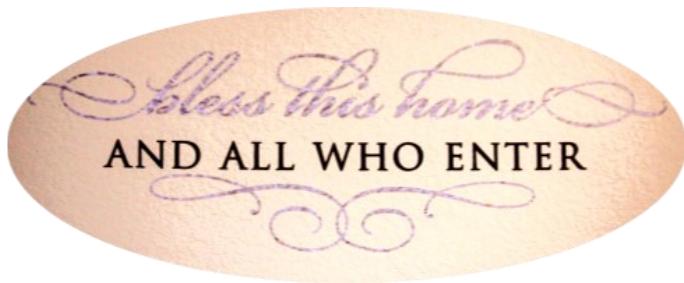


December 2015

**Christmas Greetings
From Karin & Ross Olson**



Photo by Ka Wan Powers



Let us tell you what it is REALLY like to live in a senior co-op. Gramercy Park is situated near 67th and Lyndale, across the street from Wood Lake Nature Center. Thus, we live between “Downtown Richfield” and a wildlife preserve. It is a 12 story “small town” inhabited by what we used to call “old people.” But there are young people and children around, because they come to visit or help the old people.

When we drive into our parking spot with grandchildren, the first thing they do is run to the “free table,” which is essentially a no cost thrift store in the building. People moving in or out or just downsizing put things on it. We have many times. Inevitably, things go, whether to a resident or a visitor.

With 159 units and 200 people living here, everybody becomes a familiar face and Karin greets them **ALL** by name. Further, there is a “block party” every Friday noon, a potluck, with announcements, jokes (another outlet for Ross’s Sven and Ole stories), and every several weeks some real entertainment – like folk singer Jack Pearson. Then, every month or two, Marketing hosts entertainment of interest to the community – this month a quartet from Vocal Essence, followed by refreshments and tours for those who want them. Other concerts include jazz, classical and pop.

Co-op means volunteering and we have both found places to volunteer. Karin revived a “card recycling” group. She broadened the scope beyond get well and sympathy and elevated the artistic and creative level of the cards to her unique standards. Some are completely new cards created from pictures in magazines or calendars and some partially recycled cards. They sell for the bargain price of \$1.00. The creative juices got so active that she nearly had to join a 12 step group to STOP! She chairs the “Sunshine Committee.” which puts greetings on every door for Valentine’s Day, May Day, July 4 and Thanksgiving, to make everyone feel loved and keeps a popular candy dish full in the lobby.

Ross was recruited as a security patrol (the head of that committee looks for new members who can walk and check exits without falling down.) He also is on the Health and Wellness Committee and has written for the in-house newspaper “Shorelines” on the effect of faith on health as well as arranging a speaker on “Living Well with Chronic Illness.”



We are an “independent living” co-op (the word “facility” is out of vogue) but many of our neighbors have visiting therapists or family who come to help with tasks. (We pay our daughter Susan to clean.) And although there is no dining room, a VFW with all-day restaurant service is attached. They will even deliver food to the rooms if asked. Also, many other restaurants now deliver. There is a spacious party room, the Gramercy Room, that accommodates over 200. There is an exercise room that includes a pool table and ping pong. Our older grandkids enjoy playing pool. Son Jeff and son-in-law “Snowie” are sharks. A library, beauty shop and convenience store round out the amenities.

We are a few blocks from all sorts of shopping including a post office and gas station (there is are no “service stations” any more.) We can get to church in 7 – 10 minutes, helped by being close to freeway ramps and through streets. Indoor heated parking and grocery carts to carry things to our kitchen up the elevator to the 11th floor are conveniences we had wished for when we lived in our house. We are still appreciating a washer and dryer right in our apartment. Our guest bedroom has its own bathroom to give our guests a first class experience. Missionaries Bruce and Mary Damon stayed.



