

Merry Christmas

2025



L to R: Sarah, Avery, Bodhi, Josephine, Jesse, Mabel, Levi, Eve, Mary Lou, Brian, Gwen, Julia, Todd, Kaitlyn, Jackson, Shannon, Claire, Georgia, Chris, Cori, Ana, La'akea, Kainoa

We were so proud of ourselves. During the first week of December, we went Christmas shopping, here in Grass Valley, and bought all of our Christmas presents for our grandchildren. We got some nice presents, supported our local merchants, and avoided supporting a big corporation...all wins. We admired our achievement by placing the presents on a couch in our living room. Over the next few days, we looked at the presents with a more critical eye. "Mary Lou, did you notice that these two presents are listed as being for 5+ years, and we were going to give them to two 11-year old girls?" I asked. "Well maybe we can add something else to them or get something else." And the "Great Balancing Act" begins. "Now that we added those presents for those girls, we didn't give enough to their siblings." This went on and on for several days/weeks. Now we have ordered more items and spent much more at Amazon than we did locally! On top of that, we are hoping everything will arrive on time. So much for our early accomplishment!

Balance is a good theme for this last year. Mary Lou fell while clearing an area for a storage shed and broke her wrist. I lost my balance while digging out our well box and split open a long gash on my lower arm. It was all good practice to find out where our emergency rooms are in the area!

We are doing well, though. Mary Lou continues to stay in shape by running regularly on the water ditch trail above our house. I am impressed by her dedication, but not enough to join her. We do get out a few times for Walking Wednesday (or whatever day it might happen to be). We are blessed to have so many choices of places to go.

I've repaired Chris' guitar again, built and then repaired a guitar for Ana, and I am just about finished making a slide guitar as an example for a class Jesse teaches at his school. I am also extremely close to finishing a telecaster style guitar that I started in a guitar class at Palomar College when I was living in San Diego. I really enjoy woodworking, especially making musical instruments.

We continue to spend most of our spare time and disposable income on our property, trying to make it more fire safe. We have widened our emergency access/escape road, beefed up our well box so it can handle a fire truck running over it, added a 5,000 gallon water tank to our

Happy New Year

water system, and had more trees cut or trimmed. I have finally realized that this is a never-ending project. I also joined our local Firewise Community leadership and helped to write a federal grant for our County Fire Safe Council. It is good to keep up our property and to get active locally on a big problem, but I think we may need to seek a little bit of balance. Mary Lou and I have started to realize that life is too short to not travel or spend our resources on fun things for ourselves. I hope we can actually achieve more balance in this area.

We continue to travel to our grandchildren's events. This year, we attended two cross-country meets to watch Julia run. She and her team qualified and went to the State meet. We also attended Badegech's last San Jose State football cheering event. We are so proud of her being on the cheer squad for all four years. We went to Senior night and got to watch Cori and Chris join Badegech on the field for the ceremony. We joined Cori's family the other night to celebrate Hanne's "Pinning Ceremony." She graduated from Shasta College's nursing program and has already secured a job in the emergency room at Shasta Regional Medical Center in Redding. We are so proud of her. We also attended numerous soccer, softball, baseball, and upcoming basketball games. Most Saturdays are spent driving to San Rafael, Chico, or Folsom to attend Mabel, Josie, Gwen, Avery or Bodhi's games. We love watching them play and, of course, we feel they are the best players on their teams.



Badegech, Jasmine, and Hanne



Jake, Zacharie, and Brandon

We continue to go to a few concerts each year. This year, we went to the Outlaw Music Festival and saw Billy Strings, Bob Dylan, and Willie Nelson. It was a great concert, and we didn't have to go too far. It was an hour away in Wheatland, and we took rural roads to get there and back.

Our family gathered a few times. We had most of the family for the Summer Solstice. We drove to Gearhart again for the Fourth of July. Mary Lou, Cori, Ana, Sarah, and Eve had a girls' week-end and went to Calistoga. Mary Lou joined her sister, Mardean, and went to an "all-classes reunion" at their high

school. She also joined my sister, Donna, and two other friends for a week of attending plays at the Shakespeare Festival in Ashland. It was our turn for Thanksgiving this year. The family gathered at Todd's house and was joined by Donna and her family, including Brad from New York. Jen, our niece, was also there from Tennessee. One of the highlights was playing a game Jen, Donna, and I came up with called "Swagerty Shenanigans." It quizzed our families about the stories on our swagertystories.com website.

That about does it for this year. I hope you had a good year and are looking forward to the next one.