



Happy Holidays from the Hallahans ...

As we suggested in our last Christmas report, 2025 was another year of big change for the Hallahans. We've finally settled into a new home in Grand Forks; a long time coming if the amount of thinking and energy that's gone into the project could be measured in months.

Cutting to the housing news, we had listed our lake home for sale in August 2024 as part of our scheme to downsize and move to town. Patience proved to be required. After a year of showings and open houses, we received an offer that came close to our expectations. The buyers were familiar with Maple Lake, required no home inspection, imposed no other contingencies, and wanted to buy virtually all the furniture we were weren't going to take. Perfect...except they wanted to close in 30 days – on October 2. Yikes!

We scrambled – but we made it happen. Fortunately, we had completed the major renovations to our new town home, and we had already scheduled a mover to deliver most of our furniture in mid-September to beat wintry weather. Kirk had spent all summer clearing out the garage, tossing out files, packing books, and meticulously mapping out on paper how we would squeeze extra stuff into garage storage. We hauled load after load to the local consignment store and a truck-full or car-full of stuff to town on nearly every trip we made.

The final cleaning, vacating and saying good-bye to the lake and Jean's spectacular gardens were tough, especially for Jean who admits she tends to marry houses “til death do us part.”

After closing, while Jean slogged through unpacking, Kirk escaped to Cleveland to join his Laidman cousins and their families. The clan gathered to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Aunt Joyce and Uncle Jim Simler, a welcome opportunity for him to decompress from the move and reconnect with his family.

Back to the beginning of the year. We began 2025 with our annual trek to California in January, later than usual to finish remodeling projects in much of the new house. En route, we heard the



Jean and Kirk at the camel dairy and at Thanksgiving in Hemet; Atticus on first day of 7th Grade

horrifying news reports on January 8 (our 48th anniversary) about the Eaton Canyon fire in Altadena. We had lived there for 15 years from 1977 to 1992. The Eaton Canyon fire was the larger of two major fires that ravaged 16,000 homes and other structures. Two of our friends lost their houses, while several others were displaced until it was safe to re-occupy. The repercussions for our friends are ongoing.

In March, Jean underwent a series of mild radiation treatments to kill any cancer cells lingering after surgery last year to remove a Sjögren's-related lymphoma from one of her large salivary glands. Around all the pesky health happenings then and now, we have lovely lunches, eating outside as often as possible, Southern California outings with friends (including a visit to a camel dairy near Julian), and brushing up on our mahjong skills when we're in California.

Summer back north was predictable. Besides getting ready for the move, Jean could be found enjoying her gardening rituals and the weekly gatherings of her quilt group. Meanwhile, Kirk continued teaching his History of Media course online for Colorado State, now in his eighth year following his retirement.

Summer 2026, back in Grand Forks, will be very different. We still have several decorating tasks ahead of us that we didn't have time (or energy) for in 2024. Instead of serious gardening in flower beds, Jean will be perfecting her patio pot gardening acumen. With our grandson's encouragement, we didn't sell either our pontoon or golf cart. We've stored them both for the winter and hope to enjoy summer day trips back to the lake with Jenna and Atticus...and our lake-loving dog Bentley... at least this year.

Daughter Jenna and grandson Atticus live just 2 1/2 miles up the road from our townhome. Eventually Atticus will figure out we're just a short bike ride away. He turned age 13 in November. He's already a teenager in the 7th grade and wearing his dad's sizes! Double Yikes! He's gotten into the Middle School-culture -- with only one "group inspired" tour through detention so far. Atticus is quite proud of playing the clarinet in band and is getting interested in academics. However, his real passion – you guessed it! – is video games. Where did our little boy go?!?!

Jenna celebrated her first 39th birthday in November. She's too young, however, to fully appreciate the humor of the event to those of us who remember the old Jack Benny gag. Next year, Jean will be 39 for the 39th time, as Benny would say.

And here we are, wanting to include a bit of encouragement to end this missive. The writer Rudyard Kipling opens his famous poem "If" with "If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs." It's tricky. Much of the world has lost hold of self-control and sanity. Historically, life may not be worse than times in the past, but now ugliness is being invited into our lives a billion times a day on every device. Our personal bubble certainly stands in stark contrast. We find ourselves re-balancing often to compensate for the chaos.

So, we wish for God's blessings on all of our thinking and our choices as we walk into another challenging year. See you next year, right here.

-Kirk and Jean - and Bentley

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