

2003 to 2016 Tom & Sherry Christmas Letters

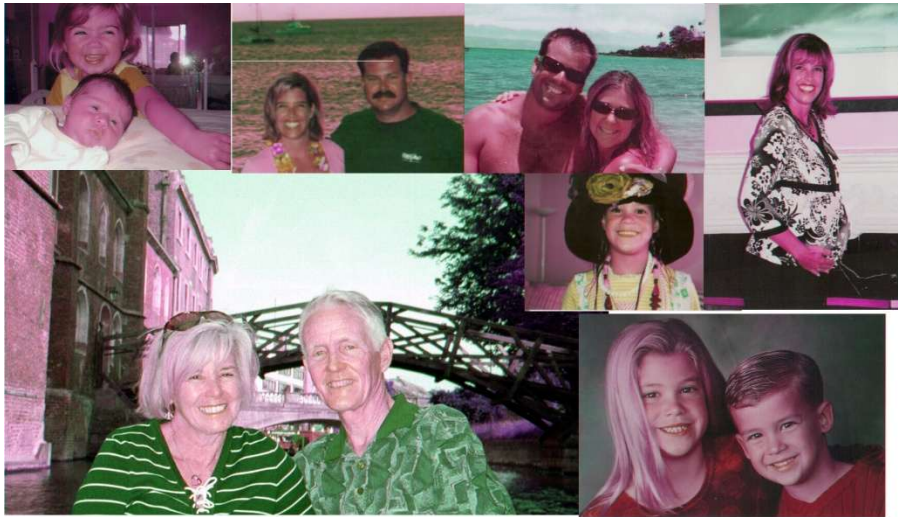
2003 Christmas Letter

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays 2003

Dear Friends and Family,

This past year has been another good year for us. We have continued to live the life style that has made us happy for so many years. We exercise and walk, ride bikes, dance, or Tom play's tennis daily. The biggest event for us was making a decision to retire at the end of this academic year. After 31 pretty happy years at CSU, Long Beach, Tom is ready to move on. Sherry is having a little more difficulty with the decision. She has been at CSU, Fullerton 15 years and is a relative baby (Tom will be 62, she'll only be 58).

Our overall retirement plan is to spend part of each year in So Cal, probably the Palm Springs area, and part in our Maui paradise at the Whaler. We are currently doing a lot of planning, looking at real estate in Palm Dessert/Rancho Mirage, and getting our home, and years of accumulated stuff, somewhat organized. We are



excited about the future, but also feel sad about leaving our home of 17 years, and our universities behind. Of course we don't really expect to leave our friends and family behind. We expect to visit with them regularly, and we plan to have an inviting place for them to visit us in the desert.

[Photos Below: Roxy Charlie; Tracy David; Spencer Christin; Tracie (with Sean); Sherry Tom; Savannah Sean]

Since we don't want to be "too shocked" by having to spend 4-5 months in Maui each year, we have been trying to develop Maui endurance by spending a little more time each year. We have been spending several weeks there in January and July-August. Last summer both Tracie and David and Spencer and Christian and their families visited us while we were in Maui. We had planned to be there together longer; however Savannah broke both arms jumping from a swing shortly before the Steffens were to leave. Amazingly, she was out of the casts in three weeks and their family made it to Maui just before we left. Savannah was swimming like a fish after arriving. She and Grandma "Wookie" had visualized together over the phone that her arms were healed and working perfectly. We enjoyed our time with our friends Bobbe and Lee who own a unit in the Whaler as well. We enjoyed our university friends, Karen and Clay, who also visited Maui. Last January we had enjoyed a visit from an old friend, Nicki and her new husband.

In June we spent three weeks in the UK. For a year, we had hoped to travel there, but had given up our plan because of the Iraq war. Then, after the war, while pondering a U.S. trip, Tom went on the Internet to find a good deal to the east coast and discovered incredibly low fares and hotel rooms in London. He interrupted Sherry at work, and

by that evening we were booked. We stayed a week in London, went to Bath, traveled around Wales for 9 days, and then spent the last days back in London. We had never been to Wales, and found it to be interesting, green and gorgeous.

We visited Cambridge and attended Wimbledon on the first day of tennis. We saw lot of top players up close. The weather was great most of the time we were there. We saw four London plays of which our favorite was Mama Mia. We had great fun singing the old songs. We had booked our trip entirely on the Internet—including B&Bs throughout Wales and West England; and were very pleased with the results. Try smoothhound.com to book B&Bs throughout the UK.

This year we welcomed the arrival of Spencer and Christin's second daughter, Charley Bene' Snyder. She is named after Charlie, Christin's dad, and Sherry's family name, Bene'. Their first daughter, Roxy, is now three, lively and enjoying her first year in preschool. She is having fun being the big sister. We feel very blessed.

During the Spring, David and Tracie surprised us all with a video of a positive EPT test, announcing that Tracie is expecting a little boy in January. Our grandchildren, Savannah and Spencer, are very excited about having a new brother. Spencer is particularly happy that he will have a little brother AND that he won't be the only boy at family gatherings. (All four of our other grandchildren are girls.)

Tim and Trina live with Tim's mother, Jane. They all want to move to Colorado, where housing is cheaper and the area less congested. They enjoy their daughter, Aubrey, who is now almost three..

This fall Sherry took on a huge new project—developing a training program at the CSUF Counseling and Psychological Services for Master's students and post-doctoral interns. She is supervising 10 interns. Their staff is very small and they need the extra help. The only problem is that Sherry has to organize and manage the whole program. She has enjoyed the challenge and done a great job. She is developing materials so that whoever takes it over after she retires will be able to pick up where she left off.

Tom is purposely not taking on new projects. Instead he is just maintaining his self-help web sites, analyzing data from his research on the SHAQ questionnaire, staying involved in the university Educational Policies Council, and trying to organize and digitize 31 years worth of written material he has created. He doesn't know where that will lead, but he will take the next step when he is ready. The goal is to put our lives (at least our words and pictures) on a few DVDs.

We are enjoying the process of looking back on our past years in our jobs, in our home, in our relationship, and the happy and fortunate personal lives we have had during those years. We are sad about the thought of leaving behind people and places with which we have been so involved. Our home has been the site of the happiest years of our lives. Yet we are also excited about the future. We plan to continue our relationships with our family and close friends and find a new home and area that will hopefully fit our retirement needs much better. We hope to take some of the best of the present and move to an even better life in the future. For many people we know who have retired, these truly are the golden years. We work hard at being in mental and physical harmony, and hope to help others do the same.

What else will we do in retirement? We will continue professional interests, travel, visit with friends, and do enjoy many of our current activities. One of Tom's goals is to keep improving his tennis with the hope of eventually becoming a top player in his age group. His plan is to outlast all the players who are better than he is. (For those who know him, you probably know that his holy grail is still to develop the perfect serve. He has made some progress lately, but it gives him another goal in retirement.) Sherry may take up painting. She has had an interest in it for years. But she will only do it when she's ready. Sometimes she also talks about golf or tennis. Tom is hoping she takes up the latter.

We hope you have had a good year, and wish you an even better one for 2004. We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Love & Happiness,

Our contact info: 481-102 Medford Court, Long Beach, CA 90803; 562-494-5041; tstevens@csulb.edu; sstevens@fullerton.edu

Maui: The Whaler, 2481 Kaanapali Parkway, Maui, HI 96761; 808-661-6529. Tom's website: <http://front.csulb.edu/tstevens>.

OTHER EVENTS IN 2003

Tom's career:

- * Added new materials to web sites (Assertion Training, Conversational Skills, POSSI, etc.).
- * Gave a presentation to First Year Experience Conference in Santa Ana on SHAQ and relationship to higher education mission in January. Included was a second data analysis on over 600 SHAQ users.
- * Continued on steering committee of Educational Policies Council, chairing the Academic and Admissions Standards (AAS) subcommittee.
- * Decision to spend less time on work, and more on organizing personal life, 31 years of materials, and planning for retirement.

Sherry's career:

- * Sherry presented workshop at CAMFT in San Jose.

More on family:

- * We visited with Parker in Payson in November in a nursing home after he fell down a rocky hill. Not long after that he was back home.

Friends:

- * Consciously spent more time with friends.
- * Sunday bike rides and dinners with Carrie Jo and Dixon Johnson.
- * Regular travel film series, Maui, boat visits, etc. with Bobbe and Lee.
- * 6-8 week regular dinners with Tom and Jan Binckes. Plus attended Elna's wedding during summer at the horse stables in HB.
- * First time get-together with Bob and Donna Kapche. Regular lunches with Bob. They retired, tho Bob ferping and Donna campaigning for Kerry.
- * Ken Weisbrod (the Counseling Center Director who hired and supported Tom) died during summer at age 90 while we were in Maui.

Tennis:

- * Tom regular tennis 3x week with Dave Dowell, Mark Owen, Jerry Shoudt, Joe McGrath, Lance Lockwood, Bill Babcock. Big improvement in serve because of Roddick-like simpler motion. Also, learned of 45 to net stance and other improvements. Dave's game took a big step forward last 2 years so Tom needed to improve. Tom also started weighting racquet, used new string, and bought a racket stringer (to get constant tension) to improve control. The racquet changes helped.

Health-Exercise-Fun:

- * We continue our healthy diet and supplements (alpha lipoic acid, C, CQ10, niacin, Bvits, E with gammas etc, K, lutein, minerals, trace minerals, xtra potassium in OJ and Tom's tennis water, selenium, calcium, magnesium, Omega 3s, acidopholis, saw palmento (tom), silimarian, garlic, glucosomine, condriton, MSM, melatonin,.baby aspirin, ground flax, plus ???)

- * We eat fish about 3-5 times/week (lots of canned salmon, tuna, frozen salmon and halibut).
- * We do 10-minute morning exercises using all major muscle groups and joints (tom 7days, sherry 5 days). Plus sherry does extra.
- * Tom rides bike 5-7 miles on days he doesn't play tennis.
- * Sherry and Tom ride together on most Sundays (6-10 miles) and 1-2x during week.
- * If weather bad or if want, dance at home.

Travel/Entertainment:

- * 2 ½ weeks in Maui in January. Great!
- * The Plaza PS Spring vacation.
- * Sherry regularly goes to Payson/Phoenix.
- * We took several weekend trips to Palm Springs for fun and real estate looking during 2003 (May?, August, Oct, Nov)

June 3-week trip to UK additional comments:

- * Many meals in pubs, lots of salmon dinners. Yummy.
- * London hotel was Copthorne Tara near High Kensington , a super deal on Expedia.com. Discovered the St.Martin's in the Field Church and it's wonderful school of music, went to the new Tate gallery, the National Gallery, mailed 6 of Tom's books to UK university libraries, went to Portabello lane, walked around the area a lot, ate in the Theatre district several times, took a rainy boat ride, saw the new giant ferris wheel, went to Katherin's landing, saw Chys Wilson's commended rooftop garden; etc.
- * In Wales the Sony videocam went out and we had a fiasco buying a new one in PAL format and driving back to Curry's to exchange it. The good news was that we got to see Tenby again. That was one of our favorite spots.
- * We also stayed in BandB's: St Leonard's, Bath; Garth Cottage, Ross-on-Wye; Ramada Hotel, Swansea;Gumfreston, Tenby; Glyn-Garth, Aberystwyth; Menai View, Caernarfon; a second nicer place in Tenby of schedule; Thatch Close, Ross-on-Wye; Quality Hotel, Slough from where we visited Windsor, but missed the Castle again.

Our Stuff:

- * Tom bought "new" 2002 silver Mustang GT convertible, 5sp w/260hp engine, leather, all extras; 14,500 miles for \$13,500 because it was salvaged from a rear-end collision.
- * He sold his 1987 Toyota Supra with about 160,000 miles for \$2800 to his friend Dixon. Tom hated to give it up after loving it for 12 years (since Sept, 1991 right after we got married). We put about 106,000 miles on it in those 12 years. I paid \$11,500 for it then.
- * Tom's buying a new Dell 5150 laptop that is loaded (512mg Ram, 80gig hd, 4x dvd write, 306gigHz, etc.) for about \$2400. A lot of money, but wants tax deduction (last time?) And a computer that will last (4 yr warranty).
- * This Fall we did some minor house repairs and took baby steps at organizing our stuff. We also did a lot of thinking about what we want next. We have narrowed to a 300 model at Rancho Las Palmas (1st choice) or the same at Monterey CC. We want a great golf course and mountain view. We had done a lot of thinking about the kind of remodeling and decorating we want to do. But still need to to more. This was necessary just to decide that we would be happy with the 300 model.
- * Our realtor, Patrick Pheasant, has been very helpful and a joy to work with so far; as has Craig Smith on the LB end.

Initial witty beginning that we decided to remove:

At the risk of not being politically correct, we wish you all a Merry Christmas. We hope none of you feel oppressed by wishing you Merry Christmas; but Christmas is a long tradition here in the good old U.S. and even if you are not a Christian, we hope you

have a Merry day on Christmas (and the other days surrounding it). Sherry and I have been recently “sensitized” by events on our campuses. In my case we had a doctoral intern was offended by the colors green and red in which our clerical staff had decorated our center (even though they had asked her if she would like to bring some decoration representing her faith). Our intern director directed the clerical staff to remove all decorations.

Fortunately, reason prevailed at a hastily called staff meeting, and the intern director did a lot of backpedaling. But not until after we heard how offended this intern was at having to bear the sight of Christmas decorations in all the stores and streets wherever she went. She thought as psychologists, we should be much more sensitive to her sensibilities. Our concern is how she is to help impart strength to clients who are facing *real* crises in their lives. Last year we went to a university Holiday Choir presentation, which did not include one song with a mention of any Christian element of Christmas. They were apparently sanitized in case anyone coming to pre-Christmas recital (in a Church by the way) would be offended by hearing anything remotely associated with Christianity. One of our secretaries put it well when she asked our staff why it was that we can have campus representations of almost every other religion or point-of-view except Christianity.

2004 Christmas Letter

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays 2004

Dear Friends and Family,

What an *amazing* year this has been for us! We have changed so much in our lives. Tom retired from Cal State University, Long Beach after 31 years in May, and Sherry retired from CSU Fullerton after 15 years. We sold and moved from our Long Beach home of 17 ½ years and bought and moved to a new home in Palm Desert. There have been many other changes as well.

2004 began with a new life in our family. On January 8th Tracie and David gave birth *3 minutes after arriving* at Memorial hospital (where Tracie works as a maternity nurse). David (a Captain in the Fire Dept and previous paramedic) delivered Sean while they were waiting for the doctor to arrive. Sherry missed the birth by one minute after not going to Arizona or Maui to be **sure** to be there for the blessed event. It reminds us of Who is in charge. Big sister and brother, Savannah and Spencer, have lavished lots of unselfish love on Sean. Sean is a wonderfully happy and easy going addition to our family.

2004 also had a sad loss for us in March. A pillar of the Sutton family, Sherry's "Uncle Dad," Parker Sutton joined his beloved Margie (Sherry's Mom) in heaven. He was part of the glue that held family members together and will be truly missed.

Tim, Trina, and Aubrey have moved with Tom's ex-wife, Jane, to Highlands Ranch in the Denver area. They hope to buy a larger home there and start a new life in a new place more to their liking.

During January we spent 2+ weeks in our Maui home. Upon our return to Long Beach, after many months of more casual looking at properties in the desert, we started looking more seriously. We found a home in Palm Desert and fell in love with the golf course location. It has a gorgeous view of the 8th West green and a panoramic mountain view from our patio, living room, and kitchen. We are at the end of a cul-de-sac and "our" pool is across the street. From our driveway we see a large pond with a beautiful fountain. Behind the pond is the clubhouse and further along the tennis club that has 19 lighted courts. Tom can now walk to tennis and play on great courts in a setting surrounded by palm trees and mountains.

