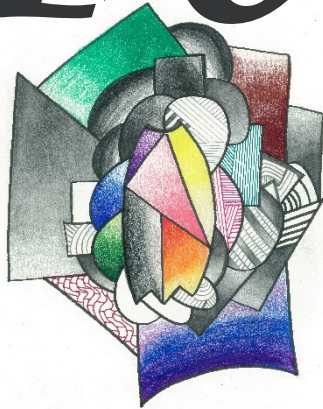


ReFocus^{Jan.}



ORIGINAL ART
By Jim Scanlon

A REPORT OF THE CLEVELAND STROKE CLUB

Jan. 2026

Cleveland Stroke Club
c/o Geri Pitts
9284 Towpath Trail
Seville, OH 44273
330-975-4320
Pittsgeraldine@yahoo.com

*The MISSION of the Cleveland Stroke Club is
to enhance the lives of stroke survivors and
their families through support, fellowship and
socialization, education, and advocacy.*



We Will Not Meet in Person until April 2026

Zoom Survivor Meeting
Wednesday, January 7, 2026, 7:00-8:00 PM

Zoom Caregiver Meeting
Wednesday, January 21, 2026, 7:00-8:00 PM

We will open our Zoom 30 minutes before each meeting.
Geri Pitts will send an email with the Zoom link two days before the meeting
and the day of the meeting.

Contact Geri, if you have any questions (pittsgeraldine@yahoo.com).

The Cleveland Stroke Club was founded on the basic self-help concept. That is, stroke survivors and their families banded together to exchange coping techniques for the many stroke-related problems they experience.

More: New members and community professionals are always welcome to join us. Our calendar, newsletter, resource list, & papers are online: www.clevelandstrokeclub.org.

Officers 5/2025-5/2026

President
Linda Davis

Asst. to the President
Linda Pfeffer

Vice President
Deena Barrett

Asst. Vice President
Pat Hill

Secretary
Kay Exl

Treasurer
John Pumper

Asst. Treasurer
Dave Zabo

Founder
Bill Pitts

**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR**
Geri Pitts
330-975-4320

**Executive Director
Emeritus**
Dorothy Norton

Other Board Members

Membership Chair
Kay Exl

Volunteer Coordinator
Shirley Patterson

Assistant to the Board
Bonnie Morris

Phone Caller
Linda Pfeffer

Board Member at Large
Frank Nisenbourn

ReFocus & Web Editor
Deb Felt

**Caregiver/Survivor
Meeting Facilitators**
Jean Nisenbourn
Sue Sheridan

FROM THE DESK OF THE EXEC. DIRECTOR

By Geri Pitts



Hello 2026! Goodbye 2025! Another successful year has passed for the Cleveland Stroke Club with the help of our members who volunteer...can't do it without you. Thank you to all those who step up and pitch right in. I love to see how you welcome new members and make them feel comfortable. Special thanks go to those who help with set-up of our in-person meetings and stay later for clean-up. More special thanks go to our board of directors who have continued to serve individually for more than twelve years plus. Now that's dedication! Talk about dedication, we're approaching our 300th consecutive Thursday bingo night. That's something to be proud of.

Because of our unpredictable weather conditions, a couple of years ago we decided to hold our meetings on the Zoom platform during January through March. I will be emailing out links for the Survivor meeting on the first Wednesdays of the month and the Caregivers meeting on the third Wednesday of the month. If you want to make sure you're on my email mailing list, send me an email (pittsgeraldine@yahoo.com). If you're not familiar with Zoom, let me know and we'll get you set up. It's free and safe.

Interested in bingo but not yet in our "bingo group"? We play every Thursday evening (except holidays). Let us know if you need bingo cards. We use pennies, M&Ms, raisins, markers, chips, anything to cover up the numbers. Are you a bingo winner? Your prize is your name in **BOLD print** in our next ReFocus newsletter. (It's the best we can do on Zoom.) Best of all, we open 30 minutes before each game for conversation with your friends and catching up with what's going on. A great way to keep in touch during the winter months. Our loyal and dependable bingo game helpers are: Linda D., Kay, Deb, Arlene and Rick. Our bingo winners for December were: **Arlene, George, Paulette, Evelyn, Raj, Vinita, Gary, Delores, Vivien, Harsha, Louise, Peggie, Linda and Charles.**

It's time to renew your membership in the Cleveland Stroke Club. Our membership dues continue to be \$8.00 per person. Please use the membership form included in this newsletter.

