

Christmas 2010

Our challenge is to nurture our sense of childlike wonder as we age.

Advent invites us to retrieve our sense that transformation, joy, and

love are still ahead of us, in spite of all the causes for despair. J & C

To our wonder, we are sending you our fiftieth Christmas letter. (And we remember the first letter we received from George and Nancy Ball, who have always inspired our letters.) Each Advent season has been a gift for connecting us to our sacred traditions, and to our loved ones who are spread across the globe. You have given us the gift of your presence and you have shared the gift of deep lasting friendships through all the joyful, and the more challenging and painful passages.

2010 began with the fulfillment of John's transformational dream that brought several **adventurous** changes. A different family now occupies the place we called home for thirty-four years.



Good bye 433 Hillcrest Ave.

What a major “decluttering” time! Our friend, Sandy Macdonald, justly labeled the process as an archeological dig. While Paula, Chris and John sorted through some of the thousands of slides, John asked Christina if she would take a picture. Paula yelled, “NO DAD, that’s what got us into this mess in the first place.” During this transition we laughed, we cried, we reminisced about unforgettable moments (much as we do when we read your annual Christmas messages). We are so grateful for family, friends, and church members who helped us mark and navigate this passage. Our light-hearted SAYING GOOD-BYE TO THE HOUSE PARTY in July honored our State College family who helped us transform the Hillcrest Avenue house into our home. You have given us so much love and support over the years—and taught us we only get to keep what we are willing to let go. Grazie Mille



Grace and Martha came to help.



Saying Good Bye To the house



Evelyn brought her guitar & all our best-loved songs



We had fun with our OLD (some antique!) hats



Grace made her magic with bubbles as



always We've celebrated graduations, weddings, and retirements here ; thankfully, we had a beautiful day to reminisce.

Our grandchildren helped pack family treasures for their homes in Wisconsin and Rhode Island and for Jason in Oklahoma. Jason has continued to work on the road for Sports Construction Group, installing artificial turf fields from Massachusetts to Kentucky. We were so disappointed that his work only brought him close to State College after we left. Grazie di cuore to Grace & Guy Pilato, who gave us a home after ours sold and before we traveled. We were happy to see many of our Mork family and our Tiede family in Minnesota/Wisconsin in August and to spend some time with Martha, Grace and Richard and their family in early September.



Carolyn, Joan and John Mork

The grandkids are delightful, and we miss being a part of this year with them, but hope that most will make it to Italy, for reasons explained below!

*The next **adventure** was our September move to Italy for the year. We are grateful to our Italian relatives, especially Rosanna Bellante, Gianluca, and Antonietta who have provided us with a little casetta (purchased by John's grandfather, Filippo, passed on to the family in Italy, and standing vacant) and continue to help us through the Italian bureaucratic system and with learning Italian. Without them we might still be sitting at the desk of the dragon lady at the Italian Consulate in Philadelphia, waiting for our Elective Residency Visa approvals. This year's battle cry has become, "IT'S AN ADVENTURE!" Part of this adventure was with Ken, Pastor Bonnie (on her sabbatical), and son, Jesse*

Smeltzer in magnificent Paris -along with transportation strikes and threats of terrorist activities.



The B's in Paris



Bonnie, Ken, Jesse in Vernazza

Our additional travels with them to the Cinque Terra and Tuscany were incredible. Whenever we drink a glass of Burgundy we will think of the unexpected rental car trip through the Burgundy countryside and the sight of Mont Blanc through the front windshield. Thanks to Carolyn and Ken for the great navigating, to Jesse for his enthusiasm (especially for castles!), and to Bonnie, and John for their unfailing good humor.

For Carolyn it is a year to pursue her passion for discovering the subtleties of mastering another language. John marvels at her ability to speak so well. As he listens to what he calls the “supercalifragilisticexpialidocious” conversations between her and Rosanna (they can really get on a roll), John is learning slowly to get up to “game speed” for understanding Italian or for begging, “Può parlare piu lentamente per favore.” (Please slow down when you speak.)

In addition to our years of studying Italian with our dear friend, Luisa Ferralis, we did spend four weeks in intensive language school in the beautiful city of Bologna learning many things as valuable as learning Italian. Students at the school from countries other than the U.S. naturally assumed everyone desires to be multi-lingual. Creating three powerful friendships with Susan (New Hampshire), Francine (Montreal) and Annette (Munich) was a treasured gift of living in Bologna.



Tre amiche Francine, Annette, Carolyn

We also came away with an attitude adjustment. Young people have more to teach us than we have to teach them. Bologna was a powerful and humbling experience in the most positive way.

Being here in Citta'Sant'Angelo (Google it!) we have greater appreciation for the grandeur of little things: a kiss on both cheeks, the coziness of small spaces, cyclamen blooming in every window box in December, incredible politeness, church bells ringing; we love "living small and simple," without a car or a TV-- 55 steps to the bakery, with the fruit/vegetable store and the butcher shop just beyond all with friendly shopkeepers who enjoy talking; living in 2 small rooms with a bathroom the size of the shower in our old house, but a view to snow capped mountains when we walk outside the wall of our medieval town to throw the spazzatura in the dumpster!



Il Gran Sasso from our town!

We do also love the chance to travel by train and small regional planes to incredible places here in Italy and in the European Community; amazingly when we flew to Paris, it was like flying from Iowa to Minnesota! (except for the change in language!) We are treasuring every day of our time here in Italy. Our "new" small house in our old State College neighborhood (717 Sunset Road) will be vacated by our renters next summer in time for our return, and, we suspect, it will feel like a mansion after our year of living più piccolo (smaller).



Peter in Florence



Carolyn, Paula, Peter, Ponte Vecchio

*We cannot say enough about the warmth, love and generosity of the Bellante family in Italy. Paula and Peter joined us for the week of Thanksgiving and Paula's **meeting** them in the deepest sense of the word, helped her to experience the only grandparent (Giacomo) she never met and to appreciate the power of family connection and Bellante generosity, Italian-style. . It was a gift to experience Italy through the eyes of Peter and Paula. It is their wish that the new generation of Italian cousins (They met 9 of them) who want to learn English will consider spending time with them in Wisconsin.*



Peter and Paula, with some grandchildren left to right Paolo, Pierluigi, Mariolino, Alessia, Francesca, & Aurora

Christina Scott and kids will join us for 2 weeks in late June and we hope they will be as enchanted by our family and by Italy as we are. We are hoping the Tiede kids could join us, but they have exciting plans at their home which will be featured in NEXT year's letter. We look forward to welcoming Guy and Grace on May 9th, but hope we have more friends and family who are able to come share this experience with us before we head back to the States in July. May the Advent moments with your friends and family—this season and throughout 2011 -- be filled with joy and abundance-- and may we all offer our gifts and face our challenges, struggles and fears with hope and love and the knowledge that we are loved.

Natale, 2010, in Citta' Sant'Angelo



*Buon Natale e Felice Anno Nuovo, con molto molto affetto, John and Carolyn,
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