



Happy Holidays 2019 from the Hallahans!

For the third season since Kirk retired in 2017, we're wintering in southern California.



At the winter Sawdust Festival, Laguna Beach

We left the northland mid-November, winding our way here with a stop in Fort Collins. We settled in amazingly fast and were back to our Hemet routine in record time---neighbor dinners and tv date nights with friend Kay Dempsey ("Loudest Voice" on Showtime and "The Crown" on Netflix), Thursday pinocle, and Pasadena overnights to catch up with longtime friends. Given the winter wonderland back home, we feel a bit guilty enjoying summery winter sunshine here as much as we can as soon as we can. And last week, Kirk lounged in the hot tub while Jean planted primroses and pansies on a 77 degree day. Heaven!

As of this writing, Jean's hit the pause button on Christmas sewing projects to get this letter to you before Christmas. She wants to remind you, though, that she's still proudly stitching on her vintage Viking sewing machine, new in 1971. And, no, the Husqvarna Viking parts department does NOT have a walking foot (a quilting essential) for that model. Minimalists remind her that old-fashioned straight stitching is perfectly adequate for producing her 2020 project, *Lost In Space*, for grandson Attitucs who says he wants "earths" on his next quilt. She still wants to write Santa, though. Surely he's got a quilting dream machine in his pack! Enough about sewing. On with the year in review.

Our favorite winter sport last year, as again this year, is movie going. We like to have educated opinions on nominees and honorees at the SAG Awards and Golden Globes in January and the Academy Awards in February. We've seen "Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood" and "Good Liar" so far. We'll catch many early releases on Netflix DVD. But, you know you're old when you evaluate a movie experience by seat comfort. Trendy recliners...heated seats...really?

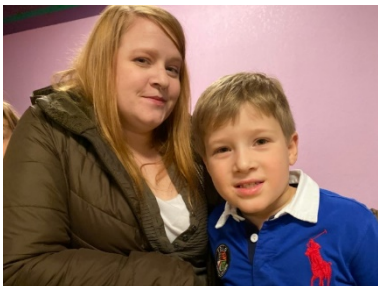
Thanks to winter visits here last winter with Nancy Race, Nancy Lilleberg and first-time California visitors Randy and Tana Hultgren from our Minnesota lake neighborhood, we saw more of southern California than we would have without company. So, come visit. San Juan Capistrano, other beach communities, Joshua Tree National Park, Palm Springs, San Diego, Hollywood and the desert "super bloom" that pops up after weeks of heavy rain...all are reasonable day trips from Hemet. Kirk is a fine tour director and chauffeur. Guests give him an excuse to set aside tending his online course on media history. The class is a portable pastime that fits our Minnesota/California lifestyle but getting him away from the computer is good too.

A sad tale from 2019 began in April when our beloved canine kid Chewbacca got so sick. Our prayer was that he would get one more season at the lake. Some doctoring and medication later, he got that wish. When we put him down at 18 1/2 years strong on Nov. 6, his



At lunch with the Hultgrens at Rancho Las Palmas, Rancho Mirage

sweet snuggle felt like a thank-you for a last season of walks by the woods and boat rides. We still smile over memories of Chewy and Atticus racing each other to the boat. Chewy usually won, even last summer, wobbly as he was. It's hard to believe we've owned our lake place since 2005 and Chewy had supervised every gardening season and remodeling project. We will miss him!



Jenna with Atticus, age 7

Our biggest excitement early in the year was buying a house in Grand Forks that's proving perfect for Jenna and Atticus and providing space for grandpa and grandma sleepovers on a lower level. We arrived in Minnesota on April 24, closed on the house May 1, and spent much of May and June helping Jenna and Atticus move out of their too-small apartment and into the same neighborhood where Jean grew up and the rest of our family live now. Jenna is enjoying making her house a home, and getting acquainted with mowing, raking, and lately, snowblowing.

First grader Atticus helped grandma plant his first vegetable garden at the new house. He likes to pluck and eat basil leaves raw! Go figure. Tomatoes and green peppers...not so much. Biking the neighborhood, t-ball, swimming lessons, the park district afternoon

recreation program and lake life consumed his summer...and ours. When asked what he loved the most about this summer, he didn't hesitate---"The boat!!" The boat went to storage in September and his world turned to school, which he loves, soccer, indoor ice skating and scouts. He's a happy, handsome, busy boy.



Atticus aboard pontoon, on first day of school, in wintery snow fort

Summer at the lake was way too short, highlighted by our annual Sheppard Family Weekend. Fall started way too early and was miserably cold and wet. We never really finished fall yard clean-up. Then a mini snow storm in early October announced winter's arrival, just as it did last year. Out came the rubberized



The Sheppard Family clan at Family Weekend; Jean with brother Bob

window insulators and the furniture covers. We stayed for Jenna's and Atticus' birthdays on November 9 and 13, then packed the car, turned the thermostats down to 52 degrees, and hit the road to California just ahead of more serious cold and snow up north. Brrrr!!!

That's our year in review. At this point in our letter, we seem to reference annually the struggle to fully enjoy our peaceful, pleasurable life while embracing those for whom life just hurts. News arrived recently that two of Jean's friends have chosen not to fight the fight any longer. This giving season reminds us to touch the hopelessness and sadness around us with our cards and letters, phone calls and gifts sealed with love. Maybe in small ways we can be God with skin on, leaving His fingerprints on the pain around us.

Our warmest regards and blessings to you as you handle life with care,



Jean feeding the seagulls in March