

Holiday greetings to all our very good friends!

As 2002 approaches, we recognize that life has changed irrevocably for all of us, and yet there is hope and comfort in approaching the holidays as always. Certainly, much good has happened to us over the past year and Dick and I are immeasurably grateful for that.

The biggest news from our family is the arrival of our two new grandsons – David Hartman Willey to John and Marnie on October 15th and Tayson Kemp Willey to Ron and Kelley on November 5th. We were thrilled to meet them both just before Thanksgiving and were also grateful for the opportunity to visit with the complement of grandchildren at that time: Sydney (2), Lindsay (~3), Kevin (~4) and Kaylee (8). All adorable! Yes, we are very lucky. We have posted some pictures on our home pages at willeyweb.com. We hope you will visit sometime and return often, as we expect to have a lot more new material soon.



We were able to take some really exciting trips this year. We went to San Diego (actually La Mesa) in January to visit with John, Marnie, Beth, Jana and our good friends Don Belter and Rose Snow. The strangest thing happened – it turned out everyone lived within blocks of one another and didn't even know it! We had some really good times together touring Temecula wineries and listening to the blues at Kenny Gs, a very pleasant Cajun style BBQ restaurant. Alaska, our long time dream trip, came true in June. We had an incredible cruise on the Radisson Seven Seas Mariner, accompanied by representatives from some local Santa Ynez Valley wineries. Thus, we were able to indulge in one of our favorite pastimes while viewing icebergs along the Inland Passage. It was a beautiful ship where every room was a luxurious suite with a balcony. We were nicely spoiled and are ready to try that again soon to a different location, probably Scandinavia in August. After the cruise, we rented a car and did a ten-day land trip, staying at B&Bs that Dick had researched on the Internet. If possible, that part was even better than the cruise!

We made our usual Spring and Fall trips to Phoenix, visiting our families there, including Pam & Paul who are family indeed. At Pam & Paul's, we were also able to visit with our good friends Pat & Joe Yokobosky, whom we also expect to see here over the Christmas season. On the Spring trip, we tried camping in the Southeastern Arizona birding country with our friends John & Nora Ayres. Of course, the weather Gods took that opportunity to bring snow to the area, so the pleasure of camping became somewhat moot. But we had a good time anyway, saw places we had never been, and accumulated quite a few "life-birds" in the process. On the way home, we managed to stop by Victorville to visit our very good friends Jerry & Betty Copeland. Dick got in some quality golfing with Jerry, and Betty introduced me to some enjoyable antiquing experiences in Old Town.

We also remember with pleasure many great wine events we shared with friends. In May, we did the Buttonwood New-Orleans-style crawfish broil with Dolly & Gerry Beth. That is an incredible picnic held out of doors near a pretty little lake. The winemaker brings in crawfish live from New Orleans and cooks them with Cajun fixings in great big pots. When they're done the crawfish & fixings are spread out on the table and everyone digs in. Of course there's a Cajun Zydeco band playing to liven things up. Great fun! In July we joined Dolly & Gerry again

at a Vanda Shepherd concert-picnic in the Gainey garden. Wow, is all I have to say to that one. She and her music were really wonderful — and the company and the wine weren't bad either. Then in August, we did a wine dinner with Gerry & Dolly at Dolly's favorite "Far Out" winery in Paso Robles: Adelaida. I understand it was great, but I will admit I don't remember much about that one, since I spent the time sleeping outside while everyone else enjoyed dinner. The generosity of the pourers at the pre-dinner garden hors d'oeuvres simply did me in, but it was a great weekend, anyway. And, oh yes, another very special event happened in May when we joined the Mission Valley winery at the barn in their new vineyards behind the Santa Ynez Mission. We got to watch over 500 Vistadores take their traditional ride to the Mission. They passed right in front of us, and amongst them were several old and new friends, including Jeff Modic and George Stillman.



Especially fun this year was the opportunity to merge our winery and birding activities! With a group of likeminded birders, we formed the Ornithological Oenophiles (Birding Wine-lovers). We had great times together, both birding and sharing in several blind tastings of different varietals. Of course, our ritual wine tasting is always followed by good food. You will find our favorite recipes and may read about the tasting results on the wine club web page that Becky Hoban and I put together: willeyweb.com/wineclub. Mixing these activities did result in a few times when our birding and wineing schedules conflicted. This Summer we were faced with choosing between two picnics on the same day — our annual La Purisima Audubon Society picnic and one for the Santa Barbara Vintner's Association. What should we do? Why go to both of course! Not all of our friends could handle this, but at least Cher & Bruce Hollingworth were up to it. Don & Diane Kistler joined us at the winery and we had we had a good time at both. We were also able to participate in some extra special events due to the winery connections of our most-connected wineclub member Becky, who pours for Sanford on weekends. She hosted a vertical Sanford Chardonnay tasting from her own library of 1991 to 2000 chardonnays. She also arranged a special Barrel tasting by Sanford's winemaker Bruno D'Alfonso. Oh, My! That was a unique experience to be sure. Bruno proved to be extremely entertaining as well as a talented maker of wonderful wines. In September, we accompanied Becky and Brad at "Real Men Cook" an extraordinary benefit contest of what have to be the best cooks of the Santa Ynez Valley. Naturally, the event is also supported by the best Valley wineries. Wine events this year also included our yearly treks to both the fabulous Arthritis Festival at the San Luis Obispo mission grounds and the Paso Robles Christmas Open House weekend and Vine Street Victorian Christmas. Don & Diane and John & Nora joined us on the Paso trek and we certainly had a good time!



