

MERRY CHRISTMAS HAPPY NEW YEAR

Dear Friends and Family,

We wish you, and those you love, joy, peace, health, and prosperity.

The newspaper comics poke fun at Christmas letters like this. Never ones to be concerned with what others think, and easier to send than a fruitcake, we will once again use this means to catch you up on our lives (we'll keep it somewhat short!). We read each of your cards and letters and hope to hear from of you.

We celebrated Christmas 2005 and welcomed in 2006 in New Zealand. Such a beautiful country with many contrasts. Our tour took us to both the north and south islands, from beaches to mountains to fjords. You can see Hugh with the helicopter he took to the top of the Franz Josef Glacier. Australia was our next trip. Sue Mathews was throwing a surprise 50th birthday party for Bruce Newcome in Sydney. We had to be there and enjoyed helping in the surprise. Then we all went sailing in the Whitsunday Islands for a week. We celebrated Thanksgiving with two weeks in Misr (Egypt). We had a wonderful tour guide whose knowledge of Egypt's history and people enriched every minute of our trip. Visiting monuments from 5000 years ago makes us wonder what we are doing that will last even a decade. We are blessed and enriched by our travels. From the Opera House in Sydney to the Pyramids in Giza, riding camels and sailing feluccas. Each trip adds to the list of places we want to spend three or four months when we retire – we are still wondering when that will be (our Super Lotto retirement plan isn't as successful as we had hoped).

Work is both a rewarding and hectic part of our lives. Hugh was offered the position as the head of the laboratories with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in the Netherlands. It had a huge "cool factor" but with Becky planning to remain in California and other factors, the time wasn't right. So, he turned them down while assuring they were still in good hands, since his friend Gary from NIST fill that position. He continues to work on OPCW related things from California with frequent travel to The Netherlands while still being a manager in Chemistry at Lawrence Livermore National Lab (LLNL). Late in 2005, Becky was appointed department head of Hazards Control at LLNL. This year, she hired a deputy to complete her management team. With the workload now spread over the full team, her stress level has been reduced. Congress decided to compete the contract for managing LLNL after 55 years with the University of California. This decision will culminate in 2007 with certain but unpredictable changes. Never afraid of change, we both just want it to happen. We'll then know how to adapt.

Our families are healthy and still, can you imagine, our friends. (hee hee) Over Labor Day Becky visited her parents and was lucky to have Doug and Jeannie there too. Hugh's family will all join us here in Dublin for the week between Christmas and New Years. Last time we were all together was five years ago when we exchanged our commitment vows. How time flies when your life is good and you are having fun!

We count our family and friends in our blessings. Please let us share your joys or sorrows by keeping in touch. If you are in the area we'd love to have you visit.

***Hugh Gregg and Becky Failor
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