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2011 Seasons Greetings from Suzanne and Rod:

The end of 2011 finds us both officially recognized as senior citizens by the US Government, part of the fight against senility by Uncle Sam. Apparently the mental exercise of dealing with 2 different health insurance entities is supposed to be good for the mental faculties. Suzanne was happy that Medicare made her submit a birth certificate to prove she was qualified when no such requirement was made of Rod. Rod doesn't believe the bureaucrats there actually had time to look at our photos to see who looked older. However, he is thinking of changing his profile photo to one with hair on top.

Since planning a European trip in 2010 apparently caused massive volcanic eruptions and mass disruptions in travel across Europe, we decided to stick to the US for vacations in 2011. Rod decided to restrict his European influence to an increase in retirement portfolio emphasis early in the year instead. Apparently the family influence extends to the overseas markets as well as its volcanism. (Public be warned...there is another Pease hiking vacation planned in England this spring.) By sticking to the US this year, Rod did figure out the proper mechanism for a bicycling trip this year. The Virginia Creeper rail trail between Whitetop and Damascus is entirely downhill and several businesses in Damascus will transport bicycles to the top on a trailer, letting you coast the whole way back to Damascus. Suzanne had a retreat in eastern TN in April, so we stuck the bicycles on the back of the car and stopped for a ride on the way. During the retreat, Rod continued to the Atlanta area and rode a 23 mile section of the Silver Comet rail trail, round trip. After 46 miles, it was obvious that 100% downhill is better.

As not all of our transport could be by bicycle, 2011 was the year for an auto upgrade. The new car could not be a replacement Saturn, since, news of Suzanne's 1998 purchase having finally reached GM, they decided to stop making that brand. She also replaced her main business PC with a new HP PC in the springtime. HP was much more responsive, deciding by summer that it probably didn't make sense for them to continue in the PC business, given that piece of information. After HP market research dug up the fact that Rod was still using his 2004 HP PC they reconsidered their decision, but it was a close thing. We are hoping that Toyota stays in business at least long enough to get us through the warranty period on the new Corolla.

We broke in the new Corolla on a road trip to San Diego in August to the annual NAWBO Convention there. The long drive allowed us to get in some visits to relatives along the way, as well as some camping and sight-seeing. Camping and hiking in Guadalupe Mountains National Park was fun, but hot. After seeing a tarantula on the road on the way to the evening nature program, there was zero desire to sleep outside a stuffy tent even with the heat. Suzanne woke Rod up early in Deming, NM to go to a dawn balloon launch. We caught the Saturday market in Las Cruces, where Suzanne happily traded dollars for rocks. We then spent a disappointing day in Tucson, finding that most of the rock and mineral shops close on Monday...probably part of Rod's plan for arriving on this day.

The weather in San Diego was beautiful, especially after hearing about earthquakes and hurricanes back in NJ. (After calling the neighbors and sending son Kevin by to check on the house, we learned that we got by

without any damage from Irene.) In San Diego, Rod walked around the city and upgraded his hat collection. He also toured the Midway aircraft carrier museum, gaining a new appreciation for what he missed by getting a tour guaranteed to be in "Navy Schools ashore". The hotel there was optimally placed, right across the street from a BBQ restaurant. Much better than the food in Las Vegas, where Rod wanted to try "the buffet" and was under-impressed.

Suzanne managed to avoid the slots in Las Vegas, where Rod was watching, but he is convinced that the reason for her solo trip to Louisiana in June was to visit the casino there. She claims that it was for a Carr family reunion and went so far as to involve her innocent aunt in supporting the fiction of a family reunion, but he was not fooled. Her brother Don, in Alaska at the time of the purported reunion, even mailed a key to his trailer so she could "stay there during the reunion", but the bill for lodging at the casino arrived anyway.

Rod continues to enjoy retirement, especially now that he can say "I told you so" to an increasing number of retiring contemporaries. His SF paperbacks continue to threaten the structural integrity of the house, but he has not yet succumbed to the lure of a Kindle or Nook, especially since the bits are priced the same as the paper. He points out that Big Brother has to be physically present to stop him from finishing a paperback. Perhaps the decision will change when he can no longer lift the weight of a dozen paperbacks at a time, or when his failing eyesight requires electronic enhancement of the size of the type. Rayonier need not worry about its pulp wood sales falling quite yet.

Suzanne made another solo trip to Florida in March to help a friend with redecorating her house. Rod originally greatly approved of the concept - redecorating using someone else's money. She had professed an extreme dislike for Florida as a retirement venue and was happily spending most of her free time beading - how much harm could it cause. You should never let the camel's nose into the tent, because the rest is sure to follow. After returning to NJ, she continued the redecorating at the friends NJ home, then started watching House Hunters International every night on TV. Rod has hidden her passport. At least she isn't quite as critical now of Rod's plumbing skills after watching what passes for adequate in some other countries.

We wish you a happy and prosperous 2012.

Suzanne and Rod

web pages:

Rod's personal home page at www.rodpease.com

Suzanne's jewelry home page at www.suzannepease.com

Suzanne's graphic design home page at www.ampersandgraphics.com

Kevin's business home page at www.ceruleanstimuli.com or www.cerulean.st

email:

Rod's email: rodpease@rodpease.com

Suzanne's email: spease@ampersandgraphics.com

Kevin's email: kwpease@comcast.net