



November 28, 2007

Hi everybody! Greetings from Portland, Oregon. We've lived here since... well, Tara moved here back in August of 2006 with her dad. Mark moved here in September of 2006. I'm the late-comer, as of June 2007. The important point is that we're all here now.

I finally graduated from Brandeis University with a bachelor's degree, *summa cum laude*, and a master's degree – both in Cultural Anthropology. I had the great honor of graduating with my friend Adueli Riak, who was on the front page of USA Today over the summer. She came from the Sudan to Massachusetts. It is an honor to be her friend; to have seen her smile while knowing that she had such a difficult past, to have shared Anthropology classes and joined in discussions with her, to have had some perspectives in common – both of us having experienced *want* more than *plenty*. I hope some of you were able to read the article about her. In all, my friendships at Brandeis will be the strongest thing to stick with me now that I've left Boston behind.

Examples of the astounding people I remember: My friend Zahrah's description of staying up into the night while her whole Muslim family got on conference call on the telephone so that her father could sing a blessing over Zahrah's newborn nephew in South Carolina. Romain, a Christian priest from Rwanda, and his quiet, loving spirit, while he gave and gave of himself to his colleagues and friends, and only later did I find out that he lost 16 Hutu family members and is the only one left alive after struggles with the Tutsis. Mads – which is short for a name I can't pronounce – who shares my twisted sense of humour and promised me a job in mediation in Sri Lanka if I ever asked for it. Mari Fitzduff, from Ireland, who taught the value of patience and subtlety in peace negotiations from her experience negotiating between Northern Ireland and Britain. My advisor, Dave Jacobson, who simply believed in me and empathized no matter what was going on, and on top of that, taught me how truly fascinating anthropologic ethnography can be. And my dearest friend of all, Louis, the head janitor of the main student campus building, who came from Guatemala at 16 years old, became naturalized in the 80s, and still works his butt off to provide for his family.

During the semester, life continued along as it does, throwing curve balls for the fun of it. Mark lost his job at the company in Oregon, where it turned out that they were not really a good fit for each other after all. While unemployed, he sat his butt down and wrote a 60,000 page book! Of course I'll let you know when it gets published. It was hard on us to be apart for so long, and we had some tough personal struggles while I tried to maintain my sanity and get my degrees, and Mark faced some demons.

I went to Portland at Easter time, and we coloured and then hid eggs in Laurelhurst Park for Tara to find. All the Portland trees were in full bloom at the time, compared to the frozen brown land back in Massachusetts. Just think, next spring I'll get to be in blossoms in February. We began our first of many explorations of Hawthorne and Belmont streets, the crazy fun people who hang out there, and the eccentric shops. My fave place to go is Buffalo Exchange, where I can buy used trendy clothing for reasonable prices.

The real estate market crashed big time, and I could not sell my house. The Boston area is one of the worst hit in the country. My infallible luck finally waned. I had over-extended myself to get into that house, and as of now it has lost \$53K in value. So, needless to say, I have carried the worries about that ever since. I did manage to rent the place out, but in that community can only manage to rent it at slightly over half my mortgage payment Ouch! Thank goodness I've got a renter though!

My brother Travis/Christopher and his lovely Bridget added Lex Logan Trulove to the family. He and big sis Arwyn make a completely beautiful family that needs to move to Portland as soon as possible.



My daughter and my heart were in the West, so Mark flew out and helped me pack up the house. Within 3 days after the graduation ceremony, we were on the road! We chose a route way up north because it went through some territory we had never seen before. We saw Niagara Falls and hugged the Great Lakes all the way through. I was surprised to find how flat the terrain is way up there in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota. Our spirits rose with the elevation as we finally spotted the Rockies in western Montana. We bought a year pass for Glacier National Park so that Tara and I could go through it later.

That was my first trip through Glacier NP, and it was truly astonishing. The *Going To The Sun* road was closed because of a landslide during the winter, so we couldn't go through, but we still saw a lot. We visited Mom and Jim in north Idaho and in no time made it into Portland and officially moved in with the enormously generous Uncles Jim and Larry. Across the river in St. Johns are my Aunt Eireanne and Larry, and over in Sandy is Grandma Trulove, so I'm amidst family here.



We moved into Jim and Larry's June 1st, and are still there! They've got lots of land on a beautiful hilltop, and their deck overlooks the city of Portland and several of the area volcanoes: Mt. Hood, Mt. Adams, Mt. St. Helens, and Mt. Rainier. They breed Saint Bernards and Schipperkes, so there are always pooches around, who enjoy playing with the six cats. They have twenty chickens and some ducks and geese as well, and right next door is a field where four goats and a horse live. That's why we call this place "The Farm." Our poor Pumpkin kitty (aka Rexie) had a cranky few days getting used to this place. He's much better, but all the felines are still trying to work out a peaceable hierarchy, and Pumpkin is constantly scratched up.