Monterey Country Club is 1200+ single story attached homes, and was built about 1980, so we have mature trees etc, but homes often need updating. Our house still needed some work even though the previous owners had put in travertine tile throughout the house, granite kitchen counters, new appliances and plumbing, painted, and done many other repairs. Our big job was to convert an atrium in the middle of our home into a new room that is our Library which we connected with an arch way to the living room and french doors, to the den/bedroom. We also have a guest bedroom. It all seems to flow well for entertaining family and friends.

A little serendipity helped us feel good about our decision. The house went into escrow on 2/17 ----our new address is 217 and we closed escrow on April 1--the date Sherry and I first met. So I guess we are April fools again. Butterflies and hot air balloons also cemented the deal. We began our process of home improvement shortly after. Meanwhile we put our Long Beach home up for sale. We had hoped to stay there until the end of the semester, but it sold the day before our realtor put the sign up for full price. So after 17 years of accumulating an *amazing* amount of stuff, we had to suddenly sort and pack. Salvation Army made several trips to help us out. The kids and our good friend Lee helped us move. (We had previously moved about 80 boxes of books, papers, etc to a temporary LB storage unit.) Tom and Tim drove the largest U-haul truck one could rent to Palm Desert that day.

Meanwhile we moved into a studio in Oakwood Apt. in Seal Beach until the end of our semesters. Our Seal Beach adventure was fun, but also busy. We had to pack and move from our offices (much more stuff). We had wanted to have our own retirement party in our home, but couldn't at Oakwood, so we saw many friends individually to celebrate. Retiring and moving to the desert was not goodbye but the beginning of a new phase in our life journey----we hope the 2 hour drive will not discourage our relationships, but to deepen them.

Our work-related retirement parties were held in our CSU Counseling Centers. Both parties were well attended and many caring, appreciative, and fun stories were told from long time friends and colleagues. Tom was especially honored by the attendance of CSULB President Bob Maxson who Tom (and everyone) greatly respects.

In June we moved from Oakwood to our new home—which was now partially a construction site. We tried to cope, but gave up and used a week of our time share in Palm Springs to escape. It was hot, but we came back home during the days and *worked, worked, worked*. We escaped to Maui for 8 weeks—our longest time ever. It was symbolic that we finally bought a car there—a 1996 Sebring convertible. Maui was great as usual. We enjoyed having Tracie, David, Savannah, Spencer, and Sean stay in our time interval unit late July and early August.

Tom had said that when we moved to Palm Desert we were still going to keep our Hollywood Bowl season tickets (we have great seats). Since PD is 125 miles from LB or LA, this presented a problem. One big help was that Tracie had spoken to her neighbors who live in Costa Rica much of the year and they graciously agreed to let us stay in their Naples home whenever they weren't there. Upon returning from Maui, we enjoyed spending time with family, friends, and the Hollywood Bowl.

Then we renewed our *work, work, work* on our new home. When Tom completed the Library bookshelves and the garage cabinets, in mid-November, we declared ourselves basically finished with all the big jobs. An earlier milestone had been met when we felt finished enough to have visitors. Our first official visitors were friends from Long Beach, Carrie Jo and Dixon. Their visit also celebrated Sherry and Dixon's October birthdays. Bobbe and Lee were the first to witness the 'before' during construction mess. Since their visit, we have had a great time with visits from family and friends and hope to see more of you.

We are also discovering Palm Desert, the Coachella Valley, and beyond. We have made trips back to Long Beach to visit, and finally took our first non-LB driving trip to the wine country of Temecula and stayed in a B&B winery just before Thanksgiving. The snow added to the beautiful drive through the mountains and back-country, and we had a great time. The Sunday before our Temecula trip we had our first *desert snowfall* while Spencer, Christin, Roxy, and Charley were here to enjoy the "hot" desert sunshine. We enjoyed looking at the snow covered mountains while sitting in, as Roxy called it, the "bacuzzi".

One of our concerns about moving to the desert was giving up the cultural events of the LA-LB area. However, so far we have attended some outstanding performances by local and visiting artists. Some were free—sponsored by Palm Desert and Palm Springs cities. Our first concert was accompanied with a lively fireworks display. The next was a tribute to Frank Sinatra with a few of his cronies, including Jack Jones, who surprised everyone with a spontaneous ad-lib performance. After thanksgiving we saw a wonderful show with Dorothy Hamill and Davis Gaines (from Phantom of the Opera) "Broadway on Ice" at the McCallum Theatre at the College of the Desert --very close to our home in Monterey CC.

We have joined the Tennis and Fitness Center at MCC. Tom is getting all the tennis he wants, and is playing with some very good players. Sherry has been hitting some balls lately too. When we first returned in September, the temperatures were above average with highs often over 110 degrees. However, much of the day was in the 90's and below. Tom adjusted very well, and Sherry almost as well. We loved the mornings and evenings because they were so beautiful and warm. Since we have lived here there have only been a handful of days when we didn't get up and find it sunny, crystal clear air, and gorgeous outside. Though it has been exceptionally chilly this past month.

Many of our neighbors have more than one home and come to MCC part of the year. We have met a number of very nice and interesting people. MCC has regular social events and the clubhouse has a nice restaurant and lounge.

We haven't given up on our career-related interests completely. Tom still maintains his web sites, which get about 70+ hits/day. He wants to pursue something more scholarly in the future. Sherry is trying to decide how much she wants to be involved giving workshops, counseling, or volunteering. So far we have been too busy with our transition to do any of that, but who knows about the future. Many of the people we know had "good intentions" for such activities after retirement, but found other interests they preferred.

This January we are going to Maui for two months, and will return to see the Pacific Life Open tennis tournament at Indian Wells (next to PD). It is one of the top tournaments in the world, with all the best players attending. Though we are free to be where we want now, we will probably be in Maui in July-August and in January-February most years.

We are excited about our new journey and hope to “keep the change”. We always look forward to hearing from you all. We hope that you have had a wonderful year, and that the new year will be peaceful, happy, and filled with love..

Love & Happiness,

Our NEW contact info: **217 Santa Barbara Circle, Palm Desert, CA 92260; 760-340-6241; tstevens@csulb.edu; sstevens@fullerton.edu** Maui: The Whaler 861, 2481 Kaanapali Parkway, Maui, HI 96761; 808-661-6529. Tom’s website: <http://front.csulb.edu/tstevens>. Mobile phones: Tom 760-977-0574, Sherry’s 760-977-0575.

2005 Christmas Letter

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays 2005

Dear family and friends,

The year 2005 was our first complete year being retired from CSU Long Beach and CSU Fullerton. We've decided we'll take just as many more as we can get. It's been a GREAT year for us. As our friend Mary says, "Life is delicious". 2005 began ushering in the new year at our Monterey CC party at the clubhouse. We didn't know anyone, but met some very nice people. One thing we have discovered in "the desert," as locals refer to it, is that there are lots of retired people and others close to our age who are very friendly and open to meeting new people. We have met other couples in settings such as the bike shop and The Living Desert and started socializing with them. That would have been very unlikely before, since we were sometimes too busy to even see our best friends. We have probably done more with other couples in the past year than we did in the past few years, and it has been fun. In addition to meeting new people here, several of our close friends have visited us from the Long Beach area. Last year we were basically moving in to our new home and this year we are establishing some roots and routines.

Sherry's new passion has been oil painting. This March, in Maui, Sherry started taking oil painting lessons with her new friend and teacher Rebecca. She is very excited about this new creative interest and Tom thinks she is doing amazingly well. Upon our March return to Palm Desert, she started lessons with the Shadow Mountain Palette Club and her 80 year old art teacher, Luce. Sherry also agreed to do the newsletter for them.

We continue to swim, walk, ride bikes, and Tom plays tennis 3-5 days/week in Maui or Palm Desert. In Palm Desert he has joined a Monday Shoot-out group of good players in the area to meet a few new players, though he loves walking over to our club and playing with players there for most of his tennis. Our bike rides take us through the desert plants and palms with vistas of the beautiful mountains which surround us. We bike to The River, the Marriott Desert Springs, the Desert Willows, and El Paseo among other places which are about 7-10 miles round trip. Relaxing at Starbucks has become a fun break in our rides. We always say, "I can't believe we don't have to go to work!!" and we really can't. We also love riding within Monterey CC, which we can easily do for 7-8 miles.

It's a little odd living in two places, but we meet lots of other folks who are doing the same and loving it. We are starting to get into the *swing* of it. When it starts getting colder in December or hotter in June, we notice that we start looking forward to going to Maui. In Winter 2005 we were in Maui from Jan 15 to March 11. We also rented our home during that time and were nervous about both the preparation for it and about having people stay here. However, it all worked out very well, so this year it doesn't seem so bad.

We spent our first extended winter in Maui, and we met several new people there too. We had worked so hard on our new home and had been busy exploring the area and new activities that Maui was a great time to get back more time to think, reflect, and slow down. As always, we had a wonderful time there.

We returned to Palm Desert before our renters left so we could see the Indian Wells Pacific Life Open Tennis tournament, which is one of the worlds top tennis tournaments. Tom loves being able to see the top players up close. We stayed in our time shares in Palm Springs (which we've never sold), then went to Long Beach for a visit. On April 1 (our 23rd anniversary of our meeting) we moved back into our home. Winter had brought record amounts of rain and the desert flowers were spectacular everywhere. We enjoyed driving to Joshua Tree National Park and into the Mountains to see all the color and beauty. Friends and family visited from Long Beach, and we continued to meet new friends in Palm Desert.

In June we took a driving trip along old Hwy 66 thru Oatman, Flagstaff, Tatum, Sante Fe and Taos, Gallup, Amarillo, to our final destination of Oklahoma City, where Tom attended his 45th high school reunion at the Sportsman's Club and Twin Hills CC where he had celebrated his HS graduation. We stayed in at the Marriott Waterford and Tom had a great time seeing old sites, etc. After OC and Norman we went north to Dodge City, KA and on to visit Tom's son Tim and his family, Trina and Aubrey, who is now four. As on the early part of our trip, we stayed on back roads and found it delightful to see all the small towns, etc.

We had a great time seeing Tim, Trina, and Aubrey who have a new, very nice large home in Castle Rock, CO about 25 miles south of Denver. They are now expecting a new arrival, James Granville Stevens, next April. They have an acre of land and love their new home and not living in as congested an area. Tom and Aubrey enjoyed getting to know each other better. She is very cute, intelligent, and full of energy. They shared lots of good hugs. We all had a great time on our trip to the Zoo.

From Tim's home we went over the awe inspiring Continental Divide, went thru Aspen, stayed in Snowmass, saw Bryce and Zion national parks, then stayed in Las Vegas for two nights before returning home. It's so nice being able to take out-of-the-way highways to get home at times instead of jammed freeways. We take the desert back roads whenever possible.

After returning home, we had less than a week before we departed for Maui again. We stayed from June 27-Aug 24. In the summer, we see all our friends who have been coming there for most of the last 18 years. The ocean was especially calm and we swam more than ever. This year Spencer, Christin, Roxy, and Charley visited with us for 2 weeks (see photo). Roxy and Charley are such sweethearts and are like fish in the water. They "almost" get as big a kick out of seeing the turtles and colorful "fishies" as their Grandma *Wookie*. The whole family loves Maui, lived on the beach and were already trying to figure out how to come next summer. Roxy is five and playing soccer this year for the first time. Charley (almost 3) loves running along the side lines and cheering her sister on.

It was nice to be home in August. In June and August we were home during some of the hottest days (high temps often 110-115). Of course that's misleading because we get up at 6:30 when its in the 70's-low 80's until 10 or so. It usually doesn't get over 100 until late morning, and cools off after dark when the nights are wonderful for golf cart rides and BBQ's. Tom still plays tennis and we bike with no problem, and it's great swimming or working on the computer, listening to music, painting or reading in our living room with our beautiful view of the mountains or running errands in the hot afternoons.

As we pledged, we kept our Hollywood Bowl subscriptions and for the second year made trips to Long Beach to visit family and friends and attend HB concerts. It was fun! After we settled down from all that, it was nice just being home knowing we'd be here awhile. We began to discover all the entertainment options in the Desert. Musical Chairs concerts performing the works of top composers, community playhouse, performers at the McCallum Theater, free outdoor concerts in PD and Palm Springs, free concerts at Desert Willows, and much more. Things we love about being in an area with so many retired people is one, that they are so friendly wherever you go, and two, that so much of the entertainment and local "culture" is the music, etc. that we love. We hear and see so many "favorites" and "oldies" here. The "Rat Pack" was very prominent here and their impersonators, influence, and music linger. Many entertainers live here at least part time, and some perform locally upon occasion. Locals say there are more stars here than in the sky.

Tracie, David, Savannah(10), Spencer(7), and Sean have been visiting us and enjoying the pool and *Tweetie Bird*, our golf cart. Savannah will be "graduating" from the 5th grade into Middle School this year. She's won several medals on Swim team (as her mom did when she was younger). Spencer enjoys playing soccer and baseball (he likes being a catcher), and is doing quite well. Sean, the youngest of our grandchildren, will be two and is talking and holding his own with all of his siblings and cousins. He won Papa's heart by asking him, on his own, for a "*Birdie* ride, Papa please".

Tom has been working on his web sites and moved them from a university server that is shutting down to the main university server. He also answers many emails from site visitors all over the world who have self-help questions. That has taken some time. He has also continued to work on tasks related to our original moving "to do" list including working on the entry patio and garden and making the drapes/curtains for the living room and kitchen. He also did some wiring and reinforced the garage rafters to hold our new bikes. We got our new hybrid bikes in October. They were mutual Christmas presents from last year. We love having them, and it also now gives us 4 bikes, so our friends can bike when they visit if they like.

We also organized a block party on Nov 11. On our street are 64 homes, but about a third aren't occupied by people who stay here regularly. We had a good turn out and people were very grateful and friendly. Tom also created a directory for those giving information. In addition to painting and being on the Board of Directors for the Palette Club, Sherry has joined and is now on the Board of Directors for the Desert Newcomers Club, she was also "asked" to be the Activities Coordinator. We both had decided we need to be careful of our time and remember to enjoy a calmer pace--- but life is just *too much fun*.

We have enjoyed just being in Palm Desert. We have been on a whirlwind of entertainment and social activities in addition to our physical activities. We took two short trips. For *Sherry's 60th birthday celebration, a milestone*, we stayed in the Santa

Ynez wine country where we enjoyed gourmet dinners and an outdoor play with Frank Sinatra's music. On the way we stayed with Mary Myers, a wonderful old friend. In November we took Hwy 74 thru the mountains and other back roads to Oceanside. At 90 miles it is about our closest ocean (LB is 130 miles). We stayed overnight in a condo on the bay and took a moonlight walk around the marina after enjoying a spectacular fiery sunset on the beach watching sandpipers and collecting sand dollars.

We will go to Long Beach for a week during Christmas to be with our family and friends and return home after to prepare for going to Maui. ***We are grateful for our health and our happiness and the gift of our family and friends.***

We Wish you and yours Love, Peace & Happiness and a Joyous New Year 2006

Tom and Sherry Stevens

217 Santa Barbara Circle, Palm Desert, CA 92260 or The Whaler, 2481 Kaanapali Pkwy, Lahaina, HI 96761

Mobile phone: 760-977-0574(tom) 760-977-0575(sherry); email: tstevens@csulb.edu New web site address www.csulb.edu/~tstevens.

