



Happy Holidays, 2007 2008!

*(Okay, so it didn't get done last year!)
(Chuck's comments after being approved by Jaye.)*



The past couple of years have been amazing, and they absolutely flew by in what seems like a wink of an eye! So let's get the condensed version out of the way and then I'll go into selected details. When last I wrote a holiday letter, January 2007, I was president of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents. I completed my term as president in July of 2007 in Grand Rapids, MI. (The photo, above left, is from then.) It was truly a special time in our lives that we were able to share with several of my family and friends. I then spent the next twelve months as past president and that still involved several trips of which Jaye got to attend several with me.

I officially ended my time on the NACAA national board in July 2008 in Greensboro, NC, but there was still one more event I needed to attend in September 2008. When it was all said and done, I had made 41 trips over the four year period. It should have been 42, but an early December ice storm last year kept me from attending our winter board meeting. Needless to say, it's felt really good to get to stay home for a change.

Jaye and I are doing well. A lot (most) of our lives for the past four years has certainly revolved around my serving as an NACAA national officer. While I'll always be closely tied to NACAA our lives will now take a different spin for a few years. My parents (Ted and Ardell) decided last spring that by the winter of 2008/09 they needed to be out of their own apartment. So with the help of my brother and sister in Omaha, they found a retirement community in Omaha that they really liked and we moved them there over Labor Day weekend. Although they are both 91, they are doing amazingly well. (If you need their new contact information, give me a call or drop me an email!)

Jaye's father (Dan) has been in declining health and after a time in the hospital in August, the doctor decided it was time for him to move to a care facility. He is at a facility here in Junction City and we are thankful for the wonderful professionals that work there and take care of him now. Jaye's mom (Bernice) is doing well and still on the farm north of Junction City. She has adjusted very well to Dan being in the home and we make sure that she has plenty to do as we all adjust to the new "normal".

For the past several years we had sort of dropped out of involvement with lots of things, but now have the opportunity to start getting involved with community activities again. The photo above on the right was from one of those events, the Geary Community Healthcare Foundation's annual big fundraising event, the Holiday Glitz. Jaye helps with the decorations and I do what I can to support that and even get to play auctioneer with a few fundraiser items. All I can say about being an auctioneer is that I'd better not give up my day job!

Jaye is still a facility manager at a small branch bank of Central National Bank. She enjoys the work and we both appreciate what Central National Bank does not only for her but for the community as well. We have many friends that work there and it really does feel like family. I am still a County Extension Agent and it seems amazing that it will be 27 years in January! It's exciting to now be able to get back to being a full time county extension agent. Many program and activities were sort of put on hold the past four years and now I'm getting to go back and do "real" county agent work! Even though I'll be eligible to retire in just three more years, I have no intent to do anything of the sort. I'm still enjoying the work way too much to even think about the "R" word!

The past couple of years have really been special as we've been able to travel a lot and in those travels we've gotten to see many new places, visit with old and new friends alike. Yet through all this travel it becomes so apparent to me that in the end, money, time, possessions, and even opportunity don't matter - what matters is people. Family and friends and sometimes complete strangers are what make your life and enrich your life and give us reason for life. So this Christmas letter isn't spending lots of time catching you up on everything we've done, but mainly just letting you know we're still here and doing good, thanks to special friends and family like each of you.

Our email address has recently changed. It is now otte2@cox.net please drop us an email so that we know we have YOUR current address. Our phone is still the same: 785-238-8800 (I still say it sounds like a pizza delivery store!) Oh, and since you aren't anyone anymore without a cell phone, Jaye's is 785-223-1534 and mine is 785-223-1403. And if you want to see just a little more of what's going on, our home page on the web is <http://chuckandjaye.com/>

The rest of this letter is just a few pictures from the past two years. But don't worry, we should have some more exciting photos for next year. I realized early on, in my four years of traveling, that Jaye has been wonderfully supportive and was going to be sacrificing a lot. She sent me off to a month in Africa back in 2002, she supported my run for an NACAA officer position and then sent me off to Armenia for a week in 2005. I owed her big time for all of that support, encouragement and sacrifice. So in January I'm paying that back, in part, by fulfilling her longtime desire to go birdwatching in Central America. We'll spend two solid weeks birdwatching in Panama. Photos will be posted on our web page as soon as I can get it done after our return.

So here's wishing all of you a very special holiday season in 2008!

