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YULE LETTER # 26 - 2013
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MERRY CHRISTMAS, Y'ALL --

Basic Math From This Engineer: Lots Of Friends Scattered All Over, But Not Enough Time To Write To Each One Equals A Christmas Letter. Recipients Of This Letter Include Relatives; College Classmates; Co-Workers; Softball Friends Throughout The U.S. and Canada; Friends In The NW; Friends In Canton, N.C. Where I Grew Up; Friends In Cities Where I Lived Like Harrisburg, Pa And Winter Haven, Fla; Fastpitch Softball Teammates; Alumni of My Softball Teams And Business Associates. Hopefully In This Newsletter, there WILL be A Tidbit of News for Each of You.

As postage and the cost of cards increase, I am sending fewer Christmas Cards by snail mail. To be sure that you stay on the list, please send me your Email address if you receive a Snail Mail card.

YOUR YEAR in the SPOTLIGHT – In the past, I have been thanked for mentioning people in my newsletter and harangued by those who have not been mentioned. Read on and see if 2013 was your year.

PREVIEW – I was up to three pages in the initial draft of this year's Christmas letter. Typically, the letter is limited to two pages with a one page front and back for mailing. So I have excluded news of injury and medical issues, growing old expenses and estate matters. An amended letter with all the news will go to my relatives and immediate family and some co-workers.

INTERNATIONAL HOLIDAY LUNCH - We had our company Holiday lunch at Creekside West as I prepare this letter. The lunch took on an international flavor as Mike and Lynda told of their recent month long travel to Dubai and Palm Island; Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates; Nepal, Mumbai, Delhi and the Taj Mahal, India and the Himalayas. A recent episode of the TV show-Amazing Race-was filmed in Abu Dhabi. Mike Bauer is our Chief Architect and wife Lynda is a retired school teacher. They take International trips every few years. Their conversation prompted President Dave Franklin to talk briefly of his travels in Bahrain. The most interesting conversation was Lynda's accounting of the separation of men and women at the security check in at airport gates. The culture and religion don't allow the mixing. Of course, each told of "different" bathroom accommodations in these middle-east countries (You don't want to know). I ask anyone who travels to bring me back all the free travel maps they can. What a treasure trove I got from Mike. There will be lots of review of the India maps with my tailor who is from India. He has been patching my softball uniforms for many years. P.S. Mike and Lynda found time to serve at Noah's Ark, a homeless shelter in Wapato, WA on Thanksgiving Day.

NEWSLETTERS – A very special thanks is given to all of you who took time to write a newsletter about your family and your year's activities. Since I may not see you all year, I certainly feel much closer to you, my friends, for sharing.

Last year's letter ended with news thru Nov 30, 2012. Below is the news from last December (2012).

FAMILY VISIT IN NEWCASTLE, WA -- Two years ago during the week before Christmas, younger brother Richie and wife Janie made the trip from St Simon's Island, GA to Newcastle, WA for a visit with son Kevin, wife Stef, Ella (now 8) and Mia (now 6). I did not make the family visit due to the winter weather. Although Snoqualmie Pass was relatively trouble free that week, it was not the same in the Yakima Valley. As an example - One morning it snowed in Yakima for 6 hours and there were 40 accidents in the Yakima Valley.

In Dec 2012, another Christmas visit was planned to Newcastle for the aforementioned six family members. I have a rule never to drive across the mountain passes from Nov 1st until April 1st. So I said I would join family in Newcastle, weather permitting. Brother and nephew offered to buy my plane ticket for the trip, so I figured I better make the trip this time. I checked the pass reports and found a couple of days with projected moderate winter weather to drive over, and then drive back. On the trip over (Sat 12/22), I encountered fog on the hills from Yakima to Ellensburg, traveled across the pass on a bare and wet roadway, then fought rainstorms and spray without working windshield washers driving into Seattle.

I checked into my favorite motel (Always Room 120) in Renton (Full house at Kevin's) and watched the UW Huskies try to beat Boise State in the Las Vegas Bowl. That evening we had our traditional family dinner at a restaurant – Vietnamese, this time. I learned about Pho which is a huge bowl with selected meat and noodles. Delicious ! Finished up the evening watching Atlanta beat Detroit in a Monday night NFL game on Saturday.

It was a harrowing trip back to the motel that night as my night vision seems to be limited. The rain didn't help and I had trouble even on roads I have traveled many times.

