Tennison 2011 Family News

Forty-fourth Edition

We hope this Holiday Season finds you healthy and happy. This year we send you our greetings from our new second home in Dublin, California. Yes, we did the unthinkable and took advantage of the downturn in the real estate market and purchased a lovely condominium about 750 miles from our home in Gilbert, Arizona and just 24 miles from our former home in Lafayette. We are closer to our California kids and have room for Pam to be with us when she is feeling poorly. The complex is just four years old. We have two bedrooms, two baths, a tiny kitchen in our great room, which isn't quite as "great" as the one in Arizona but is more than adequate for us. We also have a tiny balcony on our second floor unit, underground parking, elevator access, a swimming pool, a fitness center, and a clubhouse. Unlike our home in Arizona, this is not an over 55 community but rather is multigenerational. It seems to be mostly populated with working class couples, so I usually have the fitness center to myself.

Anyway, the searching for and purchasing of our new acquisition took a couple of months of our time. Then the real work began--I had to shop to furnish the place. If I had thought about how much work that was going to be, I may have reconsidered. First we had a bed and some lawn chairs. That held us for a while until we figured out what else we wanted. Then I learned that the days of going to the furniture store, picking out what you want and having it delivered tomorrow are no more! So, they made our sofa somewhere in Southern California. Our furniture was made in North Carolina, then shipped to Southern California where it joined our sofa to be delivered to us. Anyway, we have been shopping and getting a little bit at a time. Our end tables were delivered when we returned to California for Christmas, and a desk is still being made somewhere to be delivered at some future date. As of this week we have some pictures on the walls, and it's beginning to look like home. A four foot Christmas tree in front of the balcony sliding door makes our Christmas bright.

So, as you may have deduced, other activities this year were curtailed considerably. We square danced in Arizona while traveling back and forth to California last winter and this season which started in November. We also managed a week in McCloud in August so we didn't lose all of our skills during the April to November hiatus. Plus, we love to be with our square dancing friends.

Paul came to California for a quick visit in May and was here for Selina's 14th birthday celebration (photo above). Most of the family was able to get together for a vacation in Dunsmuir near Mount Shasta, California in late July. Lloyd and Mark had various other committments, but everyone else was there for at least part of the time. We rented a couple of vacation homes on the Sacramento River. Bev, Rick, Selina and Rico had a smaller house down the road, and the rest of us were in the main house. Kind of an interesting arrangement. Paul, Robyn and Keegan's room had a bunk bed with a queen size on the bottom and a twin on the top. Gail and Pam shared a room with a queen on the bottom and a double on the top. Monica arrived mid-week and joined them in that room. Kind of like old times but without the constant bickering of teenage girls. Whoops, did I just say that?

We dubbed this our "wall of shame"

Everyone was very busy all of the time. Hikes to hidden waterfalls, visit to the Shasta Dam, a hike up to the snow on Mt. Shasta, swimming in Lake Siskiyou, You get the picture. The large house had a hot tub on the deck overlooking the river, so that was a favorite night time activity. We all dined together at night and managed to polish off an astounding number of bottles of very good vintage wines.

Paul, Robyn and Keegan utilized the swimming pool up the road at the motel that managed the vacation homes and also hiked to Mossbrae Falls, beautiful curtain falls we visited several years ago. It is kind of a perilous walk along railroad tracks that I passed on this year. Ray and Gail hiked with them to Hedge Creek Falls.

Hikers at Hedge Creek Falls

Everyone hiked up to Bunny Flats at Mt. Shasta to enjoy the snow while wearing shorts (well, some people wore shorts). We brought lunch and sat on scattered rocks for our picnic.

Then a day at Lake Siskiyou had Rico and Keegan in a kind of water playground with inflatable rides, including a jungle gym that they particularly enjoyed. Selina rented a paddle board that she had been dying to do and made her way around the lake. Rico tried it out also and enjoyed his excursion. Bev and Rick had their two person kayak there, so several folks paddled around in that.

Bev & Selina

The Sacramento River has rapids, and they found spots to launch and pick up the kayak, so folks had some nice runs doing that. Rick and Selina were the first to try everything out, so since they survived, others followed--Rick and Rico, Bev and Selina, Paul and Keegan. The rest of us took photos along the way.

We celebrated Paul's birthday while in Dunsmuir. Selina, our chief baker, baked a cake, and we all blew out candles. Other evenings everyone pitched in for dinner, and we dined like kings every night.

Another day we all ventured to McCloud to visit the legendary three waterfalls. They are actually the same falls with three distinct levels. We started at the top and worked our way to the lower falls where we had been told you could jump off the falls into the river. Sure enough, you could, and you know they did. Well, not everyone. There was a platform area adjacent to the falls to facilitate the jump into the river. Paul, bless his

aging heart, was the first to take the plunge. Fearless Selina was next, followed by Keegan. Paul got back up, did it again, so naturally, so did Selina. Meanwhile on the shore, Monica, older and wiser than most of the previous jumpers, finally decided she couldn't let her younger cousins outdo her. Off she went while Gail held her breath. Rico, the wisest of all, watched them.