Then, of course, we had a few golf events. In July, Betty & Jerry spent some time at Pine Mountain with us before our annual LPAS birding field trip. The golf course there is small but fun. And very soon after, they came here to participate in the Village Country Club annual Mackie Tournament. Dick and Jerry didn't exactly win, but they certainly were the best dressed on the green, thanks to Jerry's good taste. Dick does his regular Wednesday and Friday golfing with friends, together with whatever time his good buddy Dave Vener can share. So Dick keeps his game up nicely. Unfortunately, Barbara didn't improve her golf game this year, but she did help VCC by developing a web page to show



how much work had been done at the country club toward becoming a certified Audubon International Cooperative Sanctuary. And, as a result, full certification was awarded in November. For her efforts, Barbara was asked to take on the maintenance of the entire VCC web site, which she was quite pleased to do. You can check all this out at villagecc.net.

And, of course, there were a few extra special birding experiences throughout the year. I continued to publish the LPAS newsletter and then took over maintenance of our website in partnership again with Becky. That turned out to be a good deal of work, but was gratifying at the same time. This year we got heavily involved in the LPAS birding rally that is held each October. Dick found special satisfaction in being able to get the local wineries to contribute to our auction. To top it off, we ended up with the winning bids on much of the wine ourselves. It was lots of fun. We also actually did some birding throughout the year. In addition to finding new life birds on our travels, we were fortunate enough to find some closer to home. We discovered Lake Los Carneros and the Goleta Slough near Santa Barbara and have been able to chase and capture (figuratively) a couple of unusual birds there. And the reason this was so special is that it was actually Dick who found them. He has turned out to be a pretty good birder! We added 32 new birds to our life list this year. And of course Dick continued his care of the VCC bluebird nestbox trail throughout the Spring and fledged over 30 new baby bluebirds, as well 45 oak titmice and a few house wrens. And would you believe?? He actually arranged an LPAS board meeting dinner on his birthday! (That even beats the year he agreed to go with me to the opera.) Is it surprising that he has been nominated to hold the LPAS Presidency next year?

We again enjoyed our local theater this year. PCPA in Solvang outdid itself with productions of *My Fair Lady* and *On Golden Pond* that we believed were actually better than the movies. Of course there is something about sitting out of doors in the crisp night air after a good dinner that is inherently better than the movies. This year we also had season tickets to the Santa Barbara Music Theater and enjoyed matinee performances of *Chicago* and *Tap*, each time followed by Beach Café sunset dinners. Once, we even were able to join our local birding expert Karen Bridgers after the play and before dinner. As I recall, the day had started out with a couple winery open houses in Solvang. Now THAT was a full day!

One of the best things for me this year was the strides that Apple made in the marketplace. I didn't manage to get a new computer, but Dick did allow me to visit the new Apple stores a couple of times and you can be sure I have my eye on that next generation Macintosh desktop. However, this year I learned how really powerful is the Apple Powerbook I bought last year. It is now my only computer since my old desktop went to our good friend Marcia Vener. She is very happy to have a Macintosh, even an older one, though she would have preferred a new iMac for Christmas. I find that with the performance of my Powerbook and my new monitor, color printer, and scanner, I get results I could only dream of previously. In fact, at one of the B&B's we visited in Alaska, the proprietor said he much regretted moving from a Powerbook like mine to the flashy new Titanium model, and he offered to trade me straight across! No way! My computing time is still limited (though Dick might tell you otherwise.) But the best part is that when we go away, I can





simply unplug the peripheral devices and take the Powerbook with me! With its 12-gigabyte memory, I now travel with all the data I have ever accumulated, including every single photo we've taken in the past five years.

Now, what about working you ask? You must be retired, in order to do all that you say? Well, no, not actually, not yet. In truth, I volunteered in January, but to no avail. They didn't accept my offer. I watched several good friends leave, but I hung on. And then in October, I was asked to help define the new contract software processes. Well, how could I resist? So, retirement has receded once more...Honest, though, next year I will really do it!

So, during this holiday season we look back on a very full year. We are looking forward to walking through the Christmas Eve wonderland (where John & Nora live) with our friends Becky Hoban and Brad Hines. And we are looking forward to New Year's Eve when we will do some wine tasting in the limo we bid on at a benefit auction. Dolly and Betty and Jerry and Gerry are going with us and then we are all going to the country club to bring in the new year. Last September we, like the rest of America, sat in stunned disbelief as we watched events unfold, and we listen now in quiet astonishment to all that is happening. We display our flag and cry when we hear the national anthem. We don't expect a quick closure to these events that have turned the world upside down. But our President advised us to carry on our lives and what other choice do we really have?. It's been quite a year and these recent events have caused us to discover again what we always knew — how precious is the love we have for all of you. Yes, there is a lot to be grateful for.

*Merry Christmas &
Happy New Year*