

# **1982 To 2002 Tom and Sherry Christmas Letters:**

**Each letter is a summary of the years events**

## 1982 Christmas Letter

CHRISTMAS 1982

16712 Saybrook #208  
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(714) 840-9131

DEAR FRIENDS,

This past year has been a year of important changes for us. Early in the year Jane and I decided to get a divorce. I moved into an apartment with a friend, Rick Cantey, who is also getting a divorce, in March, 1982. Jane and I decided to obtain joint custody of Tim. We each took one car and one house. She lives in the Maritime house. I am continuing to rent out the house at 19727 Shorecliff Lane. The two houses are almost identical. Tim continues to spend more nights in the Maritime house and attend the Gifted and Talented program at Eader School in Huntington Beach—they are called the Eader Beavers. Both Jane and I are continuing to work in the same jobs we have had. Our divorce became final on October 8. We are all very sad to see a marriage end which overall was a good marriage and meant so much to us for so long.

I think that all three of us are adjusting to the situation very well. Jane has been active at school, with Tim, and with friends. Tim has continued to enjoy his sports—baseball, tennis, etc.—and all of his other activities and friends. Last summer, many of Jane's relatives came out to visit her for the summer. Her sister, Edie, Tim, and Tim's friend, Garet Binckes all took a trip to San Francisco. This Christmas Jane and Tim are going to Texas for a family reunion.



My life has also changed in some major ways. Late last spring I met someone who has become very special to me—her name is Sherry Bene Snyder. She is completing her master's degree in Counseling at CSULB and has two children—Tracy, 15 (a girl) and Spencer, 13. Both are really neat and excellent students. Sherry has been divorced for over four years. Most of that time she sold real estate, but decided to pursue a career in counseling (against all odds). She is a wonderful, beautiful person.

Other events in my life during the past year seem insignificant compared to what I have already described. They include moving my private practice as a psychologist to an office in Long Beach, which is close to the University. I played in a Michelob Light tennis league during the summer. Our Lindborg Racquet Club team (12 of us) finished second in Southern California in our division. At work I continued to work on getting regular courses in Assertion Training and Self-Management Training well established and work with a friend, Dr. Bob Kapche, in a research project. We have written a paper, "A Self-Management Model of Smoking Behavior" which uses our theory—"Behavior Systems Theory" as an underlying explanation.

Tim has also had other events in his life. He played on Junior Team Tennis at Lindborg for the first time and is now pretty active there in tennis. Last winter, he played in a basket ball league in which his height—5'2" now at 10½ years—benefits him. He has also adjusted well over time to his GATE program at Eader after being only one of three to come into the program new last year. He now has lots of friends and feels a lot better there.

As you can see, this has indeed been a year of significant changes for all of us. I hope that in addition these are changes which will enrich all of our lives. I hope this has been a good year for you and that you will

## NO 1983 Christmas Letter

## 1984 Christmas Letter

CHRISTMAS 1984

DEAR

I hope I do better than last year and the year before on my Christmas letters. Last year I wrote one, but never mailed it; and the year before I mailed it in March. Perhaps I can get this one off by February.

Overall, this past year was a very good year--with one very significant exception--my mother died in October. She has had a serious chronic heart problem much longer than anyone--including her physicians realized. She was first hospitalized in May with an expectation she would die almost immediately. However, she valiantly fought for months. Thankfully for all of us, my brother--Ron--Tim, and I all had several long opportunities to spend a lot of time with her--especially at the end. She accepted the situation amazingly well and was so happy that we could all be together for so long. We had a birthday party for her, and she died 12 days later. She was an amazing person, and we are so grateful for all she gave us.

Tim started Junior high at Dwyer in the 6th grade a year ago and had a difficult first year in almost all ways. However, this year he is so much happier. He is doing well in all of his gifted and regular classes; he has made a number of new friends, and most recently he made starting team of his 7th grade basketball team. His height helps--he is about 5'10". He is really enjoying it. His tennis has fallen off because of this and lack of a good program at the tennis club. Nevertheless, this I am glad to see he is having such a good year so far.

This was a good year for our traveling. Sherry and I went to San Francisco last Spring and after Christmas. Sherry, Tracie (17), Spencer (15), Tim (12), and I squeezed into my new Mustang and drove to Kingman, Ariz. for Christmas at Sherry's folks house for a big family reunion. It was a lot of fun.

In addition, we went to Hawaii in July. Tim and I were there about 2 weeks and Sherry joined us. Tim left to see his mom, and Sherry and I stayed on awhile and went to Kauai. This was the first time Tim and I have been back since 1972--when Tim was 4 months old. We all had a wonderful time.

This summer was also significant in that I did some thinking about my time and my career. One thing that started it was some problems that developed about my being able to teach due to a contract interpretation. In response I am still persuing a grievance. That caused me to suspend my Life Skills Education program in the Ed Psych department and suspend the development of additional courses. So, I decided to persue something which I had been doing a lot of reading in a few years ago and want to get as involved in as time allows--Artificial Intelligence and computer simulation of psychological processes. As a result, I

## 1985 Christmas Letter

# MERRY CHRISTMAS 1985

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays! It has been 2 years since I have sent a Christmas letter. Two years ago I sent it in March, and last year I wrote one, but never got it mailed. This year I am writing one and if you received this then I mailed it. I won't try to summarize the previous year for you, but for me it had a tragic period--my mother, Charlotte, died of a chronic heart condition October 24, 1984. She had been extremely important to my brother Ron and I. Tim also loved her very much. We were all together for about the last two weeks of her life.

This has been a very interesting year for me--as I guess they all are to some extent. Sherry and I began the year by deciding to not see each other for awhile (though we went to San Francisco anyway and had a memorable trip). A few weeks later I started dating Pat Savich, who teaches in the Communication Disorders department at Cal State University, LA. She is a very beautiful person, who is extremely active and enjoyable to be with. Pat is also an excellent skier, and she got me going in the sport with two trips to Mammoth. Last week I took Tim to Snow Valley, about 100 miles from here, and he skied his first time (on artificial snow no less).

Last Spring I ended up dating both Sherry and Pat, and Sherry and I ended up getting back together and going to Europe together. We had a wonderful trip. It was my third trip and her third. We went to London via World Airlines, stayed in Norfolk Square, bought some English clothes at bargain prices, and took side trips to Oxford and Canterbury.

We crossed on a ferry to Ostende, drove to Bonn, and went through the Black Forest to Lucerne. We stayed there for three days--taking a ferry out on the lake and going to top of Mt Pilatus. From there we went through Bavaria where we stayed in a charming little town called Pfronton, then went on to Salzberg and Vienna via Mt. Glossglockner (the highest peak in Austria). We were then going to Venice, but ran into terrible traffic and instead drove through the Alps to Cortina di Ampeza--a beautiful Italian Alpine town where the Pink Panther was filmed. We did then go on to Venice and Florence in Italy, and drove on to Nice and Monte Carlo. After that we took our little Ford Fiesta through many one-lane steep roads through the Alps. The climax of that part of the journey was Mont Blanc--the highest peak in the Alps--and Chamonix. Then we stayed in Paris for five days and returned to London. It was a wonderful trip! I hope you didn't get too bored with the details, but I enjoyed recalling the images of it as I wrote it.

Tim is now only about one inch shorter than I am. He is 13 now and having a good year in the eighth grade. He enjoys his classes in general this year--especially computer science and this language arts where he works on the school paper and is one of the photographers. In addition he has (until this week) been taking piano, played on the volleyball team, played tennis on the Lindborg club Junior team, and is playing basketball on the school team.

This is my 13th year in the Counseling Center at CSULB. The center is getting a little old to me; however, the work is still interesting and counselees are always new and interesting. The last two years I have been taking a concentrated interest in artificial intelligence, and this past summer I decided to get a more structured program of directed learning through UC Irvine, which has a nationally known program. I took my first class since I got my doctorate. I also bought an IBM compatible computer (Corona), which Tim has also been going nuts about.

I have also been continuing to do research on my "Life Skills Questionnaire", which gives feedback and specific recommended learning experiences to students depending upon their scores. Last year we gave it to about 1000 students at CSULB.

This Christmas Sherry's kids Tracie and Spencer will be at their dad's and Tim will be with his mom in Texas. It's hard to believe, but I knew Tracie all the way through high school and She is now a freshman at UC Santa Barbara. Spencer is a junior in high school. It will be quite a contrast to last year when we went to visit Sherry's family in Arizona.

We will have a cozy Merry Christmas even without kids this year. We hope you will too!

## 1986 Christmas Letter

\*\*\*\*\* MERRY CHRISTMAS 1986 \*\*\*\*\*

Every year I have written a Christmas letter, but I haven't mailed them the past two years. This year I resolutely plan to mail this one. I just hope that I have recent enough addresses.

Each year has had its adventures, but 1986 has been a big year for all of us. This Christmas Sherry, Tracie, Spencer, Tim, and I have a brand new house. It was completed in October, and we moved in immediately. This is a major change in what has been a prolonged series of events. Sherry (Bene' Snyder) and I decided to live together last year and after selling her former home and selling my former home, we moved into a three-bedroom condo last March--while our new house was being built. (For those who don't know, my mother, Charlotte Stevens, died of heart failure October, 1984 and my brother, Ron, and I also sold her house in Green Valley, AZ this year.)

After all of that, we love our new house. It is only a few blocks from Cal State U, Long Beach--where I am still in the same position as psychologist in the Counseling Center and Sherry has a one-year old full time position as a Career Counselor. She succeeded in getting that position--which was very difficult to get. She enjoys the variety and work very much. However, she only gets two weeks vacation time per year. We are planning on her taking unpaid time for our vacations.

Tim is will be 15 in Feb. He is now about 1/2 inch taller than I am--although his growth rate seems to be slowing. He is now attending Huntington Beach High School--which is in the same neighborhood he grew up in and where Jane still lives. She is still teaching elementary school and is doing well. Last year Tim played basketball and volleyball on the junior high school teams, but this year he has decided to concentrate on tennis. He also likes working on the computer and photography as hobbies.

Tim "commutes" two days a week from our house. Its quite a hassle for us, but he really has two homes that way. A part of the "modern" life style I guess. He still has the same caring nature and maturity he always has had. He is a joy as a kid--most of the time.

Sherry's two beautiful kids are almost adults. Tracie is a sophomore at Univ of Cal, Santa Barbara and doing extremely well there. Spencer is a senior at Wilson High in Long Beach. He did very well in a salesmanship contest and seems to be very popular with the girls his age.

For the past few years my main career interest has been learning, cognitive science, and artificial intelligence. Last year I took some advanced AI courses at UC, Irvine--which has some of the top AI people in the U.S. in machine learning. I am currently still learning but have turned in my first proposal for a project at CSULB--an "intelligent" computerized academic advising assistant.

This year has been a lot of fun in addition to all the life changes. Last summer Tim and I took a trip up the Oregon coast. Sherry and I went to Honolulu and Maui for two weeks. We loved it.

Another new interest I acquired about two years ago was skiing. For many years I wanted to learn, but thought it too expensive and dangerous. However, some of my friends convinced me these weren't so--so I decided to go for it. It's great. Last year we made two trips to Mammouth and I took Tim locally about 3 times. This year I want to ski even more--if time and \$\$ allow. I still keep my tennis up regularly too.

Well, that covers some of the major events that have happened to us in the past year (or so). I have wanted to keep in touch. Please send me your new address if you have moved. Please contact me if you are ever to be in our area. And most of all, let me know about your life too.

**OUR NEW ADDRESS:** 481-102 Medford Court, Long Beach, CA 90803, 213-494-5041  
Tom: Counseling Center, California State University, Long Beach; Long Beach CA 90840; 213-498-4001

## 1987 Christmas Letter

### MERRY CHRISTMAS – 1987

#### FROM TOM, SHERRY, TIM, TRACIE, AND SPENCER

This year I am determined to get this letter out by Christmas. That may reflect some of the way in which things have been going in our lives. 1987 began with began with only 3 months in our beautiful new home in Bixby Village. We were Spending a lot of time buying furniture, decorating, putting in a new patio, and just enjoying our new home. Wã spend a lot of wonderful nights by the warm glow of our new fireplace.

January also began with the new ski season. This year seems like skiing might become an annual sport. Sherry started to ski too. Her first real skiing was at Mammoth. She was going to take lessons as Tom insisted. However, Tom gave her her first lesson in snow plowing, and everything went so well that we continued working together until she really skied well enough to go wedging down the mountain. She was extremely determined to ski well enough to overcome her old fear of skiing. She did very well, and we were both excited about it. She actually had fun! My skiing is also improving. We enjoyed it so much that we are hoping to go after Christmas to Mammoth again for a few days.

During the Spring we bought a 2-week time-interval studio (unit 214) at the Whaler condo on Kaanapali Beach in Maui. We had stayed at the Marriott the Summer before and fell in love with that area. It is one of the most beautiful areas in the World. Looking out from our lanai to our left we can see the beautiful beach and sunsets on the ocean. We enjoyed our Salmon pate' and wine almost every night. Looking to our right we can see the Whaler tennis courts and mountains. We can see the sunrise in that direction. We have even been having fantasies of moving to this paradise.

