



Starr Talk
December 2008



Dear Friends and Family,

We wish you health and happiness in the coming year as well as progress in world peace. Many thanks for the holiday wishes you have sent us.

The year has been eventful personally and professionally. We both just finished what is likely to be our last semester of teaching. Although rewarding, making way for the next generation is one of several good reasons to say "it's time."

Our travels were more frequent this year than usual. In January we attended the annual mathematics meetings, this time in San Diego, a welcome break from winter woes. Norton spoke about a three dimensional puzzle he conceived (and the proofs which have since been published). By coincidence, the speaker before him illustrated her talk on a two dimensional version with material from Norton's web site. She was surprised to learn of the source. On the way back we stopped in Kansas City, visiting son Andrew and other relatives and friends, and in Tucson, visiting an old friend. In March Norton and Ethan attended a conference honoring Martin Gardner, in Atlanta. The combination of mathematics, puzzles, magic, and friends old and new was fascinating. On his return, Norton stopped in Baltimore to visit his brother and wife, whose apartment is a veritable museum of art, especially photography. Norton's 50th reunion at Caltech brought us to Pasadena in May – a beautiful occasion despite the 100 degree weather. This included interesting lectures, a trip to the Huntington museum, and many heartwarming personal encounters and reconnections. We also enjoyed seeing friends and family in Los Angeles and in Kansas City.

Our major trip was a month in Europe, occasioned by a puzzle conference in Prague. Great trains plus a railpass made travel a pleasure (so easy to hop on and off) and facilitated visiting numerous friends and places. At the outset we spent a few days in Bremen, Germany, where Norton gave a lecture to an avant-garde seminar at the University (his retro view of the early days of computer graphics.) We were guests at Kunsthalle Bremen's opening dinner for their Christina Kubisch exhibit. This museum has some of Norton's work in its renowned computer art collection (in the picture a curator and Norton look at his and other graphics exhibited in 2007, with Albrecht Dürer's works in the background) . Other highlights of the visit included meeting a founder of computer art in the 1960's and an artist who invited us to his studio where he demonstrated the extraordinary computer drawing system he built himself. (A large, flat-bed plotter using carefully calibrated pencil leads – probably a unique genre, certainly unique hardware.)



We particularly enjoyed visiting long-time friends in Germany and Holland. We also made new friends in two villages near Bonn and Frankfurt where Irene's relatives had lived. Our 49th anniversary was in Berlin, where we did a lot of walking and sightseeing in both classical and offbeat neighborhoods. We took a post-conference tour with other puzzlers after Prague, visiting Vienna, Budapest, and less well-known places. The ancient churches, castles and monasteries were breathtakingly beautiful. Vienna was a delight, to which we hope to return. Pictures of Bremen and Irene's grandmother's village are at www.starr.net/is/trip08 - more should be posted in late January.

Norton's semester of teaching this fall was impeded by a gallstone attack which put him in the hospital the first week of classes. There was no premonition, no prior incident. To avoid further disruption, the needed surgery was held off until just before Thanksgiving. Irene continues with various projects as well as managing her Keyboard Help web site, maintaining websites for several non-profits as a volunteer, and occasional computer consulting.

Ethan was here for a week at Thanksgiving – a special treat as always. Andrew enjoys his work at Wayside Waifs, a large animal shelter in KC. We look forward to the four of us being together in DC in January, where we will attend the annual math conference, and in Kansas City in February when we attend a family event.

In closing, we extend our annual invitation to visit us if you are traveling in the Northeast.

Fondly, *Irene and Norton*

Our Email & Web Sites:

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www.bibliomaven.com
www.bibliomaven.com/businessjournals.html
www.bibliomaven.com/citymags.html



Irene's grandmother's house in Hamm-Sieg - then and now.



Our friends' beautiful landscaping is behind us.