Mark and I searched for new jobs all summer long with dismal results. We were reaching panic stages by September. Both of us had robbed our

retirement investment accounts to live on, and this money slowly disappeared. I am extremely grateful to be one of those responsible people who set up a retirement account in my twenties, so I had money to access. I hate to spend it, but at least it was there when I was in an emergency state.

Tara and I had been planning a long road trip for a long time. She was so angry at me for moving AGAIN, that I wanted there to be something fun to look forward to. I explained to Tara that because I was graduating school and moving to Oregon, that meant we could go on a great trip. She wanted to go to Graceland. Isn't that hilarious?! Little Elvis fan already. We ended up staying in the West, and visited grandparents and national parks. I have a cool e-story with awesome photos of our trip here: <http://people.brandeis.edu/~trulove/NatlPark.html> We started with my dad (aka Grandpa and Grandma Trulove), then went to Grand Teton NP, Yellowstone NP, Glacier NP, Waterton Lakes NP (Alberta, CAN) and ended up at Mom's (aka Grammy and Grandpa Stippich).

We spent the remainder of the summer applying for jobs, exploring Portland, and being watchful for dog presents. I grew to love Portland. What a beautiful place with such eclectic, down-to-earth folks. It's the first time in my life I've ever desired to live smack in the middle of a town. Tara, Mark and I attended what street fairs we could, discovered parks and chose our favourites, and basically sopped up Portland like biscuits in gravy. In August we went to the Eugene area for a Haley family reunion. I call them the Indians in my family: all the Cherokees. Mark got to meet some of my family for the first time, and since it was my first Haley reunion, so did I! I spent some quality time with my Gramma Haley – oldest sibling of the Haley clan - who was a bit off her peak, but still clever and silly and beautiful all the same. We also went to Faeryworlds outside of Eugene, which was a blissful fantasy world for Tara and me. Mark took more photos, and I got to meet one of my all-time favourite artists, Brian Froud.

When school started, Tara went back to live with her dad in Beaverton, which is a suburb of Portland. She's a 5th grader at Terra Linda Elementary (and thinks its pretty fun to share names with her school). She's active again in her fabulous Junior Girl Scout group, and this year has been able to join choir. We received a letter early in the year referencing a standardized test she took in the 4th grade. It said she scored so high in math that she qualified for gifted and talented classes, but when we brought it up with Tara, she freaked out. She thinks she hates math and didn't want to have to do more of it! So we let the matter drop, but I do feel validated, because I've known she has been great at math since she was a toddler. She used to beg me to give her math problems to do in her head while we rode in the car.

Mark was going stir crazy waiting to hear from someone to call him in for an interview. To protect his sanity, he made two separate trips into the desert to take photographs. The results of these trips are some incredible photos; especially night photos. Take a look at his flickr site.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mpdrouin/collections/72157601994471404/>

In October, our luck finally turned. I was hired, and a few weeks later, so was Mark. Then, I was offered a higher position in the same organization. About that time, my student



loans were coming due, so I breathed a sigh of relief that I could afford them! Mark is working in the same field: environmental remediation. Specifically, he specializes in removing contaminants from soil. He's a soil scientist with a degree in geology. He's working out in Hood River. Since The Uncles live in Scappoose, his daily commute is a grueling 80 miles one way! Needless to say, when we find a place of our own, it will be on the Hood River side of Portland. I am working for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Yes, it's another government job. I will have 15 years with the government as of March, and I would like to at least get twenty years in, at which point I will qualify for a partial retirement. If I'm ready to move on at that point, I'll move on. But if I like the job and stay on, I'll have 30 years just after my 53rd birthday, and that's not too shabby.

I still want to be a mediator, and maybe that'll happen someday. Within the VA, there are options for me to exercise my conflict resolution skills. My job is to review veterans' claims for health benefits, and to make decisions on whether they qualify, and then if so, for how much. Veterans who are injured while serving our country are entitled to monetary benefits. At the very least, they are entitled to priority care at VA hospitals to care for their service-connected injuries. I love this job so far because it requires my great analytical skills, and my un-emotional evaluation of the facts (something my immediate family doesn't usually appreciate, but my employer will). Also, decision-making is something I am very comfortable with. I view this as a feel-good job, because many needy veterans will receive help with my input.

In November, Grandma Haley died. She had been less than healthy for a long time, but not so much that anyone expected her to leave us quite yet. I was crippled with grief and unable to go to work. Mark, Tara and I went to the funeral in Eugene, and with the loving arms of my family around me, and my friends near and far who reached out to me; I can now focus on her sparkling life and the gifts she brought to those of us who knew her.

I am currently in Baltimore for training. It's three weeks of training and I've got a week left. Since I've been out here, Mark made an offer on a home. The mortgage broker told us our credit is stellar, and we qualify to buy a house even with the house still unsold in Massachusetts. January 2008 will be the month we move into a home – wherever it is. What a great way to begin the year! Of course our address will change, but The Uncles will always forward our mail, so use their address for now:



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