We are starting again to host a "**Zoom Lunch & Chat**" once a month on the 3rd Tuesdays of January through March from noon until 2:00 p.m. Drop in and say "hello" or drop in and stay while you eat your lunch and talk. Hope to see you there. And, finally, we are continuing with our Zoom Family Feud on the 2nd Tuesdays throughout the year. Join us for a few laughs and see how clever your fellow members are.

Special thanks to **music therapist, Beth Friedman Romell**, who designed a music therapy program for us. See page 9 for more details.

I was contacted by Michelle Waller of Neuroanimation to circulate info about a web seminar on Jan. 13th, at 7:00 p.m. about post stroke recovery. See this link for more details: <https://tinyurl.com/53cve72y>

I was also sent information about a new hand therapy device. See this link for more info: <https://tinyurl.com/2xfuw9vd>

JAN. HOLIDAYS

- ☀ 1 New Year's Day
- ☀ 4 Nat'l Spaghetti Day
- ☀ 4 Nat'l Trivia Day
- ☀ 5 Nat'l Bird Day
- ☀ 7 Orthodox Christmas
- ☀ 11 Golden Globe Awards
- ☀ 14 Orthodox New Year
- ☀ 15 Nat'l Hat Day
- ☀ 16 Appreciate a Dragon D.
- ☀ 18 Winnie the Pooh Day
- ☀ 19 MLK Day
- ☀ 23 Nat'l Pie Day
- ☀ 24 Nat'l Peanut Butter D.
- ☀ 31 Nat'l Hot Chocolate D.

<https://www.wincalendar.com/Holiday-Calendar/January-2026>

JAN. WISHES**Happy Birthday**

Beverly Toomer	1/02
Evelyn DeScott	1/04
John Hoffmann	1/05
Andrew Remer	1/07
Bonnie Morris	1/11
Kelli Pierson-Zellous	1/14
Paulette Mengay	1/16
Cassandra Nelson	1/17
Rod Russell	1/17
Lyle Jim Morris	1/20
Ellen Richman	1/21
Vivien Sekeres	1/21
Laura Haag	1/23
Anthony Williams	1/23
Char Grossman	1/26
Nelly Borodi	1/28
Malcolm Gordon	1/30
Peggie Price	1/30

Happy Anniversary

Vinita & Raj Saggar
1/1/1967

Get Well Soon

Jon Colston
Cathi Ellsworth
Marge's sisters
Joyce Zaid

THIS MONTH'S MEETING CALENDAR

By Geri Pitts

(Contact me for a Zoom link: pittsgeraldine@yahoo.com)

1/7	Survivors on Zoom	6:30 – 8:30	1 st Wed. on Zoom (Jan., Feb., Mar.)
1/8	Bingo	7:00 – 8:00	Every Thurs. on Zoom
1/13	Family Feud	7:00 – 8:00	2 nd Tuesday on Zoom
1/14	Board Meeting	5:00 – 6:00	2 nd Wednesday on Zoom
1/15	Bingo	7:00 – 8:00	Every Thurs. on Zoom
1/20	Lunch & Chat	Noon – 2:00	3 rd Tues. on Zoom
1/21	Caregivers on Zoom	7:00 -- 8:00	3 rd Wed. on Zoom (Jan., Feb., Mar.)
1/22	Bingo	7:00 – 8:00	Every Thurs. on Zoom
1/29	Bingo	7:00 – 8:00	Every Thurs. on Zoom

This schedule is on our website: www.clevelandstrokeclub.org (scroll down). It can also be downloaded: select the link to "Newsletters and Calendars and Flyers."

NOTE 1: All of the Zoom meetings open a half-hour early, for conversation.

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

By Linda Davis

Hello Everyone,

Happy New Year to everyone I was so glad to see everyone at our Holiday Party at Disciples Christian Church. Just a reminder we will be hosting Zoom meetings during Jan., Feb., and March. We will start meeting in person in April. We've changed the name from Zoom Lunch to Lunch and Chat.

**HAPPY 106th BIRTHDAY TO EVELYN!**

We are so proud to celebrate with you and your family! Thanks for the pics, Vinita!