2006 Christmas Letter

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays 2006

Dear Family & Friends,

We hope 2006 treated you well. We'd like to share a year in our life with you (well maybe you could read it after things settle down.) Grab your favorite refreshment, kick back (*Tom wrote the long parts*)

We now have *SEVEN Adorable grandchildren*. So who's bragging—we are!! Trina (and Tim) Stevens gave birth to James Grandville on 4/9/06.

One of our favorite "Daily Words" is Grace—"My appreciation of God's grace overflows into my life in loving, caring ways."

2006 was our second full year of our new life being retired and living in Palm Desert. It has been another wonderful year, and we feel like this is our heaven on earth. Almost everything seems to have been working well for us. We love our home in Monterey Country Club, and finally finished about everything on our original house to-do list. We love the sunny weather and being in a green paradise surrounded by mountains and desert. We enjoy having entertainment that is so convenient and to our liking, since many concerts, plays, etc. here appeal to 'mature' people. We also like being and feeling 'young' in spirit!!

We have met many nice, friendly people who are in situations similar to our own. This November, we organized our second 'annual' block party. Again we had good attendance, people were very appreciative, and we all had a good time. One of the best surprises for us has been what wonderful neighbors we have. We have made several new couple friends from our own block.

When we moved from Long Beach, we were worried that we might lose touch with our friends of many years; however, we have had many of them visit us here, and those times have been great. Though we don't see them as often, we have more time together and feel our relationships have strengthened.

We start most days (when Tom doesn't play tennis or Sherry isn't painting) with a 7-10 mile bike ride, and usually end up at one of our three favorite destinations at a Starbucks having a frappacino or coffee. It gives us a chance to enjoy the beauty, get good exercise, and sit and talk together and/or with some of you on our cells from our "Starbucks office". Just before sunset, we occasionally take Tweety Bird (our golf cart) around the golf course alone or with guests. We sent Tweety Bird to the hospital for new tires, battery, etc, so the old 'classic' is going better than ever (however, we don't get to say "*I think I can*" on the hills as much).

Sherry loves her oil painting and continues to learn and grow. This year she began drawing, starting with cartoon characters. She also completed a self portrait (age 4) and is a new believer in art therapy. She is active in the Palm Desert Palette Club, and is newsletter editor for the 2nd year. She also is a member of Newcomer's Club and had a lot of fun modeling for their annual fashion show.

Tom's professional involvement centers around his book, website, and research. He continues to sell his book, *You Can Choose To Be Happy: "Rise Above" Anxiety, Anger, and Depression* through a distributor, Amazon, etc. and continues to make it available free on his website. Top Left: Tom & Sherry-Norway; Sherry; Tracie, Sean, David, Savannah, Spencer Steffen; Top Right: Roxy Snyder. Also, books.google.com Bottom Left: Trina & Tim; Aubrey, Tom, & James Stevens; Christin & Spencer Snyder; Bottom Right: Charley Snyder has also added it to their

collection, and Tom allows anyone to read/download a pdf version free there. His website also has many of his other writings and his Success and Happiness Questionnaire (SHAQ) based upon the ideas in his book (free). His sites get over 25,000 hits/year. This past year Tom has been analyzing data from nearly 3,000 people who have completed SHAQ and associated validating questions. He found that a combination of some of his main scales (including value scales, self-worth, positive world view, self-confidence, internal (vs external) control, self-management skills, emotional coping skills, assertive conflict resolution, and intimacy skills) combine to correlate about 0.75 to 0.82 with the overall happiness scale. That means that the combination of these scales accounts for over 60% of the overall 'effect' on happiness. So his scales seem to measure a lot of

what we can control about our own happiness. Fairly strong correlations have also been found with low depression, anger/aggression, and relationship success. He is working on a paper to summarize his results, but has so far not made it a top priority and is doing it after our many other activities.

While in our Maui home, January 11-March we spent a lot of time enjoying “our” beach, swimming, walking, etc. despite an unusually cloudy February. We have met a number of new winter Whaler friends, and we enjoyed our good friends Bobbe and Lee, as always, who were in their unit for 3 weeks.

We returned to the desert to see the Pacific Life Open tennis tournament at nearby Indian Wells. Again we stayed in our Palm Springs time shares while our home was rented; but in 2007 we can return to our home! Yea!!! We were only home about 7 weeks before we left for our Europe trip; but our time at home was like a special vacation. We decided to minimize doing chores, and just enjoy our time, location, and friends/family. Spring is so beautiful here because of even more flowers than usual, and the wonderful weather.

We left for London May 22, spent several days in London, then spent three nights near Cambridge in the home of Chris and Dee, our part time Palm Desert neighbors. We had a wonderful time visiting with them and seeing the area. Next we flew to Copenhagen, where we stayed for 4 nights and began our Cosmos bus tour of Scandinavia. We toured for 13 additional nights through Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. This was our first trip to Norway and Sweden. We crossed from Denmark to Gothenburg by ferry and saw Oslo, Bergen, and many other towns. We also spent a day on a large ferry on the Sognefjorden (the largest and one of the most beautiful fjords). The weather was almost perfect, and the beauty was amazing. We were also especially impressed with Stockholm, where we spent 5 nights. While there we visited with some new friends, Chris and Marie Louise, who come to Maui during the winters and hang out near our spot at the beach under the trees at the Whaler. The islands and old town in Stockholm were highlights there. While in London we saw several shows, including Lion King. They were all wonderful!!

When we arrived back in Palm Desert, it was 117 degrees and our A/C wasn't working. Fortunately our insulation kept the temp to 91 and Tom fixed the problem quickly. The two weeks we were home had near record temps of over 115 degrees every day. However, temps were lower during our morning bike rides, and we could swim or stay inside in the afternoons (but it's a dry heat). We returned to Maui July 5-Aug 27 and enjoyed two weeks of our time with our family, Tracie, David, Savannah, Spencer, and Sean. We saw our summer Whaler friends and Carrie Jo & Dixon, our friends from Long Beach, who stayed in their friends condo in Maui.

In August we returned to a whirlwind of activity, spending a number of days in Long Beach visiting family and friends and going to the Hollywood Bowl. Sherry, “*Grandma Wookie*” saw all five of our *adorable* Long Beach Grandchildren start new schools and classes in September. She either walked or drove them the first week and *loved every minute* of it. Sean, 2 ½, started his 1st year of Pre-School at New Beginnings where big brother and sister and aunt had attended in the past. Charley, 3 ½, was on her own at Belmont Pre-School while her big sister, Roxanne, 6, was on her way to kindergarten at Naples School (where their parents and aunt and uncle had attended a *few years ago*) with cousin, Spencer, 8, who went on to 3rd grade, while his big sister, Savannah, 11, moved on from Naples to attend 6th grade at Rodger's Middle School (where, incidently, her mother, father, aunt and uncle had attended— *a few years ago*.)

On returning home, there were many free and not-free concerts (Tony Bennett) that we kept busy here too, despite the hot days with highs 105-110. Then the weather cooled and was great for the rest of the fall.

Before we retired, we took more short trips around CA, but since retiring we don't ever want to leave Palm Desert. We did take a trip to Flagstaff, AZ to attend Sherry's Aunt Hattie's funeral. While on the trip we saw Sherry's brother, Greg, and his family and stayed at Chuck's (her other brother), home. We saw a beautiful fall aspen color show and drove on some of old Hwy 66. We stayed in Las Vegas 2 nites to see shows, including Mama Mia—again. Now we are getting ready for our pre-Christmas here, and will be going to Long Beach for a week to see the family for Christmas and visit friends, then back home for 8 days before returning to Maui.

We hope that 2006 was a good year for you too, and that you are all well and happy. We love getting your Christmas cards and letters. (*If you're still reading this we hope you enjoyed a year in the life of the Stevens—Tom wrote the long parts.*)

We Wish you and yours Love, Peace & Happiness and a Joyous New Year 2007,

Tom and Sherry Stevens

217 Santa Barbara Circle, Palm Desert, CA 92260 or The Whaler, 2481 Kaanapali Pkwy, Lahaina, HI 96761

Mobile phones: 760-977-0574(tom) 760-977-0575(sherry); email: tstevens@csulb.edu website address www.csulb.edu/~tstevens.

XTRA INFO FOR US:

Since retirement he has had occasional atrial fibrillation events lasting up to 24 hours. ('Lone' Afib is an irregular heartbeat that is basically an electrical problem that is not dangerous, but causes fatigue and is very annoying. It seems to happen more often to tall, thin, athletic men.) He has had the problem if his heart rate gets above about 150-160, which it can do on hot days playing tennis. Otherwise his heart is strong and in good condition. Knowing that he could get Afib has interfered with Tom's pace and enjoyment of tennis for almost 2 years. However, recently he started taking a beta-blocker medication that has had a 'miraculous' effect. It slows his heart rate under conditions where it previously got so high, so it is very unlikely he will have an Afib event. He is enjoying his tennis so much more now, and hopes to for many years.

We were in our Maui home January 11-March 15. It was the first time during a long stay that Tom and Wayne Dyer didn't play tennis, because Wayne has a bad back.

2007 Christmas Letter

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays 2007

Dear Family & Friends,

Another wonderful year has passed. For us, these “Golden years” are in many ways the best years of our lives. We arise almost every day to a warm, sunny, beautiful landscape. We are grateful for all the wonderful aspects of our lives right now, and this is our Heaven on Earth. We are grateful for each day together. Retirement seems to be a time when we each make a whole new set of life-style choices, and more and more of you are retiring and going new ways. Are we really getting older? We feel like kids again.

2007 began with a small group of neighbors that we invited over for a New Years’ Eve dinner party at our home. We had lots of fun; but the next few days were a little crazy. We had to put away our decorations, get our house ready for our renter, pack for Maui, store our cars, and fly away on Jan 5. Once in Maui we had a great 10 weeks as always. We started swimming more, and as we did we seemed to enjoy it more. Soon we were swimming for close to an hour a day at a pretty good pace. We enjoyed the water and especially enjoyed watching the fish and coral on clearer water days. We learned to start at the end of the beach that would allow us to swim with the current. That made swimming not only easier with less wave action hitting us. It also gave us the (false) perception that we could swim really fast. Tom only played tennis about once/week because of our swimming and one of his partners, Wayne Dyer, quit playing due to health; but Tom still loves it. He hasn’t had an atrial fibrillation problem with tennis for over a year since he started taking a beta blocker. So he feels like a kid again.

During the day we spent a lot of time at our little spot at the beach under the trees at the Whaler reading, listening to music, drawing, visiting with friends, thinking, or walking (when we weren’t swimming). During other days or parts of days, Sherry painted and Tom worked on his web site and research data. At night we love just eating on our lanai, dancing at the KB Hotel next door, or watching a Netflix or English mystery. These are about perfect days for us.

While we were in Maui, our PD home renter (a crazy psychiatrist) convinced us that we wanted to stop renting out our house. Since Sherry was starting her Social Security in Nov 2007 (hooray), we decided to quit renting our house indefinitely and reduce our time in Maui by a couple of weeks. (Of course we still rent the Whaler thru ResortQuest when we’re not there.)

On return to Palm Desert, we went to the Indian Wells Pacific Life Open, which is the fifth largest tennis tournament in the world in the second largest tennis stadium. Springs and falls in the desert are so beautiful. At home we start most days off with an 8+ mile bike ride to one of our destinations; where we have a Starbucks Frapaccino as our reward.. About three days a week Tom plays tennis at our tennis club that he walks to across the golf course. Besides tennis, he meets some interesting people. One of his partners is 77, former head of Fox Sports, is in great shape, and is one of the organizers of the Tour de California bike race.

This year we have finally finished most of our big refurbishing projects at home and have had more time to enjoy just being here and enjoying our area. Our entrance garden has been a joy with roses, bougainvillea, and other flowers. When in Palm Desert we love going to many of the myriad of entertainment events here. We love the selections of beautiful music, interesting plays, etc. for people of our age—not for kids. I always thought it would be wonderful to spend a few weeks in London for entertainment, but this is like our little London. This fall we have/are seeing Trisha Yearwood, Maureen McGovern, the singer who has performed in the Phantom on Broadway over 3,000 times, the Lettermen, and topping it off was a 20th Anniversary Fundraising Gala for the McCallum Theater starring Liza Minelli. We also saw several very enjoyable plays and other musical performances by lesser well-known people. Last night we saw Andy Williams, now 80. He was terrific and an inspiration. He seems so fit and his voice is as good as ever. He joins the list of old timer entertainers we have seen who has used exercise and nutrition and ??? to live long, healthy, active lives. We previously mentioned Art Linkletter, in his 90's, Roger Williams, and others. They truly give us hope for the future and make aging seem like it can be positive. The Lettermen also seemed fit, and sounded as good as ever (though only one is an original).

In early May, Tom went to Alexandria, VA and had a great visit with his brother, Ron, and family (except Sam away to Cornell College in Iowa) and saw some of Wash DC. In late May-June we finally took a shortened trip we had talked about since retiring. We decided to drive without exact destinations or reservations and do what we felt like. Our feelings took us up Hwy 395 thru the desert with vistas of the Sierras to Reno, Mt Shasta, Mt Lassen, Yosemite, and other points north. We only had 11 days, so it was too short; but we had a great time and especially enjoyed the back roads in our Mustang with the top down. We enjoyed staying in tiny towns (ever heard of McCloud, CA—population 600).

June 27 thru August 20 we were in Maui again, spending our time much as we had in the Winter. When we returned we swung into our Hollywood Bowl season and spent one night at a hotel just a block from the bowl one night. We enjoyed feeling like tourists and seeing Hollywood Blvd for the first time in many years. This year we took Savannah (granddaughter) to her first bowl performance since she is playing the trumpet now.

We visited with kids, grandchildren, and Long Beach friends periodically throughout the year. Either we went to LB or they visited with us. We were again fortunate that Ron and Judy King let us use their home in Naples (LB) while they were at their home in Costa Rica.

During the Fall, we took a trips to Carmel and spent Thanksgiving with Sherry's brother Chuck and his family in Flagstaff via back desert roads. Another thing we like about the desert is all the close day trips we can take to beautiful, uncrowded natural spots. We can go to places like the Palms To Pines Hwy 74 in the mountains to Idylwild, etc. or through the desert to Anza Borrego, Joshua Tree National Park, the Salton Sea, and to Desert Center. At Desert Center we visited the Patton Museum complete with tanks; where during WWII more than 2 million soldiers were trained.

We held our third annual Santa Barbara Circle block party Nov 3, the day after the Club's "Welcome Back" party. Again, we had a good turnout, and about 18 people lasted from the beginning thru guitar entertainment at a neighbor's house 7 hours later. We are so lucky to live on a street with so many wonderful neighbors, and we have made several good couple friends among them. This New Year's Eve

we are walking to our Monterey Country Club party. Our block will have 3 large tables. There will be lots of dancing and fun for all. That will be a great way to end the year!

Sherry's painting and involvement with the Shadow Mountain Palette Club (SMPC) has continued to develop. The most exciting news is that at the annual SMPC art contest, out of many paintings by artists who had been painting for many years, her painting of Desert Willows Golf Course won the Judge's Choice award. When we had left the painting to be judged, Sherry was convinced that she didn't have a chance to win any ribbons because there were so many good paintings. One of the judges was the owner of a major art gallery on El Paseo (the glamor shopping street).

The other exciting thing that happened with her art was that she sold her first painting--without trying. Last summer, she was painting with Rebecca at her studio on Kaanapali Beach when a couple liked her small unframed painting so much, he bought it for \$400. He is the owner of a Graphics Company in Newport Beach. So he must have excellent taste! I must state that Sherry wouldn't write these things herself. Sherry has also been the SMPC newsletter editor for another year, and attends board meetings. She has been very active with the group.