Rico & Rick

Eventually, the good times were over, and we had to return to real life. It was good to have the family together having fun. Wish we could manage it more often.

We returned to Shasta in August to pick up our motor home which we had stored there and returned to McCloud to square dance. We then drove leisurely north to Oregon for our annual visit with friends in Coos Bay in mid-September. As usual we had a great time visiting, playing pinochle and sharing great meals. What would the world be like without friends?

Lloyd

After our visit, we boogied back to the Bay Area for the Susan G. Komen walk in San Francisco on September 25th. Our team grew in size this year as more people joined us. It rained on us, but not enough to dampen our spirits. Pam did all but a small portion of the walk.

As for our offspring, they all have busy lives that we try, sometimes futilely, to keep track of. Lloyd's business keeps him busy at all hours of the day and night. He has added travel agent to his list of business activities, so if you are looking to book something and would like to give him a call, he'll be happy to accommodate you.

Mark

Mark spent a lot of time flying around the country, sometimes for business and sometimes for pleasure. He was on a Texas based sky diving team that was training for the National's. He periodically flew to Houston, Texas for a training weekend, and once to North Carolina for intensive work in a large wind tunnel. Work had him in Dallas and Florida, and I'm not sure where else. Then he came to Arizona for the Nationals in October where his team took 3rd place in their category–right after the two professional teams that always take 1st & 2nd places. He is with Hilton Hotels again and is working long hours while looking for a house in the Bay area closer to work.

Pam

Pam still works at the same school teaching underprivileged fourth graders. She went skiing last winter with Bev and her family and visits with friends and family when she can. Her current schedule of chemotherapy has her receiving treatments three weeks out of four, with a much-needed rest week in the fourth week. Her unflagging courage and determination during this illness is inspiring. We try to be here in California with her as much as she will have us.

Monica & Gail

Gail's job as a pharmaceutical rep keeps her working long hours. She has a more compact territory which doesn't involve constant flying around but still has her driving to the valley and the peninsula. She managed to get away for trips to Hawaii and to Tuscany, both of which she thoroughly enjoyed. Finally she is suffering from the empty nest syndrome (or is she celebrating it?) as Monica is now living on her own. She is in her second year of teaching high school social studies and is sharing a home with her significant other, Kyle. She was furniture shopping and decorating a new home at the same time we were, but got hers done much quicker than we did. Ah, youth!

Bev and Rick enjoy their hectic life. Friends and children's activities occupy most of their time, but Bev manages to play in a tennis league and Rick in a golf league. Bev is cutting back on carpooling so she can do some substitute teaching just to get her feet wet again. Rick only travels occasionally now, so he is near home most of the time. Since both of the kids now golf, Rick plays with them when he can. They take ski trips whenever the snow calls. And this year on their Florida trip they made it all the way to the Keys.

Selina was "promoted" from 8th grade. They don't graduate anymore. She received awards from her school in Advanced Art, Social Studies, one for having a 4.0 GPA, a special award for community service, and the crown of the evening was for Student of the Year. Now in high school she is in service and academic clubs, as a freshman made the Varsity Golf Team and earned her varsity letter. Her Girl Scout Silver Award was quite a production.

Rico is in 5th grade at an amazing school, which really has creative and inspiring activities. His competitive soccer team made it to the semi-finals of the State Cup. Little League followed by All-Star baseball filled the summer days and nights. Now CYO basketball is in season. He skis with everyone and golfs with Selina and her friends.

Meanwhile, back in Michigan, Paul continues to work ungodly hours at Ford (what is it with my kids?), Robyn teaches at the community college, and Keegan is now in 1st grade, unbelievable as that seems. His teacher got a grant for iPads, so apparently Keegan is a pro at that. Water skiing is still their favorite summer activity which they do on their lake and up in Canada where Robyn's family has a cottage. As a family they visited Disney World in Florida last January and traveled to California for our vacation together. Paul and Robyn went to Florida for a wedding of one of Paul's best friends and later to Ireland where another good friend got married. Yes, his friends do get married later in life. They have almost completed the addition to their house and have a new concrete driveway to replace the gravel one which was really hard to shovel. We're looking forward to a Skype visit on Christmas.

Ray and I are trying to grow old gracefully but still fighting it out with the elements and our bodies. We are both healthy with nothing major to complain about. At least that's what my doctor said when I had my physical earlier this month. He's not very sympathetic to my various aches and pains. While I'm not walking as far or as fast as I did a few years ago, I exercise regularly to keep everything in working order. Ray continues to balk at the whole concept of exercise but works in the yard in Gilbert so does get out and moving around.

That about wraps it up for our news of 2011. May the blessings of the Christ Child be yours, and may health and happiness be your companions in 2012.

Love, Joy and Ray