Sherry had a good year as a Career Counselor at CSULB. She enjoyed the variety of counseling, giving workshops, and program coordination. She also made two presentations at professional conferences this year. She was excited about the opportunity to do this and the positive feedback she received. Sherry has a special talent for both counseling and teaching that is really amazing. She engages her students so well that is really amazing. They just rave about her.

Tom has really enjoyed being able to pursue his artificial intelligence and neural network interests. He was able to set aside more time to program with Lisp for AI. He has figured out how to take his computer to the beach or harbor areas to program in his car. He is also excited about getting funding to create a computerized academic advisor which will also assess other student dimensions to help them succeed (based upon his Life Skills Questionnaire) and refers to on-campus resources. He hopes it will affect the advising on our campus.

Tim was very happy about being on the Huntington Beach HS junior varsity tennis team his freshman year. This year he hopes to be on varsity team. He declined offers by both the varsity football and basketball coaches to go out for their teams so he could focus on tennis. Tim is 6'2, 180+ pounds and very strong. He did very well on his JHS basketball team the year before.

Tracie completed her second year at UC Santa Barbara with high grades again. However, since she wants to be a nurse she and there is no good program at UCSB, she transferred to CSULB and lives across the street with her best and lifelong friend Jill. Tracie is a beautiful person—in many ways—and looks a lot like Sherry.

Spencer graduated from Wilson HS this year and is now attending Golden West Community College and working part-time. He also enjoys surfing, adventures, and his friends. He is anxious to get out in the worl and start making his fortune. With his looks and friendly, outgoing manner, he is a natural salesman and will probably do well

This Christmas our house will be the center of our family get-togethers. We are all looking forward to a Merry Christmas together. We hope that you have a Merry Christmas too.

The Stevens's & Snyder's  
481-102 Medford Court  
Long Beach, CA 90803 213-494-5041

# NO 1988 CHRISTMAS LETTER

## 1989 Christmas Letter

# MERRY CHRISTMAS 1989

### DEAR FAMILY & FRIENDS,

Its that time of year we have all been anxiously awaiting--the receipt of our annual Christmas letter. Actually, some of us look forward to it to as a reminder of what some of the good things that have happened during the year--we usually don't tell about the unfortunate ones. I have noticed that our lives all seem to have been getting better--which is very nice. Here are some of our adventures for the past year.

SHERRY has had a great year in many respects. The biggest news has been in her career. In October she began a new job as a counselor in the Career Development Center at Cal State U, Fullerton. Since she had a similar job at CSU, Long Beach, some wonder why she is so excited about the change. There are many reasons: 1--she goes from 3 weeks vacation to over 3 months vacation, 2--she will be able to also do personal counseling at CSUF, 3--some of the working conditions allow her more freedom. 4, 5, 6, 7--more free time.

Sherry has also had a number of other important accomplishments and successes this year. She was co-chair of two important conferences--a statewide professional development day for student service personnel and a statewide conference for California College Personnel Association at Asilomar--in Monterey. Both went very well. Sherry received the Richard Dodge Award for outstanding contributions to her field at Asilomar. This award is given to only one person per year with less than 7 years experience. I came up to join Sherry and we stayed in Carmel over Thanksgiving in our usual romantic Bed & Breakfast Inn.

TOM also had a good year. I spent a lot of time continuing development of my computerized advising program--ANDY. It will now do many more wondrous things. I have also begun the more "political" process of getting ANDY to be used on a larger basis across campus. This part involve dealing with many subtle kinds of resistances. There seems to be almost universal support and praise from those I work with, but implementation means all sorts of institutional changes which happen very slowly. Recently, I been seeking additional funding, and am hoping that it will be forthcoming. The year began with a reorganization of our student services division, which was demoralizing for many. However, this fall after learning to look more positively at these changes, I have been very happy in the Counseling Center.

I have had a really good year with my tennis, and for the first time recently played in an "A" league and finished with a winning (barely) record. Sherry & I have also continued our skiing (at Mammoth) regularly. We both love it and have continued to improve. She now goes over most of the intermediate runs and I finally made three straight runs on the "Cornice"--an expert run at the peak of the mountain that used to scare me to death just looking at it. We also bought 2 more weeks in our Paradise at the Whaler at Kaanapali Beach Maui. So we spent a month there last summer. It is truly a paradise for us in many ways of which we are sooo grateful.

TIM is 17 and has also had a good year. His social life went up about 500% by getting a car 2 years ago. Last spring, he earned a letter at Huntington Beach High School in tennis. Last summer he went to Texas & Oklahoma with his mom after working hard at a job to pay off debts and save toward a sports car. This fall he has been working all of the time it seems. He takes 7 classes and works 20 hours/week at Trak Auto parts store. His mom and I have not encouraged all this work, but he has a goal of the type of car he wants and persists. He bought a Triumph Spitfire and wants to rebuild much of it himself. He is a senior and has applied to several colleges for next year including--of all places--Oklahoma University, my alma mater. Again, that is his idea. When I was his age I couldn't wait to leave Oklahoma!

SPENCER is 20 and has continued to attend Long Beach City College and has really gotten into school much more than before. He seems to especially like some of his speech and other interpersonal type classes and has excelled in them. He also has continued to work at the Rusty Pelican restaurant. He bought a sports car--a Mazda RX7--which he really enjoys. He seems to really enjoy his social life--which is very active. Spencer has gotten interested in health, working out, and eating well. It shows. He also really enjoys skiing and skis with his friends as well as going on a trip with Sherry and I last year.

TRACY is 22 and continues to live with her lifelong friend nearby. She will graduate next December with a BS in Nursing from CSULB. She will start working as a paid nurse in February when she passes her boards. She has been working in nursing-related jobs as well as taking a heavy load of nursing classes and doing very

well. She is also very involved with David who is now a paramedic for the Orange County Fire Dept. She likes to ski and workout and leads a an active social life.

With the exception of Sherry's new job, there have been fewer major life changes for us this year than in most recent years. It seems as though everyone has a more clear direction and has been successfully moving that way. While it may not be quite as exciting, that also has some nice advantages--SERENITY. In addition to these "external" positive events, this summer Sherry and I developed some "philosophical" insights which seem to be helping us "rise above" daily negative events. It also seems to be helping us in our counseling. For all of these things and much more, we are all grateful for this past year and hope that your year has been as good or better.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS, HAPPY HOLIDAYS, AND LOVE,**

## 1990 Christmas Letter

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**M E R R Y   C H R I S T M A S   T O   A L L   1 9 9 0 ! !**  
**FROM TOM, SHERRY, SPENCER, TIM, AND TRACIE**  
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DEAR FRIENDS,

We hope you are all well, happy, and have had a good year. We hope that you are prepared for another Christmas letter about us this year. For SHERRY and TOM this has been an especially significant year. During our Thanksgiving trip to Carmel, we decided to get married. We have been so happy the past few years that we were a little afraid to change anything.

There were many happy moments this past year. We began it with our recent "tradition" of going to Mammoth to ski. This summer we had a wonderful trip to Europe for 6 weeks. We started and ended in London. In between we went to Edinburgh, the English Lakes district, Amsterdam, Bavaria, Switzerland, and France. In Bavaria we found a wonderful little town named Uderjoch on the edge of the Alps. We came into Switzerland over the breathtaking Klausen Pass. In Switzerland we stayed in an inexpensive, lovely little place on the water near Lucerne in Vitznau named the Schiff Hotel. We also found another beautiful hotel in Les Deserables--a tiny ski town in the French--speaking part of Switzerland.

From Switzerland we went into the French Burgundy wine district. There we had one of our most memorable stays in a French country Inn by a stream and a wonderful dinner in a nearby country restaurant. After that we stayed in a beautiful French chateau on Lake Annecy for three days. Our last stop on the continent was in Paris for 6 nights at the Di Lima Hotel on Blvd. St. Germaine not far from Notre Dame. The only problem was that it got up to 96 degrees and there was no air conditioning anywhere--except MacDonaldis--where for the first time Sherry actually requested to eat dinner there. Nevertheless, we had a wonderful time in Paris--from walking on the banks of the Seine to going to the Follies.

SHERRY is in her second year working as a counselor at Cal State University, Fullerton. She enjoys her job very much, except for the 25 mile commute. During one of those commutes, she was squashed between two cars by a hit-and-run driver. She was shaken and sore for quite a while afterward, but was not seriously hurt. However, her little blue Prelude required major surgery. Sherry also modified Master's degree by taking more units and getting an official degree in Marriage & Family Counseling. She was a speaker at several conferences and was co-chair of another for Calif College Personnel Association. She also taught her first class--Ed Psy 357: Self-Management, last summer

at CSULB. In her free time Sherry also likes her aerobics, biking, and long walks--the last two usually with Tom.

TOM spent lots of time playing tennis and working on his ANDY CARES--Computer Advising & Referral Expert System--project. The grant he received last summer helped upgrade the computer system he is using and helped pay for our trip to Europe. Tom taught a basic counseling skills class this Fall as an overload--which helped pay for Europe and other bills--but kept him pretty busy. He even had to give up his Monday night tennis!

SPENCER had an excellent year in school at Long Beach City College and also got his first full waiter job at a Sushi restaurant. It pays so well that he decided to move into an apartment with some friends this Fall. Spencer also loves to ski and has become a bit of a health nut--staying in great shape. We gave Spencer one of our Maui condo weeks last summer, and he spent a week there with his dad.

TIM decided to take a break before attending college and work for awhile. He is working at Seacliff Tennis Club after giving up his job for Trak auto parts stores. He spends a lot of time with friends, and took on a major project installing a Mazda RX-7 rotary engine in a Triumph Spitfire. Despite many problems, Tim has persisted in overcoming them and is now driving the car. He has learned a great deal about project management in addition to learning more about cars.

TRACIE has had an extremely busy year finishing her nursing degree at CSULB. She has begun a new permanent job at Memorial Hospital in Long Beach with newborn babies--exactly what she wanted. She is receiving her degree December 19 in a special ceremony by the Nursing department. Last summer she also took a trip to Hawaii with her longtime friend and roommate, Jill, and her boyfriend David, who is a paramedic.

It seems that after a period of several years of a lot of changes in most life areas, the past two or three years have been much more peaceful and very happy for us. For this and much more, we are very thankful. We hope that you have had a good year also, and that we you will tell us about it.

HAVE A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND GREAT 1991 !!

LOVE,

The SNYDERS and STEVENS  
481-102 MEDFORD COURT  
LONG BEACH, CA 90803 213-494-5041

## 1991 Christmas Letter

X

# MERRY CHRISTMAS 1991

## FROM: Sherry, Tom, Tracie, Spencer, & Tim

The BIG NEWS for Sherry and Tom in 1991 started in November, 1990 on a trip to Carmel in which we became engaged. On June 23, 1991 Sherry and Tom were married in the Japanese Gardens at Cal State University, Long Beach. A mere 9 years and 11 weeks after we first met. The Japanese Gardens are very beautiful and intimate. Sherry looked especially beautiful and all of our "children" looked wonderful. We all stood on a platform over the water, and then moved to a spot on a Japanese bridge near a waterfall to take our final vows. We invited family only, with the exception of a very small number of some of our closest friends. The wedding was performed by an old Claremont School of Theology friend, Ed Hansen, who is now an administrator at the School of Theology.

After the wedding, we went to a reception at the Wind Rose--a local restaurant overlooking Alamitos Bay. In our toast, Dave Dowell, toasted to our three phase honeymoon: phase one to San Francisco, phase two to Maui, and phase three the rest of our lives. We began our dancing with the love song from "Phantom of the Opera", "All I Ask of You". Immediately following the reception, Tracie and David took us to our flight to San Francisco. Just before getting on the plane they gave us a bag prepared by the kids. It had a large "Just Married" sign on it and beer cans dangling below, so that when we walked on the plane and entered the Stanford Court Hotel in San Francisco they clanged and clattered and created lots of laughter and strange looks from bystanders. After four days in San Francisco, we flew to our time interval condo in Maui for a 4 week honeymoon there. We had a wonderful honeymoon--all three phases so far!

Another major event upon returning was that Spencer was going away to the University of Colorado to attend his last years there after completing his units at Long Beach City College. He has joined a fraternity there and seems to be having a great time, as well as doing well in his studies. He lives in a apartment with friends and has also worked part time in addition to everything else he has been doing. He seems to be favoring Speech Communication as a major. One of the things he loves about Boulder is its proximity to ski areas. He can go crazy this year skiing in addition to everything else.

