

Kit's 2020

A Super Fucked Year With Some Fucking Beautiful Moments

January

Jeanna gave Charlie some heated gloves which he liked very much.

He was supposed to have surgery to remove the bad kidney but he fainted in the waiting room and his blood pressure was so low they couldn't get an IV into him. Started Round 2 of chemo.



ZBC went to the Burning Man exhibit at the Oakland Museum. My cousin Lindy's daughter, Natasha, has an art piece in this trunk. She made it into the Smithsonian! In a trunk! A small theater was installed on the top of this 5TONCRANE art work.



February

Edin, Charlie and I went to a ceramics art show in Crockett.

Was there some for-shadowing here?



Someone's fantasy of a small side effect of a COVID vaccination? This is February – no one in the US has heard of COVID.



The cats are always a great comfort.



Tulip season



Enjoying light ---
Reflection of ceiling
lights in old glass
windows in Jeanna's
living room.

Track lights shining thru
water glasses in a
restaurant.

Halo on the top floor of
a UC building.



March

Feeding Charlie became an art project.



Alice and Tommy announced their engagement. I got a wedding catalog in the mail (how did they know?). I sent Alice some suggestions for the wedding decorations. We had a good laugh over the \$4.50 cup of colored sand. What do you do with it? Throw it at the couple as they leave the church?



After the March 15th lockdown I moved my job from Alameda to my home. It is pretty crowded in the upstairs bedroom. So far since March 2020 my home office has been in my living room, this upstairs bedroom, the bedroom next to it and now it is in my dining room.



Jeanna and Edin when masks and social distancing were a new look.



COVID continued to ravage the country, but people coped in their own way. There was a rumor that people were putting teddy bears in their windows for the kids to count when their parents took them for walks, so I put mine out there.





The plum trees
are already going
bonkers in March.

Rain on the
windshield
of my car.



April

I decided that a trip on the Richmond to SF ferry might be in order. The boat would be in the open air and I would wear a mask. I hoped that would be enough. No luck, it was shut down. I drove over to the Berkeley pier to look at the clouds.



Tommy gave me a
much needed
haircut.



Before



After

Another nice April day at UUCB. My writing group started meeting by Zoom in March. The first couple of meetings were chaotic, but I expected that. By April we were getting used to it. But we all miss the view, but more than anything we miss each other.



One night around 7 PM I hear an eerie sound from the street. A moaning howl. It's kind of scary but I don't see anything when I look outside.

Turns out that in Berkeley, instead of banging pots, or playing musical instruments, like they were doing in NY, we howled in support of all the First Responders at 7PM, every night. The noise passes down the block like The Wave at a sporting event. The neighborhood dogs join in.

I stand in the middle of the street and howl until I am hoarse.

I signed up for hospice and things started to move really fast. Charlie's last coherent words (maybe?) were to ask me to tip the hospice people after they bathed him and swaddled him in clean clothing and diapers. I was strongly reminded of how Alice was wrapped up in a neat package after the nurses wiped her down after her birth. For a moment I felt safe. Someone was in charge.

James came to sit with Charlie. Matt and Mindy came by too. I napped while they read to him or let him sleep. Their visits were a huge help. Thank you.

Charlie died on the 27th.



The hospice nurse was delayed. Charlie started fidgeting so I gave him a few drops of laudid. The advice nurse had told me I could give him 15ml but he seemed to rest well enough with 5ml. I moved away from him and started playing solitaire on my phone. I went over to check on him and saw that he was dead. In the space of 10 minutes he was already getting cold. I held his hand for a few minutes. Waiting.

I don't know what I was waiting for. But I just stopped what I had been doing and waited.

He was gone. Nothing was going to happen for him.

The nurse arrived 15 minutes later and she made a few calls. Then sat with me while we waited for the mortuary people to come to take him away. She stripped the bed and made neat piles of all the diapers and gloves and pads before she left. Apria came to take away the bed and side table, walker and wheel chair. The whole process was incredibly efficient and kindly done. People treated me like a fragile clock that might possibly be connected to a time-bomb.



I was sad, but ready to be alone after all the anxiety, noise and bother of the last few months.

The worst thing to happen had happened weeks ago when it became apparent he was completely helpless to take care of himself.

In reply to the question, “how are you doing?”