LAST MONTH'S SURVIVOR AND CAREGIVER MEETING

It was so nice to see everyone! We are so appreciative to **Select Hospital for the use of the Kresge Room**. For dinner we had pierogi and chicken catered by **Food for Thought**. We brought salads, fruit, rolls, and **Deena and Linda D. brought pies, cakes, and cookies**. **Linda, Shirley, Sue, Joyce, Nelly and George, Sue and Dave** helped to set-up and break-down. **Dave Zabo and John Pumper** kindly collected money. Many thanks to everyone for helping. **Linda D.** made announcements and announced a new music group that **Beth Friedman-Romell** designed for stroke survivors. Thanks to everyone's responses, Beth's new program is described on page 9. Thirty-one members attended, which was great because we had a week of terrible weather before and after the meeting!

Survivors' Breakout Meeting. Jean kindly facilitated the meeting. Jean encouraged survivors to try out the new music group and asked the survivors the questions on the questionnaire: their preferences of times, days, and costs. Beth was able to take our answers and design a program for us. Please see her article .

Jean encouraged survivors to use the slower winter months to get schedule check-ups, check and repair medical equipment, winterize their homes, start an exercise routine, take a class or try new puzzles, and participate in stroke groups, either in person or on Zoom. Winter is a great time to tune-up and open the door to new experiences. See page 9 for some suggestions.

The Caregiver break-out session was also a good meeting. **Sue S.** kindly facilitated the meeting. **Jackie P.** kindly shared her notes. Fifteen caregivers attended.

- ✱ A caregiver gave an update on her fiancé. He is doing better in rehab at Royal Oaks in Middleburg Hts.
- ✱ As stroke caregivers, we must continue to encourage the stroke survivor, We need to continue to remind them of the things that they are able to accomplish.
- ✱ There is a link between stroke and depression in the medical research. Here is a link to the American Stroke Association webpage that discusses research findings and supports available for stroke survivor and caregiver: <https://tinyurl.com/339ycrvw>
- ✱ A caregiver said that her husband missed a doctor's appointment because paratransit did not come. Shirley said that some of the paratransit buses are driven by sub-contractors. She encouraged people to file complaints if they are unhappy with the service that they received.
- ✱ One caregiver said they had a counselor coming to the house, but they no longer come. The group recommended that she contact Benjamin Rose to see if someone could come out again.
- ✱ The first caregiver said that she thinks that her fiancée's therapy is coming to an end. The group encouraged her to contact the treating physician to request a new prescription.
- ✱ Ralph said that his wife had a setback. She took the shingles shot and lost some of her abilities to move well. Losing strength is a side effect of from the shingles shot. He wanted to make the members aware that weakness or numbness may be a side effect of the shot. Editor's Note: We also had a bad reaction to the shingles shot and we were in the Emergency Room for the RSV shot. We reported both reactions to the drug store, which followed up with the CDC. We also needed to follow-up with our primary care physician.
- ✱ Sue S. suggested that we contact a representative of Benjamin Rose to give a presentation to discuss the services that they offer to caregivers and stroke survivors.
- ✱ Kay and Deena would like to have a presentation on scams.
- ✱ Deb would like to have a presentation on diabetes: recommended foods, examination of feet, eye exams...

GENERAL MEETING NOTES

Our December General Meeting was our Holiday meal and sing along. Special thanks to everyone who wore festive clothes, brought an appetizer, dessert, and/or white elephant gift. There was divine chaos. The gift elves (Sue S., Viven, and Shirley) were crazy busy taming the elephant gifts. **Linda D. and Joyce managed the dining room, Rita managed the kitchen, Arlene and Vinita and Nelly managed the appetizers, Vivien and many others cut desserts.** Special thanks to John P. and Dave Z. for collecting money and welcoming everyone. Also special thanks to Sue Z. for handling the 50-50 drawing and passing the hat for Disciples Christian Church Food Bank. We ate chicken tenders from Food for Thought, French Green Beans from **Rita**, and we brought mac and cheese and antipasto dish, rolls, etc. two kinds of cranberry relish (to die for) from **Sue S.** and, of course, stuffing, vegetarian stuffing, mashed potatoes, sweet potato casserole, and rolls. We counted 49 attendees. Recipes are on the web.