We came back to some other good and bad news. The good news was that Sherry still had her job at Cal State Fullerton as a counselor. We responded to that good news by going off our savings program and going out and buying a 1987 Toyota Supra with a removable top. It is a beautiful, high performance car that Tom loves to drive and Sherry also really likes. We sold our Mustang which Tom's mom had helped arrange for him to buy through Ford shortly before her death 7 years ago. It seemed very sad to sell it. The bad news was all of the severe state budget cuts also included student assistants for Tom's computer project. Tom's response was disappointment but also relief at all of the work he had been putting in on it. This Fall he has been giving his attention to a computer simulation of "neural networks" and to writing self-help materials which reflect some of our newer ways of thinking and doing therapy. It involves more attention to higher beliefs such as more basic personal philosophical beliefs. It examines more what people believe at this level and alternative beliefs that underlie unproductive behaviors and life styles. Some of the themes focus on people taking care of their own basic needs and happiness, on people balancing their needs with the needs of others, on issues related to the balance between independence and intimacy, on getting more control of ones' internal and external "routes to happiness", and on other themes. Sherry and Tom enjoy discussing many of these issues together and how they relate to our own lives and the lives of our counselees.

This year was also a big year for Tracie. First, she graduated from CSULB with a B. S. degree in Nursing and got a job at one of the best hospitals in the area in the maternity/child unit. This is exactly what she wanted. Then, on a trip to Kauai (the time share was a graduation gift from Sherry & Tom), David Stefan asked her to marry him and she accepted. They have set their wedding date to be April 25, 1992. David and Tracie have been dating since she was in High School and have always seemed to get along very well and enjoy each other very much.

David is a paramedic for the Orange County Fire Department. He also videotaped our wedding for us. They are busy looking to buy a house in this "buyers" market and very excited about planning their wedding. In this buyer's market, Tom & Sherry bought two more weeks at the Whaler in Maui for 1/3 off the normal price from someone who wanted quick cash. It seems like we are getting it for "free" because we are also refinancing our house and rental and will end up paying a lot less than we are now! We hope to use this time in the future to trade for ski weeks, other vacation weeks, or rent.

Tim worked last year to help pay off the money for the car he built--a rebuilt Triumph Spitfire with a Mazda RX-7 rotary engine in it. He completed the project with a few exceptions. One of his jobs was working as a salesman for a Mitsubishi

automobile dealer. He did ok, but car sales were very slow and he could not make much money and found it discouraging. This Fall he has begun college at Golden West Community College and is also working. He enjoys playing tennis (and plays almost every week with Tom), riding his bike, and spending time with his friends in addition to his interest in cars. He is also beginning to think about what he wants to major in and where he wants to continue his education.

As you can see, this has been a big year for us and another year for which we are all very grateful for the many gifts which we have been given! We hope that it has also been a good year for you. Though you may be far away time and distance-wise, we still think of you and would care about what is happening in your lives, and would like to hear about it. We only send these letters to a few people.

**LOVE and MERRY CHRISTMAS**  
**may your next year be even better than those before,**

**Tom, Sherry, Tracie, Spencer, & Tim**

For mailing:  
Tom & Sherry Stevens  
481-102 Medford Court  
Long Beach, CA 90803  
(310) 494-5041 (We have a new area code)

**1992 Christmas Letter**

## **MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY HOLIDAYS 1992**

**Dear Friends & Family,**

The year of 1992 was significant for us in many ways. Tracie got married, Tom reached his first half-century, Sherry's job changed significantly, and there were many other changes--mostly for the better. **TRACIE** became TRACIE STEFFAN last May when she married her high school sweetheart--David. David is a paramedic for the Orange County Fire Department and Tracie is a nurse at Memorial Hospital in Long Beach--working with newborn babies and their mothers. They had a beautiful wedding in Palos Verdes at a Country Club overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Then they were off to Tahiti for a wonderful honeymoon. After the honeymoon, they were very fortunate that a friend of Tracie's father let them rent a beautiful house in Naples--a beautiful part of Long Beach with canals.

**TIM** has been attending Orange Coast Community College. Currently he is considering Photography, Computer Science, or Engineering as majors. He has started playing tennis more again and seems to really be enjoying it. He is still "crazy about cars" and spends a lot of time on them, but lately has also been riding his bike a lot. He is also working for U-Haul part-time. Last summer he went to Europe with his mom and they were there for over six weeks. It was a wonderful and memorable trip for them. They went to England, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, and France. Every year of Tim's life he and I have attended a travelogue series at Long Beach City College. Even when he was a baby, his mom and I took him in a baby carrier and he would sleep through much of the films. It is sad and ironic that the year Tim finally got to go to Europe LBCC stopped offering the series because of the budget cuts. Maybe that is a sign of Tim's growing up--moving from movies to real life adventures.

**SPENCER** has been attending the University of Colorado and is beginning to approach graduation. He is a communications major and it seems to fit him well. Last year he was very active in Sigma Chi fraternity, but this year he has been living in an apartment off campus and is less active. Spencer loves to ski, ride his mountain bike, and spend time with friends. We have not seen much of him this year, because even when he was here for the summer, he was living in an apartment with

a good friend. So it seems that Spencer too is becoming more and more independent and enjoying it. It is great to see him doing so well too.

**SHERRY's** big news was a job change. There have been drastic budget cuts in the California Universities--especially the California State University system. We are always the poorest funded and get hit the hardest during cuts as well because we are more directly dependent upon funding by the legislature than any other system. Since Sherry is one of the newest employees at CSU, Fullerton in her center, every year for the past three years, we have been worried about a possible layoff. However, her director has fought to keep her. She is now halftime counselor and halftime Assistant Dean in the School of Natural Sciences and Math. The assistant dean position is one which puts her over student services within that school--it is largely an administrative position. This dual appointment has put a great deal of time pressure on her, because in many ways others expect her to do the same thing that a fulltime person would do in each position. She has a great number of meetings to attend. Sherry really loves counseling, so while this new situation has been interesting, it takes away her time from what she really loves. One good thing about this budget-cutting though is that the psychological services are being combined with the center Sherry is in--so her emphasis on personal counseling will be recognized more professionally.

Sherry continues to learn and grow too. This year she has begun doing some regular meditation in the mornings and has also begun to do freestyle dancing of her own creation for her aerobic workouts. The results have been great--in many respects!

**TOM** has been spending a lot of time writing his "book". His first version was really an outline of a workshop series he did called "Developing Self-Esteem and Assertiveness". He used this outline/book in his summer class as well. However, he has decided to make a larger book that expands on the brief version. Last summer he spent a lot of time on it, and has been writing as much time as he can each week on it. What he may end up with is not one book, but 2 or 3. At this point he is addressing an audience that are like my clients in the Counseling Center. The current title is **Developing Your Inner Power**.

Budget cuts have also hit Tom's center. Our staff size is about half of what it was three years ago. That has meant that Tom has been spending a larger percentage of his time doing individual counseling. However, the timing seems good for Tom, because of concentrating on the book and new ideas for helping people change. One of the main thesis of the book is that our inner philosophy of life, life themes, fantasies, and cognitive skills for reconstructing events into positive and interesting scenarios is the way to achieve greater internal harmony and happiness. He uses these ideas to deal with emotions, learning, performance, and interpersonal situations. He don't know what will become of his book, but this summer he found out that one of my tennis matches with Wayne Dyer (in Maui) has been "immortalized". Wayne's latest book, **Real Magic**, had just been published and he told Tom that he had written about one of their tennis matches in the book. This match had happened two years before. He usually beats Tom, but this particular day Tom had been playing really well. He had gained a lead 5 games to love and was serving for the set 40 to love, when Wayne started coming back and eventually won the set. That was an example of "Real Magic". It wasn't really a match that Tom would have liked to see in print though.

**TOM & SHERRY** continue to love and play together in ways that keep us feeling excited about being together. Apparently marriage has not taken any of the spark away--it may have even enhanced it some. Skiing has continued to be one of the activities that we look forward the most to in the winter. Last year we took two trips to Mammoth--our favorite place--and the skiing was great. One of our other favorite things is having a romantic dinner at home by the fire and watching Mystery on PBS. Last summer we spent four weeks at our time-interval place in the Whaler in Maui plus a week in Kauai in Princeville at "The Cliffs" condos there. Princeville is on the rainy, greenest part of the island--near where they filmed "South Pacific". The last night there we had dinner at a place called the "Bali Hai" restaurant which was completely open with a "jungle-like" surroundings and a waterfall. We had a beautiful view of the "Bali Hai" part of Kauai--where the sun sets into the sea near a beautiful, green mountain range.

We find that in many ways each year seems to get a little better--at least in our understanding and approach to life, if not always in the actual events. But then the events have been wonderful as well, so we are very grateful. We hope that the past year has been as good for you as it has for us. We love to hear about what is happening in your lives and really look forward to hearing from you. Please write.

Love,

**Sherry and Tom Stevens**  
**(and the "kids"--Spencer, Tim, & Tracie)**

## 1993 Christmas Letter

# Merry Christmas 1993

Dear

Another year has passed--it seems they go faster almost every year. Every year has been a wonderful one for Sherry and I. A number of activities have become 'traditions' for us, and we fill much of our time with them. We feel like these are the best days of our lives and are very happy. Our weeks are filled with nights of candlelight dinners by the fire eating fish or one of our experimental pastas. Then later perhaps watching an English mystery such as Poirot or Inspector Morse. Or one of our new favorites is Lovejoy--an art dealer on the A&E cable channel. Before dinner I probably played tennis and Sherry probably did her free dancing aerobics to the music of someone like Janis Jackson or Gloria Estephano. On Sundays we usually go for a drive and walk around Balboa Island or some other place in the LA basin.

We also have our yearly traditions. Last January we returned to Mammoth Lakes and skied for 4 days. While there the snow 'dumped' and we had to dig our condo and the car out of 5 foot snow drifts. And last April we exchanged one of our weeks in Maui for a week's ski vacation in Lake Tahoe at the Tahoe Ridge condos. We skied at Heavenly Valley and one day at Squaw Valley. What a wonderful thrill to stand on top of a mountain looking for miles in all directions and seeing the miles of snow-covered mountains. Then looking over the cliff you can see the steep side of the mountain that looks almost like it goes straight down for hundreds of feet. Then you ski over the edge and flow with the mountain until you reach the bottom. There you can look back up and wonder how you ever skied to the bottom. It's a great thrill!

Last June we took a brief trip north to Palo Alto to see Sherry's nephew Steve Bene' marry Tammie and participate in a partial family reunion. Then we went to San Francisco for two days, where we played with Tracie and David (and the seals). Then returned home via Carmel.

Our yearly trip to Hawaii is always wonderful. This year we went to the big island of Hawaii for a week (exchange) before spending our 4 weeks in Maui at the Whaler. That is our paradise where we can read, swim, walk, play tennis, dance, enrich our spiritual lives, eat at wonderful restaurants, and enjoy the beauty of this tropical paradise. This year my serve and volley game had greatly improved and I finally was able to beat Wayne Dyer in singles. My game has continued to improve. So if he is there next year--he'd better look out!

Our life is now becoming an epic length videotape. Last January we bought a Sony camcorder and now have filmed many of our traditions--what wonderful memories they bring. It is almost like being there again.

Our 'children' are all on their own (at least partially). **Tracie and her husband David** just bought a beautiful new house in Naples (Long Beach) and love everything but the payments. Both are doing well in their careers (as nurse and paramedic). David was active in the recent fires which hit the LA area--he has some 'fiery' stories to tell. They are enjoying their (pre-children) days traveling and being active doing a variety of activities.

**Tim** has been working at a variety of jobs, and taken some classes at a Orange Coast Community College. He lives with his mother, but would like to go to a green, cool area such as the Pacific Northwest or possibly live on a sailboat. His spirit for adventure is strong, but his financial means for adventure is weak. He reached his 21st birthday last year and longs to be on his own. Photography, tennis, cars, friends, politics, and travel are some of his interests.

**Spencer** expects to graduate with a degree in Communication at the University of Colorado this Spring. He hopes to travel to Europe after his graduation. He spends a great deal of time with his two loves--Christina and Cody. Christina is his charming, adventurous 'girlfriend' from Newport Beach that he had to go all the way to Boulder to meet. Cody is his golden retriever who has grown to a size that required Spencer to move into a house with a yard. Spencer loves the mountains, biking, skiing, and life in Colorado. He is considering it for his home after graduation.

**Sherry** has been in a joint appointment (two jobs) as a Counselor and Assistant Dean at Cal State Fullerton for her second year. She longs to go back to being a fulltime counselor. At least the layoffs didn't get her, but she would like to do more counseling. This is despite the fact that she does such a good job doing special projects which are responsibilities in the Assistant Dean job. Last year she created major publications, was in charge of all school scholarships, planned a number of activities like the awards banquet, etc. She is currently studying for her Marriage and Family Therapist licensure examination. It is very difficult and requires a great deal of her time studying for it--though she is enjoying the learning experience. Just recently Sherry spearheaded getting our kitchen, entry hall, and downstairs bathroom tiled by an independent contractor. She has wanted this done for years. Though she had second thoughts when she came home to find that everything in the house looked like it was buried under a foot of snow: actually a coating of white mortar dust. However, now that it's done it looks great and we are both very pleased with it.

