

Blessing to you and yours at this season! | 2017

We did it! We are officially snowbirds!

We've hinted at Kirk's retirement for years. In March, in preparation for that, we bought a winter get-away in Hemet, California, close to friends and familiar territory in Southern California where we lived for nearly 20 years until 1992. We found a roomy mobile home in a pleasant 55+ community about 45 miles west of Palm Springs. No leaves to rake but a couple citrus trees and small strips of dirt and shrubbery will give Jean the illusion of gardening! And no grass for Kirk to mow, but the park offers grassy areas for dog walking. Our virtually bionic 16 ½-year-old canine Chewy is still doing 2-mile walks with Jean. A priority upon our arrival in Hemet will be outfitting the guest room with a queen bed. So come visit! Hemet is pretty quiet but nearby Los Angeles, San Diego, Temecula, Las Vegas and even Mexico offer day trips and destination travel.



In May, Kirk officially became a professor emeritus at Colorado State. His last day on campus was May 5. He walked out of Clark 220 with a box of mementos and 21 years of memories and academic accomplishments to his credit.

Our Colorado house sold overnight to a faculty colleague and her young family; a blessing for them and for us. We enjoyed two weeks of farewells and endured selling endless amounts of stuff on eBay, craigslist and at garage sales. "Comfort" seemed to have been translated as "excess" over the years. That worked to our advantage as we had enough extras of nearly everything to outfit the Hemet house. The whole process---sorting, deciding, packing---has spoiled yard sale shopping and "junktiquing" FOREVER! Whatever comes through the door at either house must replace something we already own!

A major blessing of the year was finding an independent mover who trekked half of our Colorado household to Hemet and the remainder to the lake. Tim Waters also toted our unwanted furniture from the lake house to a local consignment store and even hauled our relic lake refrigerator to recycling. We remain grateful to Tim for wonderful, personalized service! We'd recommend him in a heartbeat.

Following the big moves, summer and fall at the lake have been a busy blur.



Retired? Who's retired? Kirk continues to advise two graduate candidates he began working with before retiring. When CSU offered him the opportunity to teach online, he opted for a course he hadn't taught before—History of Media. Researching and writing an all-new curriculum for that class became a new consuming passion and reflected his continuing interest in the topic. He also completed work as an associate editor of an international encyclopedia devoted to strategic communication. He plans to tinker with a couple of other projects, but plans to limit them to topics he considers fun. Although he's not fully retired -- and that's probably a good thing -- he's found that the retired lifestyle agrees with him.



Kirk with colleagues Donna Rouner and Marilee Long at CSU farewell event.

Jean's life has been almost too full! She chuckles at the wall decor that reads something like "You're at the lake! Relax!" We embarked on no major remodeling projects this year that eat up endless hours. But the merging of about 40 boxes from Colorado into the lake house kept her moving – along with more trips to the consignment store here, endless gardening, boating, hosting the Sheppard Family Weekend in July, and weekly time with the Tuesday Quilters. However, we found time to slip away with friends for a weekend in Duluth, MN, highlighted by dinner on the train ride along the scenic north shore of Lake Superior.



On the Duluth dinner train

And for a few days a week she's Grandma Jean. Jenna continues to work retail for Maurice's in Grand Forks, which includes some evening shifts. On those days 5-year-old Atticus stays with us at "Grandma Camp." He loves driving the boat



(resisting supervision), helps clean up the beach, holds the leash on dog walks, and runs to help Jean cook. He even gets Grandma to play kick ball and draw chalk pictures on the driveway. We are very busy on those days and love every minute. Atticus is the little boy we never got a chance to have when we were building our family. Another blessing.

If Jenna were penning this paragraph she'd tell you she likes Grand Forks and her apartment, enjoys her job with a promotion to assistant manager, and is meeting the challenges of life as a single mom. She is looking for a 9 to 5 job and a bigger apartment near where Atticus will start kindergarten next fall. 2018 will be a big year for them.



As you pack away Christmas, we'll be on the road to California after spending Christmas Eve and Day with Jean's family in Grand Forks. Weather permitting, we'll be in Fort Collins for a day to visit there.

Our blessed life stands in stark contrast to the pain, ugliness and insanity everywhere. It's hard to know what to say, if anything. The blessings in all this messiness may be the little God prompts we all experience to tackle our "God job" each day. We do believe that whether we're actively rebuking evil and standing in the way of wrong, or wrapping each soul we meet with kindness, compassion and tolerance, we can, with God's help, unravel evil and help goodness shine. Dozens of Bible verses suggest that. We hear it often. "Stand firm."

At this wondrous season, may God continue to bless you with light and love to share on your path.

Blessings of the Season,
Jean and Kirk



As you dig into your contacts lists, be sure to update our contact information. Jean kept her cell number and email, but Kirk changed his phone number and personal email address. Chewy's contact information remains unchanged.

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