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Dear Friends and Relatives,

Another year, another birthday. They seem to keep on coming around. I just had my 97TH and, while my strength continues to decline, I'm still hanging in there. There have been no basic changes in my life this past year. I am still living in my own apartment with the

same group of women, plus John and Char, looking after my needs.

The photo above was taken in my "day room," where I spend most of my time. I enjoy my Christmas trees and all of the cards people have sent — more arriving every day. Polly and John Wagner sent me the live spruce tree in the red pot. The smaller metal tree to the right has been one of my favorite holiday decorations for many years. It was made in Mexico out of tin cans. It has five "branches," each with a small candle. In the spring we will plant out the live tree on John and Char's farm, close to a balsam fir that was my tiny Christmas tree about twelve years ago. That tree has thrived and is now 12 to 15 feet tall. I hope this one will do as well.

The photo at right was taken last year in my living room. With me is my daughter-in-law, Char. The painting on the wall was done by my sister, Margaret Rogerson.

My most serious health problem this year has been some compression fractures of the spine due to osteoporosis. There is nothing that can be done about them except to treat the symptoms. I was on a pain medication that did not agree with me and spent a few days in the hospital getting that sorted out. I am now getting by with Tylenol, which works pretty well most of the time.



I try to read the paper a little bit every day and try to keep up with major events. I truly hope we can avoid a war with Iraq and come to terms with those who want to do us harm. I have seen too many wars in my life and do not want to witness more strife.

My favorite stray cat, Roamer, has not been seen for awhile but Gray Cat still comes around and I have a new feline friend named Fred. He is not as tame as the others and does not come indoors but I enjoy watching him through the window.

I hope that all remains well with you and that the new year will be kind to each of us.

Mary Heath