



John and Martha at the Taste of Highland celebration, August 2024.

JOHN SWEET & MARTHA TEETER

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Dear Friends and Family,

Happy New Year to all. Our holiday letter is even later this year for no good reason — we were just busy. That's a step up from last year, when health issues were front and center. We are both healthy now! Before getting to the year's news, we want to thank those of you who sent us seasonal greetings via USPS and used our Davis address (see above). We get to see your cards and letters much sooner that way!

John did not start the year healthy. He had suffered a vertebral fracture in October, 2024 and returned to CA before it could be treated. Lots of pain here! Surgery in February fixed that but in the process an adjacent vertebra was broken, which called for another surgery in March. Finally all is well with the back and he is now taking a bone-strengthening drug in hopes of preventing future fractures.

In March Martha traveled to Bodie State Historical Park at 8000 ft in the Sierras, near the Nevada border, where daughter Simone works as a California Park Ranger. Bodie is a mining town abandoned about a century ago and preserved nearly intact by the cold, dry weather. Martha's son, Charlie, accompanied her on the trip. John could not go due to his back surgery.

Shortly after getting back east in May, we traveled to Silver Spring, MD, for the first showing of the restored *Fast and Clean*, a movie about the US Whitewater Team in 1979. This was a big deal for John. While he was not a member of the team, he was good friends with all of them and many were there for the movie premier, some he had not seen in 40 years.



The ghost town of Bodie lies in a bowl at 8000 ft in the Sierras.



Simone, Martha, Charlie

Back in Mustoe, our main project for the summer was replacing turf on a steep hillside by the house with a native-plant garden. Actually, it is Martha's project as John is unable to get on the steep slope, let alone do any work there. She covered it with cardboard to kill the grass, then covered the cardboard with straw to absorb rain water. She put in a lot of seeds and plants. We're eager to see what comes up this spring!



Martha indicating the location of a circular pollinator garden in the center of the hillside.

We attended three music camps this year. The first was the Penn State Folkies reunion near Huntingdon, PA, for three days in September. The second was in November at Montara, on the coast south of San Francisco. This is an historic site. The lighthouse has for many years warned coastal sailors of dangerous rocks and it was a military site during WW2, guarding against a Japanese invasion. We enjoyed two days of singing, playing and camaraderie. Then, after Christmas, we went to Camp Harmony in the hills north of San Francisco for five days. This was quite a different experience. At both Huntingdon and Montara there were about 16-18 of us living in typical hostel fashion, doing our own cooking and cleanup. Harmony was on an extensive campus called Camp Newman with many buildings and walkways connecting them. Meals were all provided for the 100+ attendees in a huge dining hall, allowing us to concentrate on the music (plus dance for Martha) and going for long walks to burn off the calories. We drove back to Davis on New Year's Day.



The Montara lighthouse and Hostel, site of one of the three music camps we attended in 2024.



Martha playing her viola with Rick McKee (left) and Mike Thomsen at the Folkies reunion..



After leaving the Folkies reunion we made a brief stop at the East Broadtop Railroad (EBT), about 30 miles SE of Huntingdon. This is a 3-ft-gage shortline that John had visited many times while living in State College, PA. It closed as a coal hauler in 1956 and reopened for tourists in 1960. The buildings, track, and equipment are all authentic from a century ago. The buildings were in great shape and there was talk of extending the track up Broadtop Mountain toward the mines, where it had once run. That's all good news but the locomotives were another story. EBT owns six 2-8-2 locomotives built between 1911 and 1920, none of which were in service during our visit and at least two of them had been heavily cannibalized for parts. One of the engines was supposedly in the shop for repairs, expected to return to service by next season. Meanwhile, the train was operating with a small diesel locomotive, a sad state of affairs.



Besides the lovely trip to Bodie and musical adventures, there were some difficult events. First, Martha's ex and children's father Curtiss DuRand passed away at the age of 81 in August after a brief illness. Charlie and Simone are still processing this. Simone took a trip up the coast of CA to spread her dad's ashes in places she shared with him — a healing journey. Then in early December, Martha's Aunt Jane, who we visited in Houston in

2023, passed away in her sleep at 96. What a joy to have visited her when we did last year! Finally, Martha's niece Katharine Teeter Thomas – a mother, grandmother, who also mothered nieces and nephews, each uniquely – passed away at 70 on December 31. She wrote "The only way death is not meaningless is to see yourself as part of something greater." And she was. <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/bostonglobe/name/katharine-thomas-obituary?id=57176049> Her obituary was lovingly written by her sister Judith Teeter. Martha is only 10 years older than Katharine, to the month, and she spent many holidays with her brother (Katharine's dad) & family during college.

On the positive side, Martha celebrated her 80TH birthday on October 15 in Davis with a song circle of singing friends. It was the perfect way to honor that occasion. John's daughter Stephanie's family sent a gorgeous bouquet.

There were many more events in this busy year, including much time spent on the horrendous election, but we have gone on long enough.

We hope you all have stayed well this year and managed to connect with family and friends.

Love to All, *Martha and John*