



John and Martha with Martha's daughter, Simone and her significant other, Ian Jones, in December

JOHN SWEET & MARTHA TEETER

**April thru October:
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Dear Friends and Family,

Happy New Year to all. Our holiday letter is a bit late this year for reasons that will become clear as you read on. But first, let me urge those of you who send us seasonal greetings via USPS to use our Davis address. We will get to see your cards and letters much sooner that way!

Turning 85 and 79 this year led to challenges for us but there were high points too. While our ages are slowing us down and leading to mishaps, our willingness to travel has led us to deeper family connections.

2023 was mostly a down year for John as he suffered three attacks of aging. It started with a nasty fall in February that resulted in bruised ribs and a dozen stitches on a cut lip but fortunately no broken bones and (amazingly) no broken teeth; just blood everywhere and a quick trip to the ER. Then in early April, after returning to VA, he got a compression fracture of the T10 (thoracic) vertebra. Though evaluated promptly, the vertebroplasty surgery wasn't done until May. Hanging on for a month in pain and more or less alone (Martha was still in Davis) was difficult. Thankfully, generous neighbors helped with food. He spent the summer trying to get back in shape. Then Boom! In mid-October T12 fractured (both of these fractures were largely a result of osteoporosis) and it remains unrepaired to this day. Fall plans were greatly altered but we did fly back to CA on 12-Nov and have been struggling with the UC Davis medical bureaucracy ever since. An appointment on 4-Jan offers some hope. Stay tuned.

On a happier note, in March, after a brief visit with John's high school friend Peter



John with his cousins Martha Ann Colangelo and Ann Wagner at Martha's home in Houston. Ann lives in Arkansas but was in Houston for a meeting.



John and Martha with Pete and Carolyn Sweet at their home in Georgetown, TX.

Kiessling, we went to Texas to see family on both sides (John's cousins, Martha's aunt, and Martha's son Charlie). We flew to Houston and rented a car. John had not seen his first cousins – Martha Ann Colangelo and her brother, Pete Sweet – for many years (70 years for Pete). Martha Ann was our anchor in Houston, where Martha's son Charlie DuRand also lives. It was Martha's first time seeing him there. Charlie is a manager for Cady (www.home.cady.com), Senior High photos. We also went to see Pete and Carolyn Sweet, just north of Austin. What a joyful reunion! Sadly, they both recently had COVID, and Pete was unable to make a recovery. He died in April.

After seeing Pete & meeting Martha's aunt, John proceeded to Mustoe, VA. Martha's sister Susannah and cousin Susan arrived to visit our aunt Jane north of Houston. The sisters hadn't seen her since they were very young and Susan had never met her. It was lovely, filling in her family history and meeting her daughter! Jane is in her 90s and this might be one of the last chances to see her. After the visits, Martha returned to Davis, in part to plant a garden (lots of squash and kale in the fall when we returned) before going to Mustoe in mid-May.

Another high-point event was in December when Martha's daughter Simone DuRand and friend Ian, both CA Park Rangers, visited us on their way to their new assignment in Bodie Historic Park and in Mono Lake. They'd been in Crescent City (Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park) in the extreme NW of CA (Oregon border) and now went to the extreme east (Nevada border, Sierra District). They'll be living at 8000 feet elevation in a ghost town – the coldest town in CA. We took care of their cat, Steve, for a week while they visited Ian's parents in Arizona and LA (and saw gorgeous sites along the way). Moving had taken its toll on Simone (too much stuff!!) and they wound up donating an amazing amount of goods before they finally headed up to Bodie. It made for a much cleaner guest room for Martha and John in Davis.

We had more travel to family and friends. In September, we attended the Penn State Folkies reunion. Longtime friend Mike Thomsen was there with his guitar, strong voice and great repertoire, as well as friends Barb and Rick McKee. In October, on our way to Cape Cod, we visited Bart and Loraine Jackson in NJ, Martha's cousin Teresa and husband Dave and John's cousin Roy and wife Jean. At Cape Cod was Martha's Trust meeting and for her birthday her brother Steve Teeter and family came from NH. Finally, on the return trip, we spent a night with Barb and Rick McKee in NJ.

We hope you all have stayed well this year and managed to connect with family and friends safely. May the next year see us putting the virus behind us and repulsing the fascist threat to our democratic republic. Vote like your life depends on it.



John and Martha with Martha's son Charlie, who was giving us a tour of the cool and lovely Edith Moore Nature Sanctuary in Houston on a hot day.



Martha and John with Martha's aunt, Jane Stoll, and Jane's daughter Susan at Jane's home in Conroe, just north of Houston.

Love to All, *Martha and John*



John with Peter Kiessling, who stopped for a brief visit in Davis in March on the way home to Portland, OR, from southern CA.
John's upper lip still shows the effects of his fall a month earlier.



Mike Thomsen at Penn State Folkies in September.