

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

We have very few big things (except the fire) to report this year, yay! It turns out that the little things are taking up all our time now since it seems that life is getting evermore complicated.

I have been up on "the land" almost every day trying to keep up with routine maintenance and also trying to automate as many chores as possible. The Cerro Pelado forest fire this spring during which we were evacuated for about a month and which burned a lot of the vegetation in our area gave the "pricker bushes" an excuse to grow like mad as soon as the rain came. That meant a lot of work clearing the defensible space again. The wet summer we had seems to be the case after a forest fire. (I wonder if the people who try to make rain by emitting air born particles have a point?)

The fire fighters used our land to find spot fires for about a month after the main fire was "out" because of the good view from it. It was interesting to look down upon the helicopters they called out to drop water on smokes. I was also able give them about 1200 gallons of water to refill their trucks as they were emptied when they were used to put out smokes. (A rather boring job since most of the time they just sat in their trucks looking for fires.) They managed to prevent any damage to our structures-hurray!

We include four pictures to give a feeling of what was going on. There are many more on Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/cheerfulmonk/albums/72177720299042166>. These were taken the day we were allowed back in, 3 1/2 weeks after the start of the fire.

This is a picture of our house, greenhouse, and shed and the smoke from the remaining spot fires. Notice the burned area all around.



Two fire trucks were parked in front of the house.



Here is a helicopter called by the firefighters dropping water as well as a couple of smokes on the hill in back.



This picture taken from the west porch shows the defensible space that we maintain for 100 feet around the buildings, Kaitlin's pussy willow, and another helicopter water drop.



Hope your year was even less eventful than ours!

Again Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!  
Andrew and Jean

PS Jean continues to post daily on her blog, [cheerfulmonk.com](http://cheerfulmonk.com).