

2011 Annual Report: Moving West, Exploring Asia



Jim and Linda Move to the Left Coast

You heard that right. After more than 30 years in Austin, we picked up and moved west. We hated to leave our great house overlooking Barton Creek, friends and family. The lure of children and grandchildren proved irresistible.

Our children had some ideas of what we should look at. Claire suggested a nice condo in San Francisco right down the street from Ron and her. Jim objected that “San Francisco is all uphill.” Expense and congestion were also factors.

Charles suggested El Cerrito would be a good choice. We actually found a nice house there. Oops! It was located in the *black zone* ¼ mile from the [Hayward fault](#). Linda panicked. Back to square one. Jim narrowed our online search by setting up Google Earth to show the fault zone with houses superimposed.

The kids suggested we look for a place with a [high walkability score](#). Problem with that: most of those houses were in Berkeley and built in the early 20th century. Can you say, “Interesting, tiny floor plan?”

We returned for a third try. One prospect that satisfied our theoretical requirements was, alas, taken off the market the day we arrived. On Sunday before we planned to return to Austin we found our house on Balmoral Drive. Bingo! Of course, it satisfied exactly *none* of the criteria. Too far away. Low walk score. Too big.

We bought the house. The kids are finding out that it isn't as far away as they thought. Our neighbors are friendly. Linda is actively gardening, adding to an already colorful landscape. Jim has located a nearby Bridge Club, and we're really enjoying new birding hot spots. Laysan Albatross, Varied Thrushes and Allen's Hummingbirds are a few of the highlights.

For a while, you can view the house at <http://www.5820balmoral.com>.

Scarlet and Violet

We learned in late spring that Claire and Ron were expecting *twins*. Somewhat later, we received the cryptic text message, “xx xx,” revealing both to be girls: Scarlet Vivian and Violet Grace.

Tragically, a routine ultrasound at week 20, revealed a fatal anomaly. Violet had cystic kidneys. Claire carried both babies to term, becoming huge in the process, but handled a difficult pregnancy amazingly well. She received a lot of support from Ron as well as midwife sister-in-law, Amy, plus numerous friends. A lovely baby shower raised money in honor of Violet for a gift to a local pediatric hospice.



Both babies were delivered by C-section on December 30. As expected, Violet had difficulty breathing, even with oxygen. We had a chance to hold her, as well as her sister, before her short life ended during the night.

Scarlet has proved to be a wonderful girl. Born small, less than 6 pounds, she has doubled in size by the time we right this. She is assertive, much like her mother was, demanding food when she wants it, eschewing schedules. With a full head of hair and beautiful dark blue eyes that will probably imitate her mothers, she is going to be a lot of fun. As we write this, we can report that she has learned to recognize Nana and Granddad, and seems content to sleep on their shoulders.





Kai and Kiera

We are delighted to be close to Charles and Amy and our other two grandchildren. Kai started kindergarten this year, conveniently located within walking distance from home, and quickly became a *chick magnet*.

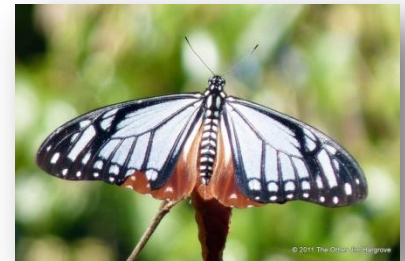
Kiera manages to hold onto her share of the limelight, but it isn't easy. Sometimes she has to resort to new tricks, such as using rattles with her feet.

Both kids are very active, bicycling daily for example, and smart. (Of course!) Amy seems indefatigable helping them with numerous projects for school and just for fun.



Jim and Linda Go A-Roaming (Some More)

This year, we focussed attention on Asia, spending a total of six weeks by combining two tours. First, with VENT, we spent three weeks in Thailand. Our guide was Dion Hobcroft, one of the leaders on our Bhutan trip in 2003. Thailand provided some terrific mammals as well as birds, including a 5-star sighting of a Pileated Gibbon desperately calling for a female. We also saw the Red Jungle Fowl, *Gallus gallus*, the source of our domestic chicken, and several stunning bugs. The butterfly at right caused us to miss a bird lifer. [More on the web...](#)



We then took a short flight to Delhi India, where we joined Zeghran's Wild India

Tour and our frequent traveling companions the Cloudmans. The trip leader, Mark Brazil, lives in Japan, and when news of the earthquake and tsunami broke, we wondered whether the tour would continue. Mark had left only hours before the event. Hokkaido, where he lives, escaped most of the destruction, so he soldiered on. The trip produced the tigers we wanted to see, including a stunning shot of one eating a deer. Jim also got to watch the finals of the Cricket World Cup being held in India. The host country managed to win, to everyone's relief. More about

this trip on the web.

Later in the year, we took a short trip to [Idabel, OK](#), where Linda's father grew up and where he is buried. While there, at the Red Slough Birding Festival, Jim took the photo of the year. We also took a [longer swing around the West](#). See these reports on the web.

Comensals

With some trepidation on Jim's part, we drove to California with Chipper, our dog, and Minnie, Cash, and Cary, our cats. *No problemo!* All have adapted well to their new home. Chipper especially likes going on more car trips. He tags along when we visit ~~Scarlet~~ Claire and Ron, and delights in sniffing around *Rancho Relaxo*, their weekend place in Mendocino County.

On to 2012

Our apologies for the lateness of this report, but we have been busy. Hope you have a wonderful 2012. We look forward to welcoming any visitors to our new home in Oakland. We have two guest bedrooms ready for you.

