

Dear Friends,

Christmas 2007

We are writing our annual Christmas letter on Halloween in Amsterdam. We spent the last week in Fribourg, Switzerland where we attended a beautiful wedding of Jean Charles (JC) and Sylviane Bonnet. Joe met JC at St. Joseph's Church in Cupertino and they became soul brothers. The wedding was all in French and Joe was one of the witnesses. Christianity is still alive in Europe.

This has been a year of blessings and growth with our children and grandchildren bringing us the greatest joy. We all were together in March at our house, in July when we were camping in the Sierras (only some tent camped) and we will all be together here to celebrate Christmas. The picture of us with our grandchildren was taken in March 2007. Their ages then were top row: Emily 3, Rachel 6, Kate Lynn 6, Anna almost 4. Bottom row: Nate 2 ½, Tyler 10 months, Jennay 8 months, and Josiah just turned 5.

This is the year of growing for Joe. In spring he planted a hobby vineyard of 370 grapes (Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay). The picture at the end of this letter shows Joe with his grapes and the one finger indicates this is the first year of growth. We see the beautiful rows of grapes from our kitchen window. He will start wine making classes at our local JC next year so he will be ready to make his first vintage in 2009. He just finished putting in our lawn. The biggest challenge was laying gopher wire under the sod as we have gophers, moles and voles. This is the second year of our rose garden which has flourished. Judy started her own flower garden this fall. In summer Joe became concerned when he saw perennial flowers in his vegetable garden and he indicated that the garden gets rototilled every year. Our house and garden will be featured in a tour next spring that benefits a local Aids organization.

Joe is still on a quest to catch a steelhead in the local Russian River (he has a goal of catching one in 5 years and he only has two more years to go).

For the second year Joe participated in a Christian program called JustFaith. The 30 week program focuses on justice in the world. This was an ecumenical group that Joe co-facilitated with a female Methodist minister. Joe has been gradually getting more involved in our wonderful parish, Our Lady of Guadalupe. He has just joined the Finance Council and is running for Parish Council and he belongs to several ministries. He annually goes to LA Congress where 25,000 Catholics wildly pray and learn about our Christianity. He is working with our pastor on a proposal to establish an "Anointed Lay Minister" program in our parish and perhaps in our diocese. This program will train lay people to do liturgies when priests are not available. We will be going from 60 to 26 priests in the next 9 years in our diocese. It is very sad for Joe that the priesthood is dying, and that the papacy appears more interested in maintaining the hierarchy of the church than in forming small, loving, vibrant, communities.

Joe's health is good, although aging occasionally whispers that life is not eternal. Currently he has a sore foot. He always talks to his brother Paul, who is a physical therapist, gets some exercises, does the exercises and usually gets better. This Fall Judy celebrated being cancer free for 5 years and has only 6 more months of medication. We are all concerned for Judy's brother John who was diagnosed with stomach cancer and is in the midst of chemotherapy and radiation.

Judy is still working as a photographer and loves photographing families, people in general, babies and especially our grandchildren. Her work is completely digital, and she uses Photoshop extensively. Judy recently joined a non profit and she teaches English as a second language twice a week to a mother/grandmother who wants to become a citizen.

We did get to Minnesota and Wisconsin many times this year and enjoyed seeing Joe's mother Margaret, 93 who has had some set backs but is again living in her own home. We always love seeing Judy's brothers John, Don and Gene and Joe's brothers Jim, Bill and Paul and his sister Marilyn and their families.

Dave and Becky live in Oregon. They will be moving as Dave just got a new job as a district manager with the Oregon Forest Service in Venita outside of Eugene. Becky is a full time mom and helps out at Josiah's school. Their son, Josiah loves science stuff. We stopped by this fall and he was trying to make a battery out of a raw potato. Mary and Frank live in Cupertino. Frank is now leading part of a big government space shuttle project for Lockheed. Mary is team teaching third grade in Saratoga. Frank's son, Ryan is a junior at Gonzaga in Washington and Will is a sophomore at Bellarmine, a Jesuit high school. Their son Nate has a fine head of hair, a smile on his face and unfortunately gets asthma and ear infections. His younger brother Tyler looks more like Nate each day and will play with Nate until he gets clobbered. Amy and Mike live in Boise, Idaho. Mike is a fish biologist for the state and Amy works for Hewlett-Packard. Their oldest, Rachel, in first grade, loves to write and illustrate stories. Their middle daughter, Emily enjoyed stepping on Grandpa Joe's shoes, smearing his glasses and then laughing during our summer vacation. Their new baby, Jennay, is beautiful, sweet and maybe has a bit of a curl. Joey and Belinda live just three miles from us. Joey is a project manager building or remodeling houses in Marin County. Belinda sometimes teaches and is helping train a rather frisky dog, Amber. Hopefully, Amber will become a Canine Companion dog after 18 months. Their oldest daughter Katie is in 2nd grade, loves to learn everything and tries to be the best. Her younger sister, Anna has cute dimples and is attending nursery school.

A Blessed Christmas from Joe and Judy Tembrock