What I imagined people were thinking



The reality



May and June

Friends sent me their favorite pictures of Charlie in action.







This is an old picture from 2014 when we were housing Exchange students. Niko, from the French Alps, was one of my favorite students.





I moved out of the bedroom I shared with Charlie and set myself up in the little room on the north side of the house and moved my office into our old bedroom. There's a lot of muddle in my head. I spent a great deal of May and June moving furniture around. Pretty manic – to tell the truth.





One of the big museums in NY had a COVID project to replicate a famous painting using only three household objects. Some of them were quite fun and creative. The three object limit was soon ignored. This was my contribution. One object. If I had looked more carefully at the original I would have put Quan Yin in the side window instead of climbing a ladder in the yard trying to get the angle right for the front window. It was fun, anyway.

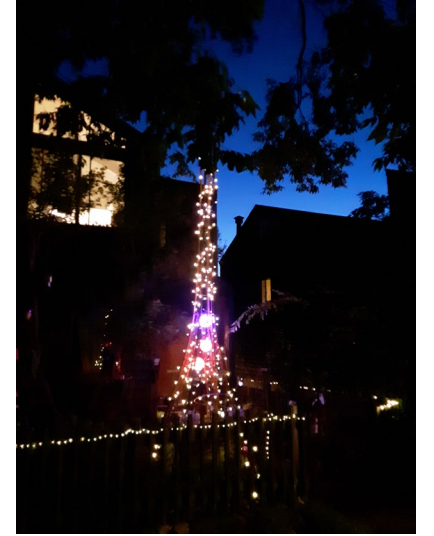




My next door neighbors, Jory and Lisa invited me to the campfires they have in their back yard.



For many years Jeanna and I have gone for Sunday “real estate walks.” The idea being that Jeanna would get listings of local open houses within walking distance and we would walk from open house to open house. Since March there are no open houses so we started exploring. This is at the Albany Bulb. We also explored Tilden Park and Brionies.



The washing machine broke and I bought a new one with the help of Karen and Herb. I visited Hannah in her back yard and took a walk with Rachel in her neighborhood. Bert getting ready to chomp down on a lily that started to bloom. I stayed busy with a little help from my friends.

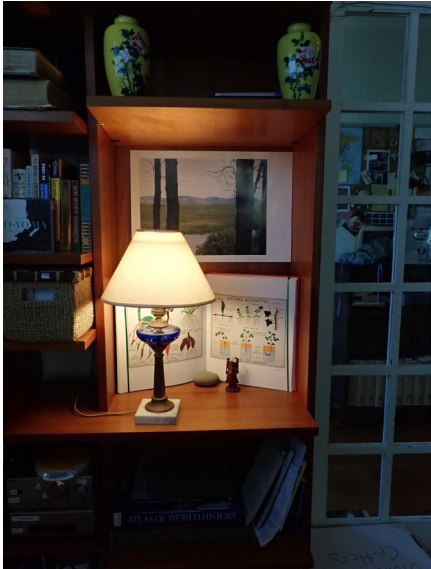




Politics.

I was going through Charlie's stuff and found these knick-knacks in a box. He got them when he was a kid on a trip to New York and DC with his mother. Given the 2020 amazing election news they exemplified conditions in Washington. The Capitol is split and the Statue of Liberty lost her torch.



