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**To:** [John Rochford](#)  
**Subject:** Dec 23  
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Dear friends and family,

It is December 23 and while this was a year that I wished wasn't. This is a time to reflect on the many blessings.

December 23 is when the corkscrew willow lays down its last leaf. I know because this is the night we have the Christmas ships that belt out the holiday standards in front of the house. We often had a dinner party to celebrate. And at 9:45 we would go on the leaf strewn deck to hear the music. And after a few oohs and ahhs, we would scurry back inside. The willow was planted back in 1990, from a neighbor's cutting. Now it is 90 feet high.

December 23 was traditionally the last Seattle Men's Chorus concert. I am well past my 17 come on years of singing. But we still enjoy going to hear the holiday concert. This year we went with 17 of our friends and neighbors. Nothing makes you feel like the holidays than an SMC concert.

December 23, because last year we had an severe ice storm. It was so bad that we couldn't even run transit or paratransit. It was also the night that my friend Pat Carroll died. He had survived several heart attacks and had over 75 visits to the emergency room. But this one was the end. Where professional job drivers could not leave their homes, his wife Dee went up the hill to the hospital to check on him. It was the end of an era.

December 23 was what I just to believe was the beginning of my brain

cancer. I am very glad thankful that after surgery, radiation and chemo there is no visible sign of cancer left. But just as this Advent taught us, this is the time to watch and wait. So, I will continue to take new MRI's and be on the lookout for any re-occurrence.

After his fall, Nick gets stronger every day. He is faithful with his physical therapy. And he's faithful about going to Elderwise. Where he is finding his inner watercolor artist. He has many friends who are very happy to take him out for lunch.

Our friends at Wider Horizons have been very generous with us. They were quick to provide help and guidance (more than once) while we navigated this chapter. Denise Klein was a genius with organizing our friends.

So, while 2023 was not what I wanted it to be, we have lots to be thankful for. Not the least of is your friendship. And as the solstice and Christmas bring the light, we bring new hope to 2024.

Hugs

John and Nick

PS this is my last post from my King County distribution lists. If you are at King County and want further updates, let me know.