

Hold onto a good friend with both hands. (African proverb)

DEAR FRIENDS,

HERE AGAIN IS THAT GREAT TIME OF YEAR WHEN THE MAILBOX CONTAINS GREETINGS FROM YOU GOOD PEOPLE.

THIS YEAR'S ACTIVITIES ARE NOT MUCH DIFFERENT FROM WHAT WE DESCRIBED A YEAR AGO: SKIING IN WINTER; SUMMER TRAILWORK IN THE MOUNTAINS; ENJOYING DEDICATED PUPILS IN MATH AND ENGLISH; AND OUR HABITAT FOR HUMANITY GROUP CONTINUES WORKING APACE. I FORGOT TO MENTION THAT WINNIE INVEIGLED ME INTO JOINING HER AT THE YMCA --- TO SWIM WHILE SHE SPENDS HER HOUR IN THE EXERCISE CLASS. I WAS PLEASED TO BE ABLE TO INCREASE MY DISTANCE TO A COMFORTABLE HALF-MILE AFTER A FEW WEEKS (OR MORE!) OF PERSISTENT PRACTICE. I MAY HAVE MENTIONED IN OTHER YEARS THAT THIS VALLEY IS KNOWN FOR ITS LARGE VARIETY OF OVERWINTERING WILDLIFE: WATERFOWL, SWANS AND SNOWGEESE --- AND THE RAPTORS THAT FOLLOW THEM. AND (FOR ANYONE INTERESTED IN SUCH MATTERS) I WAS PLEASED TO ADD TO MY BIRD LIST A GLIMPSE OF A *BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER* THIS SUMMER. IN SEPTEMBER WE HAD A GOOD REUNION OF THREE OF US WHO FIRST MET AS YOUNG AIR CADETS IN 1944. EACH OF US NOTICED THAT THE OTHER TWO APPEARED OLDER. BOOK RECOMMENDATION : THREE CUPS OF TEA BY GREGG MORTENSON. I'M GLAD TO SEE THAT OUR ANCIENT *NO IRAQ WAR* BUMPER STICKER IS BACK IN STYLE.

Lester has done his share of getting this annual summary on its way. The year is passing too fast for me to delay its completion any longer. This has been a year of family get-togethers. We travelled to Fresno in May to see our granddaughter Emily star in her high school's version of "Bye Bye Birdie". Since her high school is very diverse in racial composition, the cast was a very interesting mix. On this trip we also visited with my sister Mary and her husband in Ramona, Calif. Her husband is no longer able to travel. Our son Joel and his oldest son trained intensively for a climb of Mount Rainier. He with a party of 8 cousins and friends rented a large van and drove west from Boston in July. The entire party reached the summit --- a feat described by Joel who was the team leader and guide as "terror and toil". All our children and most of our grandchildren gathered in Mount Vernon to give them a good send-off and to welcome them back on solid ground. Then we traveled to Maine to participate in a Bradford family reunion. Seven of the nine children of Everett and Fannie Bradford are still living. The group grows larger each year as new generations of offspring are added. Our branch added one new member when Julie's daughter Natalie and husband Mickey produced a son in August.

We were able to get acquainted with our latest great grandchild when Julie & family drove their motor home north picking up Natalie & family on the way to spend Thanksgiving week with us.

I keep busy with my usual volunteer jobs with the adult day care, hospice and church. One of my most challenging jobs is acting as power of attorney and general caretaker for a German lady who was a colleague of mine at Northern State Hospital. She has no family in this country. She has rather severe Alzheimers. She stubbornly resists moving from her home which is quite isolated. Lester spends time keeping her roof and her plumbing in good repair.

Lester and I have managed to maintain good health with only minor foibles of aging as we celebrated our 85th and 81st birthdays this year.

Our love and best wishes for a blessed and fulfilling Christmas season and New Year

to all of you with whom we have shared so many pleasant moments.

Lester and Winnie Bradford