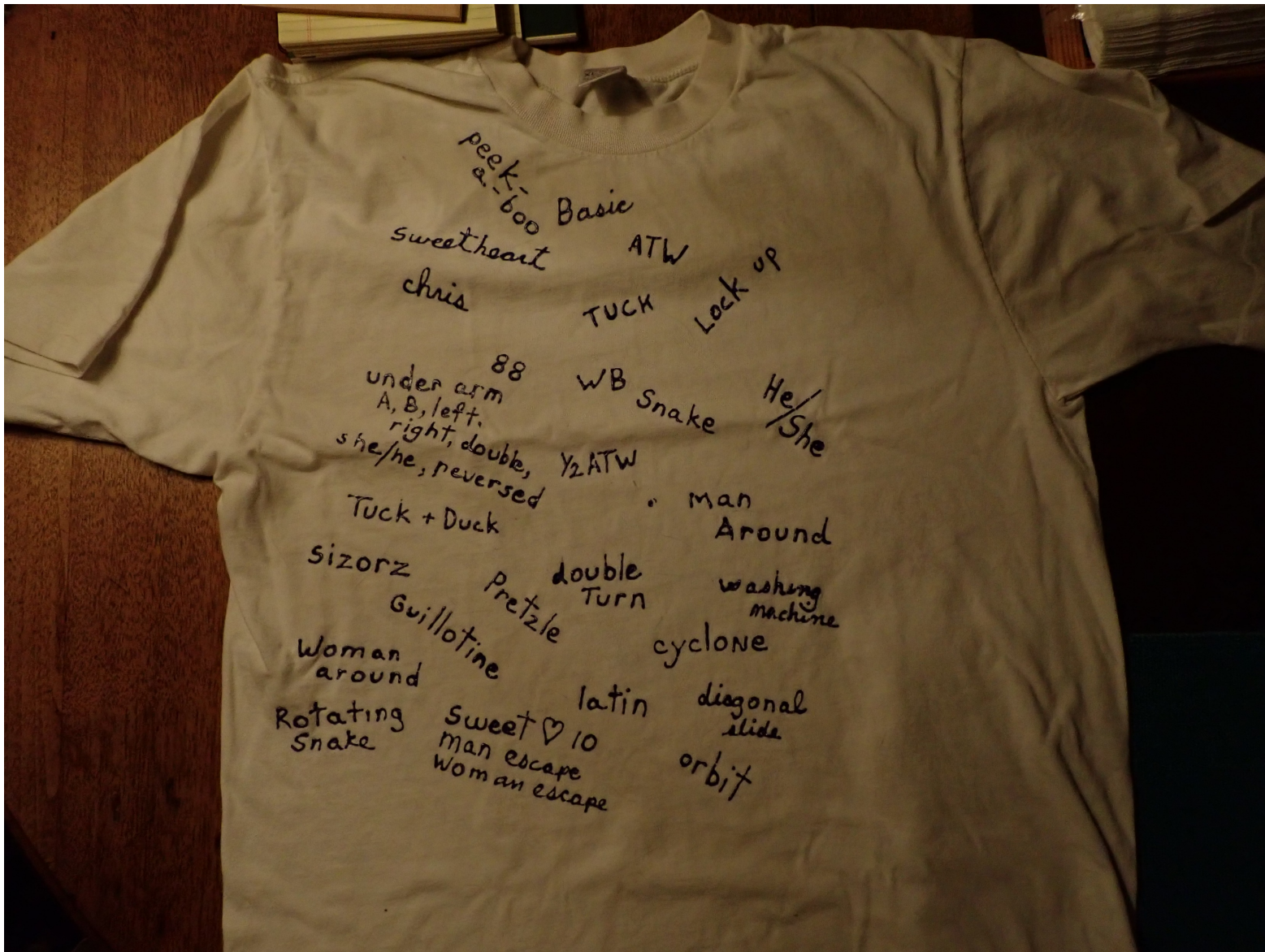


July

One day I took pictures of things in the house and added them to my web page.

Things were settling down in my head.





Back in the days when Charlie and I went dancing together I made him a crib-shirt of all the dance moves we had learned.

I was invited to join Jan D on the Rogue River Wilderness run in September. I lined up raft support from Kate Meyer, pending some clarity about what kind of COVID related protections were in order for the trip.

Mid-month, Karen and Herb and their dog Lady came to stay. Before they came, I built a cat-proof wall in the basement so I could put a litter box down there and keep the kitties from going ratting in the crawl space. I wanted to keep the dog and the cats completely separated and that meant I needed a litter box on the cat side of the door. While I was working down in the basement, I discovered that Ginger had ripped a piece of the ducting away from the heating system. She was exploring the duct right next to my head. Scared the crap out of me at first. I thought it was a rat – a really, really BIG rat.



I'm pretty proud of my cat-proof wall. Ginger still kept being able to get through it. I patched a half dozen possible gaps and was starting to think she knew how to materialize on the other side of the fence! So I sat in the basement with her one afternoon waiting for her to get thru. I played solitaire while she sniffed around for a long boring time then jumped to a spot over the washing machine where there was a hidden gap between the joists and above the ceiling. Hard to describe properly.

I wish I had found it before putting chicken-wire patches all over the place. They cluttered up a pretty elegant solution to blocking off the crawl-space from the cats. If I say so myself.