**Tom** completed the first draft of his book, **Our Journey to Self-Actualization: Routes to Harmony and Happiness**. This book represents a lot of Tom and Sherry's personal experiences and experiences of clients presented as illustrations for what he considers to be basic issues of life--especially finding happiness and contributing to the happiness of others. It combines philosophical/spiritual issues with psychological ones, and introduces some relatively new ideas like our 'Higher Self' and 'harmonious functioning'--a state of peak learning, performance, and happiness. He used it in his class last summer and has given it to a number of people to read. The feedback has been very positive--though he still has a lot of editing to do to 'get the words right.' He is currently seeking to find a literary agent or publisher interested in the book. However, this process can easily take 1-2 years. So far there has been some significant interest, but no definite offers. (PS. If anyone wants to read and review this 350 page book, I would be happy to send you a [free] copy--assuming few, will respond on this offer.)

This is our 1993 year in review. Much more happened, but I've probably already written more than you want to read. We hope that your lives have been as happy as ours. We would love to hear about your year. Please write.

**Love,**

(481-102 Medford Court, Long Beach CA 90803; 310-494-5041--new area code is 310)

**1994 Christmas Letter**

## **MERRY CHRISTMAS 1994**

Dear

Every year it seems like time is moving a little faster than the year before. Is that just us or do you notice it too? 1994 has been another great year for us. We seem to be living in the best time of our lives. 1994 was a lot like most other recent years, but we have had a few extra special events in addition to understanding and enjoying life a little more.

This was a very big year for **Sherry**. During the 1993-4 academic year she managed to arrange a minor miracle and get the Vice-President of Student Services to reassign her full-time to Counseling (instead of being assistant dean 1/2 time). She was very happy to be one person instead of two and get a chance to do more personal counseling again.

The second big event was even bigger. After a long struggle for many years and after overcoming more obstacles than anyone I know, Sherry received her MFCC--Marriage, Family, and Child Counseling license. During the years before, she had had to make many personal and financial sacrifices to give up a high-paying career in real estate, work 1/2 time for 2 years without pay, get a second Master's degree, lose 2-years of supervised credit (due to changes in the law), make a major job change, almost lose her second 2-years supervision (due to the death of her supervisor), and appeal the oral exam. But she is an outstanding counselor, and I am so happy to see her get what she has worked so hard for. We celebrated by going to Carmel during Thanksgiving, and--as a present for her accomplishment--I bought her a necklace that goes with her wedding ring.

Sherry also keeps up with her aerobic dancing, biking, and walking (and some skiing). [She keeps in great shape.] She also keeps up with her reading and visits with friends--though not as much as she would like.

**Tom** has continued to work on his book, and work on getting it published--an ongoing project. In addition, he taught more during the past year. He taught his regular summer "Self-Management" course and taught an overload course for counselors (and others) "Interpersonal Skills for Human Resource Development." He has also enjoyed the campus Planning & Educational Policy committee, because it makes important policy decisions and he gets to meet a variety of other professors and administrators.

Tom continues to play tennis 3 times or more a week and thinks that he is playing his best ever. He finally managed to play Wayne (Dyer) pretty evenly last summer and comes out almost equal with his good friend Dave Dowell-whom he has played nearly every Saturday for over 10 years.

Tom's treat to himself for his extra teaching (and to Sherry, who wanted him to get the stereo out of the Dining area) was to build a stereo cabinet under the stair-well and buy a new receiver with "surround sound." Both Tom and Sherry enjoy listening to music more. We especially enjoy cuddling up in our big chair--surrounded by speakers, sound, and love.

We bought each other a "bistro" set of two French chairs and Tom made a table for romantic breakfasts and dinners to go in the space where the stereo had been. For the first time we will actually be able to eat in our dining room.

Tom has also bought new cookbooks, and has been learning to make healthy adaptations of recipes from Italian and French cookbooks. Our favorites are healthy pizzas and pastas. He is just starting to experiment with French recipes.

Last January, when all Southern California was experiencing the Northridge earthquake, Sherry and Tom were in Squaw Valley (near Lake Tahoe) skiing. Our area generally experienced little or no damage from the quake. Our only problem was getting back from Tahoe--the two major routes were closed because the bridge on one freeway fell over the other.

Last June, after Tom's class, we made a whirlwind trip of the Southwest US--in about 10 days. (We had already seen Las Vegas just a few weeks before.) We started in Phoenix visiting Sherry's family. Sherry's mom had undergone a triple bypass heart surgery last year on Christmas day--not a very merry Christmas. But she has recovered and is feeling better. After Phoenix, we headed for Santa Fe to visit Tom's brother, Ron and family. Ron is director of United Way for Santa Fe, Judy has a second career as a mother, Sam (age 5) is bright and energetic as ever, and Allison (age 2) is the family member we had not yet seen. She is also very verbal and energetic. After returning home we enjoyed pronouncing our names as Allison had-- Tommmm and Sher--ry. We also found ourselves saying "NO---WAY" the way she did. So we really learned quite a bit from her.

On the way back home, we stopped in Flagstaff and visited Sherry's dad and her brother, Chuck and his family. Her dad was attending to a Hummingbird nest and gave her a beautiful copper pan set--which goes well with the French theme in our breakfast room. Chuck recently bought a Honda Dealership to go with his Audi-VW dealership. We think he should give away free samples to visiting relatives.

Last July we went to our condo in Maui again for a wonderful 4 weeks. We have talked about it before--so we won't bore you any more with it, but we cannot get enough of it!

**Spencer** (25) had a big year too. In May, we went to Boulder to see Spencer go through graduation at the University of Colorado. His major was communication. In August Spencer decided that Boulder didn't offer many job possibilities, and decided to move back to our area. Spencer's girlfriend, Christina, also moved back from Boulder. Spencer currently lives in Seal Beach. After working in an exclusive restaurant to get some needed income, he and a good friend, Cordell, have struck out in a new direction. They have started a snowboard business. They produce and sell "EDGE" snowboards. Spencer is getting his first real taste of entrepreneurship--and is very excited about it.

**Tim** (22) has had a good year. He has worked, attended college, and begun dating someone he seems very fond of--Trina. He met her in a college class and has been seeing a lot of her. Tim continues to enjoy tennis, music, and autos. However, after building, buying, repairing, and selling a number of cars (and even riding a big motorcycle for awhile), he seems happy just to get one good Triumph Spitfire in good working order that he can drive.

**Tracie (27) and David** are living close by in their new home. She is still nursing at Memorial hospital and he paramedicating in Orange County. They are traveling a little less, but they are putting a lot of time and energy into establishing their home and making it what they want for the future. Both are skilled at activities which are contributing to their enterprise. They seem to have a lot of fun together and work well as a team in all that they do.

We are grateful for the gift of another wonderful year. We have so much to be grateful for that sometimes we worry that it may not all continue. However, we try to live one day at a time and one year at a time--hoping to make each the best it can be. We hope that life has been well to you and would love to hear from you and know what is happening in your lives.

Love,

481-102 Medford Court, Long Beach CA 90803 - 310-494-5041

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

## 1995 Christmas Letter

# Merry Christmas 1995

Dear

We began 1995 at a New Years Eve party dancing with our friends Bobbe and Lee to music of the 50's+, then with Skiing at Mammoth Mountain. In the Spring we attended the Sutton family reunion. (Sherry's mother's side). 125 people attended the affair in Phoenix (at her Mom's clubhouse) with five generations represented. Many had not seen each other for years. It was wonderful for all to come together like that, laughing and remembering (or not remembering) old times. Everyone had a good time, and many old connections were rekindled.

The circle of life and all its emotions have been very poignant in 1995. This Fall began with death and ended with new life with lots of transitions in between. After a nine year courageous battle with a brain tumor, Sherry's brother, Robby, succumbed to cancer. He had taught Electrical Engineering at the University of Texas at Austin for 25 years. Robby gave the world his brilliance, his art, and his smile.

On October 9 (three days after Sherry's 50th birthday), a shiny new smile entered the world on the face of **Savannah Nicole Steffen**. Her dad, **David** (a paramedic), delivered the tiny 5#14 bouncing bundle. Her grandmother, Sherry, attended in the delivery room, and (of course her mother, **Tracie**, did her part). This blessing happened at Memorial Hospital in Long Beach, where Tracie is a nurse in the maternity ward. She was lavished with attention by her peers.

Tracie and David had just finished remodeling their house and buying furniture for it in the nick of time. Savannah is as cute and cuddly as can be, and seems very alert and active. She is growing like a weed and learning like a sponge.

**Tim** is currently attending college at Irvine Valley Community College and working. He is tentatively majoring in Computer Science Engineering. IVC has a program for accelerated transfer to UC, Irvine that interests Tim. Tim and Trina also celebrated their one year "dating anniversary" recently. They seem very content and close, and spend a lot of time together.

**Spencer** moved back to Boulder, CO because he loves the mountain. He is involved in some entrepreneurial activities--including a snowboarding company formed by he and some friends and specialized T-shirt sales. He loves biking, hiking, mountain climbing, snowboarding, skiing, and all the challenges the mountains have to offer.

**Tom and Sherry**. We have had another great year, and done an exceptional amount of traveling. Last year Tom taught extra courses that helped us build up our vacation accounts. Our reward was to take an extra trip. In June we went east. We flew to Washington DC and spent about a week there. It was the first time Sherry had ever been there. We stayed in Alexandria and took the Metro in every day. We got up early (for us) and were going until late at night every day. We had a great time and took lots of video to have a record of it.

Next was New York City. We stayed at Lowes on Lexington across from the Waldorf-Astoria. We walked all over Manhattan for three days, and took the Subway occasionally (during the day). We saw a Gershwin play in the Shubert Theater the second evening and saw everything else we could from Lincoln Center to the World Trade Center.

After NYC, we drove up the coast and stayed near Mystic, Connecticut for a night, where Sherry had Maine Lobster in a little restaurant on the water. The next day we arrived in Cambridge, MA--a suburb of Boston and home of Harvard--where it drizzled all three days we were there. We bought the biggest umbrella that fit into the smallest package I ever saw. We walked all over Boston and found Newberry Street to be especially interesting--with all its shops and restaurants built in charming old homes in the Back Bay area.

After Boston, we drove further up the coast to Kennebunk, Maine and stayed in a beautiful B&B. We loved all the trees and hundreds of charming old wood-framed homes. We stayed in another B&B in Connecticut on the way back. This one was on a farm owned by a schoolteacher. Every stick of furniture in it was authentic Early American farm. The house and fireplace were out of the last century, and the whole experience was like stepping back in time. It was wonderful!

The next part of our trip was another reunion, this time with Tom's side of the family. Many whom he hadn't seen in 20-30 years. It was a beautiful reconnection. For Sherry, meeting the Stevens family was a warm and welcoming experience. They have a wonderful young spirit and exciting attitude about life.

Uncle Charlie and Aunt Lillian were an inspiration. They are so loving after so many year of marriage, and both seem so content and happy with life. While there we went through Stevens family memorabilia Tom didn't know existed. He found that he is the fifth generation of a Thomas Stevens, and that one of his relatives founded Harmony IN. A newspaper clipping said that in 1884, Thomas Stevens was the first person to ride around the world on a *bicycle!*

We flew home and soon started preparing for our yearly month in Hawaii! Yes, it was one of our best summers ever! We had a wonderful time there--again. We appreciate our life and mostly feel richly blessed by our love for each other, others, and life's miracles.

What else? In addition to all of the events described above about this Fall, we reconnected with wonderful old friends, Frank and Lee Noffke, whom we found we shared a similar spiritual growth. We skied, Tom played lots of tennis. (Oh yes, we worked--and the university climates are better, due to a better economy.) Speaking of work, Sherry reached another milestone this year. She was "reclassified" from an SSPII to an SSPII-AR. That may not sound like much difference, but it is a world of difference. The "AR" means that she has a faculty-equivalent position essentially equal to an Associate Professor. It is very rare in the CSU system for anyone to make that transition.

Other things? We paid more attention to our exercise (we love exploring on our bicycles) and eating habits to try to be as healthy as possible for now and the years ahead. We are just having too much fun living, and want this to continue as long as possible!

We hope that you all have had great years, and want to hear all about them--write or call. We wish you good health, love and a happy life in the New Year.

Love & Aloha to All,

481-102 Medford Court, Long Beach, CA 90803 310-494-5041 (area code to change soon)

## 1996 Christmas Letter

# MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAPPY HOLIDAYS 1996 from Tom & Sherry

(All the news that's fit to print--plus a lot more!)

Dear

As we move into another Christmas season and look at *another* year almost completed, they seem to go faster every year. We have to remind ourselves that they don't. Our biggest feeling at the end of this year is gratitude--gratitude for another wonderful year for us. We began the 1996 year by going to Squaw Valley to ski for a week. We had a great "trade" at the Olympic Village Condos for a week, but a giant storm caused us to have only one good day of skiing and we left early to drive over Donner Pass in a blizzard. Then we drove all day in a driving rain until we found shelter in San Luis Obispo's Apple Farm motel. The year got a lot better.

