

Francis J. Shields  
23 Ashley Drive  
Ballston Lake NY 12019  
Tel. 518 877-5796

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Dear Roy,

When I look at the above date, I'm embarrassed! Your letter at last Christmastime was dated Dec. 19, and here it is almost one-half year later that I'm responding! That's my source of uneasiness, and I deserve it, since I promised myself when your letter arrived (it was an unexpected high point in my day) that I would answer it within two weeks. So much for, as you said in your letter, "the best laid plans of etc."!

Your narration of the sequence of health problems you and (most especially) your wife Jean underwent in 1991 was gripping, as I didn't know what to expect as the final outcome. Your letter left me with the impression, however, that things were finally turning out OK at the end of 1991 for both of you. I sincerely hope that is still the outcome, and that - if anything - things now are better than either of you had hoped for at last Christmas.

I can't relate the same degree of anxiety about health that both you and Jean must have experienced last year. But I have had my minor share of health concerns this year, thankfully not so serious as yours, and with what is proving to be a good outcome. I started with a fall on the ice at my front steps in February as I went out to get the mail. Cracked the back of my skull and it ached for a week or more. I finally sought medical advice, as there was a lingering ache in my skull when I shook my head or bent over. It turned out only to be the effects of the concussion from the fall. That being all settled, the next thing was three violent and sudden attacks of vertigo and accompanying retching over the next two months. These seizures came on over a half hour or so and lasted three or four hours, leaving me exhausted and thoroughly "wasted." After the second attack I underwent a battery of tests on my hearing and balance, as the inner ear is involved in both one's sense of balance (which is unstable when there is unequal pressure in the ears) and in a deterioration of hearing when this balance/pressure problem persists. The tests proved nothing seriously wrong (or so we thought), but the day following my visit to the doctor to get this news, I underwent a third attack of vertigo. This time I went to a neurologist for another opinion. He reviewed my history and the test data and concluded that I had a non-fatal if somewhat very discomforting problem called Meniere's disease. In some circles it's referred to as glaucoma of the ear, as it involves a pressure problem between the two ears that can eventually lead to deterioration of the auditory nerve of one ear. Its course is difficult to predict, but it's treatable with a non-traumatic but very delicate and complex operation on the affected ear (microsurgery). The preferred initial treatment, however, is to control the pressure in the ear by use of diuretics and a reduction of salt intake. If that doesn't work and the vertigo attacks continue, then surgery is the next option. Right now, I haven't had an attack in about



six weeks and I'm on the salt reduction program (even though high blood pressure is not a problem with me); the diuretic treatment had undesirable side effects and I gave it up. To finish this somber and cheerless narration, however, I actually feel great and am not worrying about whatever problem I have; there must be a lot worse things than my health problem, which is, in the final situation, treatable surgically.

I hope that you have found, as I have, that retirement is no drag. There aren't enough hours in the day to do the things that demand my attention, and being bored is not one of my problems. Much of my time is spent working with another retired engineer, a long-time colleague of mine who now lives in Washington State, on an engineering text covering the expertise in a particular technical field that we both acquired in over thirty-five years of working at General Electric. We've been on the writing job now for four years, and are hopeful we can complete the work within the next year before anything serious happens to either of us. When I'm not on the book job, I find plenty to do in keeping up with family affairs, the household bookkeeping and paperwork, and the usual maintenance and repair. I also do some volunteer work in delivering food to shut-ins from a food pantry, and in cooking and serving meals about once a month for an Albany inner city parish. I find myself wishing I had more time to do the things that are continually turning up undone.

Until recently my wife Anna was working at a bank in the commercial loan department. She has recently retired because of changes in the bank and a shift of her work to another location. That should leave us with more time to travel, as her job formerly restricted us to her vacation time for making extended trips. We will have been married 21 years at the end of this month (my first wife and her first husband both died, in 1969 and 1963 respectively), and between us have eleven children (she six and I five; we had none in this marriage), and fourteen grandchildren and step-grandchildren. The youngest of our children is now 29 years old, and all have left the nest, though we never know these days when it may be necessary to take one in for particular circumstances. We pray for the welfare of all of them, especially in today's world of changed values and constant emphasis on the "me."

Your letter referred to some of our old teachers at St. Mike's - especially Bros. Athanasius, Jogues, and Oswald. The 1933 Jan. class picture shows them all, plus Faber, Claude, Quentin, and Mauricius. I certainly do remember them all, and firmly believe they each had much to do with the formation of whatever moral character and civic conscientiousness I can lay claim to, as well as with the basic knowledge of grammar, language, science, math, and art that I possess. Wonderful men, both the religious and lay teachers at St. Michael's!

Roy, I've got to close this along about here, hoping that you haven't wondered since last Christmas whether I had completely ignored your telling letter. I hadn't, and it lay on the top of my desk constantly prodding me to get a reply off to you. Well, that's finally accomplished this day, and I will close with a reiteration that we would be happy to have you visit with us if you are in this area at any time.

Our home is unpretentious but roomy and comfortable, and we are ready to share it with you when you have the need for hospitality in the Albany area.

Good health and luck to you and Jean.

Your old classmate,

Frank Shields