The weather was nice on Sunday (12/23) as we made a mid-day trip to Molbak's in Woodinville, WA. Under greenhouse roofs, there are 3 ½ acres of plants, flowers, garland, Christmas decorations and other species too numerous to count. The other 1 ½ acres is a Home and Garden store with hundreds of items. If you are ever in the area, this is a must see (www.molbaks.com).

We came back home for some light snacks – Kevin and Stef seem to be able to set out a light lunch in less than 7 minutes. Then it was NFL football leading into the Sunday night stomping the Seahawks put on the '49ers.

Earlier in the month, Kevin and Stef had rearranged room configurations so that the girl's playroom was relocated to a room off the kitchen and the vacated room converted back to a dining room. The extra leafs were put into the dining room table and decorations were added. At halftime of the Seahawks game, Kevin put the DVR on pause and we had the first dinner at the new dining room table - an excellent salmon dinner that Stef prepared. Then we finished watching the 2nd half of the game and Richie showed a video of his and Janie's May 2012 trip to Switzerland.

That night Kevin drove me and my car back to the motel and Stef followed for the return trip for Kevin. It was a good move as the predicted storm hit about 9 PM.

I waited until about 10 AM (Mon 12/24) before attempting the return trip across the pass. Typically once a storm passes, the Pass crew clears off the roadway very quickly. The sun was out, the roads were bare and wet and it was a beautiful trip home as the sunlight glistened off the ever present snow beside the road.

CHRISTMAS DINNER AT THE MAGERS – Each Christmas day, Tom and Billie Magers invite me to share Christmas Day dinner at their home with their large and jovial family. It takes us a month to agree on the traditional afternoon movie which is followed by NFL football. I was home from Newcastle in time to go to dinner at Tom and Billie Magers' home. No such luck. It started snowing Christmas Eve and didn't stop until 4 ½ inches had accumulated. The hill up to Tom's house was impossible without 4 wheel drive. And the road from my house was treacherous. The bridge on the road up to my house is under construction for a new bridge. The detour re-route means only a very few cars traverse on my road out, i. e., no traffic to wear down the snow to make driving possible. But Yakima is unique, as the temperature rose and the snow was off the roadways by 2:00 pm the next day (12/26).

VA TECH FOOTBALL - Last December 28th at the Russell Athletic Bowl in Orlando, Fla. – Virginia Tech kicker Cody Journell drilled a 22-yard field goal in overtime, and Rutgers kicker Nick Borgese misfired from 42-yards out on the Scarlets Knights' possession, enabling the Hokies to rally for a 13-10 overtime victory in the Russell Athletic Bowl on Friday night at the Florida Citrus Bowl.

The Hokies closed out last season by winning their final three games and finishing the season with a 7-6 overall mark, thus extending their streak of consecutive winning seasons to 20 and avoiding their first losing season since 1992. Tech also snapped a modest two-game bowl losing streak.

Va Tech lost to basketball power Duke University, who went on the win the Coastal division of the Atlantic Coast Conference and will face # 1 BCS rated Fla State in the ACC Championship game. Va Tech is projected to play UCLA in the Sun Bowl in El Paso, TX on New Year's Eve. In my senior year of high school, I received the Angier B. Duke scholarship to Duke. It was not enough money for that prestigious school, so I ended up at Va Tech.

BASEBALL HISTORY – In our annual Thanksgiving morning telecom (Yakima to St Simons Island, GA), brother Richie mentioned that he still had a copy of an April 1948 Asheville (NC) Citizen-Times newspaper photo showing him in the Brooklyn Dodgers dugout seeking autographs. Richie was eight years old and already wearing glasses.

The Dodgers made a stop each spring at their Asheville, NC Tourists farm club, en-route from spring training at Vero Beach, Fla to Brooklyn NY for their season opener. The Dodgers were managed by Charlie Dressen. Catcher Roy Campanella golfed a low pitch in the LF stands, to the delight of the LF bleacher fans (We were segregated at that time), helping the Dodgers to a 9-8 win.

Jackie Robinson grounded to the SS, but didn't hustle to first base. Jackie saw the SS bobble the ball and turned on his speed. He was called out on a close play at first. That was probably one of only a few times that fans got to see Jackie argue vehemently with the umpire's call.

That year, yours truly won a newspaper contest to come closet to selecting the starters for the Major League All-Star game. That pick resulted in my photo on the front Sports Page and a season ticket to the Asheville Tourists Class "B" minor baseball league team (18 miles from my home town of Canton, NC).

