

**December 02, 2017**

Dear Family and Friends:

This year we are joining many of our friends and not sending out many Christmas cards. Instead we have chosen to increase our annual donation to Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières). We support MSF because it is an organization that does such incredible support throughout the world, often in the most devastating circumstances, treating those in need of medical help and regardless of politics, religion or race. This seems to be an organization that practices the message of Christianity and, in fact, the humanitarian message of all the major world religions.

2017 was a year of much sadness and much joy. Gary's mom, Wanda, died in April. She was 88 and had struggled for several years with dementia. Her sense of humor remained with her throughout her life and we miss her very much. Gary's stepmother, Luvina, also passed away in February and we will miss visiting her and our chats on the phone.

In February I made a trip to England. I spent the first week with my sister and brother-in-law, Jan and Mike. We worked on our family history and visited places where we had grown up. After a lovely overnight visit with cousin Susan and husband Ian Cobley in Bristol, I headed to Wales to spend a few days with longtime friends Marilyn and Robert Bratman. Robert had been struggling with health issues for several years and it was such a gift to spend time together. Sadly, Robert died in March. My good friend, Susan, also lost her battle with cancer in May. We have lost many we loved and who have left a lasting influence on us and on our family.

Dan and Kristy made their big trip across the Pacific Ocean starting from Mexico. For three and a half weeks they did not see land (and I did not sleep well!) crossing the ocean. Two friends made this long trip with them; they eventually landed on the Marquesas Islands. From there they sailed through many islands of French Polynesia to Tahiti (more on Tahiti in a moment). The rest of the summer took them through the westernmost islands of French Polynesia to Niue, the Cook Islands and Fiji. At present their boat is in Fiji while they are back in the USA visiting family and taking a break before returning to sail again for much of next year towards Australia.

Gary and I decided to take a trip to meet them in Tahiti. We went there by an indirect route! First we went to Lima, Peru. This was followed by a flight to Iquitos and 8 days on the Upper Amazon - a National Geographic trip. It was an amazing experience seeing an incredible number of birds and animals. Unfortunately I was sick for several days. I took antibiotics and improved enough to enjoy the rest of the trip. We then returned to Lima and flew to Chile for 5 days. We visited Santiago, then went south to the wine country and west to Valparaiso - a most beautiful city. From Chile we flew to Papeete, Tahiti, to meet Dan and Kristy and join their diving group (which included non-divers) for stays on four different islands. We absolutely loved French Polynesia and our accommodations were luxurious: a bungalow on stilts over the water, a private compound with our own swimming pool and a grass hut on the beach. There was wonderful snorkeling and bike rides along the lagoons. Unfortunately, I could not keep the sickness that I had experienced in Peru at bay and towards the end of our trip became really sick. The trip back was a nightmare due to airline delays. We finally got home and were shortly at the emergency room. I had contracted E. Coli. A large quantity of antibiotics finally got me back to health again. However, I had to cancel the annual visit of our granddaughters to Montana, so we have much to make up for next year!!

In April, Arthur left Bozeman with girlfriend Ali for the Napa Valley, where Arthur is studying at the Culinary Institute of America to become a certified chef. He has been cooking for several years and it is exciting to see him pursuing his dream and doing so well at a very tough job. We miss not having them in Bozeman, however. Kendal and Brandon have had changes in their lives. Brandon is now studying for an MBA at UC Berkley. He is still working at Google; juggling work and studies makes for a busy life. Kendal continues to build her business and is incredibly innovative. Check out <http://www.kendalsbees.com>. They just bought a house in Alameda, across the Bay from San Francisco, and will move in after having some renovations completed.

Marcus and Sam continue their busy lives with two lovely girls, Lauren (10) and Allison (7). Lauren has started duck hunting with her dad and aced her hunter safety class! Allie keeps the family soccer tradition alive. Both Marcus and Sam have busy and responsible jobs and I am in awe of how they juggle everything in their lives.

In October – a wedding! Paul married Xue Fan. It was a most beautiful ceremony held at Carmel Highlands on the central California coast just north of Big Sur. We enjoyed getting to know Xue's family and celebrating with our family and friends. Xue met Paul at Scripps Oceanographic Institute (where Paul works) while she was a graduate student obtaining her Ph.D. She now works designing oceanographic instruments and they live in a fun area of San Diego.

Gary and I continue to enjoy our lives in Montana. Settling Wanda's estate has kept Gary busy for a significant amount of time this year. There are always many jobs to do around our property and now snow to plow! Gary is also a huge support to me in my volunteer work on the Board of Cancer Support Community MT (<https://cancersupportmontana.org/>). I am so thankful for my good health after my experience with cancer, now seven years ago.

Our dogs continue to live an idyllic life. Pumpkin is now 13 and Rosie, at 4, is a great companion for her and for us. We have exciting plans for next year – a four-day trip into Yellowstone in January, and a river trip down the Danube plus time in Switzerland and Germany in May and June.

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

We groan at the political situation here and worry about the world that is being created for our grandchildren. It is a feeling of being very helpless to affect change or to stop the things that we feel so passionate about, so we will focus on what we can do locally and will continue to speak out for those less fortunate than we are.

We send our love for a good holiday season and as ever, we wish for a peaceful world in 2018