Tom's main non-play interest is still his website and research. He has been updating himself about complex statistical techniques, and he added a PDF format version of his book (*You Can Choose To Be Happy*) that is easily downloaded in entirety (free). A PDF version was already on Books.Google.com but users can only view it there and can't download it. Tom now has over 3,000 subjects who have completed SHAQ. For example he has found that simple (regression) combinations of some of his scales (such as Positive World View, Self-Confidence/Efficacy, Internal Control, Spiritual/Mental Values, Self-Management, and Emotional Coping Skills) can lead to correlations of over .80 with Overall Happiness, over .50 with lack of depression, and over .40 with lack of anger/aggression. The first correlation is very high for this type of work, and overall the data provide substantial positive evidence for the ideas in the book. Despite these findings, he is still looking for better ways to build a statistical model of the data; and he is enjoying learning about how to do that. He is in no rush, because the data keeps accumulating (from his SHAQ website).

For the first summer, no children came to Maui for various reasons (incl cost); but we did have two couple friends come. Because of increased costs, we have put our 2-week time interval that we've owned for 20 years on the market. So this may be the last year friends or family can stay there. We're very sad about that.

Our loveable children and grandchildren news. They are all very busy, and doing well. Tim and Trina are busy with 1-year old James, and Aubrey is becoming a little lady at age 6. Aubrey enjoys school, dancing, swimming, and family activities. They are loving their life south of Denver in Castle Rock, where they live near the top of a hill with a beautiful view and a very large yard. They love their home and spend a lot of time improving it and taking care of it along with all their family activities.

Tracie, David, and family have had a good year. David made the short list for promotion to a Battalion Chief for the Orange Co Fire Dept. Savannah, 12, is an excellent student and swimmer. She completed the Jr. Life Guard Iron Man event this summer. Spencer, 9, is in the third grade, and has become quite an athlete. He does well in soccer, basketball, and baseball. Plus he started football. He is on the all-star

team in soccer. Little Sean, 3, is in pre-school and enjoys sports like his big brother, anything to do with "The Cars", and is the apple of everyone's eye including his brother and sister. Tracie keeps them all together in the most loving way.

Spencer and Christin are also lovingly raising two beautiful girls--Roxy, 7, and Charley, 4. Roxy and Charley also play soccer, and their energetic mom, Christin, is their coach. Both really love the water and are becoming good swimmers. After a number of years working for others, Spencer is starting a new business selling medical supplies. Giving up an excellent paying job and starting a new business is both courageous and difficult, but he has a lot of experience and is working very hard at making it work. We are proud of our families and enjoy each precious minute with them.

We hope that you have had a wonderful year in each of your own lifestyles, that your health is good in both mind and spirit!! We look forward to hearing from you.

We Wish you and yours Love, Peace & Happiness and a Joyous New Year 2007,

Tom and Sherry Stevens

217 Santa Barbara Circle, Palm Desert, CA 92260 (Or Jan, Feb, July, Aug: The Whaler Unit 861, 2481 Kaanapali Pkwy, Lahaina, HI 96761)

Mobile phones: 760-977-0574(tom) 760-977-0575(sherry); email: tstevens@csulb.edu website address www.csulb.edu/~tstevens.

2008 Christmas Letter

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays 2008

Dear Friends and Family,

We know that this has been a difficult year for many in our country and the world, and we have had our financial reverses as well. However, we are very fortunate and grateful so far to be as well off as we are. Our own trials began last January at our Maui Whaler home, when ResortQuest “upgraded” their standards for rental units. We spent our 8-week winter and much of our 8-week summer vacation remodeling our unit. The Whaler was also remodeling and renewing infrastructure as well. Then two Hawaii tourism airlines went kaput, the recession hit, and occupancy plummeted. We’re hoping for a better 2009 at the Whaler.

Maui, winter 2008, was also the last trip for our good friend Bobbe Browning, who passed away August, 2008 while we were in Maui. Bobbe became like a sister to Sherry after hiring her while Counseling Center director at CSUF. Bobbe had also edited my book. She and Lee had become dear friends, and Lee was a loving caretaker through her illnesses. Through it all both kept a wonderfully positive attitude. Bobbe had made many contributions, had many friends, and is missed by all.

March 6 we came back to “the desert” as everyone calls our area. Near Palm Desert are Rancho Mirage, Cathedral City, and Palm Springs to the west and Indian Wells (home of the major tennis tournament), La Quinta, and Indio to the east. The largest cities have about 50k people, but the whole area is about 350k. Nevertheless, we are surrounded by beautiful (up to 10,000ft) mountains and beautiful desert. Our love for our home and area grow each year. Most days we begin looking out our window across the golf course at the mountains, then take a bike ride to Starbucks for a frapaccino; or Tom plays tennis and Sherry walks with a friend. It is almost always sunny and beautiful with lots of palm trees, green, and flowers. We often do our “work” in the PMs and spend the evenings with our friends, going out to eat, a movie, or a concert/play, or spending a night at home curled up watching a mystery, movie, or reading. This year we saw Jack Jones, Steve and Edie, Andy Williams, the Lettermen, Kinston Trio, and others less well known. So we live La Dolce Vita here and are pretty content in our desert home.

Sherry's Greek Lady Painting



Spencer, Sean, Savannah



Tracy



David



Tom and Sherry



Spencer, Christin, Charley, Roxy



Tom on Tweety Bird



Aubrey, Tim, James

The spring brought lots of flowers this year and we enjoyed our trips through the desert and mountains to view them. The weather is most ideal here in March-May and late Sept-November. When it gets too hot or cold we go to Maui. In fact we enjoy it so much here that we take short trips even less than we did before we retired. In the spring we wanted to take back roads thru the desert, so we took an overnighter to Barstow (where?). As a friend said, “We stopped there once on our way to Las Vegas when we had car trouble.” But while there, we found the Bagdad Café on old 66 (from an old favorite movie of that title). We also saw the Patten museum at Sirocco Summit in the middle of the desert on IS 40. It was Patten’s headquarters of the once largest military base in the U.S. (that few people know about). We took trips in the spring and fall through the Anza Borrego park desert to Julian, a charming town in the mountains. We also frequently visit our nearby National Park—Joshua Tree and our nearby mountain town of Idyllwild.

We had hoped to take a trip to Greece or some such exotic place last summer; but decided our Whaler investment was our trip, so we took a less expensive driving trip taking as back roads through NoCal. Our first night was in Mohave (Where?) near Edwards AF base, home of the "Right Stuff." We saw the Blackbird RB-71—wow!—and other special planes on the way. The RB-71 still holds many world speed records despite being designed in the 1960s. That night was one of our most fun. We ended up in a local hangout restaurant-bar dancing with all the locals while listening to them take turns at Karaoke and tell tales. We met some characters including an 82-year-old with a pony tail (who looked 65). He still wore his WWII AF cap and jacket and danced the night away after joining us at our booth with his 65-year-old wife.

From Mohave we went to Tahoe where a storm drove us to the Napa and Alexander Valleys to sample the local vineyards. We stayed in Calistoga for 3 nites. Then we dodged the rain driving through the Northern CA coastal redwoods and mountains along the Oregon coast to Newport, OR where we spent two soggy days. We enjoyed the harbor and eating at "Mo's"—famous for "old salts" and salmon. We saw some sun on the way down the coast and enjoyed eating seafood at another rustic place in Crescent City, CA.. Then we drove through the beautiful Trinity Alps and stayed at a wonderful small town, Weaverville. We went down the NoCal coast hiway 1 and spent the night in Mendocino at Cabot Cove. We stayed in the same hotel as the cast from "Murder She Wrote." What, it wasn't filmed in Maine? No, Mendocino. Back through wine country, to Cloverville, then we visited with our friends from Maui, John and Jean Bower (John just turned 90), and then home.

We went to Maui on June 23 and resumed remodeling. However, we spent less time or work ourselves, and had a much more enjoyable trip until we learned of Bobbe's death. We returned for the funeral and spent time on and off seeing the kids, going to the Hollywood Bowl (this was our grandson, Spencer's turn to go to the bowl with us. He enjoyed the picnic and the concert. He is also in intermediate band) and seeing friends in Long Beach before returning more permanently to our home. It's pretty hot that time of year (100-110 highs most days), so that is a good time to be away. However, we loved being home, and have had a wonderful fall. We held our 4th block party and visit a lot with friends here. Some are here year-around, while others come and go during the 'season' which starts in October. We love staying here and having many great days.

Tom finally got enough subjects (over 3400) who have taken SHAQ (The Success and Happiness Questionnaire) to do a 'final' data analysis and write up the results. He is currently finishing the first draft of his monograph. It is quite lengthy, since SHAQ has 70 scales/subscales plus 6 outcome scales. His data analysis produced even more positive results than he expected, so he is excited, and anxious to get the monograph out. He would also like to write a shorter journal article. When finished, he will put the monograph on his website. Anyone can take SHAQ free at www.csulb.edu/~tstevens/success.

Sherry has continued her painting, and added several new triumphs to our collection. After the closing of the Shadow Mt Palette Club, she was a bit lost about finding a group to paint with. However, she found a new group right here in Monterey Country Club—the Palette Ladies. They are a very nice group of ladies (excellent painters) who paint in our clubhouse weekly. She also found another place where she can continue to work with one of her original teachers, Luce Felts.

What about our 'Kids'? Tracie and David have a beautiful new home in Naples about 100' from a canal on Treasure Island. They got a super deal on a much larger home and moved this fall. They're very excited about it, and they will have room to put us up now and then. Savannah is 13 and a lovely teenager. She and Grandma Wookiee (Sherry), oh and mom too, had her ears pierced on their last trip to the desert. What fun. Savannah plays trumpet in the school band, swims, and is an excellent student. Spencer, 10, is in 5th grade; and is an all-around athlete, staring in soccer, also playing football and basketball. Sean, 4, is graduating into kindergarten from pre-school, and is full of energy and fun. Sean's also gung ho about soccer and a top player on his team. He's the one that's famous for, "Ya just never no!"

(Big) Spencer is now CEO of his company that now sells pharmaceuticals to sports teams, and with backers supplying the cash, bought a company that has contracts with NFL and other teams. He has taken a great deal of financial risk to do this, but we all admire his focus, hard work, and persistence. Christin has been a wonderful support through some trying times, lovingly caring for Spencer and the girls. She is an enthusiastic soccer coach—last year for Roxy and this year for Charley (needless to say, they have quite a team). Roxy, 8, is in the 2nd grade and Charley, 5, is in kindergarten. They both love the beach, are great swimmers, and are happy loving children.

Tim and Trina are enjoying life in Castle Rock, Colorado. Tim has been working with a computer tech company lately and seems to be enjoying the work. Aubrey, 7, enjoys school, swimming, and taking care of little brother James, 2, who is growing fast. We don't see them very much, but we miss them.

That wraps up s sample of our lives this past year. We hope that you have had a good year as well. We hope to hear from you soon.

Love,
Tom and Sherry Stevens 217 Santa Barbara Circle, Palm Desert, CA 92260; Sherry: 760-977-0575, sstevens@fullerton.edu; Tom: 760-977-0574; tstevens@csulb.edu ; Website: www.csulb.edu/~tstevens Maui: 2481 Kaanapali Parkway, Unit 861; Lahaina, HI 96761.

2009 Christmas Letter

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays 2009

Dear Friends and Family,

It seems as though Christmas letters are gradually becoming a thing of the past. Sherry says I say too much. She's probably right, but I also like to write these letters to recall the year's events and for our own records. I have a collection of them dating back over 30 years I think. If I ramble too much, please skim or skip. So here's our year.

We're not tired of retirement yet. In the desert we get up to beautiful, sunny days almost every day. Though we had 1.1 inches of rain 3 days ago (a record for the day), we'd only had an inch for the whole year. We get up and ride our bikes 5 days a week to a Starbucks for a Frappicino. Tom still plays tennis 2x/week. Sherry paints 1-2 days/week with a group here at Monterey CC (MCC) or with her teacher Luce's group. Sherry's loves painting, and she keeps getting better and better. She exhibited her art at a MCC art show this year, and sold paintings there. Tom loves her paintings and is says she's one of the best desert landscape painters he has seen. She's also very good at the many other subjects she paints. She keeps coming up with new challenges whereas many painters stick with one or two subject areas.

We started the year with our now traditional MCC NY Eve party with LB friends, Carrie Jo and Dixon and our desert friends. Then we went to Honolulu, then Maui for 6 weeks. There we swim daily for exercise instead of ride bikes. In the winter, we see the Humpback whales, and their dramatic antics. This trip was the first we haven't had to worry about remodeling our unit for 2+ years, though the Whaler was in a terrible reconstruction mess. It's still going on a little; but the worst was finished last summer. The recession and reconstruction dropped our rental occupancy from about 80% to 30% for the year—not good for us. We also went to Maui for 6 weeks in July-Aug 13. During that time, Tom met with the board president who agreed to push renewing the tennis courts. We went from 4 good courts to 2 shabby ones due to making them a parking lot during reconstruction. They should be completed about now and Tom can play on them when we go Jan 12, 2010. Installing a new TV, dishwasher, and carpet completed our unit for now. The Whaler is looking very good—finally. However, due to the low occupancy, we've decided to supplement Aston and rent it ourselves for low rates.

Returning to the desert at the end of February, we began one of our beautiful Springs here, with all the desert flowers, etc. Since it is still part of "the Season" here, there is lots of entertainment (for good prices). This past year we have seen the Lettermen, Mitzi Gaynor, Andy Williams, Lani Kazan, and others. This week we saw Barry Manilow, who lives in nearby Palm Springs and put on a 5 night benefit for local charities. He put on a great show, and we are impressed by all the good causes he has supported.

We thought that when we retired, we'd be traveling more, and we are when including Maui and our summer trips. However, we love being here so much that we take fewer 1-5 day trips than we did when we were working. This year we went to Julian, a quaint little town in the mountains that we can get to via either desert or staying entirely in the mountains south of us. We stay in the 100 year old the Gold Rush Hotel. During August (our Hollywood Bowl season), we stayed in Santa Monica and went to the new Getty Antiquities Museum. Later, we stayed in Oceanside on the way home. We just returned from a trip to Prescott and Sedona, AZ via back roads, where we stayed in the remodeled Hasayampa Hotel with authentic 1927 décor.

Given that the economy was in such a mess, we decided to help it out some this year. We put off buying a new (used) car, but decided the prices and time were right for a trip to Europe. So we took perhaps our most wonderful trip ever. During the spring Tom spent a lot of time planning our trip. We had decided to take a Eurail-based trip, and he booked each place via Internet. We spent 28 days to and from Paris. In Paris, we went to Roland Garros (where we accidentally sat in the seats of friends from the Whaler believe it or not), spent a day on

the BateauBus (on the Seine), and just had a good time. Then we took a beautiful train trip to the Cinque Terra (5 very small towns on the Italian Riviera, 3 of which are inaccessible by car). We stayed in Monterossa al Mare. We traveled in or near all these towns via ferry. They are wonderful, charming towns and a highlight of the trip.

