

Christmas 2018

Dear Friends,

On the first Sunday in Advent Rich sits at his computer and begins our family Christmas letter. Advent is a season of looking forward with hope and back with reflection and thanks. This year we've had a lot to reflect on and to be thankful for. We've been married for 50 years and reflect on the blessings of those years, two great kids, two great daughters-in-law and two great grandkids. We are part of a community, Sitka, which nurtures us. Even when working abroad, we always knew we had "our place" that would welcome us home and into the cycle of community life. We've been blessed with work that we view as vocation and we are grateful for the blessings of health.



The year we fulfilled a dream we both shared, to go around the world on a ship at 19 miles an hour. From January to April we spent 113 days on the MS Amsterdam, from Florida, through the Canal, across the South Pacific, visiting New Zealand, Australia and Asia and then around Cape Horn and back to Florida. We've traveled a lot but, surprisingly, out of 40 some stops we had only visited three before.

So it seems a little strange that when people ask us our favorite we come back to Hong Kong, where we'd spent time in the past. It was a romantic interlude, enabling us to rekindle happy memories. Beyond Hong Kong Rich particularly liked the Cape Verde Islands, with its mix of European, African and American musical cultures. Suzi liked Cape Town because it was entirely new and different and we heard some great local, live music there too.

Back home we took a trip with Brian, Liz and the grand kids, Liam and Fiona, to Cape Breton Island, where every child seems born with a fiddle and there was a ceilidh in every pub. We didn't know 7 year old Liam could step dance, but he can and does and Fiona was alive to every new possibility and wanted to dive in. Rich loaned Liam his extra camera. It turns out Liam has a natural eye for composition.

Kevin and Shannon experienced the earthquake in Anchorage. We're thankful that not only are they are safe but that Alaska's strict building codes kept the whole city safe. A 7.0 earthquake in most other places is deadly. We spent a few days with them in early December.

Once we settled back into Sitka Rich took a job doing a talk show, "Problem Corner" on the local commercial station. He's trying to build the show into a community forum for civil discourse. He still keeps a camera strapped around his neck and his pictures have been picked up by several local organizations for promotion. Apparently he cannot retire. Suzi is back with her watercolor painting group and is involved in a weekly craft's group. She is also volunteering at the local historical museum. We both still volunteer at Raven Radio and are active in our Unitarian Fellowship.

This Christmas we will have all our kids and grandkids with us in Sitka. We look forward to a family holiday. We wish you and your families the best for 2019.

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July found us in Cape Breton with Brian, Liz and their kids.



June 10, 1968 and 2018—really glad that our parents let their children get married.



Kevin and Shannon joined us for carols.

On the America's Cup sail boat in Auckland.

As you might imagine with a trip around the world, the photo selection is impossible. Rich has put many interesting ones on the web at <https://www.rich.mcclear.net/2017/12/28/coming-soon-2018-ms-amsterdam-grand-world-voyage/> if you're interested in the world beyond Sitka.