

# **MERRY CHRISTMAS HAPPY NEW YEAR**

Dear Friends and Family,

May this letter find you, and those you love, safe, healthy, and thriving.

This year, the entire world was in awe when Mother Nature showed her powers. We hope you did not suffer from her wrath.

At the last minute we decided to spend the 2004 Christmas holidays on a cruise down the Danube from Vienna to Budapest (photo's upper right corner). What a relaxing way to see Europe. Our joy was dampened by the tragedy of the Banda Aceh, Indonesia earthquake and resulting tsunami. One area devastated was near Phuket, Thailand where we were sailing one year earlier. Our hearts were warmed by the outpouring of aid from around the world. When our own nation suffered from repeat hurricane damage Becky was proud to have several of her staff provide emergency assistance.

We are grateful there were no personal disasters. Becky's Mom and Dad both have some health issues and are still living on their own in Ohio. Becky's nephew, Dan, was married and became father of a cute daughter, Jade. Hugh's niece, Helen, started college this fall, making his brother Dick's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday feel even older. Becky reminded Hugh he's only a year away from the half century mark.

Hugh solidified his strong position in LLNL's Chemistry Directorate, and continued his work with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in the Netherlands. Becky was named the Hazards Control Department Head in early December. We both work long hours and feel the strain but feel we are making a difference. It is great to relax together at our comfortable home with our two cats, Gamma and Travis (aka 'Lardbutt' in Hugh's lexicon).

In May, for some relaxation, we spent a week on the Big Island of Hawaii at a home situated in the middle of an old lava field with wind power, rain water, and peace and quiet (photo's lower right corner). Hugh and his flying partner, Rod, won the air rally they enjoy each year. Luckily, in July, work took both of us to Europe so we spent a few days in England, including a special July 4<sup>th</sup> tour at Stonehenge (photo's lower left corner). Becky was part of the first U.S. delegation to establish a sister lab relationship with Libya (Libya's Roman ruins, Leptis Magna, in photo's lower middle). Then mid-July through mid-November Hugh did some flying, we did some sailing, a bit of camping, but mostly working. We were ready for 2+ weeks in Belize and Guatemala. We visited Mayan ruins (photo's upper left corner), were awed by Tikal's main temples in full moonlight, saw indigenous wildlife, went caving, enjoyed a week of sailing, and just plain relaxed. Now, we are looking forward to 2+ weeks in New Zealand. While our flight departs on the 24<sup>th</sup> and arrives in New Zealand on the 26<sup>th</sup>, Becky has reminded Hugh that Christmas, and the associated gift giving opportunities, WILL still happen!

Sending each of you our annual letter and photo collage with the year's memories has become one of our holiday traditions. We hope each of you enjoy your holiday traditions, too.

***Hugh Gregg and Becky Failor  
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