NEW TEETH – On Sunday June 9th, 2013 while operating the softball pitching machine at practice, I took a batted softball at close range. The initial hit was to the upper right chest as I tried to turn away, then the ball bounced against my mouth. It knocked the two middle teeth off my 4-tooth upper center bridge and broke the anchor tooth on the left side. The anchor tooth on the right side has been repaired multiple times, but was still mostly defective at its inaccessible root.

During the incident, I maintained the cigarette in my mouth until I bent over to spit out the blood. And yes, I did finish practice.

The dentist said no repair was possible as replacement teeth in a bridge will only bond with heat. I needed to wait on the injury healing process before taking any repair action. I was feeling OK. I took two pain pills that week and some Ibuprofen. Then I only took one pain pill the following week. I apologize to my friends and softball buddies who had to bear looking at my "Frankenstein mouth" for several months.

I was on borrowed time anyway – protecting the bridge and the failing anchor – no steak, chew on the sides, no bar fights and no softball games as a third baseman or catcher.

At the next dentist visit, Dr Connell suggested replacing all the top teeth with a full set of dentures. He said I only had four (4) good teeth

on top (Lost some others over the first 50 years). I said to myself no way was I going to revert to dentures.

In late September, I succumbed to the inevitable and had the teeth impression made that is the basis for denture preparation. In mid-October, all the top teeth were extracted without incident and minimum resultant pain. The denture is inserted before you leave the dentist chair. Three weeks later after a healing period, I was back in for a fitting. The denture is covered with molding goop and held in position in the mouth for about five minutes. After it hardens, the excess is trimmed and the dentures re-inserted. My gums continue to shrink as they heal and I am about ready for another fitting. Sometime in the near future, I will get what is called a soft re-line. Thru this episode, I only took two pain pills, but the dentist advised a week's worth of Ibuprofen which also assists in the healing. I'm learning how to chew all over again and having more trouble with my life-long over bite rather than having to adjust to the dentures.

FAMILY VISIT for 2013 CANCELLED - Brother Richie Williamson and Sister-in-Law Janie of St Simons Island, Georgia had planned a return trip to the Northwest on October 1st for a family visit with son Kevin/Stef in Newcastle, WA and yours truly in Yakima. But in August Janie had knee replacement that went sour. Janie is still recovering and has finished therapy with a significant improvement in range of motion of the knee. Carol English, ASA commissioner for Wash State's softball program just had her knee replacement. Let's hope hers goes much better than Janie's.

FASTPITCH SOFTBALL – Fastpitch softball in 2013 was My 49th year as a player (Retired in 1998); My 55th year as a coach, My 37th year as a sponsor; My 36th year as the Yakima Softball Assn Executive Director and My 31st year as fast pitch Commissioner in this area for the Washington Amateur Softball Assn (ASA).

I have the title of Director Emeritus for my 21 years as Vice-President with the North American Fastpitch Assn (NAFA). I was a co-founder of NAFA and selected for their Hall of Fame. I continue to serve on the Executive Committee, the Classification Committee and act as the Secretary for the Hall of Fame Selection Committee. Recently, I concluded eight years as an At-Large Commissioner, then a Vice- President with the International Softball Congress (ISC), a victim of downsizing.

The JRW & Associates fastpitch softball team had a good year, winning tournament championships in Moses Lake, WA and Portland, Ore. In Moses Lake, 60 year old Tom Magers, the team's designated hitter, earned the Most Valuable Player trophy with key hits at critical times. Pitcher Sam Aldridge gathered the Most Valuable Pitcher trophy, throwing all but one game in the tournament. In Portland Sam went down with a leg injury facing the second batter in the semi-final game. Joey Robbins relieved and dominated in back-to-back victories enroute to the MVP trophy.

The year ended on a down note with a 1-3 record in the ASA West Nationals in Salem, Ore over the Labor Day weekend. The bats went dead and the team made an abnormal number of errors. Troy Grow, a veteran player with 34 tears on JRW teams, mentioned our albatross in the post-tournament meeting – "If our team has weaknesses that we try to hide, the other team will inevitably find that weakness".

WISHING EACH OF YOU A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS, A REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST'S BIRTHDAY AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

(Jim) (Jimmy) (Bob) (Bobby) (Five)
(J. R.) (Ridge) (Coach) (Jim-Bob) (Jimbo)
(Skipper) (Luv) (Area Fixture) (Legend = Old Man with
Accomplishments and Accolades)