Linda D. made announcements. **Beth Friedman-Romell** told our members about her new music group. Deena became MC introducing our musicians (including Deena's friend, **Beth Friedman-Romell**, Deena's sister, **Judi**, and her friend **Andrew Stiltner and his mom, Kim**). Neerja told us about Hanukkah and Beth showed us a dreidel. Shirley told us about Kwanzaa. And Selina and Jo Marks brought a magnificent cake. Here are Vinita's pics.



BOOK CORNER

By Carolyn D.

The Return of the Spider
by James Patterson

This is a continuation of his original book. I think it is a very good book. It caught you up on things. The first book was called, Along Came a Spider and this one is called, The Return of the Spider. I recommend it—4 stars out of 5. It's excellent.

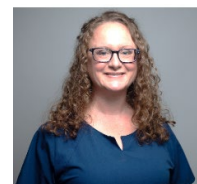
**BEER CORNER, ETC.**

By Dr. Roger Gulbranson

My cat passed away from cancer before Christmas. We were sad. I have a new cat. She squeaks a lot and has a foot fetish! I love her.

**TOE TIPS**

By Jenifer Vanek RN

Reliable Nurse Foot Care (www.RNfootcare.com, (216) 956-0293)

Gently stretch everything, including the feet! Stretching can help to prevent cramps and tightness in the feet and ankles and contribute to overall health and mobility. Clench and release toes, rotate feet clockwise and counterclockwise, and stretch legs as your individual mobility allows. Stretch in a safe place and start slowly and gently—don't overdo it!

THINKING ABOUT IMPROVED HOME SAFETY DURING A POWER OUTAGE!

By Jocelyn Brown James

Several nights ago, I experienced a lengthy power outage. Living with mobility challenges it occurred to me that my extra flashlight, candles and unique needs were stored all over the place or nonexistent. Access was not in my favor.



As the inside temperature dropped, I nestled under my bedcovers with my overheating cellphone. As I was performing a total recall of my immediate needs and their locations, I imagined adding potential reflective enhancements to my rollator walker, bedside commode, wheelchair and medication caddy for the next outage emergency.

I am considering making certain that all walkways are passable before bed in my critical areas. I could use a dedicated plastic bin for item storage that can be placed underneath my hospital bed.

I could have used a large sportsman type flashlight, battery operated cellphone charger, extra required batteries for the charger, short bottles of water, candle in a capped jar, candle lighter, wipes or bottle of handwashing gel and gloves. A bag of peppermint cough drops snacks or glucose tablets, plus a dose of medications for openers.

Based on individual stroke survivor need, I am sure other storable items can be added to this personal care package. It took this episode of sudden darkness in my state of physical challenges to fuel my plan for power outage safety and survival.

Always be open to being prepared and safe at home!

50 WAYS TO START A CONVERSATION WITH ANYONE

By Pat Hill

**Introduction**

Check out the following strategies, then go to any meeting, luncheon, or party and seize the day! Use these practical tips to confidently begin and maintain conversations in any setting.

Getting Started

- ✱ Be the first to say hello.
- ✱ Introduce yourself to others.
- ✱ Take risks and expect success.
- ✱ Remember your sense of humor.
- ✱ Practice different ways of starting a conversation.

Making Connections

- ✱ Make an extra effort to remember people's names.
- ✱ Ask a person's name if you have forgotten it.
- ✱ Show curiosity and sincere interest in finding out about others.
- ✱ Tell others about the important events in your life. Don't wait for them to draw it out.
- ✱ Demonstrate that you are listening by restating their comments in another way.
- ✱ Communicate enthusiasm and excitement about your subjects and life in general.
- ✱ Go out of your way to try to meet new people wherever you are.
- ✱ Accept a person's right to be an individual with different ideas and beliefs.

Being Yourself

- ✱ Let the natural person in you come out when talking with others.
- ✱ Be able to succinctly tell others—in a few short sentences—what you do.
- ✱ Reintroduce yourself to someone who is likely to have forgotten your name.
- ✱ Be ready to tell others something interesting or challenging about what you do.

Nonverbal Skills

- ✱ Be aware of open and closed body language.
- ✱ Smile, make eye contact, offer a handshake, and go find the approachable person.
- ✱ Greet people that you see regularly.