We have both found that we enjoy our counseling more each year. We share a lot of ideas and have found that we have dealt with so many types of problems and found so many ways of dealing with them that each person is challenging--yet fun to help. People often ask us how we can listen to people's troubles all day; but we rarely see people who don't see significantly improve --or at least feel significantly better. People often think that counseling is depressing because the counselor can't change the circumstances of people who are not doing well. What people don't appreciate is that people can mentally overcome their circumstances, and we see it happen so often that it is truly inspirational to us.

Tom's efforts to get his book, *You Can Choose To Be Happy: "Rise Above" anxiety, anger, and depression* published have been frustrating. However, since he has never let little things like that stop him, we decided to form our own publishing company so that we can publish what we want. We have named it the Wheeler-Sutton Publishing Company

after Tom's mom's maiden name and Sherry's mom's maiden name. So the "hidden" family names get established in this company. There are many kinds of registration required to be an official publisher recognized in the industry, etc. But we are going through those steps. We now have the capacity to publish "on demand" for small runs or large. So the entire project (including book revisions) has taken some time this year. Currently, Tom is beginning to seek additional reviews and endorsements. Wayne Dyer gave him a very good one, and so have a number of previous readers; he is seeking additional ones from a variety of non-local people to include on the cover or other pages (a common practice in self-help books). We don't really expect to sell many books, but it allows us to use it locally and to distribute it as opportunities arise. We also give away a number of copies.

The book reflects a lot of both of our thinking and approaches to counseling and life. We stress both internal and external paths to health and happiness. For our own physical health, this was the year of the "mineral doctor." If you have not heard the tape by Dr. Joel Wallachs about the importance of minerals in your diet to live to a healthy (very) old age, then we highly recommend it. We have sent it to several families and would be happy to send it to you. Or you can order one (free) by calling 800-881-2502 to Health Sources (who sell colloidal minerals). Almost everyone we know who has heard this tape has started taking a balanced mineral diet afterwards (normal multivitamin mineral supplements are very inadequate). We also ride our bikes, do aerobics, or Tom plays tennis almost every day now. Our lives are just too much fun, so we want to live them as long as possible.

In addition to Sherry's counseling, she continues to direct the intern program in the CSU, Fullerton Career Development & Counseling Center and gives many workshops. Her workshops are loved by all that attend and this year was even an invited workshop presenter at the national conference for financial aide administrators. They paid all expenses for her to stay in the beautiful new Hyatt in San Diego, plus a small honorarium. She gave the only self-development type workshop at the conference. Since Sherry has been reclassified into a faculty-type position, she had to write an extended document specifying what she has been doing and include many evaluations. She also has to go through the tenure process again. Creating the document was a great deal of work, but the committee was impressed with the result.

This fall, we gave our first professional presentation together. It was given to the organization of California higher education counselors at our yearly conference in Shell Beach. We found that it was much more complex and that we were much more nervous than when we give presentations alone. But we had a great turnout, it went very well, and we were happy with the results.

Our kids are no longer kids. All have their own lives quite independent from us. **Tracie and David's** daughter **Savannah** is now more than one year old. She walks, is starting to talk, and is very smart and happy. She has been the center of their lives for the past year. They have worked around their schedules so that they have never used a nonfriend or nonfamily babysitter, and have done almost all of the child care themselves. **Tim** surprised us all (not too much) by informing us that he and Trina plan to get married next year. They are beginning to make wedding plans. Tim got a good-paying job earlier this year working for the Garden Grove School District and Trina is working as a dental assistant. They seem to get along very well and seem very happy together. **Spencer** has been working (constantly) at his business manufacturing and selling snowboards (in Boulder, Colorado). So far they seem to be doing well, but it takes a great deal of time and energy. He has found a great way to combine doing what he loves with work. He especially enjoys "demo" trips.

Our other 1996 travels included a trip to the Santa Barbara wine country (did you know there was such a thing?), and a trip up to coast just north of Newport, Oregon. We decided to try camping again. The last time we camped was about 14 years ago. We bought a new dome tent, sleeping bags, and a few other things and forged north. We camped in Big Sur, stayed in a beautiful B&B north of Napa, camped in Humbolt, Harris Beach, Beachside, and then stayed in another B&B in Newport. Sherry talked Tom into campfires and cooking almost every night, and we found sleeping in our tent on our "self-inflating" mattresses to be very comfy and cozy. One night in Humbolt, we didn't feel so cozy. We heard sounds we thought were a bear. At that point we wished we had a cellular phone. After lying awake for a long time worrying, Tom finally stuck his head out of the tent. He saw a racoon looking right back at him. Were we relieved! On the way home we camped in Sunset Bay and Patrick's Point, then saved our luxury part of the trip until the end--a very good idea. We stayed in Santa Cruz, then at the Four Seasons hotel in San Francisco. Our last night was in Carmel--then home.

We were home two weeks, then took our yearly trip to Maui--our second home. There we were sad that Whaler's Village next door closed some of our favorite places--even Chico's restaurant--in favor of super-expensive places like Tiffany's and Ferragamo's. We certainly won't find those places very useful--except for window shopping. Other than that, we had a great time, saw old friends, and made some new ones. At Thanksgiving, we took our "traditional" trip to Carmel.

That brings us up to the current time. Sherry's mom and her husband, Parker, will be visiting from Phoenix. Spencer will be visiting from Boulder. But Tim will be going back to Texas and Oklahoma for Christmas. Tracie and David live close by, so we usually see them more than the others--especially since Savannah has been born.

These are the best years of our lives. We don't think that we particularly "deserve" them, but we intend to enjoy them as much and as long as possible. We give some and we get a lot back, but our times together are our best times, and they are times filled with love, harmony, and happiness. Having life events go so well has made it easy, but we have tried to learn how to find inner ways to happiness as well. Those have been the areas of greatest progress and greatest security against fears that our wonderful life could change--especially that something could happen to one of us. That is the dark side of having such a good life, and it can potentially undermine it. So a great challenge is overcoming those fears. So in addition to taking our minerals, we try to appreciate what we have and believe that we can still find meaning and happiness--even if circumstances were to change. Perhaps some of you have similar fears. In any case, we hope that you find happiness as we have and look forward to hearing from you.

**Love,**

**Tom and Sherry Stevens**  
**481-102 Medford Court**

**Long Beach, CA 90803; 310-494-5041 (area code changing in June).**

## **1997 Christmas Letter**

# **Merry Christmas 1997**

## **from Tom & Sherry Stevens**

**Dear**

1997 has been a bountiful year of transitional life events--a wedding, surgeries, travel, career changes, publishing, reconnecting, and growth. It has been a very interesting year--not all positive--but very interesting. Tim and Trina began their family in a lovely wedding on April 5. Jane (Tim's mom) was happy that so many of her family came all the way from Texas and Oklahoma to be at the Wedding. Many of Trina's family and friends were also present. Trina's family is of Chinese ancestry and originally from Vietnam. They had to overcome tremendous hardship and danger to move to the US after the Vietnam War. The Wedding was beautiful. Most importantly, Tim and Trina really enjoyed it and were very happy to be getting married. They are now living happily ever after. They are continuing to work and go to school part-time.

Sherry and Tom's year began with thinking of a possible Europe trip. We hadn't been to Europe since 1990, and had plans to go this summer. So January we did a lot of research into possible itineraries. We considered a trip to Scandinavia versus England and Paris. We even sacrificed our normal ski trips to help us pay for it. A few events interrupted our planning. The first of February Sherry had a hysterectomy plus other stuff! She was at home recovering for a good part of the Spring semester, came back to work, and immediately got called for Jury duty on a gang-related murder case in the middle of Compton (gang city). Fortunately, the defendant plea-bargained. Squeezed into all of that we gave an invited address to a conference at CSU, Sacramento on, "You Can Choose To Be Happy in Relationships." Tom also was interviewed on local cable TV about issues related to his book by CSULB president, Dr. Robert Maxson. Sherry gave a

transition workshop to her staff, because their director, Bobbe Browning was retiring. Little did they know how much they would later need it!

Just as Sherry was dealing with the jury problems, she was told she might have breast cancer. After a few scary days, it turned out OK. However, the MD did limited surgery that left her with an open wound for six months--putting our Europe plans in doubt.

Sherry rose to the occasion, and decided to choose to be happy in Europe. We went to London, the Cornwall/Devon area of England, and Paris for 3 weeks in June. Sherry left with the MD's blessing and half his medicine chest. We spent a total of 8 days in London where we saw plays; toured parks, pubs, and piccadillies; and took a day trip on the train to Oxford. Being mystery fans, we enjoyed seeing Sherlock Holmes "residence." We stayed near Paddington both times in different hotels. After London, we rented a car (a new Alfa) and toured the Cornwall/Devon area for a week. We started in Lynmouth/Lynton in a beautiful B&B where we had dinner next door at a wonderful country pub overlooking the ocean and hills. On successive nights we stayed in St. Ives, Penzance, Looe, Lyme Regis, Shaftsbury, and Windsor. One of the highlights of the area was Polperro--a town on a tiny bay with quaint buildings and a great deal of charm. It allowed no cars, but horse-drawn carts brought passengers in. Overall, we loved the area and found it to be our favorite in England--it was so beautiful, charming, and fun!

From London we took the 190 mph Eurostar train (though the Chunnel) to Paris. We got on the Metro and popped up in the heart of the Left Bank (Odeon) to find hundreds of people and dozens of bands celebrating something. Was it our arrival? No, it turned out to be Mid-Summer Night's Eve. We found our Hotel le Regent on rue Dauphine to be in a perfect location. It was new, very modern, French, and small. It was great. One of the highlights of our Paris stay was our anniversary dinner in ?? One of the lowlights was getting my pocket picked in the Metro. Fortunately, they didn't get my passport. Though rain put a damper on our stay, we saw the Louve and many other sights. We had a wonderful time despite the problems.

We arrived back in London with hopes of finishing off our trip with a day at Wimbledon--the tennis championships were in their first week. But we were to be there only three days, and the forecast was rain, rain, rain. However, it didn't rain much. Not only that but for only the second time in history, they opened Wimbledon for play on the middle Sunday. Anyone could "cue up" and get tickets. After three hours wait in the cue we got great seats in the brand new Court 1 and saw some great tennis that day. So the same storm that had dampened our Paris trip had made "People's Sunday" possible, and we ended our trip with a smash!

After a few days in Long Beach, we were off to Maui to our summer home. One of Tom's projects was to begin his own website ([www.csulb.edu/~tstevens](http://www.csulb.edu/~tstevens)). He put many of the self-help materials he has written on that site--including a complete copy of his book. He hopes to make it a more complete self-help center as time goes on. He also developed a website for the Counseling and Psychological Services Center at [www.csulb.edu/~caps](http://www.csulb.edu/~caps). Sherry continued to read, heal, and explore wellness, spirituality, and other topics.

We enjoyed another wonderful summer in Maui of beauty, love, tennis, walks, ocean, and seeing old friends. We also enjoyed the visit of our friends Bobbe and Lee who stayed at the Whaler for a week. Another nice thing happened while we were there. A very thoughtful French woman had found Tom's billfold in the Paris Metro and given it to a friend in a international business. The friend called us and returned Tom's wallet and apologized for her countrymen who had picked his pocket. She warmed our hearts.

After a wonderful summer, the Fall was a bit of a shock. At CSU, Fullerton, both the Vice President and Director of the CDC (Sherry's boss) left. A very dominating and mean-spirited health center director (a dentist) has been trying to get control of counseling; and the new VP seems to be going along with it. It has been a battle all semester. It might have severe consequences for Sherry, and it has been a big source of stress and time commitment all semester. Yesterday, Sherry received very unexpected--but terrific--news. The personal counselors will not move far and the acting director will be the Asst VP, a counseling psychologist, who has fought for them all semester. This is a great victory for them all, and Sherry is very happy about it.

Meanwhile, Tom is getting his book, *You Can Chose To Be Happy: "Rise Above" Anxiety, Anger, and Depression* published. We needed to use it's ideas regularly this semester in order to get through these ordeals. After a huge effort from Tom and Bobbe (who put many hours editing into the project), it finally went to the printers just before Thanksgiving. We had less time together than ever. Murphy's Law held--everything that could possibly go wrong did. One week before "deadline," Tom said, "At least my computer hasn't broken down, I don't know what I'd do if it did." Well, he found out;

the motherboard went out three days later. Currently, the printers have the book and we have our fingers crossed as we await the copy to be proofread. We hope that the real copies will be in our hands by mid-January.

Tom did get 99% of the book work done just in time for our annual Thanksgiving trip to Carmel. It was so wonderful having such quality time together again. Even though life got hectic again on our return, it also gave us a goal to not get so overcommitted too often.

