

December 17, 2014

Dear Family and Friends:

Belated Christmas greetings and a Happy New Year. We are late writing because we just got back from an incredible trip to Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar and had little time to get organized for the Christmas season.

Let's work backwards through 2014. On November 8 we flew to Thailand and spent a week seeing Bangkok, Chang Rai and Chang Mai. We saw many temples in Bangkok, the old capital of Ayutthaya, the Golden Triangle (where Myanmar, Laos and Thailand meet—famous in the past for opium smuggling), then spent an incredible day at an elephant farm learning to feed, brush, wash and ride elephants. It was perhaps one of the most amazing days of our lives. They are incredible animals, so gentle and intelligent. Being able to communicate with such an amazing animal was a special experience. From there we flew to Cambodia and visited Angkor Wat, and learned much about the former Khmer Civilization. We flew back to Bangkok and joined a Viking River Cruise going down the Road to Mandalay (the Irrawaddy River) from Mandalay to Pyay, then by road to Yangon (formerly Rangoon). Myanmar (formerly Burma) is just opening after years of isolation by the military government. It is a beautiful but very backward country, with warm welcoming people ruled by a horrible government. There will be elections next year and who knows whether the country will move forward towards democracy or backwards to closure and military rule. We returned on December 5 with bad colds so Christmas preparations got even further behind!

Summer was good and our garden produced a good supply of vegetables – many of which are now in our freezer, as is more elk meat, courtesy of friends who hunt on our land; Ken shot 2 elk and caretaker Dan shot another. Granddaughter Lauren came to stay for 3 weeks this summer (with Marcus coming for the last week), and we had a wonderful time with her. She is now 7 and old enough to take some riding lessons, go panning for garnets and sapphires with Granddad (they were highly successful) and go fly fishing with her dad. It is wonderful to spend time with our granddaughter and we look forward to when Allison (now 4) is old enough to come too.

In spring, we took our RV to visit family in Oklahoma, always a nice time. From there we drove through Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee to visit friends in North Georgia. We now know that Cabbage Patch dolls were invented in Cleveland, Georgia and know more about them than we ever need to! We drove to Cincinnati to see old friends from California, Tony and Debbie Fairhead. Tony started a non-profit (<http://childhoodfoodsolutions.org/>) which helps to alleviate food insufficiency for poor children in Cincinnati. We really admire the work that Tony and Debbie have supported over many years.

Gary's Mom, Wanda, is doing as well as possible, living in the memory-care part of a very good assisted living facility in Bozeman. We are able to see her several times a week. While we were gone her niece, Wanda Jo, has stayed here and visited her, which is a great comfort to her and a great relief for us.

Our kids are doing well – Marcus and Sam are busy with jobs and two girls, Lauren and Allison. Dan and Kristy bought a big boat and hope to have adventures on it in the upcoming years. Paul got a promotion and his lovely girlfriend, Xue, obtained her Ph.D. in November. Kendal and Brandon had their first wedding anniversary in September and their jobs keep them busy. Kendal is doing a lot with bee keeping and is now branching into giving talks as well as keeping the whole family supplied with honey. AV has the same job and a lovely girlfriend too.

We sadly had to say goodbye to our dog, Neko, in July. She fought a good fight against liver cancer. Neko had been so much part of our lives during the past 12 years that we miss her every day. Pumpkin was very sad too. We welcomed a puppy, Rosie, at the end of last year through an organization that rescues unwanted dogs and puppies from the Crow Reservation. Pumpkin and Rosie are good companions for us and for each other.

Be sure to check out our web pages for pictures and more: <http://bclodge.com/>.

Healthwise – this has been a good and bad year. The bad part was that Gary developed serious complications after having three wisdom teeth removed, necessitating admission to the hospital for emergency surgery and a two-day stay, followed by large amounts of antibiotics. He recovered quickly. Pauline still goes to UCSF for medical tests (but now only every six months) for medical tests in addition to tests here in Bozeman, but is doing well.

We send our love for a good holiday season - if a little belated, and as ever, we wish for a peaceful world in 2015.