On to Rome, Tom's first trip there, where we saw Lance Armstrong ride a time trial within a block of our hotel, the Ludivisi Palace just a block from Via Veneto—a fabulous luxury hotel/shopping street. When returning home, we saw the movie, “Angels and Demons” which showed scenes of so many places we had seen in Rome—including the Vatican, Pantheon, Tivoli, and many famous piazzas. We walked 15-20,000 steps/day. After 5 nights, we went to Assisi—one of our favorite places on the entire trip. It was so old, charming, clean, and beautiful. The tourist guides stress it's being where St. Francis lived, but don't give enough credit to the charm and romantic aspect of it. Our hotel window overlooked the valley below filled with vineyards and olive trees. From Assisi, we went to Florence for 4 nights. We were impressed that both Rome and Firenze had banned most autos in downtown, and the effects were great for pedestrians. In Firenze we took a guided bus trip to the wine country—Greve'—where we visited a wine castle owned by descendants of the Medicis. Our mobile phone saved us from missing the trip. We also attended a wonderful concert in a church by a retired attorney/pianist and Japanese opera singer our last night. After rain in Florence and a day of rain on the train getting to Zermatt, the weather was beautiful and warm for the rest of our trip—as it had been earlier.

Zermatt began 3 days of perhaps the peak experiences of the trip. The first day we took a long funicular ride up to a hotel overlooking the Matterhorn—magnificent (see our photo below). The next day we embarked on the Glacier Express—a special train with glass everywhere that travels through the heart of the Alps. We spent the entire day on an amazing journey to Chur. Then we changed to a commuter train that took us to Lucerne (also a gorgeous ride). Eurail means first class seats everywhere, and with 1-2 commuter train exceptions in Italy, all the trains were wonderful. The third of the peak days was spending the next day on Lake Lucerne on ferry's taking us from town to town. The weather was perfect and the trip amazing. The last time we had taken the lake trip was 1990, and it had been very cloudy. From there we returned to Paris via another TGV train—the fastest in the world. Our train had a sign that said it had been clocked at over 350 KM/hr. We were back in Paris for only 2 more days, but we went to the Louvre and saw a few other sights. This hotel Dauphine was only a block from the Seine. The first hotel had been near the Sorbonne—both on the left bank near the Latin Quarter. What a wonderful trip. We want to take Eurail again soon. It is so much better than traveling by car, plane, or bus. You travel in quiet luxury viewing beautiful scenery and arrive in the central city—no security checks or airport hassles. We had a wonderful trip.

We returned from Maui this summer a little early and stayed with Tracie and David in their wonderful new home in Naples (island in Long Beach). We got to see them quite a bit more and they put up with us for quite a few days. We gave them a couple of breaks, but we were there longer than ever before; and enjoyed our stay very much. This year was a big year for their children. Savannah began the 9th grade in high school, (little) Spencer started middle school, and Sean started kindergarten. Spencer and Christen are still in their home on LB peninsula, and Spencer has a new job (still representing medical supplies). Christen has been Roxy's soccer coach, who's now in the 3rd grade. Charley is starting 1st grade and is also active in soccer. Tim and Trina are still in their home in Castle Rock, CO. Aubrey is now 8 and James 3. We don't get a chance to visit very often, but will hopefully get a chance to visit longer next Spring.

This year Tom has “worked” on his research and writing projects harder than any other year since retiring. Last Spring, he completed his monograph about the research results on the over 3400 people who took SHAQ. It's now available on his website. There is so much data that the monograph is too large to publish as a journal article, and more experienced advisors haven't been able to suggest very practical ways of breaking up the data. The strength of the results surprised even Tom: SHAQ's subscales had high multiple correlations with the emotional outcomes; with Overall Happiness, $R=.87$, $R^2=.75$; with Low Depression $R=.73$, $R^2=.53$; with Low Anxiety $R=.67$, $R^2=.43$; with Low Anger-Aggression $R=.70$, $R^2=.49$. R^2 is the “effect size”—meaning for example SHAQ predicted happiness scores with 75% accuracy. That is very high accuracy for psychological data and it's made Tom feel more responsibility for getting this “good news” out somewhere.

During the summer, Tom also received notice that the last printing of his book was sold out. Given the strength and extent of the research data, he decided to revise the book—something he didn't think he'd ever do. So this fall, he revised the book and included the new research results. Since SHAQ was designed from the book, the data provides detailed support for almost every significant idea in the book—making this book rather unique.

He now has very extensive data that supports the idea that you can choose to be happy and provides data on supporting his recommendations of exactly how to do it. You can see an advance copy “hidden” on his website (no links) at www.csulb.edu/~tstevens/ChooseToBeHappy2010.pdf. He’d love to get feedback about it before publication.

Meanwhile, SHAQ was accidentally disabled by the university from providing more user data to Tom last year when they changed their network servers. Tom must write new computer programming code and work with the webmaster to get new SHAQ user data. He has been too busy, so has probably lost data from over 1200 new people. He worked on the problem last Spring, but stopped to revise the book. So he hopes to work on that problem again soon.

This fall, in addition to the activities described above, we did some living room modifications. Tom created a new media center with a computer, a new LCD TV, and our stereo at its heart. He put all our old photos and videos, all our music, and is adding all new movies, etc to the hard-drive(s) as well. Plus we can watch NetFlix live over the Internet on the TV. We think it’s very cool, but Sherry’s still learning how to use it. We also replaced the carpet and are (hopefully) replacing about 27 feet of windows and sliding doors across the kitchen and living rooms with tax-incentive, energy-efficient ones.



Tom and Sherry near Zermatt with Matterhorn in background

That pretty well covers 2009 for us (possibly more than you want to know). However, it’s been a great year for us for which we are very grateful. We just keep taking one year at a time hoping that the next will be as good. We hope that you’ve had a good year to and would like to hear all about it. We actually enjoy long letters.

All our love,

Tom & Sherry

Sherry & Tom G. Stevens; 217 Santa Barbara Circle, Palm Desert, CA 92260; Sherry: 760-977-0575; sstevens@fullerton.edu ;
Tom: 760-977-0574; tstevens@csulb.edu; website: www.csulb.edu/~tstevens

2010 Christmas Letter

MERRY CHRISTMAS 2010

Dear Friends and Family,

We hope that you have had a happy year. After 6 years of retirement, we are still loving it. This is our second “green” (email only to most) Christmas letter. The first generally received positive comments. Maybe it’s because we have a lot of Green friends (or maybe they’re just cheap and want to save on stamps themselves). Since this past year our “normal” (wonderful to us) lifestyle was much like previous years, we’ll just comment about a few events that stood out for us and made it different.

2010 had several milestones for Tom. In March he published the first revision of his book, *You Can Choose To Be Happy: “Rise Above” Anxiety, Anger, and Depression*. Though Tom had never planned to revise the original book, his research results on 3446 people (27% from outside the U.S.) taking his Success And Happiness Attributes Questionnaire (SHAQ) were so positive, that he felt “impelled” to revise his book and include summaries of the results relevant to each chapter. (SHAQ was designed with questions related to each chapter in the book. Tom wanted book readers to know that the book’s ideas and suggestions weren’t just untested theories. His book is now available almost anywhere in almost any format, including Kindle. As before, he offers a free pdf version on his website and on books.google.com. He spent a great deal of time rewriting, editing, and publishing his book this past year. After working on the book, he spent several weeks updating his Internet-related computer programming skills so that he could make some improvements on his website.

The other milestone for Tom was his 50th Northwest Classen HS (Okla City) reunion. Our major trip in 2010 was driving on old Hwy 66 where possible and taking a leisurely trip back to OkCity in June. We spent time in Flagstaff with Sherry’s brothers and families, Sante Fe, and a few remote towns on the route. At the reunion, many of Tom’s old friends returned, many of whom hadn’t come to a reunion ever or for many years. There were so many interesting stories, he can’t even begin here.

Sherry’s main avocation has been painting, and she has continued to develop her style. Tom loves Sherry’s painting that he commissioned for our semi-French-Country style kitchen. Even though we live a couple of hours drive from Long Beach, she continues to stay very involved with the life events of all the kids and grandkids there. Sherry’s big treat this year was to get a “new” car—a used Lexus SC430 hardtop convertible. We had to sell her faithful 1994 Infinity J30 though it was still running good with 130,000 miles. She had it for 12 years, so it’s like an old friend. Now we have 2 convertibles and not a lot of backseat room. We took Tom’s Mustang to OkCity.

Again, we spent about 6 weeks in Jan-Feb and July-Aug in our Maui home. The Whaler HOA has completed a lot of renovation construction on our 12-story buildings and is beginning a new phase this year (the whole exterior); however we have still loved being there. Tom has played less tennis in Maui because his singles partners are dwindling and he has enjoyed swimming so much when we’re there. As we age, more singles players switch to doubles.

We continue to love our life in Palm Desert. We ride our bikes almost every day. On the other days Tom plays tennis or we may swim. There are so many entertainment opportunities, restaurants, and places to visit that we never lack for something to do. Even though the temperatures aren’t as good as Maui, we get even more sunshine and we love the sun, the mountains, the desert, and all the green and beauty that surround us. In addition we have made a number of friends here, so we never get lonely. Even though we’ve been going to Maui for about 24 years, we now feel much more like this is our primary home and we want to be here longer than we have been the past few years. Therefore we plan for the first time to try not going to Maui this winter.

The kids are fine (wasn't that a movie title?) Tracie and David and family came to visit us in Maui this summer. Savannah, 15, is in HS and lettered as a freshman last year in swimming and water polo. She plays in the band and makes top grades. Spencer, 12, began Middle School, plays soccer and flag football, was in Junior Lifeguards, plays in his band, and makes top grades. Sean, 6, began 1st grade and plays soccer and flag football. David is still a Captain for Orange County Fire and Tracie still works part-time as a nurse.

Spencer and Christin's kids are also doing very well. Roxy, 10, plays soccer and the violin (like Tom used to) and does very well in school. She is in Jr Lifeguards, and along with her cousin Spencer completed the grueling ironman course. Charley, 7, plays soccer and does well in school. Roxy and Charley have each learned to sail their own Sabots. Spencer is a sales manager for medical devices, and Christin still coaches soccer and has a part-time job.

Tim and Trina also have two children. Aubrey, 9, loves school and does very well. She also swims and has begun piano lessons (she even practices without prompting). James, 4, has become very assertive and talkative and is learning to swim. Tim still works with computer systems and Trina is a dental assistant.



Tom & Sherry at home in Monterey Country Club

This Fall we organized our 6th block party, and it is gratifying to see how many of the neighbors really know each other and have become friends. Tom has spent more time learning about Internet-related programming, upgrading his website, and now is digitizing about 5,000 old slides. Something he's wanted to do for years. Our media center will soon hold pretty much our whole lives in one form or another. Sherry has also been catching up with tasks she's wanted to do for years. Sometimes, Tom can't get her to come out of the closet.

We hope that you've had a good year, and would love to hear about your year and life.

All our love and best wishes for a happy year,

Tom & Sherry

Sherry & Tom Stevens; 217 Santa Barbara Circle, Palm Desert, CA 92260; Sherry: 760-977-0575; sstevens@fullerton.edu ;
Tom: 760-977-0574; tstevens@csulb.edu; website: www.csulb.edu/~tstevens

2011 Christmas Letter

Merry Christmas 2011

Dear Family and Friends,

We are grateful for another wonderful year. Actually, as the years go by, we are more grateful for every day. Little in our living situation or regular activities has changed during the past year; however, we had many memorable events. We started the year with friends at our annual NY Eve club party. However, instead of hurrying off to Maui in January, we had decided to try staying in Palm Desert this year, since there is so much to do here and we had been spending a lot of time in Maui the past few years; and we realized that we had started to take our Maui home a bit for granted.

This was the first full “season” we spent here in “the desert.” We saw several wonderful performances including Harry James tribute, Johnny Mathis, Jack Jones, the Lettermen, Swan Lake, Chrystal Gayle, Fiddler on the Roof, Anything Goes, and others. We also took a short trip to Paso Robles and the wine country there. We stayed in a hotel owned previously by a cousin of Jesse James. On the way we had arranged for a guided tour of Edwards AF base (which they only give once/month by base personnel). We saw the “Right Stuff” movie on Netflix just before leaving. Chuck Yeager is still alive, in his 90’s and recently remarried, and still visits the base. NASA also has a large presence there, and we toured their facilities as well. We even ate in their cafeteria. It was a very interesting and fun experience to be in the “Right Stuff”.

In March we attended the Indian Wells Tennis Tournament (the 5th best attended in the world now) with my long term tennis partner and good friend, Dave Dowell. The tournament was bought last year by Larry Ellison (owner of Oracle and one of richest men in world). He became an enthusiastic tennis player a few years ago, so he decided to buy his own tournament—a great way to mingle with the world’s top tennis players. Then he bought a winter home here (for a steal—asking price \$75mil—paid \$42mil). Money has its advantages.

We saved money by not going to Maui, and we had so much fun with our Eurail pass in 2009, we decided to plan another similar trip. We traveled May 18-June 21 to Madrid, Toledo, and Barcelona (Spain); Nice (France); Cinque Terre and Sorrento (Italy); Innsbruck, Salzburg, and Vienna (Austria); Rothenberg au



3 Spanish AVE train at 300 kph (186mph)



2Monterosso al Mare, Italy--Cinque Terre

Tauber (Germany); Colmar and Avignon (France); and back to Madrid for our flight home. We had many highlights on this wonderful trip. We discovered parts of Madrid we had missed in 1999, and enjoyed it much more—partly because we stayed in the old town. By coincidence our UK next door neighbors—Chris and Dee--came to Madrid to visit relatives while we were there, and we all had dinner together. Nice was nice—better than we remembered it too. We had loved the Cinque Terre/Monterosso in 2009 and still do. This was our first trip south of Rome, and we loved the Sorrento area. We stayed in a beautiful hotel overlooking the Bay of Naples next to a tiny town, St Agata for 6 nites. We spent a day on the Amalfi coast taking the bus along the winding, steep road with gorgeous views to Amalfi town, then taking the ferry back to Positano—seeing the view from the Mediterranean. It was a fabulous day. A day latter we took a wonderful tour (via boat arranged by our hotel) to Capri, and spent the entire day there. It is also as amazing as everyone says. Sorrento was also beautiful and interesting. It is where we bought our 20th wedding anniversary present—a beautiful wood inlaid lazy Susan.



6 Sorrento-Bay of Naples—view from our Hotel



5 More Positano



4 Capri - our landing and departing point



8 Rothenberg - Medieval Festival



9 Colmar, Alsace France - beautiful canals etc



11 Vienna Stadsopera from our seat



12 Sherry's breakfast at Hotel Steffanie in Vienna-YUMMY!



10 Madrid –Tom and Sherry, dinner in old town oldest bar

Austria—especially Innsbruck and the Alps-- was beautiful. In Vienna, we were able to attend our first opera—at the Vienna Opera home (Staats Opera). Since it's one of the most beautiful in the world, we wanted to go there. Also, we stayed in a 300 year old hotel—flagship hotel owned for 130 years by the Schiff family. They have made it an antique gallery for storing part of their collection. It was also amazing. Rothenberg au Tauber is one of the most authentic medieval towns in Europe. We arrived during a festival in which townspeople dressed in medieval costumes and set up displays of medieval times. The old town is completely walled. Rick Steves described Colmar as the most beautiful town in Alsace. It is filled with centuries old wooden bright multi-colored buildings along an old canal. Flowers and celebrations are abundant. We bought some French items to go with our Provincial theme at home. Avignon was also very interesting and beautiful; but by then we had seen so much we were almost overwhelmed.