My “raw” materials.
And a zillion zip-ties.



adjustable exercise pen

ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS FOR 24, 30, 36, 42 & 48 IN MODELS

assembly instructions

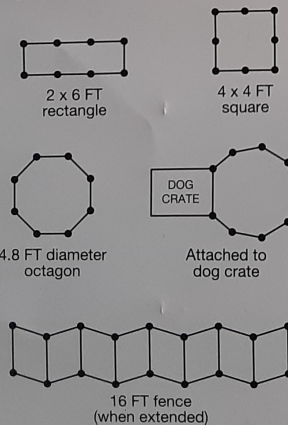
step 1

Locate the retaining hook that keeps the exercise pen panels secured for storage and transportation. Lift the hook upward and pull the panels apart carefully. (The hook will remain on the last panel during use.)



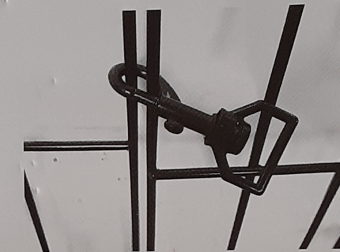
step 2

Find a large open space free of obstacles and carefully unfold the panels. The panels are permanently assembled, but can be moved to create a variety of configurations. Some examples are shown here:



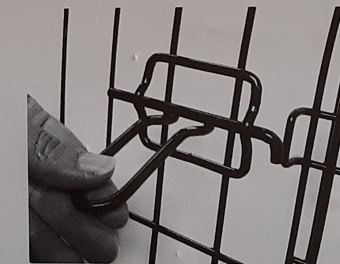
step 3

Use the included snap hooks to secure the two open end panels of the exercise pen to itself or to your Animaze crate. For best results, place two snap hooks at the top and bottom and space the remaining two snap hooks evenly along the middle wires.



step 4

To open door, lift and slide the latch mechanism to the left. While holding the latch mechanism, pull the door towards you. To close door, slide the latch mechanism to the right so it is completely secured through the loop.



step 5

For added safety when using outdoors, install a ground anchor at the intersection of every other panel.

August

In spite of the warnings about high wind and lightening I drove up to Grizzly Peak to see the magnificent thunder storm that was going to set fire to the whole state. Rain that never hit the ground. Warm wind. It was quite beautiful.



Behind me Mount Diablo
was already on fire.



In spite of the August heat my windows had to be closed to keep the smoke out for the next three months. I spent a lot more time indoors. The orange light made me feel like it was a hot winter.

The trip on the Rogue was out of the question. Jake, Jan's son, was working with teenagers in Oregon teaching kayaking to 40 different students a week. He and his boss and family wouldn't be able to quarantine before we left. I didn't feel safe going on a five day wilderness trip with people who had so much exposure.

When the fires started in Oregon they almost wiped out Jake's workplace and he spent months struggling with evacuations. Jan was trying to get some boating in even if it was just on the South Fork of the American.



Bert was in the habit of pissing on the living room furniture. I was getting to the point where, on one of his frequent escapes into the yard, there was a part of me that felt, “Fuck-it. Go. Don’t come back. Get eaten.”

At the same time, it was one of my entertainments; trying to figure out what I could do to solve the problem. I planned to build him an outdoor enclosure that allowed him to go out the window, climb a structure and get under the deck where he likes to hang out when he escapes.

I thought a cat tree might provide enough structure to build on, enclosing it with chicken wire supported by some pipe I got at Urban Ore. Voila! Linda, a friend of my brother, Tom, wanted to get rid of a cat tree. What luck.

Linda asked a friend to bring the cat tree to me in his truck. He brought a friend to help carry it into the house.

All went smoothly. It was set up in the dining room in all its carpeted glory.

Ginger calmly walked up to it and sniffed over every square inch, then settled in.



Bert was in the hallway minding his own business when the cat tree was set down in the dining room, but he came exploring once the people left. He rounded the corner by the refrigerator, saw this thing, this horrible, horrible thing in his dining room, and hissing and howling he took off in the opposite direction.



He eventually figured it out.



September

Around 2PM on a Sunday walk over by UC with Jeanna. The air was breathable and we were protected by our COVID masks from the worst of the smoke.



But by September 9th, the day never dawned. The smoke was so bad that the street-lights stayed on all day. It was too depressing to take pictures.

