beach. For the event I chose a brown layered dress that Mark said made me look like a giant pill bug. I also bought these ridiculous sandals with little rocky-jewel things on them, which was a waste of money because everyone went barefoot on the beach.



It was a lovely wedding, followed by a reception of vegan and vegetarian food that was quite outstanding. Brian and Willi are two of the greener people walking the planet and will set good examples for those of us that still choose paper or plastic instead of taking our own cloth bags with us to the store.

In other news, Kid #4, Holly, graduated from Alma College in May and is out in Montana working for a catering company. Kid #2, Becky, returned safely from a multi-month stint in Germany. And Kid #3, Arthur, is working on a master's degree in creative writing.

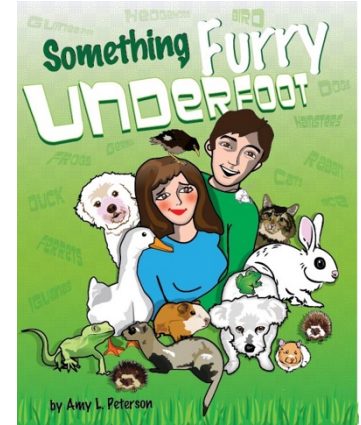
With the kids all out on their own, Mark had too much time on his hands and set out to replace his former bird pal with a mynah bird, which flew from Florida to Detroit Metro Airport on a cargo plane. We waited three hours to pick up this boisterous bird and the ride home was an awesome mix of bird-bouncing-against-cage mixed with the smell of day-old banana, which is a mynah bird's favorite. The bird we named Little Buddy was soon accidentally joined by another mynah due to the bird breeder putting Mark's name and address on a cardboard container that was to have been sent to Alabama. Since said birdy came from Florida and



was in a box for 38 hours before arriving at our house, she is now a member of our family. The photo is of Mark with BOGO, Little Buddy and Peanut, the hamster.

Now, you may notice the lack of vacations mentioned in 2012, and as a result, we are starting 2013 off with a trip to the Amazon to go peacock bass fishing. Should we survive all the critters awaiting to eat us on the Amazon, we will have one good fishing story (or many lies) to share next year at this time.

Other note-worthy news is that my book, *Something Furry Underfoot*, is undergoing a final edit and should be available at Amazon.com by early spring. The front cover looks a lot like the one at the right, and inside the front cover and before the back cover, you'll be able to read about a whole bunch of critters that Mark and I raised over the 18 years of our marriage.



As with my first book, this book will contain dozens of tips, which, in this case, will focus on critters. For example, one tip is that "Love always finds a way," and it prefaces the chapter about Louie, the African pygmy hedgehog, and his daring escapes and encounters with Sonic, which resulted in four unplanned litters of baby hedgehogs. This book will be available at Amazon.com as an e-book for \$1.99 and as a paperback for somewhere around \$11.

For those who like photos more than words, I've also taken my four kid's critter photo books currently at Bookemon.com and converted them into books that rhyme. These photo, rhyming books will be converted into e-books which will be for sale for 99 cents at Amazon.com. Kids photo books are:



Bumpkin Gets Big



Dusty, the Angel Pups



Goodnight, Big Wuzzy



Purrkins, the Cat

Look for an announcement about my books on my web site www.amylpeterson.com.