

Christmas 1998

I have much to be grateful for this year. First, we were extremely lucky that Hurricane Mitch made a big circle around Belize, always staying 175 – 200 miles away. We didn't even get tropical storm winds. All we got was the storm surge, but even that did a lot of damage to piers. I am grateful for the Belize Barrier Reef that protected us. The 25-foot waves out there were cut down to 6-foot at the Caye. I stayed on the Caye, but realize how foolhardy that was. Don't worry, I will never be that stupid again. I learned that one has to decide to leave early and move fast. I got about three inches of mud and saltwater on my floor. As I cleaned up, I threw a lot of stuff away that I had been saving for no good reason because I had already let go of all of it. In the face of the extreme damage in the rest of Central America the effect on us is minimal. The Caye was functioning again within a week.

I am grateful for friends and family. I got an outpouring of emails, phone calls, and letters expressing concern for my well-being. Thanks to everyone! In the summer I did another AMTRAK tour of the USA visiting family and friends and several visited me here. My mother came in March and I took her on a little adventure, visiting a Garifuna village, two Mayan villages, and the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary. Jeff came the week after Mitch, just as I finished cleaning the mud out of his room and mine. My grandson, Ray, is a darling three years old and has a little brother due in March.

I am grateful for a marked improvement in my health. It happened on August 7th in Barranco, a Garifuna village on the southern coast of Belize, in the midst of a week-long traditional healing ceremony called a dugu. It was my second dugu and I wanted to dance this time. I got exactly what I asked for – the weakness in my legs disappeared. Four months later I can still walk, stand, and dance. I've put away my walking stick and my stool. It is such a joy!!!

I am grateful for many interesting opportunities for involvement in environmental work here in Belize. I am working on a book of the history of the Belize Audubon Society in preparation for their 30th anniversary next Spring. The environmental work of Caye Caulker Branch of the Belize Tourism Industry Association has also provided opportunities to make contributions right here where I live. Recently we have been working on a website – look for cayecaulker.com on the Internet soon.

I wish you all a satisfying, peaceful holiday season full of love, however you choose to celebrate. For myself, I plan to go to Guatemala with two friends and to visit Guatemalan Friends in Chiquimula on the way home.

With all my love,

Judy