



Christmas 2018

Hi all!

Only a brief and simple note with the Christmas card this year... no time for a tome this time around – too much going on. We'll get back to the usual type of Christmas Letter NEXT year, maybe!

Gene has worked his last full year in 2018, before his retirement on 24 January 2019. With that in mind we spent about a year investigating how best to facilitate our relocation to Maine. So, our quaint little Ballot Box in Newcastle Maine is changing! We fell in love with the house at first sight ten years ago, but alas, it's too small for a permanent residence and for all the toys we both have (less than 900 sq. Ft., great for weekends and vacations, but...!), and it didn't have a garage (a necessity in the winter up there), and it didn't have great accommodations for guests, and... and... and.

We had three options; sell and buy something better, tear it down and start new, or expand. We couldn't bring ourselves to sell it or tear it down, so that left only option 3... expand, so, we're expanding! We're keeping the basic house and all its charm, but making five significant changes; we're bumping out six feet across the entire front (the south side) to add to the tiny kitchen and dining cubby, adding a 4-season sunroom on the west side, building a 3-bay, 2-story garage on the east side (at a slight angle to the main house) with 2 bays for cars (the third bay for tool shed and woodworking shop) and the entire top floor as a quilt studio with half-bath, and connecting the house to the garage with a heated entryway. Finally, the existing basement will be converted into a guest suite with another half-bath once the expansion is completed. Construction started 18 September, and our general contractor has promised us that everything except the basement conversion will be complete by the first of May 2019! You can view the various past (and future, eventually) phases on the **Ballot Box CHANGES** page:

<http://ballotbox.familytreehouse.net/changes.html>

Moving to Maine also means unloading the house in Woburn, bought in September 1988! Thirty-plus years of "stuff" to clean out to get the house ready to hit the market. I retire in January, but I know what my new full-time job for February and March will be! Lynn and I have been tinkering with the herculean task for a while, but we'll need to accelerate the process soon if we want to be able to offload the house in synch with the move north!



Another “big thing” this year is that we are now grandparents! Megan and Dan have a son; Alexander Paul Morneau! Alex was born February 9th, and is a happy, sweet, smiler who lights up a room wherever he is. We chose the German words for grandfather and grandmother, ***Opa*** and ***Oma***, as our names for him to call us. Alex isn’t talking yet, so we haven’t heard him call to us... so far! We don’t get to see him as much as we’d like, but that may be true for all grandparents.

Audrey’s living in Amesbury, doing dog-grooming, dog-sitting, and dog-training as well as her full-time job! She has a service-dog-in-training sidekick (Loki), and is keeping herself busy and independent.

Lynn keeps up with her quilting and is looking forward to moving north where the entire 2nd floor of the garage will be her 20’ x 20’ quilt studio! She hopes to host many quilt related activities such as making quilts for charity and teaching beginners to sew and quilt in the new space. This has been a year for making baby and kids quilts. Friends and a neighbor had babies this year and of course there was the first of many for Alex. Lynn still participates in two quilt/sewing bees, one in Cambridge MA and one on Pemaquid Peninsula in Maine and hopes to continue them both as much as possible.

Gene is finishing up his work for MITRE (he hit the 30-year plateau last year), working technical and engineering support for the Air Force on Foreign Military Sales to allied countries. Two trips this past year, eight days in April and seven days in August, both to Sofia Bulgaria... a very pleasant city to visit, with serious pride in their cultural heritage. Photos and a few videos are on Flickr at:

<https://flic.kr/s/aHskDA24MD>

As he winds up his 31+ years at MITRE, he tallied some of his travel statistics; he took 224 business trips for MITRE over the 31+ years, encompassing 1068 days (2.93 YEARS on the road!). His longest trip was 46 days (in 2009, to Germany), with a plethora of one-day trips; lots of one-day train trips while we lived in Germany (1991-95) and several one-day flights to DC and back from Bedford MA. That’s almost 10% of his time at MITRE spent on the road! Not very fair to Lynn... especially when the kids were little.

Obviously, our address will change at some point in 2019, but we’ve had a post office box up in Newcastle Maine for a while, so you can contact us using that address even now (P.O. Box 211, Newcastle ME 04553), and we have a house phone (207-385-1782) that works when the internet is up and running.

Happy holidays, and may 2019 be bright and sunny for all of us!

Gene & Lynn