It was hot when we returned home (highs over 110). We rode our bikes, swam, and had a good time and pretended we were in our own estate—since almost no one else was braving the heat); but were really ready to go to Maui, since we had been away “so long.” I hadn't mentioned that the HOA is doing a complete remodel of the Whaler exterior—all down to the concrete on all 12 floors of both buildings. New everything on the outside. Construction started last March and won't be finished until this February (2+ months late). We still loved Maui despite the construction. We decided to return in January, 2012. However, we thought that our 2012 January trip there would be to a finished Whaler. Instead HOA says our lanai will be closed, which is our extra room and place we watch boats come in at dusk. Oh well, maybe we can adjust

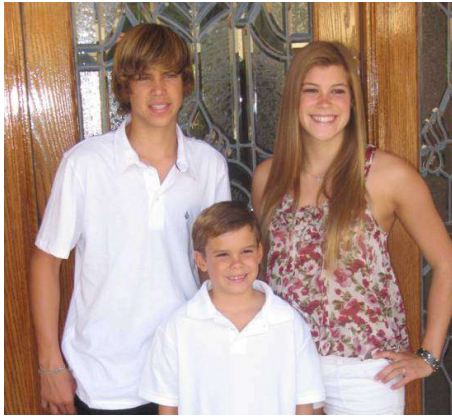


When we returned home in August, it was unseasonably hot again. Our neighbors told us what a mild summer it had been except when WE were here. We still enjoyed the beauty, swimming, and the QUIET. Not a lot of people in Palm Desert in the summer. As usual we spent time in Long Beach with the kids/grandchildren, and used our Hollywood Bowl season tickets. I also get to play tennis with my old partner, Dave Dowell whenever I return to LB. Since then, we decided to just enjoy home and our wonderful Coachella Valley. It's sunny and warm almost every day, we're surrounded by beautiful golf courses, palm trees, and mountains. And there is lots to do. Sherry is painting again and Tom continues his work related to his website, research, and book. He has also begun to dabble in artificial intelligence again. What more could we ask for? We will spend Christmas with "the Kids" in Long Beach again; but now Sherry and I also celebrate our own at home.

While many of our friends are happy and healthy, several have suffered severe losses. We will greatly miss Jean Bauer and Bill Lewis—two wonderful people who made it into their 90's; and it was a terrible shock to learn of the death of my long-time psych professor friend Dr. Robert Kapche. All of them left behind wonderful loving spouses.

Our children are very busy with their lives and families. We wonder at their endurance, but are proud of their love for their families. Spencer (our son) and Christin have decided to separate and probably divorce. It's been a very long and difficult, yet enlightening year for him. He is fighting for a fair custody of his daughters. They adore him, and he, them. They have spent quality (if not quantity) time together. He is such a good father! In addition, Spencer had spinal surgery to replace a disk in Sept. The doctors recently cleared him and he is riding his bicycle 50 miles about 3x week. This last Father's Day he paddled 26 miles from Santa Catalina to Long Beach with Roxy & Charley sailing along side of him in an observation boat. I was so proud of Spencer when he recently said to me, despite his obstacles, "this has been a good year for me".

Tracie & David are doing well. Tracie manages the busy schedule of her family and also still is a part-time RN at LB Memorial. She multitasks excellently!!—and always with a smile and gratitude for her family. We are so proud of David for his promotion to Fire Chief and also, with a smile and good humor and humbleness, takes care of his wonderful family.



13 Spencer, Savannah, and Sean Steffen



14 Spencer, Roxy, Sherry, and Charley

Our grandchildren are also very busy growing, and growing into their lives (and bodies). They all stay active and excel in school, sports, and music. All that are old enough are or have been in Jr. Life Guards and have finished Iron Man. Savannah turned “Sweet Sixteen.” She still swims, plays varsity water polo, is in PACE, plays French horn, and still has time for her good friends and family and really is sweet 16!! Spencer became a teenager and reaching 5’9’ almost simultaneously. He plays football on school team, flag football for Friday nite lites, and soccer. He plays alto sax, and (playfully) avoids all the girls who think he is so cute. Sean, last but not least, is 7 and in the 2nd grade. He plays flag football for Friday nite lites, like his big brother, plays soccer and swims, and was lead in his school play.

Roxy is 11, in her last year at Naples Elementary, is sailing her own Sabot and winning sailing races with a grin. She swims, plays violin, and writes very interesting short stories. Charley is 8 and a third grader. Like her big sister, she sails her own sabot and is fearless in the midst of all those boats. She plays soccer and swims. She likes drawing and is also a budding poet. We still love Tim, Trina, Aubrey, and James and hope they are doing well.

So as another year heads toward a close, we just keep pinching ourselves to see if it is all real and keep hoping for as many more days like these as possible. We look forward to hearing from you and hope you have had a good year and have been able to rise above your difficulties. We hope that next year be filled with health and happiness for you all.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Love,

Tom & Sherry

Tom and Sherry Stevens; 217 Santa Barbara Circle, Palm Desert, CA 92260; The Whaler 861; 2481 Kaanapali Pkwy, Lahaina, HI 96761; Tom-760-977-0574; Sherry-760-977-0575; tstevens@csulb.edu; sstevens@fullerton.edu

Website: <http://www.csulb.edu/~tstevens>

2012 Christmas Letter

Merry Christmas 2012

Dear Family and Friends,

Welcome to (a year in the life of) the Stevens annual Christmas letter. As always, Sherry tried to convince Tom to shorten our letter, and---as usual---Tom smiled and continued to write ☺ She still loves him---so grab your favorite beverage, put your feet up (no snoring) and enjoy another great year with us. This morning our beautiful Mountains are blanketed with snow. It never fails to amaze and fill us with awe at the sight viewed through our desert palms and green golf course.

We began 2012 celebrating with some of our friends at the club NY Eve Party. On Jan. 5th we went to Maui for a month where we celebrated Tom's 70th birthday at the Swan Court. We had hoped (and expected) that the nearly year-old Whaler external renovation would be complete; but instead our entire Lanai (even opening our sliding doors) was "off-limits" until our final week. They installed huge external construction elevators, stripped the outside to the concrete structure, replaced railings, tile, planters, and all our glass. Nevertheless, we had a wonderful time in Maui, swimming with our friends the turtles, magical schools of silvery blue fish, and amazingly colorful fish. We delighted at the whales antics, and walked and day dreamed. Our artist friend, Rebecca, said, "Maui is God's way of loving you."

When we returned home to "the desert" and enjoyed our first season of the Friends of the Philharmonic series of major Symphony orchestra concerts--including the Royal, Chicago, Boston, LA, St Petersburg, and Cleveland symphonies playing at the Palm Desert McCallum Theatre. We enjoyed a number of other performances including Monica Mancini and the Four Freshmen. A new favorite night out was "Frank's Place"—Frank DiSilvio; who looks and sounds a lot like Frank Sinatra and sings many oldies. His place (in the Indian Wells Hotel that Desi and Lucy built) is reminiscent of old elegant dinner clubs in the movies where you can dress up and have a nice dinner, entertainment, and dancing. It turns out that Frank D. was/is a minister for over 20 years as well.

Tom spent much of his avocational time revising his website. He didn't really want to do it; but created it in 1998, added the SHAQ questionnaire in 2000, and has only slightly modified it since. A complete overhaul was long overdue. With wildly varying numbers of visitors (ranging from 2,000 to 20,000 per month) over the past few years, he felt he owed it to his users to revise it. So he did, doing some editing, and making it much easier to navigate. Tom's real burning desire has been to get back into developing some Artificial Intelligence/Neural Network project(s) built upon his readings and previous AI programming

about 20 years ago. To do this he wanted to relearn the LISP programming language first. So he has spent the remaining part of 2012 doing so as time was available. He really enjoys programming and tells Sherry it's sort of like her working a giant puzzle, visualizing how all the pieces eventually go together to make a whole. Except the program becomes almost like a living thing.

Sherry has continued to paint with The Palette Ladies, her women's art group at our clubhouse, and occasionally paint with a group at Ivy Ranch in Thousand Palms. Tom (and nearly everyone) says her work is wonderful. She primarily paints a variety of natural scenes and occasionally a portrait. She just finished a pair of whimsical tree frogs in a dark night sky. Though she sometimes takes a holiday period away from painting, called Artist Block, she generally starts again fresh with new inspiration.

Initially, we had intended to take a driving trip into Utah, Idaho, Montana, and other points north last summer. However, the length of the proposed trip seemed too long. So we decided to go to England (5/22-6/19) instead in a trip that would be quite different from our previous two Eurail-oriented trips. We stayed in London for 5 nites at a beautiful little boutique hotel near Paddington Station. While there, we river-boated to Greenwich. Later, we luckily got 'special' seats in the 2nd row for "Singing in the Rain." The cost was being showered with water from all the dancing in the rain (and kicking it on the audience). Fortunately it was a warm nite, we put up our umbrella and enjoyed a memorable evening.

The Queens 75th Jubilee celebration was under preparation with a lot of excitement in the air. We left London before the crowds arrived, but still enjoyed the festivities. We picked up a 62 mpg VW Golf diesel from Hertz and were off for almost 3 weeks of driving on the "wrong" side of the road. We visited Cambridge for 2 nites where we "punted" past the colleges on the River Cam, then stayed with our Palm Desert part-time neighbors Chris and Dee Sharp at their lovely home near Bury St. Edmunds for 3 nites. Dee is a voluntary tour guide and gave us a wonderful tour of the area including our old TV favorite "Lovejoy's" stomping grounds. We had a great visit, and will have a chance to show them some of Maui this January. The Sharps had warned us that they had had SIX solid weeks of rain before we arrived in the UK; but our days in London had been quite sunny. However, the day we left it started raining and rained some about every day the rest of our trip. Chris initiated us in driving down narrow 1½ lane (2-way) hedgerow-lined roads. The speed limits on these roads are up to 60 mph! However, watching him gave Tom the courage to drive a "little" faster than he had been. (Sherry's confidence didn't increase at the same rate.) It seems everyone there just drives fast on these roads, slows down some for oncoming traffic, and doesn't mind brushing the hedge on one side while missing the rear view mirrors on the other side by inches at 30-40 mph. We never thought we'd get our car back to Hertz unscratched after several hundred miles, but did.

We saw two main United Kingdom areas—the Cotswolds and Cornwall. The Cotswolds' are between Oxford and Bath, and were the center of some of the richest men in England (from wool) during pre-industrial revolution times. They built beautiful stone towns of a few hundred people that are now wonderfully well-preserved tourist destinations. We stayed in a number of picturesque little country inns and small hotels. Even with all the rain, we loved the beautiful countryside and lovely towns. We would stay for a nite or two and then go 30-60 miles to the next town—taking out time driving on the lovely narrow roads. Fewer tourists were there that time of year, and we saw very few Americans.

We stayed in Burford, Bouton-on-the Water, Chipping Campden, Cheltenham, and later Bibury (at the famous Swan Hotel) on the way back from Cornwall. On the SW Coast in Devon and Cornwall we stayed

at Lynmouth, near Port Isaac (home of Doc Martin PBS series), St Ives, Talland Bay (near Lowe-Polpero), and Torquay (birthplace of Agatha Christie, whose mysteries we love). We saw some Doc Martin videos at night so we could recognize his places in Port Isaac (Port Wenn). The trip was filled with beautiful and memorable places that added to our large photo collection; so we can keep enjoying the many wonderful sights and experiences. Except for the rain, the trip went pretty much without mishap. Returning to London, we stayed in “The City” close to the “Eye” on the Thames. We walked a lot and saw the London Museum and the “Old Bailey” from English mystery, “Rumpole of the Bailey.”

After 3 lovely, but toasty weeks back in Palm Desert, we were off to Maui for another 6 weeks. The Whaler renovation had been finished since February and now looks wonderful with new grounds, new outer building, new infrastructure, and much interior renovation. Hooray! After several years of construction we hope we’re done for awhile. Our time-interval unit 214 studio also was now finished after about \$100k renovation inside. Both the Steffens and Spencer and girls visited us at the Whaler for about 3 weeks. All seemed to have a good time (as usual). We spent most of our time on Kaanapali Beach swimming, walking, listening to music, eating, visiting, reading, or just thinking. Tom’s not playing much tennis there now because most of his partners have quit or are injured (Hmmm). He still plays singles about twice/week from Oct-May in the desert at our club. We ride our bikes the rest of the week in Palm Desert.

We returned to Long Beach and started our Hollywood Bowl season and visited friends and family during that trip and a second LB trip before returning to our PD home for the late summer and fall. We held our annual block party and welcomed the snowbirds back to the desert in November. We have enjoyed staying home in the beautiful desert (only leaving for quick trips to Julian and Las Vegas so we could drive the back roads through the mountains and the desert), and the weather has been even better than normal this fall. You’re almost there—refresh your beverage ☺



Left: Tom, Sherry

We welcomed having our Kids, the Steffens--Tracie, David, Savannah, (little) Spencer, and Sean here for Thanksgiving. We enjoyed swimming, Tweety Bird (our golf cart), working puzzles, talking, teasing, and eating, eating, and eating. David’s chef experience as Fire Chief came in handy. As always, Grandma Wookie’s Chili Chicken Casserole was a big hit. We missed Spencer, Roxy, and Charley and hoped they might join us as they had at Easter, but it was Christin’s turn. The cousins have so much fun together and

it's such a pleasure to have us all together, which we will be at Christmas in Long Beach at Tracie and David's lovely home. Since our last letter (big) Spencer has joint custody of his girls, which has been an enormous blessing and relief. He is such a good father and we are really thankful for where he is in his life.

There is so much happening with our grandchildren, it would take another epic letter. They are all swimming, studying well, into school activities, social, family oriented, have fun, and have normal melt downs. They are all stars. Some are sailing, some are soccer players, some are playing water polo, some are flag football players, some are playing instruments and some are singing. They have rooms full of medals and trophies. The biggest trophy to us is that they are well, happy, and well adjusted children. They are our grandchildren and we love and adore them, as we do their parents. We are grateful for the gifts of love we have from our family and friends and we are grateful for you. We would love to hear all about your past year, and hope the next will be a happy, healthy one.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Love,

Tom & Sherry

Tom and Sherry Stevens; 217 Santa Barbara Circle, Palm Desert, CA 92260; The Whaler 861; 2481 Kaanapali Pkwy, Lahaina, HI 96761; Tom-760-977-0574; Sherry-760-977-0575; Tom.Stevens@csulb.edu; sstevens@fullerton.edu

Website: <http://www.csulb.edu/~tstevens>

2013 Christmas Letter

Merry Christmas 2013

Dear Family and Friends,

It's a little scary that the 10 years since we retired have passed so quickly, but it's been a wonderful time, and we are very grateful for all the memories. This year began with going to Maui on New Year's Eve and staying a month. While there our friends Chris and Dee from the UK visited for a week. We also enjoyed the first Winter in Maui after all the construction was completed at the Whaler. Of course we saw the Humpback Whales, snorkeled almost every day, and had a wonderful time.

While in Maui, Tom decided to get an ablation procedure to hopefully cure his atrial fibrillation problem he had had for 17 years. (They run a catheter, etc thru veins into the heart and create scar tissue that prevents "misfiring.") Tom researched MDs for years, and had decided upon Dr. Andrea Natale in San Francisco, who invented the most widely used procedure and has a success rate of about 80% after one procedure

and 90% after two (if necessary). We flew to San Francisco for his appointment and made it a vacation of it as well in April. Then we flew again for his procedure May 24. Since then Tom has still had no more AFibs, though he has had a number of uncomfortable, very minor heart “wobbles” (PACs), and a higher HR that were disturbing. All gradually is improving so that everything is getting closer to normal—except without the AFibs or worry about them! (Just as I was writing this the cutest little cotton-tail bunny walked across our patio, and looked me straight in the eye. Behind him is our beautiful golf course and mountain range.)

