

Dear Family and Friends,

December 2017

We are still here in our home in Santa Rosa. Our neighbors woke us up at 4 AM October 9th. We looked east and the sky was all red and we heard popping sounds (we think propane tanks exploding). The fire was a least 2 miles from our place in the country. In our small reading group at Our Lady of Guadalupe, 3 lost their homes. It is very sad for those who lost everything. Many at the bottom of society have also lost their jobs. It will take years to rebuild. Fortunately, we live in a community of compassionate and generous people.

In January we spent 10 days in Cuba with a group of volunteers from St. John's (Joe's alma mater in Minnesota). Other than our luggage being lost for 5 days and one of us getting sick, it was a wonderful experience. We spent most of our time in central Cuba in the town of Ciego de Avila. The last couple of days we spent in Havana. Cuba is a poor country and the effects of communism are obvious in the low wages. Cuba is not a police state and we think the US has nothing to fear from Cuba. The army and police are not visible, and people speak freely. Churches are open and very active.

From Cuba we visited a small island near Cancun called Isla Mujeres. Excellent snorkeling and food. We traveled the island in a "put-put" (golf cart). Then we spent a couple days south of Cancun in Playa del Carmen. Beautiful beaches and excellent food. We visited the Mayan ruins of Chitzen Itza and Tulum.

In June we traveled to Kauai, Hawaii. It was Joey and Belinda's 20th wedding anniversary and they spent a couple days in a "honeymoon" cabin while we zipped around with their girls (Katie then 16 and Anna 13). We watched them easily make their way down a steep path to the "Queen's Bath". We were a little nervous, but not for long as we followed them down to the ocean pool (we got back OK). We also took a catamaran boat ride that was a little bumpy (says Belinda) and went by the "Puff the Magic Dragon" mountain.

July was the time for grandkids. All eight were here as Becky, Mary and Amy all brought their kids to Santa Rosa for a week or so. We did the usual walk in the redwoods and the beach and they went to an amusement park. Amy's girls (Rachel, Emily and Jennay) had never been to Yosemite. Judy and Joe were on their way to Colorado to celebrate Joe's brother Bill and wife Kathy's 50th wedding anniversary. So, on the way to Colorado we spent an awesome day in Yosemite Valley seeing the "Dome" (that Joe climbed 5 times in his younger days) and many other sites. With all the rain last year Mirror Lake was a lake again. We delivered the grandkids to Boise. There we visited the Clairvoyant Brewery in process. Our son-in-law Mike and 2 partners have been building a brewery and developing many tasty brews. In October we went back to Boise for a 3-day grand opening, and it was grand!!! Food and bands every day and excellent beer.

Judy continues to volunteer 2 days a week helping first graders learn to read at our local grade school. She was very excited last week when a little girl put some words together and read her first sentence. In August she traveled to Boise with her sister-in-law Nancy Brandl to watch the solar eclipse from the side of a lake. We saw the effect of the eclipse on the water and viewed a 360-degree dawn. Awesome.

Joe had a good year growing and selling grapes and making wine. His Petite Sirah grapes were blended with Zin that won the "Best of Show" red wine in the home winemaker division at the Harvest Fair competition. He coordinated a "Health Fair" at our parish that focused on providing free health services like flu shots, nutrition and immigration resources. He is getting closer to organizing his family history, building an index, and loading the data on the "Cloud" (this year he means it). He coordinates 2 spiritual study groups and he and Judy attend another at our parish that is led by an 80+ year old Jesuit. Joe reads and contemplates a lot. He spends a lot of time and energy with the challenged. Joe believes that heaven (eternity) is now and real joy comes from living one's potential and sharing blessings. When he prays the "Our Father" he emphasizes the "On Earth" phrase.

Our grandchildren are so exciting. (in age order) Katie is a lead musician at her church community and will be off to college next year. Rachel loves debate and plays trumpet & other instruments. Josiah is into track, has built a computer, and is making a little money by sharing his computer capacity and automatically investing it. Anna is a freshman (person) in high school and just got her braces off. Emily loves to kick the soccer ball and is a cheerleader. Nate is an awesome competition swimmer and is preparing to go to a private Jesuit school (Bellarmine) in San Jose. Tyler is one of the best

swimmers on the West Coast and loves to play monopoly and be the banker. Jennay was just elected student body president in her grade school and is growing an inch a month.

We wish you all a year of peace and joy and in that spirit, we are not going to say one word about our President.

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Fire in Coffey Park (our friend Laura lived here)



Joe and Judy age 77



Catholic Church in Havana



Joe in front of the US embassy in Havana



Mayan ruin of Chitzen Itza in Mexico near Cancun

Joe in front of Mirror Lake in Yosemite with Rachel, Emily & Jennay (note 5 fingers for 5 Half Dome climbs)



Amy & Mike at the Clairvoyant Grand Opening

Joe and Judy and our quickly growing up grandchildren





Above: Our new vineyard sign (we have 23 Valley Oaks on our land)
Below: Anna & Kathie Tembrock at the beach in Kauai