

Dear Family and Friends:

The first big snow and Christmas cards have arrived, so it's time for our annual letter. This year we are including more photos, meaning less for you to read! This letter is our 45th since the first one in 1978 when we were moving to Ottawa from San Diego. We might call it the "45-25" note, but more on 25 part later. The photos start with our young family on vacation in Cuba. Gemma missed that trip because she was in Taiwan on holiday with her boyfriend's family. Other photos include two from Brian's November birthday outing and one of our two granddaughters together in the fall.



Ben, Nicola, Peter & Cynthia snorkelling in Cuba

2023 was a pretty good year here with our health concerns being top of the list (as for most 80-somethings). Our "getting out" has been gradually improving, maskless, to our usual favourites – day trips to nearby towns, concerts and plays.

Included also are more frequent medical trips for checkups, vaccine shots, prescriptions, etc. We are blessed with a youngish family doctor for which we give regular thanks. Very happily he is not near retirement, but he challenged us this year by relocating from / to three offices; finally settling at an established clinic. He seems happy and settled there, so more love and thanks from us.



Peter, Cynthia & Brian on his November birthday

Cynthia and Peter usually accompany us to the plays we pick and they make excellent chauffeurs. We also are driving out of town but not as far or as often as before. Both Joan and I have now "passed" our over-80 Ontario driving retest. We mentioned these tests last year and their "difficulty" has not changed, so long as your vision is OK. Ontario is now talking about a real road test for the over 80 crowd. We shall see.



Joan & Bob at Brian's birthday outing

Trips to places like Kingston, Brockville, Cornwall and Arnprior are the sort of driving we now do. Actually I drove to nearby Carleton Place twice with Ben, our youngest driver, for his first G test. This was a success but in the process we learned lots about rural streets and small-town traffic. Experience has always been to book those tests in nearby places for both better scheduling and good results. Both Ben and Gemma will eventually need to do their final "G" test so I can't retire yet.

Our regular activities include home maintenance which peaks in the spring and fall with both pool and lawn / garden chores. While the number of tasks seems daunting, we get them done a few at a time with help from the youngsters around the corner for heavier jobs and pool openings and closings. On-line bridge increasingly involves Joan, but I dabble a bit too. Would you believe we have not touched a deck of cards since Covid, rare for keen bridge players like us! I continue to be involved with the meteorological / oceanographic society (CMOS), doing their archives and helping with the local chapter (also all on-line). The society local executive occasionally meets at a pub, but like the bridge playing, no in-person meetings in Ottawa have been held since Covid. Our world has permanently changed!

In 2023 I started a new activity. I joined the *Club of Rome* and listen to their weekly seminars which are always interesting. They are a think group formed in the 1980s after a seminal book called *Limits to Growth* was published. Most of the active members are retired but very accomplished in their fields and beyond. So I am in awe of them and do not participate much beyond their weekly Zoom talks, but I have learned a lot. This interest came because of CMOS liaison and I have actually sent a few CMOS folks to them. Climate Change, which we are experiencing in spades right now, is a common focus in both groups.



Nicola and Gemma in the fall

In the fall we did two new things, left undone for way too long – about 25 years in fact. We had the house air ducts cleaned – our duct system is used by both the furnace and air conditioning and HVAC companies recommend cleaning about every five years. So, yes, do that but avoid the telephone scammers who are overactive on this service. The other 25-year item was replacing our comfortable and well-loved mattress. Whoa! 25 years is also way too long since quality and other factors suggest changing at shorter intervals. While shopping we learned that the old combination of mattress and box spring has been replaced by a double thick mattress sitting on a simple box frame. Heights are variable of course but now a new mattress = the old mattress + box spring. Who knew? We did see a very few of the older set ups still on the floor displays. Happily, mattresses are among the few consumer items still made in Canada (North America), and our current sheets even fit the thicker mattress.

At these ages, losses of our friends and neighbours are occurring more often. 2023 was no different with more friends departing from our life journey. In keeping with last year's theme of positivity, we won't list names unless the passings were our close relatives, of which there were none in 2023. Ending with this good news, we wish everyone a Merry Christmas, an excellent 2024 and most of all, good health and safety from Climate Change impacts and viruses out there.

With love,

Joan, Bob and Brian