Our life in Palm Desert was pretty normal for the Spring: biking, tennis, Sherry painting, going to lots of local entertainment events, and visiting with friends and family. Tom had finally returned to artificial intelligence programming that had so interested him in the 1980s. He bought the LISP programming language and began relearning it and learning of all the new developments since about 1994, when he had stopped before. As a learning project he created a photo-viewer/screensaver that we use to show our collection of photos on our TV (via computer). It can select directories randomly, so it shows misc past collections that spur wonderful memories and feelings of gratitude for all the places we have been, friends and family, and other memories. Now Tom’s working on his first real AI project, a neural network model that he has always been interested in. So Sherry paints and Tom works on the laptop.

In May we got passes to go on a tour of the newly opened to the public Sunnylands—the Annenberg Estate. It was the site of many important meetings through the years. Reagan celebrated New Years’ Eve there for 8 years during his presidency. The newly re-dedicated Sunnylands is to be a site for important international meetings. One of the bedrooms can only be slept in by the sitting president of the United States. Within a month of our visit, President Obama met with the new Chinese Premier,

Shortly after that, the Tour de California bike race held a stage in Palm Desert, riding over the Mountains, down El Paseo (main shopping street), and finally ending going up the tram road in Palm Springs. Temps reached over 108, and though many of the riders were Tour de France regulars, the narrators said that for many of them this was the hardest day ever on a bike. Afterward the tour decided not to race here next year. (But Sherry and Tom will be riding almost daily as usual.) Seeing the bikers in person after many years of seeing them in the Tour de France on TV was a thrill for us.

Then our old Long Beach friends of many years, Drs. Carrie Jo and Dixon Johnson visited us, and while here said they were interested in looking at properties. To our surprise and delight, they bought a second home in our Monterey Country Club. We are so happy that they did, and look forward to seeing them much more.

Our first grandchild, Savannah Steffen, graduated from LB Poly HS in June with both a 4.4 GPA in their PACE program, and was the SoCal CIF swim champ in the 50 meter free-style. Her coaches said she was the fastest female swimmer ever at Poly. This Fall she is enrolled at UCLA and was chosen to be on the UCLA swim team. Consequently, she is living in the athletic dorms. We are very proud of her, and she is has been having a wonderful time.

Spencer (15) was chosen as PolyHS outstanding freshman water polo player this year and his brother, Sean (9) began playing water polo this year, and is looking good. Sean, Roxy (13), and Charley (10) participated in the “Stud Iron Man” competition which swimming, running, and endurance makes it a difficult task. All finished with good times and received awards for their efforts. Roxy and Charley also raced Sabot sail boats

again last summer and did very well. More importantly all of these grandchildren are doing very well academically.

After attending Savannah's graduation, we were off for a trip to the England, Scotland, and Ireland (6-16 to 7-9). We arrived in London, drove to England's east coast to Whitby and Berwick-Upn-Tweed, then on to Edinburgh, Oban, and Glasgow in Scotland. The drive to Oban was thru "Harry Potter" country, and was gorgeous. Oban was an especially charming fishing town. Hotels seemed unexpectedly inexpensive, so we were able to stay in some of the best in almost every city (except London). We're not very used to traveling this way, but at this stage of life, we're happy to. Comfort and luxury seem a little nicer at this age. In Edinburgh we stayed in a famous private club that rented out rooms—the Royal Scots Club. In Glasgow we stayed in the Grand Central Hotel built with the central train station, and in Belfast we stayed in the Europa Hotel, where President Clinton had stayed (the most bombed hotel in Europe, but looking really good now). In Dublin we stayed at the Gresham in the middle of old town. Every trip has its memorable aspects, but this one will be remembered partly for its hotels.

We took a Ferry from Glasgow to Belfast, then a train to Dublin. From Dublin we rented a car for a week and made a large circle around the coastal backroads of Ireland staying in Waterford, Kinsale, Kenmare, Dingle, and Galway. Kinsale and Kenmare were our favorites. They were beautiful fishing villages and tourist towns that we loved. In Waterford, we stayed in the Granville Hotel—the best in town. What was so remarkable to Tom about the Granville is that "Granville" is his middle name! He doesn't see that name often. While there, we were thrilled to see a Brit, Andy Murray, finally win Wimbledon. The whole UK just exploded with excitement, and there was never-ending TV coverage of Andy who had hardly slept for about 2 days afterwards because of all the events he had to attend.

As with our last UK trip, we spent a lot of time driving on backroads that were "less-traveled"-- often 1 to 1 ½ lanes wide (two-way)--driving through beautiful countryside. However this year the weather was much better with sunshine and warm days (for there) most of the time. We flew home from Dublin and left with a lot of wonderful experiences and memories.

After a very short stay in the desert we were off to Maui again until 8-27 where we could just "do nothing" after a pretty busy late Spring and Summer. It felt great! However, (with urging from Aston—our rental agent) we decided to upgrade our Whaler furniture, so it seems remodeling never ends. We came up with a new theme and bought the first new furniture pieces. We swam with lots of sea turtles and some big Eagle Rays this summer, and of course saw our many reef fish friends again. Our friends Liz and Lee Legvold stayed in our Whaler time-interval unit while we were there, and Spencer, Roxy, and Charley stayed at the Whaler the last week we were there. We enjoyed them all.

Our yearly schedule has become somewhat similar from year-to-year, not unlike the academic year calendar we have lived on for almost our entire lives. Visiting the kids and friends in LB, the Hollywood Bowl, then finally back home to PD, snowbirds returning and our organizing a block party, and living a wonderful life here in the desert are yearly phases. So, with a few exceptions, this has been another great year for us for which we are really grateful. Many of our friends and we agree that "the desert" as they call our area is a little like heaven on Earth or a grown-up's Disneyland. We highly recommend it for living or just a visit if any of you are so inclined.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Love, *Tom & Sherry*

Tom and Sherry Stevens; 217 Santa Barbara Circle, Palm Desert, CA 92260; The Whaler 861; 2481 Kaanapali Pkwy, Lahaina, HI 96761; Tom-760-977-0574; Sherry-760-977-0575; tstevens@csulb.edu; sstevens@fullerton.edu

Website: <http://www.csulb.edu/~tstevens>

2014 Christmas Letter

Merry Christmas 2014

Dear Family and Friends,

It's been 10 years since we retired and moved from Long Beach to Palm Desert—amazing to us anyway. It has been a wonderful 10 years. We've been able to enjoy the beautiful environment and weather where we live, make new friends, enjoy all the entertainment here, travel, and do what we wanted most of the time. For us it has been like a dream come true; except that we never thought we'd end up living in the desert.

This year began with a trip up the coast via Solvang, Cambria, and Carmel to San Francisco where Tom had a final post-ablation checkup with Dr. Natale. He is still AFib free since the operation 18 months ago. Then in February it was Sherry's turn for an operation [for prolapse] at UCLA by Dr Shlomo Raz, a renowned surgeon. Full? recovery took quite awhile and he wouldn't let her ride her bike for 3 months. Unfortunately, the operation wasn't entirely successful and she is going in for a second surgery this Dec 18. Not looking forward to that. We hope her Christmas present will be to have everything fixed the way it should be.

In the Spring Tom began revising his SHAQ (Success and Happiness Attributes Questionnaire) which has been free on his website since 2000, and was the basis for his research related to the ideas in his book. SHAQ can be taken in all or part, depending on user goals. Since Tom has been re-learning the LISP computer language from his days studying Artificial Intelligence, he saw revising SHAQ as a way to rewrite it in LISP and to learn LISP better in the process. The project is involved since SHAQ has about 700 questions and 60 main scales. SHAQ also makes self-help recommendations for users depending on their scores, and has an overall HQ (Happiness Quotient) score that is scored similar to an IQ score. So a score of 100 is the mean, and 120 would be a pretty high score. Tom loves writing with LISP and has been spending a lot of time on the project since last Spring. He has just finished the revised SHAQ and it's on his website. The past year about 70,000 people from all over the world visited the website--about 70% are from the U.S. All his materials are free. Tom's other main activity without Sherry is tennis, he still plays about 2/wk with a few friends at the club.

We had planned another trip to Europe, but Sherry was still recovering and we weren't sure how well she'd do walking as much as we usually do. Fortunately, she had a surge of wellness just before the trip, and it seemed she walked all day almost every day. We left home 5/19, but because our United flight to Chicago was late, we missed a whole day in Paris. Nevertheless, we were in Paris a total of 6 nites, and we especially enjoyed Paris this time. We loved the little street, Rue Gregoire De Tours, our hotel was on. It was on the Left Bank near the Seine and Notre Dame. Our street was so cozy and romantic that we ended up eating breakfast and most dinners in beautiful little restaurants there. On our last morning the breakfast café gave us Champaign, and for dinner the effervescent owner of a little restaurant gave us Champaign for our bon voyage. Everyone there was very friendly.

We bought another Eurail pass and used it in 7 countries. We love traveling on the European trains—minimum hassle luxury travel, beautiful scenery, and arrive on time in the center of town. Our route was Basel, Switzerland; Monterosso, Sienna, and Orvieto Italy; Innsbruck, Austria; Munich and Bacharach, Germany on the Rhine; Amsterdam; and Brugges, Belgium. We have been to Monterosso (on the Cinque Terre coast) the past 3 trips to Italy now, and spent 4 nites there because we love the colors, the food, the natural beauty, and everything? The other Italian towns were also very romantic, interesting, and hill towns surrounded by vineyards and other beautiful country in Tuscany and Umbria. Bacharach was Rick Steves' suggestion on the Rhine, and it was a very charming town, from which we took a part-day ferry trip to St. Goar. It's been 24 years since we were in Amsterdam, so it was a real treat returning. We stayed in a beautiful hotel on a canal near the Rijksmuseum. Interesting fact for us bike riders: 70% of all distance traveled (by walking, car, bus, tram, etc) in Amsterdam is on a bike; and it shows. Everyone looks fit. The whole city went crazy when their soccer team beat defending champs Spain in the World Cup while we were there. From Amsterdam we went to Brugges, a beautiful city with many canals, wonderful architecture, and many sites, good food, and good CHOCOLAT.

We returned home 6/19 to our usual toasty summer weather, but swam a lot and enjoyed the summer quiet in Palm Desert. Then off to Maui from 7/8 to 8/28. While there, with some sorrow, we parted company with our only remaining Whaler time-interval unit 214P, which we sold during the trip. The last people to stay there were our friends, the Legvolds, whom we enjoyed for their 2 weeks. Both LB children and families came near the end of our visit. The grandchildren are getting older and doing more what teenagers do. Sherry likes to see them grow, but partially misses them being little children she can dote over. Their big adventure was to go zip-lining in Kapalua. They are all fish and love swimming, diving, snorkeling, surfing, etc. One of the big events for them this year was that David (Steffen) was promoted from Battalion Chief to a Divisional Chief. Orange County Fire is so large (many cities contract with them) that David is chief of a division with five cities in it. So congratulations David! Spencer has also had a very good year selling real estate. Even though he is new to the profession, he has become one of the top salesmen in the LB Naples area. He works hard and seems to love his work. Even Roxy and Charley have been involved in his open houses.

The oldest grandchild is Savannah, who completed her first year at UCLA, and has been on their swim team. She is either swimming or studying, and does well at both. Spencer turned 16 and is now driving. He and Sean (10) have been very active in water polo—the Steffens family sport. Both have done very well. Spencer was named outstanding player on his LB Poly HS team and the entire league--and is the team captain. Sean was named to one of the All-American water polo teams for his age after his team did very

well in Junior Olympics. Spencer's girls, Roxy (14) and Charley (11) are both in middle school. They are very close sisters and hang out a lot together; and both play the violin well, do competitive sailing in Alamitos Bay, and are both very good swimmers and completed the very difficult stud iron man contest. What about Tracie? She still works part-time as a nurse at LB Memorial and organizes everyone else—including most big family events. For example she just finished organizing the Poly HS Water Polo banquet. Fortunately Savannah and Spencer's driving has reduced her role as bus driver. Though we are proud of all our grandchildren have accomplished, we are more proud of them as people.

Sherry continues to paint with the Palette Ladies, visit with friends, and pursue other interests. (See photo below.) When you add the chores, she doesn't have much additional time, because she and Tom are always doing something together. Bike riding, coffee at Starbucks etc, swimming, traveling, (so much) entertainment in the desert, visiting with friends, and cozy nights having dinner and watching a movie or favorite mystery, PBS show, etc keeps us busy and very happy. This Fall, we did a few major chores (including redoing Sherry's scary closet), took quick trips to Dana Point and thru the desert to Barstow, and just enjoyed our beautiful area. After all, where can we go that's any more beautiful (at least to us)?

Our first 10 years of retirement (and living in the desert) have been our heaven. The 10th year was another great year for which we are very grateful. We hope that you are happy and healthy, and have also had a good year.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Love, Tom & Sherry

Tom and Sherry Stevens; 217 Santa Barbara Circle, Palm Desert, CA 92260; The Whaler 861; 2481 Kaanapali Pkwy, Lahaina, HI 96761; Tom-760-977-0574; Sherry-760-977-0575; tstevens@csulb.edu; sstevens@fullerton.edu

Tom's Website: *You Can Choose To Be Happy* at: <http://www.csulb.edu/~tstevens>



15-Back in Paris on the luxury Thalys 200+ mph TGV train.

Merry Christmas 2015

Dear Family and Friends,

Ahh, the Golden Years. Some events this Fall: We and about 80 of our neighbors celebrated “Uncle John”’s 100th Birthday during this year’s 11th SBC Block Party. Ivy and Gene, with whom John lives, provided Pizza Vino’s wood-fired oven to make pizza for everyone, and we all had a great time. Then Woody Lewis, our tax acct of many years, sent us a letter beginning with “The pencil is obsolete” to tell us that he is retiring at the young age of 93. In October Sherry had her 70th birthday, and Spencer and Tracie HUGELY SURPRISED her by coming here from LB and celebrating with us

2015 began with Sherry recuperating from her latest female surgery at UCLA. She did very well, but because of a related problem is scheduled to go back again next April. Again, she had to miss bike riding: this time from December through the summer. Instead, she swam lots of laps in “our” pool. During the recovery period she was a super trouper and we were doing almost everything else normally. We had a great Spring (as always), visiting with friends and family, going to concerts, taking a couple of short trips, and having cozy evenings watching videos with dinner by the fire.

Tom continued to play tennis, bike, and work on his Neural Network programming; but Sherry has painted less--mostly due to the depletion of her painting group. She has begun to look for a new group. In April Tom flew back to Oklahoma City for his 55th NWC High reunion, and enjoyed seeing old friends and childhood places. Also, for the first time ever, Tom’s brother, Ron, visited us from his new retirement home in Chicago. [Incredibly: yes, he did retire to Chicago, where he and Judy still have lots of friends and good memories.]

For June, we had planned to take a driving trip up the coast to Seattle, Victoria; however, the Euro exchange rate helped convince us to go to Europe again. We spent about 3 weeks in Italy and a week on our first ever cruise. We took a 7 night Norwegian Jade cruise from Venice to Corfu, Santorini, Mykonos, and Katakolon/Olympia Greek Islands. We loved Santorini (especially Oia) the best by far. First, we flew to Rome and stayed in Hotel Ludovisi Palace near Via Veneto, where we had stayed in 2009. Going to breakfast our first morning, Sherry fell down a long flight of marble stairs from the first step and was badly banged up with cuts and bruises from her arms to all over her legs. Fortunately, she had no concussion or broken bones—strong bones! We were nursing her wounds for the rest of the trip. Not to miss any part of Rome, she was up on a Rome tour bus the next day (in the rain); even though she could barely walk.

