

Christmas 2011

Dear family and friends,

We are happy to greet all of you and share our past year. We hope you enjoy this longer, electronic version of our annual Christmas letter. We can include so many more photos!

We got a lot of rain in Dec 2010 (after we wrote our last Christmas Letter). It was a “Pineapple Express” storm coming from the west from Hawaii. It dumped more rain in two days than we get in several months.

We knew we had weak waterproofing on our bottom floor retaining wall. About twelve hours after the rain started, the water started flowing in, much worse than ever before.

This is a really long and agonizing story but the bottom line was that we had to dig up the retaining wall (about 60 linear feet, down about 11 feet) and redo all the waterproofing and drainage. Work started about the middle of March and was finally complete in early September. Two men, Hugo and José, dug the entire wall out, jack-hammered out tons of rock, did the repair, filled in the dig and then replaced the concrete sidewalks, floors and patios that had to be removed.

We could show you photos of before and after but they look the same! All the extensive work just got buried. Here are two photos. The first is our bottom floor after Mark ripped out the carpet to try to keep ahead of the water flow. The second is to show part of the dig. If you would like to read all about the effort, Mark has a web page describing it in detail: <http://www.silologic.com/1949%20Via%20Ladera/Wall.html>



First floor with carpet removed, sandbag dam and shop vacuum to pick up water.



View of the dig from underneath the exercise room

Sally has really been working on her piano playing. She plays duets every week with a neighbor, Miriam Kirk. In April, they gave a recital for Miriam's grandson and his family. Here they are at Miriam's house (she has two pianos).



In May, we flew back to Aliquippa to visit Mark's sister. Mark was mostly there to fix things. We visited relatives and went to a great Flea Market held in Rogers, OH.



Mark and his sister, Diane

In June, Mark wanted to attend the Train Collectors Association National Convention in Sacramento, CA. He dragged Sally along. We visited many full-size train museums and many model train layouts.



A model train layout that we visited in Sacramento

We took a bus trip to Lake Tahoe with a ride on a dinner boat.



Sunset over Lake Tahoe

All the grandkids were together in July when the Roundys came from Utah for a visit! We enjoyed a few days camping at Mission Beach in San Diego in our tent trailer. Lots of fun swimming in the bay, the pool and the ocean! The Utah grandkids had fun boogy-boarding for the first time! (We couldn't get them out of the water!) We added a trip to Legoland.



*Game time at Grandma and Grandpa's!
(Austin, Ashlee, Alyssa, Max and Hailey)*



Tide Pools

At the end of July, Sally (aka Grandma Sadi) took granddaughter number 2, Hailey Rones, on *her* 10-year-old trip with Grandma. Sally and Hailey took a Road Scholar planned trip up near San Francisco for a 5-day program entitled “Puppy Love.” We visited and learned about the training and use of Guide Dogs for the handicapped and the blind.



We ended our trip with a couple of days exploring San Francisco. We *froze* going over the Golden Gate Bridge in an open-top bus!



Eating with friends on Fisherman's Wharf



In September, we attended an AARP convention in Los Angeles. AARP used to stand for American Association of Retired People. But now more and more members are not retired so the name was just shortened to its initials. This, surprisingly, was a lot of fun. We went to concerts and talks and we were volunteers and actually helped at one of the talks. Since it was in Los Angeles, it attracted a lot of stars. We saw Carol Burnett, Tim Conway, Alex Trebek, Lionel Richie, Dr. Jane Goodall, Richard Simmons (Sal got a kiss on the cheek from him!), Dan Marino, Patty Austin, Ramsey Lewis, Martina Navratilova and Bob Eubanks. We didn't take any decent photos though.

We were blessed with another grandchild on October 7, 2011 when Anabella Angel Bilsland was born. This is Kevin and Anastasia's first child. We went to Arizona to meet her in early November. What a little cutey!



Sally challenged herself by taking Spanish III at Palomar College this Fall. She wants to be ready for her volunteer opportunity in Peru in 2012. You'll hear about that in next year's Christmas letter!

Mark's train room has made substantial progress over the year. All the track is powered and he can actually run trains.



We send our wishes for a wonderful Christmas.

Mark + Sally

As always, you can read more at <http://www.silogic.com/>