

Dear Family and Friends,

**T**he calendar tells me December is upon us and I have fallen short of a New Year's resolution to stay in touch during this past year. A quick note or a phone call should be simple enough, but the current of our busy lives is strong and pleasant meandering infrequent. For this I apologize and substitute, humbly, a one-size-fits-all family update.

The basic facts remain unchanged — Gary and I watch excitedly as our youngsters leave the nest and embark on their adult life journeys and we thoroughly enjoy our grand-parenting experience with Hailey Evelyn Howland. Tanya (Gary's eldest) and Chad announced last summer that Hailey is expecting a sister or brother in March; and learned this fall that Tanya is in fact pregnant with twin boys, with a revised due date in February.

Gary has not been stationed within commuting distance this summer and is once again a construction nomad. He spent the first part of the summer on the Iowa-Minnesota border in Leroy and finished out the summer and fall in Rockville, near St. Cloud. In spite of the long hours, temperamental equipment, and unpredictable weather conditions, Gary loves the thrill of a new road to build. The winter months find him doing legwork in preparation for next year's construction bids. The weekends are consumed by efforts to put miles on his Harley, complete paperwork and care for "his" birds. He has cultivated quite a diverse avian "clientele" at his feeders, including hummingbirds, rose-breasted grosbeaks, pheasants (pictured right) and droves of goldfinches.



Tanya decided not to go back to teaching this year. She takes care of Hailey and several other children in her home daycare. Chad is now a tenured teacher in one of the middle schools in Farmington and recently earned his MA degree. Although Chad continues to experience medical problems with his back, he and Tanya are always on the go. I tire just listening to their typical weekend itinerary. Hailey continues to delight. She's very mobile now, and a powerful communicator, even if all the words aren't instantly recognizable. She loves animals, especially dogs.

Nick (Gary's son) was offered a teaching job (middle school Band) in Edina this summer. He has worked in the school for two years as an assistant. His first year as a teacher is going very well, as he knows the students and enjoys his colleagues. Nick and his roommate Andy recently purchased a house in Maple Grove. Their lovable cocker spaniel, Armstrong, now has his own fenced yard; a big improvement over apartment living!

Crystal (Gary's youngest) finished her teaching degree and student teaching experiences this fall at St. Cloud State, graduating in December. She spent November in Texas on a student teaching assignment. In spite of her busy academic schedule, she somehow made enough time for athletics ---- and put in an All American performance in Boston this spring (nearly 12' in the pole vault). She will soon begin job hunting, looking for a teaching position in either physical or special education.



Jaslyn (Rosaly'n's eldest) transitioned directly from her undergraduate program (Engineering and Soils) at UW Madison to a Master's program this coming year. She spent the summer in the Soil's Lab, working on her research project among other things. Her friend, Jim, is half way through his Master's Degree program, working as a research assistant. He is currently looking into options for a Ph.D. program, outside of Madison. They were able to get away last summer for a couple weeks of traveling (4000 miles worth) and camping in Glacier, Tetons, Yellowstone and SawTooth. As a part of her research on fertilizer leachate Jaslyn planted seedlings on our farm, for follow up study. Now she returns home not only for the "big" holidays, but to measure her trees! She and Jim will be splitting the holiday season between his folks in Wisconsin and our family here in Northfield.

Although undecided on a major or profession, Lesanna (Rosaly'n's middle daughter) is leaning toward Biology, with a concentration in Art. Her ceramics work has progressed remarkably following classes at Carleton, as a freshman and sophomore, and at the U of M, during her senior year in high school. Our cupboard overflows with wonderful handmade mugs and dishes. Lesanna worked as a veterinary assistant this summer and led a canoe trip in the BWCA for incoming Carleton freshman in August. Currently enjoying a break between trimesters, she is working for a Biology professor at Carleton and the veterinary clinic in Northfield. The Sitar, ceramics, exercise and reading consume the balance of her time away from work.

Dorissa (Rosaly'n's youngest) is progressing through a rigorous senior year at Northfield High School. Outside of her studies she continues to be involved in Middle Eastern dance and outdoor activities. She and Lessy took a camping trip to the North Shore of Lake Superior in August. Rissy worked a variety of jobs last summer, mostly in dog kennels. Her summer began with some traveling, as her AP Chemistry class visited various labs and museums in Chicago for a weekend in June, and her Art class spent nearly a week in New York City. Last weekend brought some very good news to our mailbox; Dorissa was accepted at Carleton. She plans to pursue science.



Spritzen & Rissy

The news of extended family and friends is good. Gary's folks are well, as are my ex-in-laws, the Arnesens. Ron and Kris will be making the journey from Stillwater with their family to join us on Christmas Day. Jim and Traci will enjoy the holidays California-style this year. I visited my Grandma (father's mother) last week in her home in Sheffield, Iowa. As could be expected, I found her busy --- crocheting, embroidering and keeping house. Both my Grandmas have always been bright stars in my sky. Grandma Harpole died on Easter nearly four years ago at the age of 96. Grandma Rodruck, born Fern Olive Bullis in 1902, is closing in on the century mark. She is pictured here in her backyard on her 99<sup>th</sup> birthday. I remember, as a child, running down the alley to keep up with Grandma walking to work. Her stride was deliberate and her pace fast. Grandma never wastes time; not then and not now.





Our creature count is a bit down this year as elderly rabbits and rats succumbed. Dog, horse and cat numbers hold steady at 4, 5, and 2 respectively. Gary recently purchased two wild turkeys, hoping for offspring to release this summer to complement our abundant mallard and pheasant populations. The numerous coyotes in the area proved fascinating this past year because they were especially vocal and visible, showing themselves even during the day. The girls and I take turns howling at them attempting to elicit responses; often successfully. Gary does not participate in this activity. I suspect that living a quarter mile from the nearest neighbor for more than a decade has rendered me unsuitable for any higher density residential arrangements!

This year brought a couple unusual animal incidents --- saving an abandoned week-old raccoon from a tree in our yard and rescuing a day-old wood duck caught in heavy traffic on 35W.

Again this year, I am privileged to work with many fine people in the Farmington School district. Educational technology continues to be a challenging and exciting field. It seems that the combination of my job and my duties at home pretty much consumes the available hours each day holds. On the occasions when time remains after chores are done I enjoy photography, reading and sewing. However, I have learned to treasure even those days which offer no "leisure" time, as I find joy in the simple acts of breaking ice out of a horse water bucket, wrestling the mower across the lawn, or lifting steaming quart jars of tomatoes out of the canner. Of course, this household bliss is sporadically interrupted by such events as a dog-skunk encounter or a 24-foot section of metal fence falling on my shin. Overall, I find that the demands of living in the country are also its charms.

The smiles of those close to me and the memories of absent loved ones enrich this holiday season. May you find happiness now and in the coming year.

Truly,

Rosalyn, for the family.



Rabbit



Pansies



Pearl

Dorissa



Lesanna



Sunflower



Jaslyn



Spritzen Rissy Trotzig



Skeeter



Rosalyn and Ronald, taken 1952 at Grandma Rodrucks