

bad blessings

.....

*give thanks, give thanks for
adverse experiences,
contrary events*

This was no accident. You strode, steadfast and slow, out of boundary berm onto blacktop, indiscernible against autumn remnants of sprawling screwbean. Your hide undivided from camouflaging brush until brakes were past deploy, you kept coming, deliberate, hoof by hoof, even as wheels swerved. As one with the fatal fender, you met your end. The car would never run again.

*time-honored Honda
laid to rest a total loss,
we share rides, pay debts*

And when your kin crossed our other car days later on a rain-slicked Texas two-lane, souls were spared, though not the yearling deer's. A wakeup call, some say, a blessing in disguise. We hold instead that fate's a coward's cover, happenstance an equal game of chance. Misfortunes spell a counter turn of happy luck, believed the Greeks, for someone else if not for you. Whatever Tyche divines for us, we'll take it: we live, we choose what tale to make of it.

*along random roads
damage done, benediction,
worse disaster dodged*

We wrote lots, presented some, published a little. Poems found homes in journals and anthologies, and I was especially honored to take part in a launch reading for *Weaving the Terrain: 100-Word Southwestern Poems* in Austin, in April, representing my work and that of two other members of our long-lived Lubbock writers' group.

We are glad for family close by, roofs unencumbered by mortgages, favorable health checkups, and a year that closes with more successes than setbacks. We aim to start 2019 with a writing-retreat vacation and a return to the Paragraph Ranch series — and a new car! — and we'll go from there. We hope for blessings of all kinds, beneficent or bad, however they come.

Do let us hear from you in the new year.

barbara brannon & kay ellington

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Dear family and friends,

It has been a year of ups and downs, gains and losses. Beverly's husband, James, and Chris's father, R.C., left us, both too soon. But Betty's grandson Jaxson Brewer joined the family this summer (most of us are still looking forward to the chance to meet him!).

Here in Spur, we gained three tax-sale houses to start fixing up, and progress is under way. We invested in the dream of running the local weekly newspaper, *The Texas Spur*, starting in March, then in December handed off Lone Star Literary Life, our bookish dream project since 2015, to a capable new owner. We helped restart the Chamber of Commerce and put on the town's first, fun Tiny House Tour of Homes. We rejoiced with our downtown neighbor, the Palace Theater, at its grand reopening with a showing of *The Post* and a post-movie open house at the newspaper office.

We kicked off an exciting year on the road with the Texas Heritage Trails by participating in the historic 50th Anniversary Caravan through 700 miles of sites and sights of Big Bend, El Paso, and the Guadalupe Mountains in early spring . . . but months later lost the warhorse Honda Pilot to a wayward deer along another trail.

In between we've traveled new vistas of Texas, with a Preservation Texas trip to Brownsville and the Lower Rio Grande Valley (and Matamoros, Mexico); another PT jaunt through San Antonio and the Hill

Country; Texas Plains Trail visits to places as far-flung as Farwell and Frisco, Gail and Goodnight and Guthrie, Morton and Muleshoe, San Angelo, Shamrock, and Snyder, Borger, Brownfield, Benjamin, and Big Spring, Quitaque and Quanah, Childress, Canyon, Canadian, and Claude, Abernathy, Abilene, Austin, and Amarillo, Levelland, Littlefield, and Lubbock, Dallas and Dumas, Happy and Hale Center, Tahoka, Tulia, and Turkey, Pampa, Plainview, and Plains.

We spent nights on the Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge in winter, in some terrific B&B's from Austin to Yoakum County, at the luxurious Hyatt Lost Pines Resort in Bastrop — though we skipped our customary campout in Palo Duro this Fourth of July in favor of parades and parties in our new home county.

With Levi we enjoyed the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Shamrock, a back-country drive and a hike through remote canyons in the Big Empty, a family day at the State Fair of Texas, and our annual jaunt to Post to cut our Christmas tree (after he expertly played the role of Santa in his school play). Levi also got to return to Lost Pines, this time with me and his mom, and he kept me company cross-country to North Carolina and back for James Pickett's funeral and a few rare days to see Beverly, her grandkids, and Pearson kin.

Kay and I enjoyed another visit to Emory and Yantis, in East Texas, for the annual Ellington/Hollis family reunion in September. Kay did not go near the boat this time around.