Building Rapport

- ✱ Seek common interests, goals, and experiences with the people you meet.
- ✱ Try to help people if you can.
- ✱ Let others play the expert.
- ✱ Be open to answering common ritualistic questions.
- ✱ Be enthusiastic about other people's interests.
- ✱ See that the time is balanced between giving and receiving information

Continued on Next Page

50 WAYS ... Continued.**Effective Communication**

- ✱ Be able to speak about a variety of topics and subjects.
- ✱ Keep up to date on current events and issues that affect our lives.
- ✱ Be willing to express your feelings, opinions, and emotions to others.
- ✱ Use “I” when you speak about your own feelings and personal things, rather than “you”.
- ✱ Visually show others that you are enjoying your conversation with them.

**Continuing the Connection**

- ✱ Be ready to issue invitations to others to join you for other events or activities to further the relationship.
- ✱ Find ways to keep in touch with friends and acquaintances you meet.
- ✱ Seek out others' opinions.
- ✱ Look for the positive in those you meet.
- ✱ Start and end your conversations with the person's name and a handshake or warm greeting.
- ✱ Take the time to be friendly with your neighbors and coworkers.
- ✱ Let others know that you would like to get to know them better.
- ✱ Ask others about things that they have told you in earlier conversations.
- ✱ Listen carefully for free information.
- ✱ Be ready to ask open-ended questions to learn more.
- ✱ Change the topic of conversation when it has run its course.
- ✱ Always search for the things that really get another excited.

Positive Interactions

- ✱ Compliment others about what they wear, are doing, or saying.
- ✱ Encourage others to talk to you by sending out positive signals.
- ✱ Try to see and talk to people you enjoy.
- ✱ When you tell a story, present the main point first and then add the supporting details.
- ✱ Include everyone in the group in conversation whenever possible.
- ✱ Look for signs of boredom or lack of interest from your listener.
- ✱ Prepare ahead of time for each social or business function.

Source: <https://tinyurl.com/mryncuwz>

Submitted by Pat Hill MBA, The Medicare Problem Solver, 216-570-9236, pthmba@att.net



NEW MUSIC PROGRAM FOR STROKE SURVIVORS

By Beth Friedman-Romell



Music can be a powerful tool to help us rise above life's challenges. To cite just a few examples: rhythm "entrains the brain," helping us regulate our movements; singing strengthens the muscles involved in speaking and lifts our spirits; playing an instrument improves attention and coordination, preferred music triggers endorphins, the brain's "feel good" hormones -- and the list goes on!

You can harness the elements of music to support your physical, speech, cognitive, and/or social-emotional goals in a new, community-based program called **"Music for Daily Living,"** for people living with the effects of stroke, traumatic brain injury, and other neurodegenerative conditions. Led by Board-Certified Neurologic Music Therapist® Beth Friedman-Romell, this 12-session program will use music techniques to help you improve your day-to-day functioning and quality of life. No prior music experience is necessary!

"Music for Daily Living" will meet twice per month from January through June on Thursdays from 11 am - 12 pm at B'nai Jeshurun Congregation, 27501 Fairmount Boulevard, Pepper Pike, Ohio 44124. Session dates are: January 15 and 29, Feb. 5 and 19, March 12 and 26, April 16 and 30, May 14 and 29, June 11 and 25. Class size is limited to 12 participants.

This pilot program is offered on a pay-what-you-can basis, with a suggested fee of \$10 per session (no charge for caregivers). Advanced registration required. Please call or email Beth for more details and to register: 216-260-5525; beth@differentdrum.net.

This program is made possible with generous support from JWell, a Cleveland-based Jewish wellness center offering programs and resources that embrace all people in their pursuit of well-being, healing, and community.

