

## Travel and taxes

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Taxes. Blizzards. Airports. these are the things that have been obsessing me for about six weeks. Every year I have to put together my tax information for my accountant; what's the big deal? I've done it for years. I am self-employed, so I have to organize all those receipts and document that yes, I did have lunch in the Houston Airport on my way to a conference; and yes, I did need to buy a new ream of computer paper at Staples, and yes, yes, yes... Nothing much changes, years to year, except the dental bills, which have grown and grown. And I don't cheat, or even try to find ways to ferret out extra deductions. So I should be used to it, and relaxed about it, but I am not; and I don't know why, each year, I whine and mutter and procrastinate.

But now I have completed the tax stuff, and mailed it to the accountant, so maybe I will stop having the dream about the final exam for which I haven't prepared..at least until next February.

But then there is the endless snow and bitter cold which this year has made Maine feel like Siberia...and has also complicated travel. I got hung up in Houston during an ice storm (yes, IRS, I had to eat lunch in the Houston Airport). And then my plane out of Madison was cancelled and I had to take a bus to Chicago (yes, IRS, \$30 for bus fare: tax deductible); and then a week or so later my plane out of Sarasota was cancelled; and now I am supposed to go to Tucson next Friday and already...ALREADY!...the weather guys on TV are making sounds about a snowstorm....a Nor'easter they are calling it, because TV weather guys love to use that term....late next week. Can this be true? In *March*..the very month of my first-day-of-spring birthday??? Of course it can. It happens, at least in New England, every March.

In any case I am hoping to get to the Tucson Book Festival, where I am to speak next weekend, and where I will also see a lot of old friends. And then later in March: the Virginia Festival of the Book, in Charlottesville, where I will get to see my brother, sister-in-law, their daughter and three grandchildren.

Unless, of course, my travel is once again disrupted by snow.

Today the sun is shining very brightly and I am bemused and curious about the tracks on the snow surrounding my house. I recognize my dog's prints. He makes the trip around in a circle that varies very little...he is respectful of the underground electric fence which operates even through deep snow. Lately he has, when I let him out after dark, been barking a bit in the area outside my bedroom. There is no exterior light there so I can't see what he is barking at...but today I can see some prints that are not his. More than not-his, they also cross the electric fence boundary and go up the hill beyond. I'm guessing fox. They are smallish tracks. And I am just hoping that skunks don't come out in the snow, or porcupines, which have done him in before...but a porcupine would leave a different track. (I just looked up porcupines, in fact, and learned that they winter in the tops of trees! Who knew?)

I watched the Oscars with three women friends Sunday night and we muted all the speeches when they started thanking their agents and producers and moms and dads. But at least no one pretended that they hadn't prepared a speech, and some speeches, like that of Lupita N'yongo, were very moving. There wasn't too much overly-prepared repartée and the gowns were pretty, and so what if my choices didn't win. It's a pleasant way to spend a Sunday evening and I was able to catch up on "True Detective" the next night.

Here is the moon.



This was taken by my thirteen year old grandson, who is fascinated by astronomy and has a fancy telescope and knows much more than I do (though I was able to tell him that 16th century Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe, having lost his real one in a duel, had a false nose. My grandson had not known that ...and let's face it, a false nose is interesting. Brahe's was apparently made of brass)

I bet it would be cold, though, a brass nose, in a snowstorm.

And I wonder if it would be tax deductible as a medical expense.

Tags: Untagged