

Prettig Kerstdagen en een gelukkig nieuwe jaar van Hugh and Becky

Another year of Hugh and Becky's Christmas letter from The Netherlands. Hard to believe it will be three Christmases here, already. We continue to enjoy this adventure.

The biggest change has been the loss of Becky's father in late November. At 93 years young pneumonia weakened him and he gave up this earthly life. It was pleasant to think of him and other angels helping Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet deliver gifts to children on December 5. Becky's mom is doing better than expected after losing her husband of 68 years, thanks to the care and attention of Becky's sister, Peggy, and The Villas where she lives. Rather than going to the USA for the funeral, Becky will go to Tucson AZ in January to be with her mom for several weeks. Luckily, the rest of our family members have fared better.

Hugh's work with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons continues to be a challenge. Most of his staff have a maximum time they may work for the organization. So Hugh has been replacing staff members as they leave. He is happy with the two newest staff and is looking forward to the final choice for someone that should start in early 2013. This will leave a lasting effect on the organization and enables him to transfer work to others so he can build future strength for the Laboratory.

We continue to enjoy the travel opportunities that life offers, and sometimes for Hugh, demands. Hugh had two trips to India for OPCW business. His first trip found him landing in 48°C (118°F) humid weather. Becky stayed home in the cooler Netherlands. During the second visit it was still hot but more tolerable. The one day he had free from the busy work schedule was the day the Taj Mahal was closed to visitors. So, all work and no play for his trips to India. Just recently he went to both Beijing and Singapore for more OPCW duties.

But most of our travels have been more fun. We spent the last Christmas holiday in Italy, five days in Florence and five days in Rome. We did all the classics from seeing Michaelangelo's David in Florence and his Pieta in St. Peter's Basilica, tossing coins in Trevi Fountain, visiting the Duomo, etc. You see the Coliseum in the background of our photo.

We were lucky to see Becky's parents, her sister and family and some of our friends in the SF Bay Area when we were in Arizona and California last January. It was great to be with Becky's mom on her 90th birthday.

In February, southern Spain, Gibraltar, and the fascinating city of Barcelona offered a warm escape from the cold of The Netherlands. Throughout the year we enjoyed short trips to Berlin, Paris, Dusseldorf, and England.

We got time on the water, too. We rented a boat to "potter" on the canals around Leiden and joined a group sailing a 100 foot clipper ship on the Waddensee in northern Netherlands. In August, we visited Croatia and stayed inside Diocletian's Palace, before we sailed for a week on the Adriatic Sea.

Becky has become tours coordinator for the American Women's Club. The first trip was to Malta and Hugh was able to join us. Ok, go look up Malta, and then read about its importance in the history of the control of the Mediterranean. She just finished trips to see the Christmas markets of Aachen, Germany and Vienna, Austria and has plans for some great trips in 2013.

We'll be in Greece for this Christmas season, giving that economy a tiny boost. And just before heading to Arizona for three weeks starting in mid-January, Becky will tag along with Hugh for a trip to Madrid, Spain.

We enjoyed hosted friends who visited us, showing off our adopted country. If you are looking for an adventure you are welcome here in the Netherlands. Don't put your visit off too long because we will be back in the USA one of these days.

We hope that your life is happy and full of wonder and adventure.

Becky Failor and Hugh Gregg

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