Fall was also a big family period. After a huge effort, Spencer decided that the snowboard business was not where his future lay. He returned to our area and has gotten established with a new job and a new girl friend, Kristin. His new job is managing and marketing catering for a popular Italian restaurant in Long Beach--Ragazzi. That is convenient, because Kristin's kitchen for making "Yummus"--deliciously flavored hummus is nearby. Spencer has also been helping her with her business. They have been friends for 15 years, but have decided to be more than friends.

Tracie and David's daughter Savannah is now 2 years old. Being objective grandparents we can honestly say that she seems like one of the brightest, prettiest, and cutest 2-year olds we have ever seen. And she seems to get cuter every day. Tracie and David are both doing well in their jobs, house, and lives, but the big news is that they are expecting another baby in June!

This Fall we saw four generations of women together on and off over a five week period. Sherry's mom and "uncle-dad" Parker came to the area so that her mom could receive treatment for her pain and related problems. Sherry was very happy to get a chance to visit with her mom and help her through these difficult times. We all had a chance to reestablish connections and visit during this time. However, since we--especially Tom--were so busy, we couldn't do all that we would have ideally liked.

We had hoped to have a Christmas party for our friends, but now we are looking forward to just having some peaceful time alone and a chance to get our house and lives back in order after the past whirlwind year. 1997 has had its ups and downs, but it has contained a lot of memorable events. It has been a very interesting and mostly happy year. We hope your year has been happy and would like to hear about it.

**Love,**

Tom and Sherry Stevens, 481-102 Medford Court, Long Beach CA 90803; (new area code 562-494-5041). Tom's email: [tstevens@csulb.edu](mailto:tstevens@csulb.edu); Sherry's email: [sstevens@fullerton.edu](mailto:sstevens@fullerton.edu)

## **1998 Christmas Letter**

# **Merry Christmas 1998** **from Sherry and Tom Stevens**

**Dear**

Every year is special and we appreciate the many gifts we have received each year in our lives. After all the effort, Tom's book, *You Can Choose To Be Happy: "Rise Above" Anxiety, Anger, and Depression* was finally published. He sent copies to many of you and if you did not receive one and would like a copy, please let us know. There was little time for celebration, because he still had a lot of work to do to help make the book available to anyone in the world who would like a copy and do some initial promotion. He has also tried something very different--making a free pre-publication web book version available at his web site (along with some other self-help handouts he has written) at [www.csulb.edu/~tstevens](http://www.csulb.edu/~tstevens). This Fall, Tom decided to not get involved in any new major projects immediately, but has been very busy as chair of the Curriculum and Program Review Committee

at CSULB (it reviews all new academic programs). He also received a small grant to develop a faculty training workshop on helping teach students learning and comprehension skills.

Last May, we were honored to be in a select few who made presentations to large audiences at the CAMFT—an association of therapists. The presentation was on “Spiritual Cognitive Therapy.” We are expanding it into a 3-hour workshop to be presented at the American Counseling Association World Conference this April. We have been doing a lot of reading in this area to complement our experience and ideas already in Tom’s book.

To have healthy, happy lives we try to maintain a good balance between the different parts of our lives, eat and exercise well, and find positive meaning in all of life. This approach helps give us peace when facing the aging process and resultant health concerns. After last year’s surgeries, Sherry has had a very healthy year. Tom has also been very healthy except for an occasional heart arrhythmia problem that is not serious. However, it was scary at first. Fortunately, extensive testing has shown his heart to be very strong; so we are both relieved.

Last Spring, we were saddened by the loss of Sherry’s father due to kidney disease. We attended his funeral in Flagstaff, AZ. And though the event was very sad, Sherry was happy to see so many of her family and extended family members. We also met some of her father’s closest friends, who shared with us the many ways that he had helped them in very significant ways.

At Cal State, Fullerton, our good friend (and Sherry’s Director) Bobbie Browning retired in August. As a result, her work situation changed significantly. The CDC split into two centers—a career center and the new Counseling and Psychological Services center—where Sherry now works. There were a lot of adjustments to be made. However, ultimately Sherry loves working with her counselees and helping them grow. She also gives a lot of workshops on topics such as healing and wellness, guided visualization, life balance, life transition, depression, gratitude, and happiness.

Our “kids” are getting pretty grown up. We have two major news items from them. **Spencer** is engaged to Christin Anderson. They have been “buddies” since high school, but never really dated until Spencer returned to California. They intend to marry late this summer. Spencer arranges large parties and events for graduations, reunions, etc. He is very enthusiastic about his work. Christin has her own business making and selling her own brand of hummus—called Yummus. She is also very enthusiastic and is doing well. Spencer is no longer the only Spencer in the family (It’s very confusing): **Tracie and David** made a new contribution to the family—Spencer David Steffen—born on June 10. Meanwhile, Savannah is now 3 years old and getting smarter and cuter all the time. **Tim and Trina** are both working and going to school part-time. They continue to enjoy their married life and try to have some fun while being very busy.

Our travels didn’t include skiing for the second year, but we went to the Wine Country near Santa Barbara and spent two nights during Spring Vacation in tiny Ballard. Then last summer, we again traveled to our second home in Maui and had another wonderful month there. After returning home, we went to San Francisco to participate in the American Psychological Association convention and in October we spent 4 nights in Las Vegas attending a conference to receive 18 CE units toward our licence renewals. We are also going to Payson, Arizona on Dec 26 to celebrate Christmas with Sherry’s family and will stay in Palm Springs for a couple of nights on the way back. Then, we will end the year dancing with our friends Bobbie and Lee who have invited us to their Yacht Club New Years Eve Party.

Our lives have become more stable over the years. We seem to have developed more traditions and habits that we love and work well for us. Our lives regularly include lots of bike-riding, tennis for Tom, romantic dinners, TV mysteries etc, walks, drives, music, dancing, reading, Sherry’s Gratitude Journal, visiting family or friends, and special nights out. So these are the best years of our lives and we just want them to last as long as possible. We hope you are also having great years and we hope to hear about your lives as well.

**Love and blessings for a Happy New Year,**

Tom and Sherry Stevens, 481-102 Medford Court, Long Beach CA 90803; 562-494-5041.

Tom's email: [tstevens@csulb.edu](mailto:tstevens@csulb.edu); Sherry's email: [sstevens@fullerton.edu](mailto:sstevens@fullerton.edu)

## 1999 Christmas Letter

# Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays 1999

### Dearest Family & Friends:

We've had another great year with much to be thankful for and we hope that you have too. We joke about being like rats in a maze who have now reached the goal box. I will start with some of the most fun stuff first. We have been traveling more during the past few years and this summer we took two trips—one to Spain and Portugal and one to our Maui Paradise.

The first trip was a first for us in several respects. It was our first trip to those countries, but also the first time we have ever taken a tour. We decided to try it. We went with Cosmos. We booked a couple of extra nights in Madrid for a 17 day stay in June. We started in Madrid, went south through Toledo, Granada, Torremolenos (on the Mediterranean), Gibraltar, Seville, Lisbon, Porto, Salamanca (the old university town), and back to Madrid. It was a wonderful trip. We weren't so sure we liked being so structured at first, but it was a very efficient way to see a lot in a short time. It provided a great overview of the two countries. Our guide Roberto was helpful and informative, and we enjoyed meeting our tour-mates from around the globe. They came from Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, England, Italy, former Soviet Union (now US citizens), etc. We especially enjoyed the large Malaysian family and have communicated some with them.

After that trip, we "moved" to our 28 day summer home at the Whaler in Maui and walked, swam, read, wrote, played tennis, visited with friends, and generally spent another wonderful time there.

Finally, a few weeks ago, I was in a meeting where we were asked to write down the answer to the question, "Where in the world would you go, if you could spend New Years Eve any place you wanted?" First, I said Paris, but thought, no that's too cold; so I said Honolulu. A couple of weeks later, a friend said she knew of a special deal for two to Honolulu for a week that was very cheap. Being a cheap person, I decided to check it out. Before the morning was up we and our friends Bobbe and Lee were booked on a week long trip to Honolulu to leave on New Year's Eve morning. I guess too many people were afraid to fly then. In Honolulu, they go crazy with fireworks on normal New Year's Eves. We can't wait to see what happens this year—we expect a festive atmosphere.

In addition to our traveling, we have great weeks at home too. We schedule lots of time together, normally we ride our bikes, walk, do aerobic dancing, or Tom plays tennis for exercise each day, and we do our other health-conscious activities. So life has been great most of the time. In August, Tom's brother Ron and his family—Judy, Sam, and Alison all drove from Santa Fe and stayed with us for a few days. It was great seeing them all. They are all very healthy and happy.

Now for the work part. Generally Tom has been happy at work doing much of what he has been doing at CSULB for 26 previous years. 1999 was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cal State, Long Beach. That means Tom has been there more than half the life of the university! Tom thinks of these years under President Maxson as it's Camelot years. He is very involved in campus governance from the faculty side, last year he was chair of a subcommittee that reviewed all new university undergraduate degrees and programs. This year he was elected vice-chair of the Planning and Educational Policies Council—the group that writes most academic policy and has many other important functions. He enjoys meeting involved faculty and administrators from all parts of the university and having a say in important matters that affect student lives.

Tom has continued to develop his web site, and has put his book, [You Can Choose To Be Happy](#); many of his self-help handouts on relationships, anger, loneliness, time-management, career-planning, learning, etc.; questionnaires; and other stuff there for free viewing or downloading. The new web site URL is [front.csulb.edu/tstevens](http://front.csulb.edu/tstevens). Take a peek and let him know what you think. He wants to make it much more interactive, more like a person is actually receiving counseling. Also look at his web links page.

Sherry and Tom presented a 3 hour workshop to the American Counseling Association World Conference on "Spiritual Cognitive Therapy." We had a large turnout and really enjoyed it.

Sherry also presented "Walking in Balance in a Mad, Mad, MAD World" at a CA statewide University Counselor's Conference and presents many workshops at Cal State, Fullerton and in the community. She also created one of her dreams this year by opening a small private practice in Belmont Shore . Things had gotten pretty chaotic in her office after our friend and former center director, Bobbe Browning, retired. In the Spring Sherry chaired a selection committee to find a new director. They hired someone who seems really good and has gotten the office in a state that is much happier for Sherry. Another reason for the private practice was as a place to go in case the office situation didn't improve., but things are looking up.

Spencer had a big year—a big triple!!! He reached 30, was offered a new position with a company involved in import/export shipping (he actually has to wear a suit and tie and was amazed to discover he didn't die.) The job pays very well and has a lot of aspects he likes and they were delighted to get him. The really BIG NEWS is that he was MARRIED to Christin Anderson—his long-term friend from high school. Christin, as, you might remember, has her own business selling "Yummus" hummus." She is adorable and a wonderful gift to our family. They married on August 14 at a friend's parents' home. It was a beautiful wedding and sort of a reunion for many high school friends. Spencer and Christin were living in a very small beach home in Surfside, CA, but recently moved into a larger place one-half a block away. They love living near the beach. Spencer's dog, Cody, amazes people: he's known as the blind Golden Lab that chases balls on the beach. He apparently uses sound and smell to find the ball even if thrown 100 feet away. The Snyder's seem very happy.

Tim and Trina also seem happy. Tim is working as a computer tech and Trina as a dental assistant. Both are taking classes. They lead a busy and social life, and like to take short trips. They are thinking about moving to a smaller town in Northern California—possibly Sacramento next year.

David and Tracie are continuing to lead the good life in their lovely home in Naples (an area of canals in Long Beach), You may recall that David is a paramedic with the Seal Beach Fire Dept and Tracie is a nurse for new babies and their moms at Long Beach Memorial Hospital They both trade off caring for their children—our Grandchildren, Savannah and Spencer. Savannah is 4 and this year has been active in preschool and in everything she does. She is a ball of fire and as cute as can be. She has been taking ballet and appeared in her first recital this Spring popping UP as a jack-in-the-box. Spencer, on the other hand, was, falling DOWN as he learned to walk. Spencer is now 18 months, and follows Savannah around constantly---to her mixed consternation and delight!

We look forward to receiving your letters (we noticed we are receiving more Christmas letters each year—possibly in self-defense?) We love to hear from you and hope you are having **healthy and happy lives**. Keep in touch.

**We wish you a Joyous New Year & New Millennium 2000**

**Love,**

**Tom and Sherry Stevens**

481-102 Medford Court, Long Beach, CA 90803; 562-494-5041 (voice or fax)

email: Tom, [tstevens@csulb.edu](mailto:tstevens@csulb.edu) Sherry, [sstevens@fullerton.edu](mailto:sstevens@fullerton.edu) Tom's web site, [front.csulb.edu/tstevens](http://front.csulb.edu/tstevens)

## 2000 Christmas Letter

# Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays 2000

### Dear Family and Friends,

We are grateful to be so blessed in our lives with good health, loving family and friends, meaningful careers, and our wonderful personal lives filled with our many activities and travel.