I built a massive air filter out of a 2x2 foot box fan and two air filters used for HVAC systems. It felt kind of ridiculous to have this bulky “hillbilly air filter” in the living room but when I checked the filters they were grey with smoke after a month or so.



During one of the heat waves, I put a block of ice in the cavity and it helped cool things down a bit.

We all got familiar with various air quality websites to determine when it might be safe to go out. My choice was PurpleAir. Jan had invited me to join her on the South Fork of the American to do the C2G run. By that time I had built a bed in my Honda Fit and according to PurpleAir, the air was cleaner at Camp Lotus than it was in Berkeley, so in a very last minute burst of courage I packed up and drove up to meet Jan on a Thursday evening.

Unfortunately the other 2 boaters we were going to boat with on Friday bailed on us so Jan and I hung out at the State Park and caught up with each other's lives. I planned on staying thru Sunday. While Jan went paddling with another group on Saturday, I took a nap. When I went to sleep the air quality was 43 (pretty good) when I woke up an hour later it was at 185 (bad) and ash was falling like a light snowfall. When Jan got back to camp I told her I was going home and I was home before it was totally dark.



It was my first solo camping trip (2 nights and 3 days) and I had a good time. Any day camping is good despite all the confusions. I think the test wasn't how easy it was going to be, but how well I was going to be able to cope with uncertainties. I didn't feel stressed out and I had a good time. A-, B+. Boating would have made it an A+ trip.

You bet I went back on surface streets to take this shot! I looked it up on the Internet and Chuneed Mirko is an Oakland graffiti artist. I have no idea what the 'puppie' part is all about. I want to know how he was able to re-program the CalTrans warning sign. I can think of all kinds of things I would put on one.

About every two weeks I go to the office in Alameda to pickup the mail.



In September, my neighbor Teri introduced me to some of my neighbors down the hill. They had been meeting every day at 7PM in the street since March to check in with each other. They are friendly with each other but I find their endless preaching about politics pretty boring. Which is pretty boring given that the 2020 race for the Presidency is so full of dread and melodrama. As the nights begin to cool and darken I gradually stop going.



Teri and I started taking
late evening dog walks
around the neighborhood.

**YOU HAVE NOW ENTERED
THE JURISDICTION OF
THE MINISTRY OF SILLY
WALKS.**

**COMMENCE SILLY
WALKING IMMEDIATELY.**

Follow procedure. We are all in this together so let's have
some fun while we can! (Don't know how to silly walk?
Google Monty Python Ministry of Silly Walks for instructions)



October

I started buying a bouquet of flowers almost every week when I go shopping at TJ's. Bert likes to eat them.

Bert does not like walking on the stove so that is where they sit. I like the reflection in the back-splash and the knives are an interesting back drop.





Since I hadn't been walking to work twice a week I wasn't able to add much to my shoe photos. While sitting around, I'd been sorting my pictures. I have more than 150 pictures of shoes that I have collected over the years. Don't ask me why. Since March there have been very few.

Everyone seems to be taking on those projects that they never had the time to work on – sorting pictures – remodeling the kitchen – washing the car.



Mid-October, Joan and Bob invited me to paddle with a small group on the Stanislaus River. Alice and I join them at Knight's Ferry. I was paddling for the first time in years and I was scared I had forgotten even the most basic of maneuvers. Joan and I paddled tandem. We managed a decent forward ferry and then an s-turn. Confidence restored (it really is like falling off a bike), we proceed downstream. We unmasked on the river but sat yards apart at lunch.





Alice and Tommy have been deeply involved in the fungus community. During our lunch break on the river, Alice brought me a bunch of fungi so I could take pictures of them with my macro lens camera. These are all fungi. She showed these to her instructor at Mills and he got all excited about the Orange Squiggly one. It's rare.



The water was very high and we got to the take-out early enough that Alice and I took the long way home. We wandered on side roads for an hour or so before getting on a highway to take us out to Hwy 99.





My neighbors got into Halloween, big time. The T-Rex kept banging its head on things when it looked down to pickup the candy. Everyone was laughing and the kids were bouncing like ping pong balls.



The dragon lights up at night.

I sat out on my front steps to see if anyone came Trick or Treating. I was ridiculously delighted when a family went by and the parents allowed their kids to take a couple of candies from the dish I left at the bottom of the stairs.