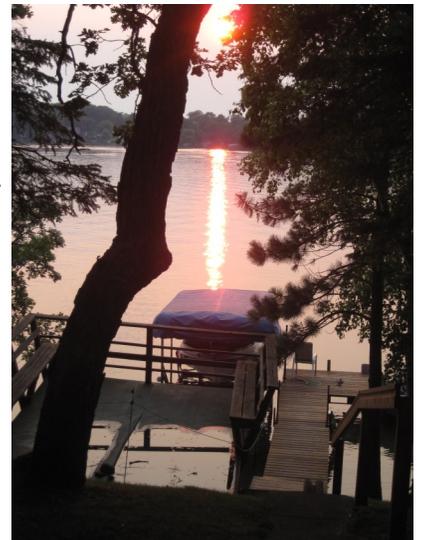
We have unwittingly entered into the form of competition that senior citizens invariably win against young people – number of surgeries. Ross had left shoulder repair — which our neighbors quickly trumped playing double shoulder REPLACEMENT! We’ll let them win that one. Karin had the battery in her implanted gastric stimulator replaced for the third time and on December 9 required removal of her left 1st and 5th toes – for danger of infection. With God’s care and people’s prayers we have no real fear. Each medical crisis offers a chance to proclaim God’s faithfulness and wisdom. But

it has forced us to simplify Christmas decorations this year.



We have continued our volunteer activities but will at some point probably have to eliminate some things to make room for new ones – and to accommodate the effects of age. Karin is still a discussion leader for Bible Study Fellowship in Bloomington and teaches Kindergarten Sunday School (20 kids this year!) She is a mentor mom for Mothers of Preschoolers, volunteers at Community Emergency Services food shelf and is an active grandma. This year Clara sleeps over one night a week and goes to the BSF Children's program with grandma. We host Chinese students and scholars and attend the monthly Friendship Dinner. We have set the goal of inviting all our Gramercy neighbors into our home for either a meal or coffee and refreshments. Ross teaches Junior Church, 4th – 6th graders, and leads them -- with lots of adult and teen help -- on all day hikes spring and fall and the Science Museum in the winter. He chairs the board of Outpost Ministries www.outpostministries.org and the Outreach Commission at church and serves as board member and webmaster for Twin Cities Creation Science Association www.tccsa.tc. He runs www.rossolson.org where his politically incorrect op-eds go to die.

Every summer for a number of years we have rented a cabin on Little Elk Lake in Zimmerman, this past year moving up to 2 weeks, during which our kids and grandkids are invited to fish, swim and canoe down the little river that exits the lake. Then on the 4th of July, we try to ask extended family and Chinese friends to make it a big gathering. Lots of new memories being made and many old memories recalled because this cabin was rented by Ross's parents for many years.



The move to Gramercy was precipitated by Karin's right below-the-knee amputation three years ago. To move up on the waiting list for the big apartment, we bought a small one but never lived in it. We stored things as we staged our house, moved Ross's computers there when the office in the house needed carpet and used the party room for family reunions. Just in the last month, that apartment was finally sold and we are free of the extra monthly fee, a real answer to prayer. Our only travel this year was to L'Anse in Michigan's Upper Peninsula for Aunt Delores' 90th Birthday Party this summer.

OK, even though it seems like bragging, we'll tell you about the grandkids (and, of course, their parents have to be amazing for them to turn out so well): Christopher 19 has an internship in video production and is an "elder statesman" in the world of Rubik's Cube competition, traveling the country. Patrick 16, has a job at Family Pathways, helps a lot at church and drives. Aizec 14 was a standout baseball player his very first year to play and is making bullwhips. Annika nearly 10 is very artsy-craftsy and loves Chinese dance. She was baptized this summer.



Avery 16 is a good student and plays basketball well. She is a good example of godly character. Xavier 12 excels in football, math and growing!

Laura 12 reads, writes, sings, babysits and acts. Helen 10 is very compassionate and good at making friends. She was in "Jack and the Beanstalk with her sisters. Esther 7 plays piano, acts, takes ballet and organizes things. Clara 5 swims, dances and is carving out her own identity. She is in Grandma's Sunday School Class. Those 4 got to see the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Atlantic Ocean last spring.

Every Tuesday is "Papa Day" with Ross taking 4 or 5 granddaughters to museums or other attractions. This year's Chinese visiting scholar, YanMei Wang, likes to come along on Papa day. We house some grandkids when their parents are out of town and help with transportation of others. And we are clearly in the grandparent spoiling mode. God has been very good to us.

May the real joy of Christmas live in your hearts as in ours. ***Joy to the World the Lord is Come!***

Ross & Karin Olson

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