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Dear Friends and Family,

Last year John wrote in his Christmas letter about reconnecting with Martha Teeter while attending the funeral of a mutual Penn State canoe partner, Anne Waldspurger Shuster. Well, good things do sometimes come from funerals.

At this time last year, John was staying with Martha in Davis, CA. John returned to Virginia in early February, just as COVID-19 was coming to the fore. We reunited in July. Martha screwed up her courage to travel to Virginia despite the pandemic, fleeing the heat, fires, and COVID in California to arrive in Mustoe, VA, a remote area with clear air and virtually no COVID cases.

To cut to the chase, we got married on 19 September in a small outdoor ceremony next to the pond on John's 400-acre farm. It was a "perfect fall day" — chilly, sunny and breezy (so no virus worries). There were only six of us, Martha's daughter (Simone DuRand) John's employee and good friend (Chris Moore) another good friend (Anne Adams, local newspaper owner/editor, who took a zillion photos for us) and Tate Swecker, the wonderful officiant. And, oh yes, we had around 75 friends and family attending via Zoom, with Martha's sister, Susannah Nuriel, providing technical assistance from Tacoma, WA. Quite an experience!



Doubling back to cover the rest of the year, John's return in February was timed for maple season. He was eager to make syrup this year since weather had been uncooperative in recent years and the stockpile was diminishing. Fortunately, it was a good year, since it is unlikely we will make it back early enough in 2021.

Martha, meanwhile, was working to address homelessness through a local non-profit she helped to found, Davis Opportunity Village, gardening in Village Homes, and singing for fun with several local (and sometimes not so local) singing groups.

March brought COVID. We started to get used to wearing a mask when we went to town, both on the East and the West coast. We minimized trips to the grocery or hardware stores, even resorting to curbside pickup (Martha). Until recently, a bank teller would have set off the alarm if a masked person walked into the bank; now it's required!

When Martha arrived at Dulles airport in July, she was fully wrapped in a nylon rain suit with hood, goggles, gloves and an N95 mask. She stripped all of this off and applied a liberal dose of hand sanitizer before getting in the car. We figured no virus had gotten thru those defenses so we skipped the quarantine. Perhaps that was risky but it turned out OK.



Martha at San Francisco airport

Harrisonburg, VA, with two universities, was an early epicenter for the virus, so John limited shopping in spring to the much less infected cities of Staunton and Covington. Later, we found a food co-op in Harrisonburg and decided to risk it. It is a worthy place, not quite up to the Davis Food Co-op in size or selection, but it has a lot of things we use. So we joined.

One of the few benefits of the pandemic is that all meetings are being held on Zoom and distance doesn't matter. So we have been able to participate in and even facilitate the music groups and meetings that we did in person last year in CA. We even continued our exercise classes via Zoom! It's not quite the same as meeting face-to-face but it's a lot better than missing out on everything while staying safe.

We made only two short day trips from Mustoe — one to visit John's friends Nevin & Judy Davis and to help them cut some firewood. Nevin is no longer able to cut wood but the Butler Cave Conservation Society has, collectively, taken care of their needs. We also went to Cass, WV, to visit an old caving and railroad friend of John's George Deike & wife Mickey and to introduce Martha to some of John's favorite machines, the logging steam engines at the Cass Scenic Railroad.



John and friend at Cass, WV

Our return to California was postponed several times until finally the fires subsided and air-quality improved. But we greatly enjoyed the fall display of colors around the farm, ending with several frosty nights! We arrived in Davis on November first under clear skies and 80° temperatures.



Since then John has gotten into several projects, the biggest one being to clean out and expand our tool shed, still ongoing. Martha continues with her community-service work and music groups.

The five-day Camp Harmony we attended last year between Christmas and New Year, near the coast north of San Francisco, has gone virtual this year. While our music groups usually have 10 to 30 people, this one has several hundred — an interesting challenge to navigate via Zoom. And we will both be technical assistants for sessions that are our favorites — Folk for both of us, Old Time for John and Ballads for Martha.

We hope you all have stayed well this year and managed to connect with family and friends safely. May the next year see us be protected from the virus with a new appreciation of friends and family!

Love to All, *Martha and John*