November

Biden wins the Election and there is dancing in the street. At the corner of Berryman and MLK, one of my neighbors set up a little laptop and big speaker and played some rocking tunes. I danced and watched for hours.

The following day Karen and I brave BART and downtown Oakland to support a “Count the Vote” rally. It’s scary/fun to be into the world and I feel like I am playing hooky -- but with p-nut butter sandwiches and a mask.



Alice's birthday is in November and I always like to give her a big present for her birthday. I decided to give her the same camera with a macro that I used to take all those fungi pictures when we went to the Stan.

Unfortunately while I was at B&H Photo (online) I saw a camera with a zoom lens that made me drool. I splurged and bought both; an Olympus Tough for Alice and Nikon Coolpix for myself.

As soon as it arrived I went to Cesar Chavez Park and started teaching myself how to use the zoom. A floating blob on the water turned into a Ruddy Duck. And I could read the numbers on the clock on the Campanile!





Tilden Park with
Jeanna.



Lake Anza



An afternoon walk at
Point Isabel with Alice.



There was a lot of anxiety built in around Thanksgiving. Where to have it? In person or via Zoom? Who to invite if it is in person and who to leave out. Risky behavior and trust had to be considered.

Karen and Herb came down from SoHum so we had an early Thanksgiving with Dan and Laura and Maisie (2 and a half). Maisie and I fell in love with each other. She is a delight. Energized but not frantic.

Jeanna invited me to her zoomed potluck for Thanksgiving. Three households. Mine (including Alice and Tommy), Rachel, Miranda and Jeannie, and Jeanna and Nathan. We all cooked a potluck dish (or more) which we put into containers for each family. Nathan drove from door to door delivering the food and we all sat down to eat in our own dining rooms and chatted via Zoom. It was a memorable Thanksgiving.

Point Pinole.
Again with Jeanna.
I enjoyed going to the local
parks for my walks. Jeanna and I
were both dreading the winter
darkness and cold so we got out
as much as possible.



I have always wanted to walk out on the New Bay Bridge, so I did.

I don't recommend it.

One is only 10 feet away from the speeding traffic on the bridge so the noise is intolerable.

They stupidly put the walkway on the south side of the bridge so the view is narrowed to Oakland Harbor. Yerba Buena Island blocks the view of SF.

I did see some interesting things.

Starlings on the approach.



And enjoyed my
zoom lens



There were a LOT
of Starlings.



This fishing pier is
built on the
foundations of
the old bridge.

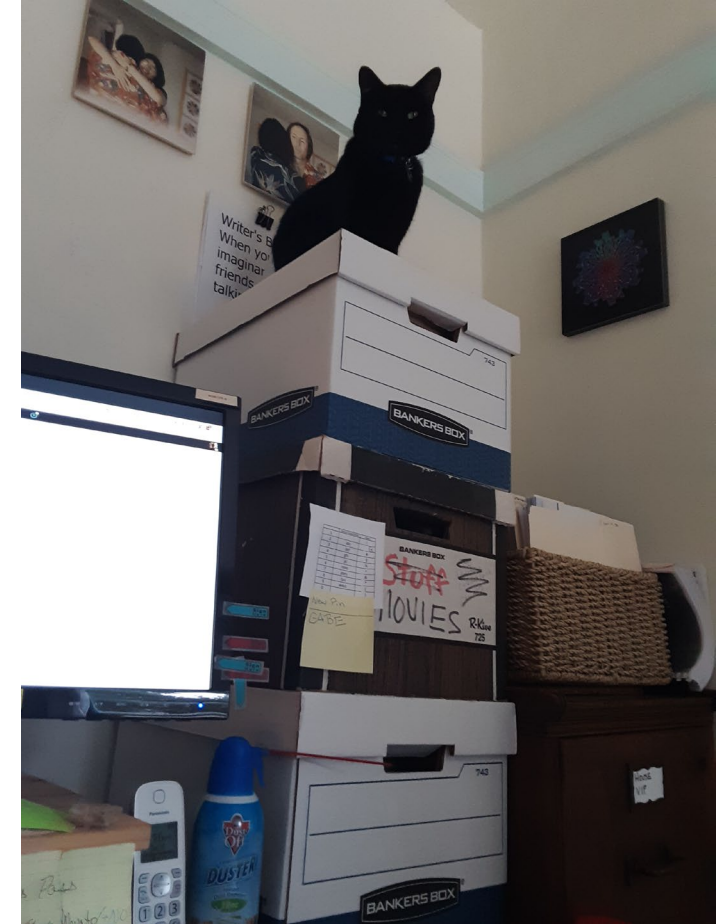


I like how this Century Plant managed to live long enough in this hostile environment to send up it's flower.



