

**Dear Ones,**

**2016**

**Here I am in Zikaville, where those who escaped the mosquitoes infected with the dreaded virus, may be the victims of sprays, insecticides -- and politics. City officials worked tirelessly to deny the dangers that might scare off tourists, conventions and big spenders. Inspectors found three Miami Beach danger zones where the mosquitoes were breeding, but the city initially refused to reveal their location -- in a city just 88 blocks long. One zone was the city's Botanical Garden, my voting precinct and one of the city's few green spots not yet replaced by parking garages and sky scrapers. The city hastily chose to spray heavily with chemicals illegal in Europe and considered dangerous. Officials refused for some time to reveal the location of the other two danger zones. Why offend the owners of hotels, businesses, and tourist traps? On Sunday mornings they sprayed the city, over and over. Church became an adventure. My church sheltered the homeless who fled the aerial assaults. Two police officers caught the virus but the city refused to compensate them, though both worked in the danger zones. The city ruled them ineligible for coverage unless each could "positively identify" the mosquito that infected them.**

**The city now claims to have wiped out the mosquitos, but warns of their return momentarily, since this is mosquito country and the virus can also be sexually transmitted by frisky visitors from other infected areas. Church remains an adventure since the city closed the Venetian Causeway's east draw bridge to vehicular traffic for major repairs. The bridge was briefly reopened for "the convenience of visitors" attending the lucrative Art Basel convention this month, but closed it again it when it ended. No "convenience" for residents. The result: in order to drive to church, which is 2 miles east, one must now detour west to the City of Miami, south through congested downtown, east for five miles across the high-speed MacArthur Causeway, and then -- north.**

**I frequently post security alerts to keep Facebook friends safe. For example, always check the back seat before you climb into your car and drive off. Unfortunately I recently had an unpleasant experience when I neglected to follow my own advice. Hairy P. Houdini, my little rescue dog loves to travel in the car. When I head for the garage, he bolts to follow and leaps into the passenger seat. I leave the car door open when I run back inside for something. It can be stuffy in a closed car in a closed garage. I did that Friday afternoon before we drove to the big Publix Market on Biscayne Blvd. All seemed normal. The poorly lit parking garage was jammed with impatient drivers seeking spaces. As usual, I walked Hairy on his leash and around the garage before leaving him in the car while I shopped. We stopped to chat with the Christmas tree salesman, took the elevator down to the street, then went back up the elevator, which he enjoys. We returned to the car, I opened the door and Hairy jumped back in ---- as something large hurtled over the back seat and out of the car!**

**My big orange cat Prince Harry! I lunged, managed to touch him but couldn't hold on. Terrified, he dove beneath the next car. He clearly thought we'd returned home and was shocked to find himself in a strange, noisy, and busy place. He ignored my calls. Prince Harry skittered beneath another car, then another, with high-pitched**

panicky howls. How could I ever catch him? You know how cats -- and some people -- go berserk when frightened? I needed help and considered recruiting the tree salesman. But, how would Prince Harry react when a tall, total stranger tried to grab him? Not a pretty picture. In a panic, I had an idea, my only hope. Prince Harry doggedly follows the dog when we take walks. Perhaps, just maybe... I got the dog out of the car and, amid all the headlight, horns, and traffic, we strolled by the cars where the cat cowered. Sure enough, he eventually emerged and followed us, wild eyed, yowling, and scared. How would I ever be able to wrestle him back into the car? No problem. I opened the door and he dove inside! I removed Hairy's leash, fastened it to the cat's collar and secured it with the driver's side seat belt so he couldn't escape. I left, bought groceries, returned, peered in the window before opening the door -- and he was nowhere to be seen! Hairy P., the dog, was placidly curled up on his blanket in the shot gun seat. Then I saw the seatbelt and leash stretched up and over the seats! The cat had leaped into the back and had surely hung himself! Much to my relief, I found that the seatbelt had released several more inches when he jumped into the back. And he was fine, curled up on the floor. When we arrived home Prince Harry stepped out of the car, happy to be there. I drove into the garage, took the groceries inside, returned to close the trunk -- and in the growing darkness was startled by a pair of demonic glowing eyes staring out from behind the spare tire. Prince Harry was hiding in the trunk! It would have been bad had he been locked in there all night -- or longer. He definitely had 9 lives. Don't know how many he has left. It could have been worse: a desperate fugitive, robber, or rapist lurking in the back seat. What's troubling, however, is that my little watchdog gave no clue, no hint that we had an uninvited passenger aboard. In fact, he remained poker-faced as though nothing was amiss. I can't even trust my best friend! Even more troubling is that during the entire drama, the howls, me peering under cars, plaintively calling out for "Prince Harry" -- not a single person in the crowded garage noticed, asked what was wrong, or offered to help. All were busy. Self-absorbed. Doing their own thing. No surprise the police have difficulty finding eyewitnesses these days. Remember that naked man who strolled down a Miami residential street at dawn carrying his girlfriend's severed head -- which he threw at the first police officer to arrive? And the startled officer, a rookie, who instinctively threw it back? Today, no one would notice. Or call the police. They are all too busy, focused on their cell phones and other electronic toys.

**I'm sure you'll agree that it's been one heckuva news year, and it ain't over yet. Have a joyful, blessed 2017.**

**Love, Edna B, Hairy P. Houdini, and Prince Harry.**

**PS The cat's name is Prince Harry because he and the British Royal share things in common: The same hair color -- and both have been described as tomcats. However, Prince Harry the cat has been neutered. I doubt they've done the same for the royal prince. Although, reports are that the Queen seriously considered the idea.**