

Dec. 24, 1987
Ballston Lake NY 12019

Dear Ernie,

I hope this note and card don't come as too much of a surprise to you, but I've been thinking of you at this season, and wondering how you've been doing since last Anna and I saw you, at Willow Road, when Joe Martel, Henry, and Bob Hanson were also there. We very much hope that you are well and enjoying this Christmas season, and we extend our wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!

Well, I must tell you - I finally did it!! I retired from GE at the end of August, and am now halfway through my 4th month of being my own boss (except for Anna, also known as "Honey do...", of course). I admit to liking the change, although it does demand some self-discipline, and despite my finding there aren't enough hours in the day to finish my self-imposed tasks. Work at GE had become less than enjoyable, and I was forever looking forward to my weekends, and dragging myself back to work on Mondays. On my last several projects at GE I felt I hadn't been handled in a professional way, and that there wasn't enough money allowed on the project, because of poor or off-target pricing quotations, and this had caused me some embarrassments either with the customer or with my own management. Finally, when I was almost in-between jobs and working on the report for my last big project, I was approached to be lead GE systems engineer on the large contract we had garnered with General Motors for all electrical aspects of the GM project to build the new Saturn auto-manufacturing plant at Spring Hill TN. As I viewed it, that job would have taken two to three years to complete, with all kinds of travel involved, and I just wasn't up to that kind of time involvement or that much travel. So, I gave up outwaiting the company to give me a "golden handshake" (it was clear by then that such a thing was not likely to happen in '87 or maybe '88), and announced I was leaving. I gave them only 2 months notice, and they accepted. So my last official GE work day was Aug. 31, although I kept going in each day until Sept. 17 to finish the report I had been working on and to clean out my files of 30+ years of accumulated material, much of which I wanted for possible use at home. I didn't want to rule out the possibility of doing some consulting work, but I wasn't intending to actively seek such work either.

After I retired, Anna and I took "her" vacation in late October, and we used some free 'frequent traveler' (PanAm) tickets to get us to San Francisco. There, we rented a car and drove all the way up the California and Oregon coasts to west of Portland, staying mostly at B&Bs (bed and breakfast places) along the way. At Cannon Beach OR, just short of the Columbia River, we turned inland, then southeast to Beaverton OR, where we stayed three nights with some old GE friends, the Dunki-Jacobs, whom you and Midge met many years ago. Dunki (as he likes to be called) and his wife moved to Oregon after he retired from GE in 1984. We had a very nice time visiting there and seeing the sights in and around Portland, including Mt Hood, Bonneville Dam, and the gorge along the Columbia River. When we left there on Oct. 25 (Sun.) we drove the inland roads down through OR and CA, past Shasta dam and on into the Napa Valley wine country, finally ending up at a B&B in San Francisco where we stayed 4 nights while we saw the city and visited twice with a second cousin of mine. We left enough unseen and undone to justify another trip sometime, and unreservedly enjoyed all we got to see and do there, including two rides on the running board of the famous cable cars. Then it was back East on Halloween, in time for Anna to get a day's recovery before going back to work on Nov. 2.

While we were at Dunki's I agreed to help him present a paid technical seminar on electrical power system grounding, under the sponsorship of the Portland electrical engineering society, at Beaverton on Feb. 13 next year. Since my return from the vacation trip work on that upcoming project has taken up a great deal of my time. I've also been busy with straightening out our financial affairs - mostly working with a financial consultant to see what are the various alternatives for investing the payout we get early next year from the GE Savings and Security Program, now that I've retired. But enough of 'business'.

We expect to spend a somewhat quiet Christmas, compared to others in the past, as some of our children either will not be visiting us during the holidays or will come when others have already left. I must admit, when they're all here at the same time one isn't left with quite the same feeling of being able to communicate with them individually and catch up with their 'state in life', as it were, as when we get visited by only one or two at a time. But, one takes it as it comes, I suppose.

As to other aspects of our family, there are two new additions (at least) this year, although not a great deal of other changes. We now have 15 grandchildren within the family circle (3 ready-made, as they are step-children of Joe Shields, my oldest son, who's stationed with the Army in Belgium as a Captain, and who married a divorced Captain he met in the service; she and Joe now have two children of their own, and she resigned from the service this fall, to take care of her toddlers). We expect to add another two grandchildren officially in 1988 when Leo, number three son, who's been living with their mother, marries her next May. We think the world of all these kids, but are especially glad that the date has been set for the May wedding and the family relationship of the parents, children, and us will finally be legalized (if that's the word). Leo, incidentally, works as a computer programmer with the GE Ordnance Systems Division in Pittsfield MA.

Jay, the second oldest son, recently changed jobs and is presently working in computer software quality control at Atex in Bedford MA, a subsidiary of Eastman Kodak. Jay lives in Millbury MA and is unmarried so far. Mary Shields has been married about two years to a nice fellow from Minnesota. They live on the edge of Greenwich village in NY City, where Mary and a partner run a small jewelry-making business (very modern brooches, earrings and necklaces). Dorothy Shields, the youngest of the clan, works as an artist in NY City, and lives near my brother in Brooklyn. She also has started a new job recently, with the clothing and textile division of the firm that makes 'Swatch' watches. We're waiting to see if she likes her new job and will stay there for a while, to get better established in the commercial art world, as it were.

As to Anna's children, her son Jim still announces for Station WGY here in Schenectady, while she has 3 daughters living in various parts of Boston, and two other sons who are raising families in Montana - in Whitefish (just outside Glacier Nat'l Park), and in Great Falls.

Ernie, I guess that completes the roundup of information on the Shields/LeLievre families. We are hopeful this note finds you well and completely recovered from the operation you underwent not too long before our visit with you. If you can manage, just drop us a postcard saying how you are. And please show this letter around and express our 'hellos' to Joe and Henry Martel, and to Bob Hanson. We look forward to being able to see you all again on another trip to Boston, expectedly in 1988.

In the spirit of Christmas,

Frank, for Frank and Anna Shields