December

My life is starting to feel more stabilized. Ginger and Bert hang out with me while I work for Gabe. They rush to the door in happy expectation every time I go upstairs. I think they like it that I sit still for 8 hours while they sleep on the equipment.



Alice and Tommy came over about every 2 weeks.

Alice had fun with my zoom lens.







Alice and I started going for walks together in her neighborhood.

The winter light isn't very good for taking pictures. It's too blue – too cold.





I find that if I go out taking pictures it is better to go alone. I can take my time to fiddle with the camera without making anyone wait.

Practicing with the Light balance. Looking back towards Berkeley from the Albany Bulb. I don't like either of these but I am always amazed how you can change the mood of a picture by changing the light balance.



But when I
see
something
as
beautiful
as this I
wish I had
someone
with me.







In June, my friend, Fred, died suddenly of Leukemia. Every winter he would bring to my Monday Group a leaf from this Gingko tree that grows near the Faculty Club on the UC Campus. Jeanna and I were wandering around the campus one day and when I saw this I knew it was Fred's tree.





The convergence of Jupiter and Saturn came close to the Winter Solstice. I went out to Point Isabel to see. I ran into my brother, Tom, and we took a walk with the dogs while we waited for the sun to go down. Even with the binoculars I could not really tell what I was looking at. My friend, Carol, told me that when she went out to The Bulb, there was a guy with a proper telescope and he let her see the moons of Jupiter.



I have to say I was more
engaged with our sun
than I was with the
planets.





Light



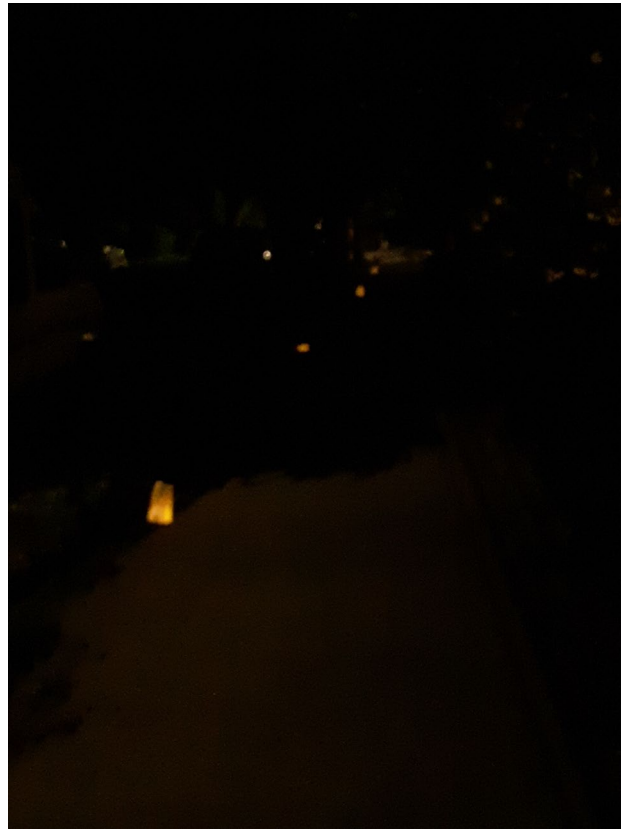
Christmas Eve



Sorry for the crappy picture.

On Christmas Eve, one of my neighbors put out these white paper bags with little battery powered candles in them. Lumiere?

My friend Donna knows the lady and said she put these out on Milvia and Bonita Streets. One every 20 feet or so.



Above North
El Cerrito





Albany
Bulb



Bert caught and killed for the first time. A wren. I suspect the bird crawled through the gap under the door to my front porch. There was no other way it could have gotten in. Ginger, in a move typical of her, sniffed it a few times and, satisfied, went elsewhere. Bert kept looking at me anxiously and I had to distract him so I could collect it and toss it in the trash.



