

THURSTON

Dec. 2022

Oh, no! Not another Christmas newsletter!

(What! ... NO PICTURES????!!!)

Well, you can give a big sigh of relief here ... this one's a bit different ... but please, will you keep reading right on to the end. That would be for a BONUS: you'll get the opportunity to be obedient to Galatians 6:2! (Isn't it exhilarating to be able to dump burdens on others!)

Since last March when Janet's real life was taken from this dimension of existence, the grief for me has been persistent and often just exhausting due to the several times each day when the tears come. In this apartment there are five handkerchiefs and six boxes of Kleenex strategically placed. A "bad" day is a dozen Kleenex tissues and frequent resort to the handkerchiefs. Today as I type, it's November 30 – the last three days have been bad days; the business stemming mainly from putting out/up the Christmas decorations.

In the better years, no matter whether in the USA or in Hong Kong, once the boxes/footlockers of decorations were in Janet's reach she could get them all out/up in less than three hours. It's taken me parts of five days. The tears come not from feeling so incompetent in doing something Janet had perfected, they just come because... I'm sure you know some, but not all, of the why at this time of this particular year.

Christmas 2021 Janet wanted to bring out only one item: the diminutive (only 31" high) rotating tree that has "fiber-optic"(?) lights in the needle ends, changing colors as the tree turns. She told me she was just too weak to put out/up all the decorations. So why didn't I tell her I would do all the "work" and she could just supervise?! A mystery! Except, it is not. Her physical vitality had declined to the point that she was no longer able to do what she felt was her job, her place, her role – with Christmas decorations ... and with numerous other areas of our lives. It would have been usurping her role, in a sense demeaning her, had I done the work. That should have been a clear warning to me of what was impending. But it was too unreal to believe she really was coming to the end here.

So this year right after Thanksgiving there was an intense, irresistible pressure to put out/up what she had done for Christmas in 2020. Thankfully (a premonition?), that year she'd taken photos of how almost all the decorations were arranged – so many! – three footlockers of items! And those were "exquisitely" packed; twill be difficult to get it all back in, and it won't be done as neatly as she always did it. So many aspects of life are now not as they were, but at least with the Christmas decorations comes the positive feeling of touching things she touched, displaying what she'd collected through the years, re-enjoying her joy – joy almost like a little kid – in gazing at them and reflecting. Which brings this mailing to a more practical point...

There are SO MANY little this'n'that items about which I am totally clueless: from where did that thing come? Did someone give that one to us? Who? What's the story behind it? Why were each of these decorations particularly meaningful to Janet? SO MANY little bits of our lives about which we never had conversation! So many missed opportunities!

Now then, here is the main thing: **communicate** with those you love most dearly; learn about those little things. You will be glad you did if they precede you in escaping this world ... and, more importantly, you will be giving enjoyment to that person by letting them share what may be trivial to you but of special delight to them.

And GUYS! Take the time to let your mates talk on and on about anything that will put a twinkle in their eyes ... a cheery, uplifted sound in their talking. If you really are interested in them, then be interested in what has special meaning for them – even if you think it's just some girl stuff that can't compare with binging on NFL or whatever.

Janet did so much for me, for our life together ... so many things, even so many little things! Probably foremost among all those were the ones of a domestic and personal help nature:

*"What is that particular pot, pan, spoon, tray, strange kitchen gadget used for?"
"If I choose to use liquid laundry detergent instead of powder, will pouring the detergent directly on the clothing items damage them?" "Is it okay to wash these things with these things?" "How cum you can put the trash bag in the can so quickly with no air pockets, but it takes me forever and there still are air pockets?"
"Which of these three ties goes best with this shirt?" "Oh, my! I really wasn't supposed to use a metal spatula in that Teflon-coated skillet?" "Janet, would you please show me how to program this remote?" "It'd be a big help if you got on your computer to get my plane tickets and my lodging all set." "Oh, and could you order this book for me?" "And would you mind responding to this female person's email?" "That stuff I ate has that many calories?!" "Oh, man, yuck! I just picked at something on my back - could you put this Band-Aid on it for me?"*

There is just so much ... now I see ... so much that has been lost, so much that still is somewhere out there in foreign territory.

"Thanks for telling me the tag on my shirt is showing."

"Um, Janet, can you sew this button back on for me? - and, oh, also, this seam is coming loose on this shirt."

**When all is said and done, one burning question remains:
why don't they make thimbles for guy-sized thumbs?**

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Did you pick up on the burden in all that? Shouldn't have ... wasn't any ... all that is just the way it is – highly individualistic ... not really a "burden" to be shared, Besides, as many of you probably remember, Galatians 6:5 does follow that other verse. (KJV reads best)

But maybe there really is one burden to share... We find so many verses in the Bible that deal with events surrounding Jesus' birth and the time of his infancy. Some months back – long before the Christmas season – one of these came to mind and remains therein: the Matthew 2:18 quote of Jeremiah 31:15 about Rachel weeping for her children. She **refuses to be comforted** at the loss of what was loved because the object of that love was "no more." That's where I have been; still am. But today (Dec 4), waiting for the Sunday AM meeting to begin, just chanced to read on in Jeremiah 31 ... he prophesys there is hope. Maybe. We'll see.

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This Christmas, and always ... appreciate, cherish the loved ones with whom you can still connect in this life!