Our start for the new millennium began on Waikiki Beach with our good friends Bobbe and Lee. It was only a week, but it was an eventful week that may have changed our retirement plans. Tom hadn't been to Hawaii in the winter since he moved away in 1972, and renewed his love for Hawaii "winters." (We know that must sound pretty strange to people outside California who see SoCal as such a warm place.) Sherry has been interested in the possibility of living there since venturing there part of the year as a sophomore at Northern Arizona University for a memorable summer.

The BIG NEWS of the first year of the new millennium is that Spencer and Christin have a new baby girl—Roxanne Bauer Snyder, born October 22. She is beautiful. Mother and baby are doing great., and Spencer is a proud, sleepy dad. Our "Kids"—Tracie, Spencer, and Tim are all giving us more grandchildren. It is Tim and Trina's turn now and sure enough, Trina is expecting a baby girl this spring. Meanwhile, Tracie and David's kids, Savannah and Spencer just keep getting smarter and cuter. They are both sweet and energetic kids who love to play. Savannah began Kindergarten, is taking ballet now, and loves to sing and dance.

After a busy Fall 99 and the millennium trip, we returned to make a presentation in San Francisco at the national First Year (college student) Conference. Shortly thereafter Sherry began working on her file for her tenure and promotion to (full professor equivalent level) at CSU, Fullerton. This is the second time she has had to get tenure there—due to her changing classifications into a faculty equivalent position.

The past three years have been cool for SoCal, so after our Hawaii experience, we decided to spend a couple of days in Palm Springs during Spring break. We stayed in a little B&B that is an old classic small hotel that during the 30's and 40's was supposed to have had old favorite "Stars" stay there.

During the spring, Tom learned that his sabbatical proposal had been approved for Fall, 2000. He proposed to develop an Internet site at CSU, Long Beach called CARES: Computer Assessment and Recommendation Expert System. It is built upon his earlier Life Skills Questionnaire (from the late 80's), and ANDY CARES—the expert system he designed in the early 90's. The advantage of the new system is that it can be delivered on the Internet, and will have all kinds of Internet links. These links are to both Tom's book sections and other writings plus links from all over the Internet. Users are assessed and helped with all sorts of academic and personal problems. The web site address is <http://front.csulb.edu/success>. Tom has been working on this project during this semester and hopes to have it running at that address soon.

Tom also was active in the university as vice-chair of the universities faculty Planning and Educational Policy Council, which consumed a lot of his time and taught his self-management class. He also continued to develop his primary web site which contains free on-line copies of his book and other writings. His hit rate has continued to increase, so that there are currently more than 1,200 visits per month. He also reprinted his book during Spring, 2000. It has made it to under 40,000<sup>th</sup> on the Amazon best seller list. (That's not so bad, if they really have 2.5 million books.) He also, was interviewed by Dr. Len Olinger for an hour on his radio show that aired in Phoenix, Boston, and various other cities during the spring.

Sherry spent a week in June caring for her mom and giving Parker a week off. Her mom has been in very poor health, and Sherry wants to spend as much time with her as is practical. Late June was also the time of Tom's 40<sup>th</sup> High School reunion for Northwest Classen HS in Oklahoma City. So we planned a trip to explore the original Hwy 66 and accomplish our other goals as well. Hwy 66 is very meaningful for us. Sherry and Tom each grew up just a block from Hwy 66, except Tom lived in OC and Sherry in Flagstaff. Also, Tom's dad owned a motel on Hwy 66 in OC. So we drove the old roads where we could get our "kicks on route 66" and had a great trip. We stayed in Flagstaff with Sherry's brother Chuck and his wife Nancy; in Sedona, Greer, Payson; and with Tom's brother's family in Sante Fe, NM. Before our trip we bought two of the new little (Razor-type) scooter for fun and exercise. We ride our bikes so much, we miss

them on our trips, so they are like our travel bikes. Tom really had fun scootering around his old neighborhood in OC. On the way back, we stopped in Las Vegas—where we returned in the fall for a conference to earn professional continuing education credits.

Of course we spent our heavenly four weeks in Maui later in the summer as usual, and we extended our time in Hawaii so that we could visit our friends Bobbe and Lee in their new time share at the Marriott in Kauai. We also spent a few days in Honolulu and had a great time. This year Tom's tennis partner Wayne Dyer bought a unit at another condo down the beach, and has also decided to spend more time in Hawaii.

This Fall, we have been trying to figure out how we could spend more time in Hawaii and other warmer places after we retire. After much research we decided to try to end up with enough time at the Whaler, in Palm Springs, and perhaps other places so that we could spend the heart of the winter there, and we began to actualize part of our plan by buying some more time.

This fall, Sherry spent much of September completing her file for her tenure and promotion. The great news is that the first faculty committee, her director, and her vice president have now approved both tenure and promotion and complimented her for such a fine file. Tom has been working hard on his project this semester. We took our annual break to Carmel for Thanksgiving after enjoying an early Thanksgiving dinner with our kids and grand kids. During grace when Sherry was thanking God for our food, little Spencer (2 1/2) said, "But there's no food on my plate" repeatedly.

We talk a lot of our travels in our letters. I suppose it is partly because the other parts of our lives are very similar from year to year. Tom still plays lots of tennis and is in his perennial quest of the holy grail—the perfect service motion, and we ride our bikes several times a week or do aerobic dancing. We are health nuts about nutrition, exercise, and the lot. We just love life too much and want to be as healthy as possible for as long as possible. We love music and have been collecting CD's of music from the 40's, 50's, and early 60's; and enjoy concerts by the LA Philharmonic.

We love to hear from you all, so keep your letters coming. Also, please include your email address—if you have one. We hope that you are healthy and happy, and wish you a very merry Christmas and great 2001.

**We wish you a Joyous New Year 2001**

**Love,**

**Tom and Sherry Stevens**

481-102 Medford Court, Long Beach, CA 90803; 562-494-5041 (voice or fax)

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## 2001 Christmas Letter

# Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays 2000

Dear Family and Friends,

We are grateful to be so blessed in our lives with good health, loving family and friends, meaningful careers, and our wonderful personal lives filled with our many activities and travel.

Our start for the new millennium began on Waikiki Beach with our good friends Bobbe and Lee. It was only a week, but it was an eventful week that may have changed our retirement plans. Tom hadn't been to Hawaii in the winter since he moved away in 1972, and renewed his love for Hawaii "winters." (We know that must sound pretty strange to people outside California who see SoCal as such a warm place.) Sherry has been interested in the possibility of living there since venturing there part of the year as a sophomore at Northern Arizona University for a memorable summer.

The BIG NEWS of the first year of the new millennium is that Spencer and Christin have a new baby girl—Roxanne Bauer Snyder, born October 22. She is beautiful. Mother and baby are doing great., and Spencer is a proud, sleepy dad. Our "Kids"—Tracie, Spencer, and Tim are all giving us more grandchildren. It is Tim and Trina's turn now and sure enough, Trina is expecting a baby girl this spring. Meanwhile, Tracie and David's kids, Savannah and Spencer just keep getting smarter and cuter. They are both sweet and energetic kids who love to play. Savannah began Kindergarten, is taking ballet now, and loves to sing and dance.

After a busy Fall 99 and the millennium trip, we returned to make a presentation in San Francisco at the national First Year (college student) Conference. Shortly thereafter Sherry began working on her file for her tenure and promotion to (full professor equivalent level) at CSU, Fullerton. This is the second time she has had to get tenure there—due to her changing classifications into a faculty equivalent position.

The past three years have been cool for SoCal, so after our Hawaii experience, we decided to spend a couple of days in Palm Springs during Spring break. We stayed in a little B&B that is an old classic small hotel that during the 30's and 40's was supposed to have had old favorite "Stars" stay there.

During the spring, Tom learned that his sabbatical proposal had been approved for Fall, 2000. He proposed to develop an Internet site at CSU, Long Beach called CARES: Computer Assessment and Recommendation Expert System. It is built upon his earlier Life Skills Questionnaire (from the late 80's), and ANDY CARES—the expert system he designed in the early 90's. The advantage of the new system is that it can be delivered on the Internet, and will have all kinds of Internet links. These links are to both Tom's book sections and other writings plus links from all over the Internet. Users are assessed and helped with all sorts of academic and personal problems. The web site address is <http://front.csulb.edu/success>. Tom has been working on this project during this semester and hopes to have it running at that address soon.

Tom also was active in the university as vice-chair of the universities faculty Planning and Educational Policy Council, which consumed a lot of his time and taught his self-management class. He also continued to develop his primary web site which contains free on-line copies of his book and other writings. His hit rate has continued to increase, so that there are currently more than 1,200 visits per month. He also reprinted his book during Spring, 2000. It has made it to under 40,000<sup>th</sup> on the Amazon best seller list. (That's not so bad, if they really have 2.5 million books.) He also, was interviewed by Dr. Len Olinger for an hour on his radio show that aired in Phoenix, Boston, and various other cities during the spring. Sherry spent a week in June caring for her mom and giving Parker a week off.

Her mom has been in very poor health, and Sherry wants to spend as much time with her as is practical. Late June was also the time of Tom's 40<sup>th</sup> High School reunion for Northwest Classen HS in Oklahoma City. So we planned a trip to explore the original Hwy 66 and accomplish our other goals as well. Hwy 66 is very meaningful for us. Sherry and Tom each grew up just a block from Hwy 66, except Tom lived in OC and Sherry in Flagstaff. Also, Tom's dad owned a motel on Hwy 66 in OC. So we drove the old roads where we could get our "kicks on route 66" and had a great trip. We stayed in Flagstaff with Sherry's brother Chuck and his wife Nancy; in Sedona, Greer, Payson; and with Tom's brother's family in Sante Fe, NM. Before our trip we bought two of the new little (Razor-type) scooter for fun and exercise. We ride our bikes so much, we miss them on our trips, so they are like our travel bikes. Tom really had fun scootering around his old neighborhood in OC. On the way back, we stopped in Las Vegas—where we returned in the fall for a conference to earn professional continuing education credits.

Of course we spent our heavenly four weeks in Maui later in the summer as usual, and we extended our time in Hawaii so that we could visit our friends Bobbe and Lee in their new time share at the Marriott in Kauai. We also spent a few days in Honolulu and had a great time. This year Tom's tennis partner Wayne Dyer bought a unit at another condo down the beach, and has also decided to spend more time in Hawaii.

This Fall, we have been trying to figure out how we could spend more time in Hawaii and other warmer places after we retire. After much research we decided to try to end up with enough time at the Whaler, in Palm Springs, and perhaps other places so that we could spend the heart of the winter there, and we began to actualize part of our plan by buying some more time.

This fall, Sherry spent much of September completing her file for her tenure and promotion. The great news is that the first faculty committee, her director, and her vice president have now approved both tenure and promotion and complimented her for such a fine file. Tom has been working hard on his project this semester. We took our annual break to Carmel for Thanksgiving after enjoying an early Thanksgiving dinner with our kids and grand kids. During grace when Sherry was thanking God for our food, little Spencer (2 1/2) said, "But there's no food on my plate" repeatedly.

We talk a lot of our travels in our letters. I suppose it is partly because the other parts of our lives are very similar from year to year. Tom still plays lots of tennis and is in his perennial quest of the holy grail—the perfect service motion, and we ride our bikes several times a week or do aerobic dancing. We are health nuts about nutrition, exercise, and the lot. We just love life too much and want to be as healthy as possible for as long as possible. We love music and have been collecting CD's of music from the 40's, 50's, and early 60's; and enjoy concerts by the LA Philharmonic.

We love to hear from you all, so keep your letters coming. Also, please include your email address—if you have one. We hope that you are healthy and happy, and wish you a very merry Christmas and great 2001.

**We wish you a Joyous New Year 2001**

**Love, Tom and Sherry Stevens**

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## 2001 Christmas Letter

# Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays 2001

### Dearest Family and Friends:

As 2001 approaches its end, we enjoy looking back and thinking about the year's events. As we look back on previous Christmas letters, we find them a good summary of many events we most want to remember. The letters are meaningful to us, and we hope that you don't find them too long or too focused on the many fortunate events in our lives. We try to work hard, play a lot, and find a balance between the two that works for us.

This has been a year of some very significant changes for us—both gains and losses. In January, Tom was wrapping up his sabbatical project, the Success and Happiness Attributes Questionnaire (SHAQ) and associated web site (<http://front.csulb.edu/success>) that contains many self-help tips and Internet links. SHAQ was partially based upon his earlier Life Skills Questionnaire (LSQ) that was a subject of previous research, but SHAQ is much more comprehensive including a scales on basic values, life themes, beliefs, and other internal factors that relate to ideas in his book. Tom's book (*You Can Choose To Be Happy*) is still selling and achieved a new best with Amazon.com by ranking just over 7,000 at one point (out of 2.5 million titles?). In January, we also spent a week in our new time share, the Plaza Resort, in Palm Springs.