From Rome we took a train to Padua then Venice—where we spent 3 nites before and 2 nites after the cruise. We stayed in the lovely Hotel Ca'Vendramin, which had been a duke’s palace and was still furnished with wonderful furniture that looked as if it belonged in a museum. We loved our walks around the quiet neighborhood and canals, and eating at the little cafes on the canals. We had never spent much time in Venice before, and really loved our time there.

The cruise was timed well with Sherry’s wounds, but she still ended up walking a lot. After Venice, we rented a Hertz Jeep Renegade in Venice and kept it until Rome. We had a wonderful stay in Assisi, which we had visited in 2011. We stayed in the Giotto Hotel, with a great view overlooking the valley and vineyards below. We had some of our best food in Assisi, and loved walking through the beautiful streets. Next, we had a beautiful drive though mountain backroads and stayed in a remote town as a stopover for seeing

Pompeii the next day and driving on to Positano on the Amalfi coast. It is a beautiful, tiny town built on a steep hill in a V. The hotel was near the Amalfi highway, and we had to walk down and UP over 400 steep steps just to get to and from the main part of town. [Super trouper Sherry did it!]

Next we stayed 5 nites at Hotel Jaccarino in Sant Agata, on a hill between Sorrento and the Amalfi coast where we had a wonderful view of Sorrento and the Bay. Again, we had great a wonderful time walking, eating, sightseeing, and just enjoying our hotel. On the way to the hotel, our GPS took us through a “street” that was several blocks long with high rock walls on both sides and so narrow we had to pull our mirrors in to keep from hitting the walls on both sides. It started out not so bad, but got narrower and narrower. My biggest fear was having to back out. Sherry was afraid we couldn’t get out of the car if we needed to, but I reminded her that we could go through the rear trunk door if necessary. That was the last time we followed GPS down a very narrow street. Tourist beware that Google and Garmin don’t seem to know how wide the streets are. Speaking of that, we again were so grateful for our TMobile plan that gives us unlimited Internet data and 20 cent/min calls in 200 countries at no extra cost. So driving in Italy was just like going to Arizona—except we had better coverage. We returned to Rome and then were home for 2 weeks before going on our summer stay in our Whaler Maui condo.

We saw some old Whaler friends in Maui, but this was the first year in some time that we didn’t have any special family or friend visitors stay there. We had sold our original Whaler time-interval unit, and the kids didn’t come; so we ended up with a romantic Maui get-away vacation with just the two of us; which we hadn’t had for quite a while. We always have something to do to our unit, and this year we bought a new couch and big mirror. We’re happy that after the pretty complete renovation, the Whaler is looking great and so is our unit.

For the first year, ever, Wayne Dyer was not in Maui while we were there; and he was to arrive the day after we left. However, we learned a day after we returned home that Wayne had been doing his daily ocean swim on Friday and died in his sleep on Saturday. Even though we had not seen so much of Wayne the past few years, Wayne and Tom played tennis almost daily while we were in Maui for about 20 years. Wayne was a friend and to some extent an inspiration for both of us. Tom might never have written his book without his contact with Wayne. As you may know, Wayne’s PBS shows and books have affected the lives of millions of people, and he will be missed by many. Almost every time we went out for dinner with Wayne at least one person would tell him how much he had changed their lives. Wayne was only 75 and was a force of nature. He used to say that we’d be playing tennis into our 80’s; but that was not to be. We will miss him.

After our 7 weeks in Maui, we returned home to the desert. We have a wonderful time here, even when it’s very hot. We’ve now been retired and living here for 11+ years, and we love it. In the late summer, we take Tweety (golf cart) rides around the golf course, swim, ride bikes, and enjoy the beauty, friends, and activities here.

Fall at the McCallum Theatre has been fun. We’ve seen some great pianists, “Anything Goes,” the Kingston Trio (with 2 of the originals), Paul Anka at the “Gala” special performance, and Barry Manilow. Barry gives 5 concerts and donates all the proceeds to local charities. We’ve seen him twice before, and he puts on a great show. During the Spring we saw several visiting philharmonic orchestras, Johnny Mathis, a great Bee Gee’s “tribute,” Jack Jones, and others. We are so grateful to have such a wonderful venue 5 minutes away.

Our grandkids: no little ones in elementary school any longer! All are doing well in school, are active in sports, social life, have lots of fun, and are very lucky to have such great parents and live in such a special area. Roxy, Charley, and Sean also play musical instruments. Savannah is a junior at UCLA [still on the swim team]. Spencer will graduate from LB Poly High School in 2016, and Sean is in his first year in Rogers Middle School. Roxy is a freshman at Wilson HS and Charley is in the 7th grade at Rogers. Chief David and Nurse Tracie have good years every year working, playing, and being great parents. Spencer [he's no longer Big Spencer because his nephew is now taller than he is and the same height as Tom] has had two great years in real estate and has been a top salesperson and grown his business rapidly; yet his life still is very centered upon Roxy and Charley. We're happy to see all of them making significant contributions to their community.

This year I will put some photos at the end of the Christmas email/letter. The hard copy version will have fewer photos.

We hope that you have also had a good year, and are happy and healthy. We are grateful for our health and wonderful life every day, and hope you are too. We'd love to hear about your year if we haven't all ready.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Love,

Tom & Sherry

Tom and Sherry Stevens; 217 Santa Barbara Circle, Palm Desert, CA 92260; Tom: 760-977-0574; Sherry: 760-977-0575; Tom.Stevens@csulb.edu; sherrybstevens@gmail.com [Note: Sherry has new email];

Tom's Website: <http://www.csulb.edu/~tstevens> --"You Can Choose To Be Happy"



Tom and Sherry Selfie in Positano



Merry Christmas 2016

Dear Family and Friends,

The year 2016 was a very emotionally mixed year for us. After 12 years of living in Palm Desert and being retired, we had been very lucky to lose very few friends during that time. However, this past year within a few months we lost several friends to death and moving away. We have had to cope with that, and know that you have all had significant losses by now also. For us these losses underline our philosophy to be grateful for every day we have, and try to live each day maximizing our health and happiness for ourselves and others. Also, I've often skipped mentioning all our friends when describing events because most of you don't know them. However, this year I will mention each one at least once: in tribute to them because they are such important parts of our lives.

We began the year in our now traditional way of attending the Monterey CC NY Eve party with friends Carrie Jo and Dixon Johnson, JR and Connie Fleischner, Lynne and Dave Bangsund, and Marilyn and Frank Alexander. We danced to the old music we love and had a great 2016 beginning.

We all are so lucky to live in Fantasyland. It is so beautiful surrounded by mountains, green, palm trees, and interesting places. Because it is a wealthy resort area and home to so many Hollywood people, we have so much entertainment, dining opportunities and special events here it is amazing. The "season" from Nov-April has so much to do, that no one could keep up with it. Our favorite is the McCallum Theatre. We see so many older stars that perform the music we love, and have season tickets to the visiting world class philharmonic orchestras that play there. A few we saw in 2016 included Pinkus Zukerman with the Royal Philharmonic, Pink Martini, Frank Sinatra Jr (just before he died), Steve Lawrence, Jersey Boys musical, The Russian National Symphony, Jack Jones (who lives here), Olivia Newton John, The Beach Boys, and Mama Mia musical. All were wonderful and are highlights of our year!

Other activities include the Palm Springs Film Festival, the BNP Indian Wells Tennis Tournament (now the 5th largest in the world with the second largest stadium), (Tom's) car shows, our first polo match (for the CSU Palm Desert campus emeritus club with Carrie Jo and Dixon Johnson), art shows such in each major local city, "Cruise Nites" on El Paseo, and of course dining with friends—most often Liz and Lee Legvold dinner and a movie--etc, etc. In March we took a brief trip to Death Valley and this time spent one night at Furnace Creek in the valley. We love the desert, and it was beautiful.

Sherry continues to lunch with some combo of the girls—Liz Legvold, Linda Young, Sue Berry, Marilyn Alexander, Connie Fleischner, Dee McMillan, Linda Cook, Jan Perrier, etc. And she paints with the Palette Ladies on Tuesdays. Tom plays tennis mostly with Dick Borah and Ab Glowiki and enjoys their long talks as well. He also continues his projects on his computer. This year he was working on new AI ways to assess the structure of how people think. We still ride our bikes or swim almost every day.

In April, Sherry was back at UCLA with Dr. Raz for her third operation. The first 2 were successful, but the third of 3 places where things can go wrong did. All went well, and FINALLY we hope the third time is the charm, because on her 6 month follow-up, Dr Raz told her she was like someone who never had children and she had a 30-year guarantee now.

We are very grateful for Dr Raz. While in the waiting room, a man said that his wife had had surgery using mesh from another MD and she was now on her 17th surgery, and is having the mesh removed/replaced. (Dr Raz is famous for doing that.) I also attended my friend Dave Dowell's retirement from CSULB. Dave had delayed his retirement for three years so that he could take the position of Provost (who is the person who actually runs the university academic programs). He was given credit for changes that improved the graduation rate by almost 20 percentage points and was being modeled around the country. Also in April, son-in-law David's mom Pat had a severe stroke, and has been bravely battling it since.

In May we flew to Chicago for a week and visited with Tom's brother, Ron, and wife Judy, and children Sara and Alison. After being there we could understand a little better why they retired there. They have a lovely condo with a view of Lincoln Park across the street in a great area in Chicago. There is lots to do in Chicago, including many indoor winter activities. Ron has taken up table tennis (from his teenage years) and is very good at it, playing with outstanding young players. Ron has been a huge Cub fan since his youth when he used to sit in the bleachers regularly. We took a tour of Wrigley Field, and then as we all know they finally broke the 108 year World Series win drought this year.

In June, we attended grandson Spencer Steffen's high school graduation for LB Poly. He is now attending CSU, San Luis Obispo, which was originally mostly an engineering school, but now is a complete top university with very high entrance requirements. Savannah is now a senior at UCLA, still on the swim team, and expects to graduate Spring 2017. Meanwhile Sean has been left all alone in LB and misses his older sibs. However, he is very active and good in water polo and he and his parents spend a great amount of time with the sport. On a very sad note for the Steffen's, David's mother Pat had a stroke and her speech and movement have been affected. That is one of the losses I mentioned.

Immediately after the graduation, we began a month-long trip up the entire west coast to Victoria. We finally didn't go to Europe and took this trip instead as we had been planning for several years. We ended up in a beautiful hotel in Victoria, and had a special/memorable day with Ab and Joan Glowiki (snowbird friends and Tom's tennis partner in PD). They took us on a tour of Vancouver Island, and we finished with a delicious home-cooked meal by Joan in the beautiful penthouse overlooking the bay. In Seattle we had a very nice lunch with PD friends Chuck and Linda Young on the water downtown near our hotel—a beautiful boutique hotel we were lucky to find. On the way back we had another delicious home-cooked meal. This time with Lynne and Dave Bangsund (Portland snowbirds in PD) at their vacation home in Bend, OR.

Our trip included stops at SLO, San Francisco (where we lunched with our 95-year old friend and ex-Whaler neighbor John Bauer and his daughter, Carol). A visit with John is always leaves us seeing what a positive person he is. Then we celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary on June 23 in Calistoga which is in the Napa Valley. (We've together 35 years.) We saw the Humbolt redwoods, and our favorite spots on the Oregon Coast were Florence, Newport, and Cannon Beach. We went around the Olympic peninsula in WA and took the ferry from Port Angeles to Victoria and from Victoria to Anacortes through the San Juan Islands.

On the way back, we weren't really looking forward to Reno. However for \$18 and Expedia points, we got an upgraded room at the Peppermill Resort on the 15th floor. We were amazed at probably the best room we'd ever stayed it. It was a huge suite with a bar for 6, dining table for 8, full living room, huge bedroom, and TVs everywhere showing videos of favorite places in Italy with music by Dean Martin etc. We had room

service for dinner and breakfast because we didn't want to leave. Our server told us it was her favorite room in this huge hotel complex.

We returned home in July 15 to hi temps of 110 to 115 almost every day. No bike riding or tennis. So we swam every day in 90 to 95 degree water. (It feels cool when you get in and cold when you get out.) We often spent a couple of hours at the pool reading, listening to music, etc. So we enjoyed ourselves. During that stay we went back to LB and had our brief Hollywood Bowl season. We also learned of the passing of our close friend Mary Cash, wife of Bob Cash. Bob and Tom collaborated on a number of projects at the university, were close allies in their approaches to psychology, and were tennis partners for years.

Then we were off to Maui from 8/4 to 9/20. It was the latest we had ever gone, so we didn't know many people at that time. It was strange because our friend of many years Wayne Dyer had died of heart attack just after we left last year, and this was the first year without him. Also, our old friend Jack Kelley, died in June after a many years long battle with cancer. Jack had been a survivor who had fought illnesses for years with a positive spirit to enjoy life to its fullest. He swam out a long way into the ocean almost every day despite a bum leg and his illnesses. I always like to quote Jack's saying, "Any day is a great day when your wake up on the right side of the grass." We we happy to see Karen Kelley and hope she keeps coming to their home in the Whaler. We also we had dinner with Rick and Patti Reed before they left. Spencer, Roxy, and Charley visited for 9 days while we were there and had many adventures including zip-lining again, snorkeling, and surfing.

After returning from Maui we attended Savannah's 21st birthday party in LB. While there Dave Dowell and I had our traditional tennis followed by our traditional long lunch at Subway. We had been doing this for 35 years. During that time Dave told me he had only been officially retired for one week, and he was thinking about how he was going to "reinvent" himself for retirement. Also, he and Nancy were finally going to come and see us together. He had had a wonderful 6 months before with trips to Italy and Vancouver Island with 2 daughters.

Then, exactly one week later, I called Dave to get dates for buying our traditional BNP Tennis tickets. His friend John answered his phone and told me Dave was dead from a heart attack. John said he and Dave were riding up Palos Verde hill (which they did almost weekly) and when he got to the top Dave was slumped over his bike. We have all been in shock from such a great loss. Dave was only 65 and seemingly in the best of health looking forward to retirement with Nancy. Tom lost one of his best friends ever and Nancy and his 3 girls lost a wonderful husband and father. I spoke at his memorial attended by over 300 people, and told them that he probably met the criteria for one of Maslow's self-actualized persons. It was held at the university Japanese Gardens where 25 years before he had been a best man at our wedding. In over 35 years I never heard Dave ever put someone down or take other than a positive problem-solving approach to ainy situation.

We have also had losses on our street. A year ago when Ivy Lewis treated the block to celebrate Uncle John (Curran)'s 100th birthday, we worried if he would be here for his 101; however, Ivy died of cancer just before our block party. The night before her memorial, her husband Gene Lewis died in his sleep. So they had a dual memorial. Also, on our street, our friends and neighbors Sky and Joan Richardson and Howard Boydston and Jo Andrews have moved away. So after 12 years here with loss of very few friends, we have lost some of our closest to death and others have moved. It has indeed made us grateful for the time we

have had with those friends and for the happy and productive lives they all had. All of this happened before Thanksgiving. Reflecting reinforces our goal to be grateful for and enjoy every minute we can, and realize that every day is a great day when you wake up on the right side of the grass.

So we're trying to finish the year on a positive note. We took a romantic trip to Coronado Island in San Diego, have put more emphasis on our Christmas in PD this year, are visiting "the kids" in LB for Christmas, and will return to join a number of friends at the MCC club NY Eve party/dance as usual.

Some other friends I didn't mention who we get together with in PD include: Sue and Lind Berry, Roger and Dee McMillan, George and Leslie Wachob, and others.

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We hope that you have also had a good year, and are happy and healthy. We are grateful for our health and wonderful life every day, and hope you are too. We'd love to hear about your year if we haven't all ready.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Love, Tom & Sherry

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