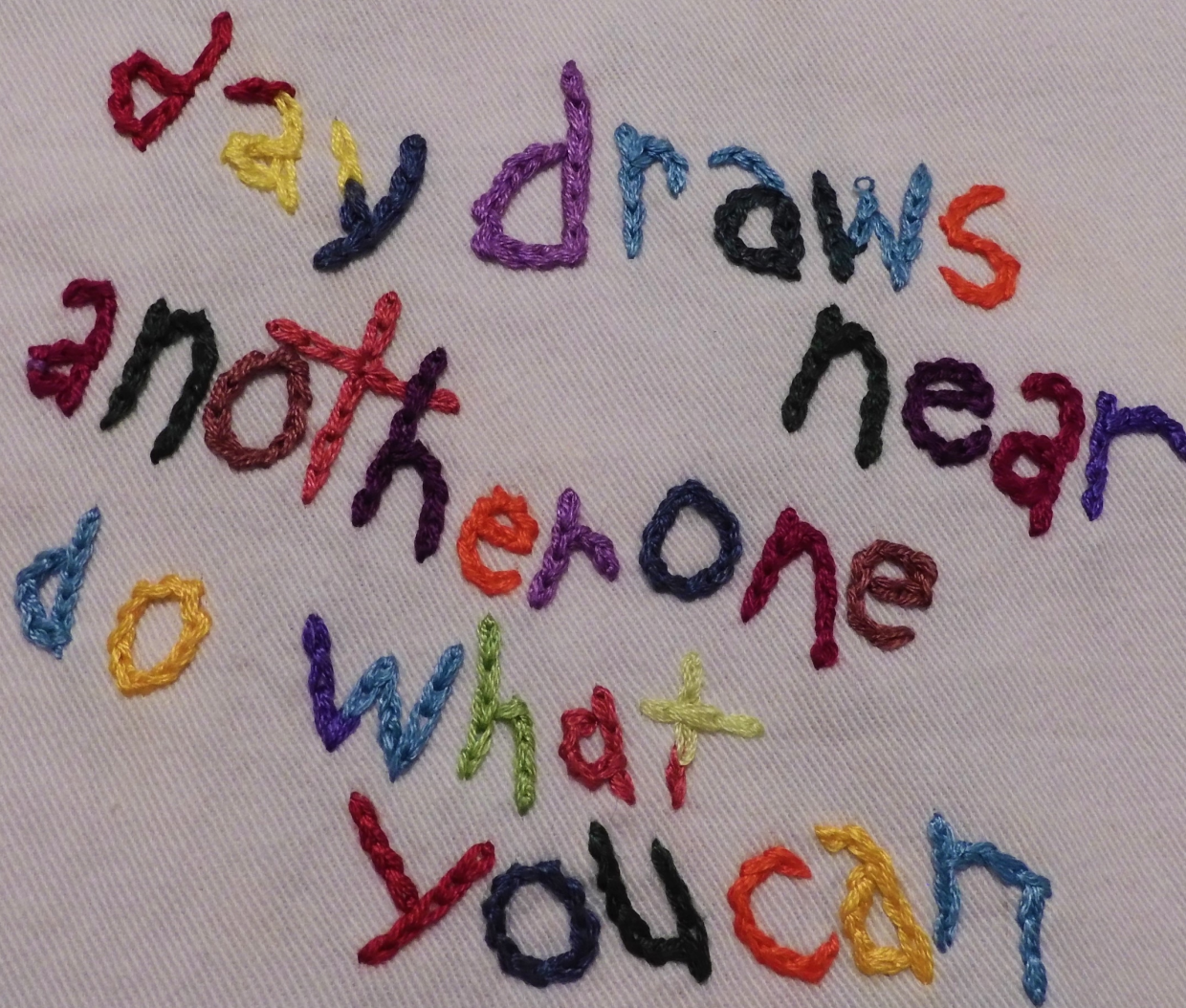
New Years Eve. On Grizzly Peak over the UC Campus with Jeanna.

Happy New Year!!!
Fuck 2020, let the new year commence!



I have been knitting and
crocheting. This seems a
fitting ending to the year. It
should read:

The New Year draws near
Another one
Do what you can.



The New Year draws near
Another one
Do what you can.