April brought the joyous occasion of Aubrey Stevens's birth. Aubrey is our fourth grandchild and third granddaughter, Tim and Trina's first child. She was a healthy 11 ½ pounds and 22 inches, so Tim and Trina literally had a handful. However, it wasn't long before Aubrey was sleeping through the night, and in many other ways, she has been a very happy and loved baby.

June was a great month. First, it brought more outstanding news. Sherry's received her tenure and promotion to full professor equivalent at the same time. Tenure is a six year process. It is very rare for someone to achieve the promotion to full professor level with less than a PhD degree, so that is quite an accomplishment that went beyond our earlier expectations, and reflects the great job she has done in the Counseling and Psychological Services at Cal State University, Fullerton.

Next, we took a 17-day trip to Florida, the first time Tom has ever been there. We loved the warm weather (88-92 almost all the time) and the beautiful environment. We landed in Orlando where we visited Disney World, Epcot Center, and drove to the Kennedy Space Center (where we were filled with awe and appreciation). Then we stayed at Key Largo, Boca Raton, and Miami's South Beach. They were all great, but we loved South Beach. It is filled with restored art deco buildings (including the Beacon Hotel where we stayed) and lots of ocean view, open restaurants. For exercise, we swam, walked (walked some more) and Tom rode his scooter up and down the beachfront bike paths.

Finally, in June we celebrated our 10<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary (our 20<sup>th</sup> year since we met will be this April) at a new French restaurant in Long Beach.

We had been trying figure out how we could restructure our real estate and lives after retirement to spend more time in Hawaii and warmer climates for over a year, and during late Spring and June we made some big moves in that direction. We decided to sell our rental condo at Stoneybrook Villas in Long Beach and our time-interval units at the Whaler in Maui and buy a (full year) studio unit at the Whaler. During that time, to our amazement, we sold our LB condo within a week. We also made a deal to buy # 861 at the Whaler (using videos from our real estate agent in Maui). It is the same basic unit as the time-interval studios we already owned (and loved) for 14 years, but this is really ours. We have a contract with Aston Resorts, who operate the Whaler and rent it out like a hotel room on a daily basis, with almost no effort from us. We closed the deal in July while in Maui, but will not actually stay in that unit until January 2002. We have now sold 4 of our 6 weeks. Our good friends, Bobbie and Lee bought our January unit; so we are looking forward to seeing them while we are there.

Unit 861 has a fabulous ocean view overlooking Lanai, Whaler's Village, Kaanapali Beach, and the mountains. We have put in a new kitchen and are having a wall bed installed this January. We are very excited about staying there for the first time this January and hope to spend several months a year there after retirement. Tom has always wanted to have a bike in Maui, so one of his first actions was to buy one. The only drawback about owning the condo is that we have to pay for it, worry about it, and occasionally do some maintenance.

After all of these wonderful things that had happened, we were deeply saddened by the loss of Sherry's mother. She had been ill for several years, but had survive against all odds. Sherry's mom had taken care of her family and other people all her life and had accomplished amazing things. As a young child during the depression, she worked and was a "mother" to her siblings, living in very meager conditions in Williams AZ. As a mother with five children, she started and finished a bachelor's degree in three years, and graduated valedictorian of her class (she had no high school) and then went on to complete her master's degree, and all but

dissertation of her doctorate. She taught first grade for many years, and then became a school psychologist in Flagstaff until her retirement. During our Maui trip, even though she had been very ill, we were shocked to hear of her sudden death. We traveled back to Arizona for the funeral, but returned to Maui for our last week there. It was a little bazaar mentally, but the time in Maui was very peaceful and healing. Each year it seems harder to return to California, but once home we enjoy our children and grandchildren, do some of the California things we love, like the Hollywood Bowl, and begin the new academic year as usual.

Tracie, David, Savannah, and Spencer are all doing great. David was promoted to Captain and given his first assignment in Los Alamitos with the Orange County Fire Department and we are very proud of him. Savannah is now in the first grade and loves gymnastics. She is a ball of fire. Spencer started preschool and loves it. This Halloween he was a fully decked out fireman—just like his daddy.

(Big) Spencer and Christin have been very busy taking care of their now year-old daughter, Roxanne. She is adorable, with huge brown eyes. Christin has sacrificed her career and put “Yummus” on hold to be a stay-at-home mom(executive) and Spencer is working hard in his job selling prosthetic devices. He travels all over the LA area and spends a lot of time working with surgeons in the operating room. He has learned a lot about the medical industry and enjoys his work.

Tom also mourned the loss of his cousin Charlene Coe, who was in her mid 80's when she died of cancer. She had been a good friend of Tom's mom when Tom was young, and he became close to her after his mother's death. He had visited with her a year ago during his 40<sup>th</sup> high school reunion in Oklahoma City. She had been a vibrant and energetic woman who never lost her physical or mental beauty. She loved big bands, loved to dance, and loved to travel. She was still a tour director traveling around the U.S. and taking cruises until cancer made her stop. We loved her and her spirit, and we will miss her very much.

September 11 had a dramatic impact on the nation and we were shocked at the tremendous loss of life and property. However, Mayor Guiliani's comment that New York would never be the same, it would be even better set an inspiring tone that seemed to capture the spirit that has spread through the land. We have each seen clients who have been more directly affected. Otherwise our Fall semester has gone very well. For the first time in 28 years Tom didn't teach any classes or workshops, but Sherry has continued to offer quite a few. Tom is focusing his time on his web sites because so many people are using them, and he wants to continue his computing and writing during retirement.

Those were most of the big events in our lives during the past year. As we begin to contemplate a new life stage, we have begun to look back on our careers and lives. We are saddened by the passing of those close to us and those not so close in the media and elsewhere who have influenced our lives. Yet we are also grateful for both the memories and the continued influence those people have on our lives now. It seems as though many values we learned a long time ago have been validated by our many experiences, and that broader perspective helps us move to perhaps a new level of awareness and (hopefully) wisdom. Time seems to go so fast, yet it really has been quite a long time since we were young adults trying to decide what to do with our lives. We have had many wonderful experiences and been very fortunate. We are very grateful. We hope that you have had a good year and look forward to hearing from you.

Photo(from Top-left): Sherry, Savannah, & Tom; Tracie, David, Savannah, & Spencer; Aubrey; Spencer; Christin, Spencer, & Roxy; Roxy; Trina & Tim.

**We wish you a happy new year and a wonderful 2001**

**Love & Aloha ,**

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**Love,**

**Tom and Sherry**

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## 2002 Christmas Letter

# Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays 2002

Dear Family and Friends,

We hope you have all had a healthy and happy year. We have. The year 2002 began with our staying in our new Maui condo,



Whaler 861, for the first time. A week after we arrived we celebrated Tom's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday on January 9. Being in our new condo was quite a Birthday present. We added a king-sized Sico wall bed to our studio, that would be our "bedroom" and Tom's birthday present was a new Rattan reclining chair. Our friends Bobbe and Lee stayed there in their new time interval unit and purchased a full-year unit similar to ours on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor. We had a wonderful time.

[Photo below: Tom; Whaler Tower 2; view from 861; Tom Sherry; Spencer, Charlie, Roxy; Tracie David Spencer Savannah; Aubrey; Chalie; Tim Trina]

Sherry has a new Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) director who is also director of the CSU, Fullerton health center. Since he is so involved in the health center, he has given her assistant director responsibilities. Part of the change involves being in charge of the counseling interns. She enjoys the challenge of the new tasks and loves spending so much time with the interns. However, her client load has been reduced and she misses having more clients. For all the years she has worked in CAPS, she has never had a window; but this Fall the counseling staff moved into a new CAPS building that is very nice, and she finally has a big window with a great view. Even though the first part of the Fall was chaotic, she was happy to move. Sherry also exercises regularly and keeps in great shape.

Tom has continued to work on his web sites and SHAQ (Success and Happiness Attributes Questionnaire), and is currently doing an extensive data analysis of the first 600+ people's results. He also made presentations of his "Spiritual Cognitive Therapy" professional workshop at a university and professional conference and continues to serve on the CSULB Educational Policies Council and is chair of the Academic Admissions and Standards subcommittee. He also oversaw the third printing of his book (*You Can Choose To Be Happy*) then gave up almost all work associated with it. He has let a company in New York do it all. He has also cut back on workshops and classes, and is trying to get more time for putting his (often neglected) personal business at home in order. He continues to play tennis 2-3 times/week and ride his bike on the other days (usually with Sherry).

Our Spring and Summer was very interesting. We spent Spring vacation week in our Palm Springs time-share, which we really enjoyed.

In June we went to Ojai and Solvang for a few days, then returned to really get involved in some home business we had been putting off for years. After many years of Sherry's urging and Tom's resistance, we re-did our inside painting and carpeting. The task was worse than we had even imagined. For example, Tom had to pack about 40 boxes of books and papers from his office and carry them to the garage. Re-carpeting meant basically moving out of the house and moving back in. We also painted the walls ourselves. We had thought that the carpeting wasn't going to get done until we returned from Maui; but the very last work day before we left the carpet installers were scheduled to install the carpeting. They didn't show up until 11:30 am July 3, and we were getting quite nervous since nearly everything was moved out of the house, and we were leaving for Maui July 5 at 8am. No worry, they completed the task by 7pm, and we got almost everything moved back in before we left July 5.

Our summer in Maui was wonderful as always. This is really becoming a second home for us. We have friends there including Bobbe and Lee, who also spent their first summer in their new Whaler unit. We are keeping our Whaler time-interval unit 214 as long as possible so that our family and guests can stay there (for the cost of our yearly fees). We were excited that Tracie and David and our two grandchildren, Savannah and Spencer, could stay there for the entire 2-week period. They had a great time exploring all the beaches and snorkeling places in Maui, and we all had a great time together at the Whaler. Each year we would like for family or friends to use 214 while we are in Maui. Family and Friends can also use 861 anytime we are not in it, but it would cost more. Aston Resorts runs the Whaler rental program and rents it when we aren't in it; but we can let family and friends use it. It is our paradise. We have a wonderful beach outside one door and great tennis courts out the other. We have wonderful views of the ocean and the island of Lanai on one side and the Kaanapali golf course and mountains on the other. We can walk to Whaler's Village next door or to the Sheraton, Westin, Marriot, or Hyatt hotels that share our beach. In addition, we are only 5 minutes from Lahaina. Sherry had been wondering if she can spend several months a year there (in our studio) in retirement, but she seems more confident about it.

In continuing to do retirement planning, we are also asking ourselves where we will live on the mainland. It is beginning to look as if it may be Long Beach or Palm Springs. We know a lot about Long Beach, so we are also exploring Palm Springs more. We traveled there twice this fall and began looking at possible developments of interest. One big surprise was the cost of housing. It looks as if we can get a home there for about 2/3 the cost of Long Beach. Since we can spend the hottest part of the summer in Maui, heat wouldn't be a problem. Sherry and Tom both love the sun and very warm temperatures. The condos we are looking at there are on a golf course and have genuine, first class tennis clubs on the property. Of course we don't really play golf, but the view of the grass and mountains is spectacular. Tom used to play golf, and Sherry is interested, so golf might work itself into our lives. We want to continue living a very active and healthy life style for as long as possible; and we love the warmth, natural beauty, and being outdoors. So these places seem to be the place for us. Many of our friends, who are about our age, also have OCRPD (Obsessive-Compulsive Retirement Planning Disorder). Perhaps you too are sufferers of this pre-senility disorder. Still research shows that it helps fend off dementia, so perhaps its not so bad after all.

Our 'kids' are leading active lives as parents and taking good care of our grandkids. Tim and Trina and Aubrey's lives haven't changed much lately. Tim still works for the Garden Grove School District and Trina is a dental assistant. They are hoping to buy a house sometime in the near future with Tim's mom. Aubrey has been learning to talk rapidly and is cute as can be, but we haven't seen as much of her this year.

Christin and Spencer are expecting a new arrival in the family in late Spring, 2003; and have decided to wait to be surprised about the sex. Spencer is still selling body parts (artificial knees, etc.), and doing very well at it. Roxy has big, beautiful, brown eyes just like her grandmother. They love living in Surfside on the beach, and would love to buy a house there; but they are very  
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David and Tracie had some changes. David was appointed as a Fire Department Captain and assigned to be in charge of a Los Alamitos Fire Station last year. The nurses at Memorial went on strike, so Tracie had to picket. Their efforts were well rewarded. Savannah is now 7 and won a major swim meet, along with continuing her dancing. She was singing, "All I want for Christmas is my two front teeth–LITERALLY." (Little) Spencer is now 4 and is one of the most curious kids we have ever seen. He asks, "Why?" and keeps asking more detailed questions until he gets to the bottom of things. One of his typical recent questions was "If the moon lights up the world, what lights up outer space?"

We are aware of the many blessings we have in our lives and what happy lives we lead, and we are very grateful for them all. Sherry keeps a gratitude journal that helps us both. We hope the past year has been a good one for you, and enjoy hearing all about your lives.

We wish you all a Merry Christmas and wonderful 2003.

Love,

Tom and Sherry

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