**2017 Activities**

**Holiday Card Picture:** In September 2017, Chris and Lou went to the 50th anniversary of Chris’ graduation from Central High School in West Allis, Wisconsin. The class reunion was very well planned and held at the West Allis Knights of Columbus Hall. The reunion had lots of decorations and memorabilia from 1967. It was nice that everyone at the reunion pronounced “Geosling” correctly. There were even nine teachers from that time that attended including the biology teacher who remembered Chris quite well. We visited family and friends while we were in the area.

**Family Status:** As mentioned last year, there was a large fire in the Carmel area and Katy’s house managed to survive. The winter of 2017 had many rain storms. There was record snowfall in the Sierra Nevada. Some roads across the higher passes in those mountains were not open until the end of June. In the Carmel area, the access road to Katy’s house washed out, the Pfeiffer Canyon bridge to Big Sur was destroyed, and a landslide buried Highway 1 south of Big Sur at Mud Creek. The bridge is rebuilt, but the landslide portion of Highway 1 is not going to reopen until late 2018. Katy, Seanna, and Kaiden were again displaced for a while until the Palo Colorado access road could be fixed. Andy, Suzuna, and Melina live in Yokohama and had fun visiting Japan attractions during the year. They are coming to visit us in December, 2017. Emily and Victor spent most of the year taking over our second floor along with their cats, Juju and Kitty Meow. They want to move to the Portland, Oregon area next year.

**Games:** Lou published some rules for combining *10 Days in Africa* and *10 Days in Europe* to form the more difficult *20 Days in Africa and Europe*. He also continued to work on the online Javascript version of *Terra Mystica.*  The computer play ability has improved but the artificial intelligence is still not challenging to experienced game players. Tony Leal and Lou continued developing the *Spice Trader* game. This trading game is based on the spice trade around Southeast Asia circa 1600. After some play testing and several map and rules changes, the game has become reasonably fair and interesting.

**Trips:** **1.** There were trips to Palm Springs for usual games, and to see the DesertX indoor and outdoor creative art exhibitions, including the all-mirror house, the native art building, and modern decorative sculpture. We liked the Annenberg-Sunnylands Center and Gardens.

**2.** Around Memorial Day, JoAnna came to visit. We went to Sequoia National Park for some hiking and planning to try some river rafting on the Kaweah River. After all that snow, the river was frighteningly high, so we declined. We then drove across the Central Valley, got some fruit, and visited Hearst Castle in San Simeon. We spent some time looking at the many elephant seals basking along the beach.

**3.** Chris had a business trip to McLean, Virginia, and afterwards we went with Jim and Ellie to Fort Lauderdale for a *Carnival Splendor* cruise to the Bahamas, Grand Turk, and Puerto Plata in the Dominican Republic. The lifestyle in the Caribbean is quite casual and relaxed. All of the places that we visited on the cruise were subsequently severely damaged by the fall hurricanes.

**4.** We have been playing the board game, *Ticket to Ride*, and there was a new version called *Nordic Countries,* that covered places in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland. Scandinavia at the summer solstice seemed interesting, so we decided to go on a rail/ferry journey around the area based on the routes in the game. We landed in Stockholm, toured the area, and then took the overnight sleeper to Kiruna, Sweden. We were therefore north of the Arctic Circle on June 21 and were looking for the midnight sun; we got the midnight snowfall instead. The next day we went underground on the iron ore mine tour. We later saw the midnight sun over the Lofoten Islands in Bodo, Norway. We also went on the rib-boat maelstrom tour, the outer island tour by ferry, and visited the large air museum there. We continued onward to Trondheim via rail, Bergen by boat, and then rail to Oslo, Copenhagen, and back to Stockholm. The last part of the trip was the ferry ride to the Aland Islands, which are a Swedish speaking, autonomous part of Finland. This was the only country visited that accepted Euros.

Have a great 2018 and keep in touch.