<https://www.jwellcle.org/>

MORE WELLNESS PROGRAMS STARTING IN JANUARY

- ✱ Every year, **insurance** (Medicare, Medicaid, Disability, Obamacare, private insurance) will pay for at least **10-15 sessions of outpatient therapy per year.** To learn more, ask your neurologist or primary care physician to write a prescription for an evaluation. The therapist will make a recommendation and submit it to your insurance company for approval. If you have problems, your physician can help.
- ✱ **Tri-C** starts the Spring Semester of their wellness and therapy programs designed to train occupational, physical therapy, and nutrition students and help stroke survivors. Our members love these programs. For further information, see: <https://tinyurl.com/3j93f5c6> or call 216-987-3555.
- ✱ **Speak Easy** starts the Spring Semester. Speak Easy is a free program that is sponsored by CASE to train speech therapy students and help stroke survivors. Members chose to meet in Zoom or in person. For more info, contact Jean 216 368-3351, email jmn13@case.edu
- ✱ **Cleveland Hearing & Speech Center** starts their communication programs for persons with stroke or head injuries, including book club, a conversation group, individual speech therapy, memory therapy, and group therapy. There is also a group for caregiver support. Some groups meet in Zoom and some in-person. For more information, see www.chsc.org/neo-act or email: averhovitz@chsc.org or call: 216-231-8787.
- ✱ **Beth Friedman-Romell** hosts sound baths at Healing with the Horses. We will be holding sessions from 2-3 p.m. on the following dates: January 11, February 8, March 8, April 12, and May 3. For more info, see <https://differentdrum.net/index.php#events> or email her at beth@differentdrum.net
- ✱ **Ohio Seniors** are eligible to sit in on college classes for free. Many classes are offered on-line now. For more information, see: <https://highered.ohio.gov/students/adult-learners/lifelong-learning>
- ✱ **Art Therapy Studio** usually starts new groups: call 216-791-9303 or email info@arttherapystudio.org



Evelyn's December Puzzles

US



Jean & Frank freezing



Dave & Sue at Severance



Neerja's very, very, very sweet holiday



John and Mary's Family Gathering



Vinita and Raj's Family Gathering



Sue's daughter enjoys her delayed flight w BFFs.



Harsha & Shirish with family in the Dominican Republic



Cleveland Stroke Club Membership Form

For year 2026

Dear Members: In order to support your Club, please complete the form below and mail it along with a check for your yearly dues (payable to: Cleveland Stroke Club). Please write DUES in the memo line on the check.

Mail to:
Cleveland Stroke Club
c/o Kay Exl
6507 Chase Drive
Mayfield Village, OH 44143

It is necessary to complete this form each year so that we can keep our records updated. Thank you for your continued participation and support.

(Please Print)

Date _____

Name (stroke survivor) _____

Name (caregiver) _____

Spouse (circle) Yes No

Supporter (neither caregiver or stroke survivor) _____

Address _____

Number

Street

Apt.#

City

State

Zip Code

_____ CIRCLE PREFERRED NUMBER
Home Phone Number Cell Phone Number

e-mail address _____

Birthdays (month and day):

Survivor: _____ Caregiver: _____ Supporter: _____

Wedding date (month/day/year): _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION:

Name _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____ City _____

Annual Dues - \$8.00 per person per year – or - \$16.00 per year for a stroke survivor and caregiver

PAYMENT OPTION: two years - \$16.00 per person – or - \$32.00 for a stroke survivor and caregiver

Three years - \$24.00 per person – or - \$48.00 for a stroke survivor and caregiver

Amount enclosed for dues- \$ _____

☐ I prefer to receive the ReFocus: _____ in Email or on the Web _____ in my mail box at home

WORD PUZZLE: Hat's Off to the New Year (Nat'l Hat Day Jan. 15th)

By Brenda Koos

(Use every letter and word only once.)

F N F U P Y N L O V Q Z H P E
 P E U T C B I U T P C D B O R
 O Q D S J O A G A V O K O T I
 R O Q O I Z T A O O M T A W A
 K D N H R W O T V M V O T O N
 P G Y G C A P S C M L U E O N
 I G X F I D A B P L T H R B O
 E E E E K A C Y E A O O O F I
 N O T E R B P P P M N W S N G
 C L O C H E P M B U L A G M E
 R W I B O A G U A E V Q M S L
 P D T I C V R T R C C Y P A J
 W V L C H G M U S H R O O M O
 R O L I A S X S O M B R E R O
 T N O S T E T S X D R A N S B

Boater

Campaign

Cloche

Homburg

Mushroom

Sailor

Sun

Bowler

Capotain

Fedora

Kova

Panama

Sombrero

Top

Breton

Cappello

Gatsby

Legionnaire

Porkpie

Stetson



Make your own puzzle here:

<https://puzzlemaker.discoverededucation.com/word-search>
Gary and Paulette: Our Holiday