The Holi-Dazed Times

Serving the Public since 1994

The Year in Review - 2014

Can you believe it?! Another year has *flown past.* Now, for those "youngsters" among my readers who are saying, "Nah, that's not true! This year has drug on… and on… just like *every other year since I was born* in 199X… or later!" I remember when I was a kid and it seemed as if time practically stood still, barely inching along. Will summer ever start***?!*** GAWD! Will my birthday ever get here? Geez, it's been a WHOLE year since my last one. Isn't it Christmas… **yet?!**

To the "utes"* among you I say, "just wait." It's all a matter of perspective and from *MY* perspective time is accelerating. I wonder what Einstein has to say on that… hmm? So, let's back off that accelerator (another name for the "gas pedal", or the electron-flow control for you Prius drivers!), sit down, relax and review the year just past.

* - Reference Joe Pesci in "My Cousin Vinnie"

Travel Note #1 -

The last week of January found Dick & I escaping the winter that would never end. Per the National Weather Service, the winter of 2013-14 accumulated over 50" of snow and had an average minimum temperature from Dec-Mar of 11 degrees, that's Fahrenheit mind you, not Celsius! We jetted off for Hawaii where we had not been since 2007.

Our week in paradise had us visiting the islands of Kauai, where neither of us had been, and Oahu ("The Gathering Place" in Hawaiian). Kauai was unseasonable cool as there was a tropical storm just off shore which caused the island to be cloudy and even rainier than normal, but it was calming and restful, and GREEN! We did a modicum of hiking and drove to Hanalei Bay (home of Puff the Magic Dragon!) The weather on Oahu, Honolulu specifically, was more what one expects… highs in the 80's and *sunny!* But also hustling and bustling. While there we **re**-visited the battleship USS Missouri, drove around the island and basically just hung out and enjoyed our respite from winter, awaiting us back in Iowa.

Trivia Anyone?

As has been a tradition for me for the past 5 or so years, January is when Jeopardy (the game show) has their online test/contestant search. And I of course participated in my lifelong goal of becoming a Jeopardy contestant. As you will see by the time you finish this particular publication, there is no further mention of Alex Trebek, so you can guess the outcome. Here is just a sample of what the questions were like: TREES - Brought over from Australia to the U.S., blue gum is a common variety of this tree; DOUBLE "L" WORDS - Hairstyle described as "business in the front, party in the back"; lastly, NAME THE WORK - 1902: "The horror! The horror!" (Now, I have included the answers, two of which I knew, somewhere else in this letter… but, you have to keep reading!)

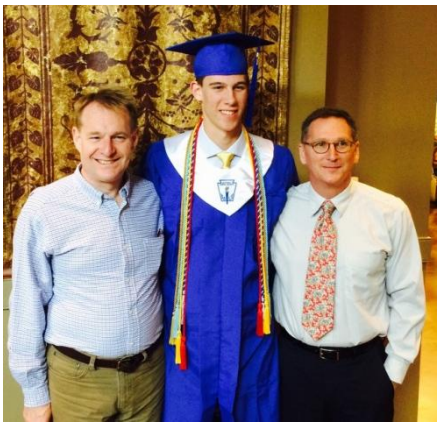
MID-WINTER DOLDRUMS

Upon returning to the blustery snow and cold which was Iowa in February, I attended my second term at Communiversity. For those who do not know, Communiversity is an annual activity here in the Quad Cities run by a non-profit organization with assistance from St. Ambrose University and Augustana University providing "educational activities" all through February. "Classes" meet Sunday afternoons for 3 hours for 4 weeks.
This year I signed up for Bookbinding! We made small little "notebooks" and in a couple cases made simple origami boxes to put them in. Quite interesting and something to do in February other than shovel snow!

As winter showed signs of loosening its grip on the Midwest I found myself recruited by friends in the neighborhood, Joel & Diane Franken, to assist in re-building their website for their non-profit organization *artsBASICS.* They are a support organization whose mission is to… " increase access to arts education for all students in all the arts in Davenport Community District BASICS Schools."

Want to know more (or see what I did for them)? Go to their website! http://www.artsBASICS.org/

Spring Has Sprung –



Dick of course all during this time has found himself working like a dog (What does that really mean? I mean yes, some dogs have to work… there are those Australian Shepherds that herd sheep, and of course K-9 Unit dogs, but come on, how many other dogs really have to ***work***???) Anyway, Dick works VERY hard, especially during tax season. So it was a pleasant break come May when he took time off and we drove down to see his sister, Dee Ann, and her family (husband Jim, their sons Ryan & Kyle). The main purpose of the trip being (drum roll, please…) Kyle's graduation from high school. ***Congratulations Kyle!***

And yes, he really is that tall; Kyle is NOT standing on a box, *nor am I standing in a hole*, hold the short jokes! Sidebar: In the fall Kyle started college at Purdue University and has become the *second* Division I college athlete in the Davidson-Van Hoeck family (lest we forget, Dee Ann was recruited by and played volleyball for the University of Iowa.)

On A Sad Note –

In April we said goodbye to my Uncle Ralph Perino, husband of Gloria (my Mom's big sister, and father of Gordon, Corrine, Dino, Patrick and Michelle). He passed away one day shy of his 92 birthday having battled ALS for the last years of his life. If you knew Uncle Ralph, you'd agree, he was loved by all, and he had a smile and kind word for everyone he met. Be at peace Uncle Ralph, you are missed.

Making Hay While the Sun Shines…

As summer finally rolled around, it was "back to the grind" of yard work, which isn't really so bad with the use of power equipment like a lawn tractor, except when you get a flat tire on said lawn tractor down the hill from the house in the front yard and you have to get the air compressor down there and get the weight off the axle so you can re-inflate it… ArrrgGGH!

We did our share of generating more O^2 (oxygen) for this planet of ours (i.e., we planted more trees!) This included replacing the hard maple in the front yard, which we had already replaced once before. We had

one rogue gust of wind this spring that snapped the top out the previous replacement tree which had just started to get nice sized… **double**-ArrrgGGH!!

We also planted several more crabapples and another oak.

Travel Note #2

The Fourth o' July weekend had us traveling this year to Seattle, in the

state of Washington, for an extended weekend. I had never been there and it had been 30 years (as best he can estimate) since Dick had been there. We did a lot of the usual touristy stuff, like Pike Place Market, but we did NOT get to see the "Flying Fish"… : (

We drove out to Mt. Rainier National Park, and came back via the Bremerton, WA, on the Kitsap Penisula, crossing the Puget Sound by ferry to get back into Seattle.

Another day found us driving up to Everett, WA, to the Boeing Corporation facility. There we did a guided tour of the manufacturing plant… BIG place! (Sorry, pictures not allowed!)

Back in Seattle we did a lot of walking around city and took the "Underground Tour" (in case you want to know more...

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seattle_Underground).

Alas, we drove around the old site of the 1963 World's Fair, home of the famed Space Needle, but we did not ascend said structure. Speaking of the World's fair, the still operating Monorail was located right outside the front door of our hotel… did you know it simply runs from downtown to the Fair site a whopping 0.96 miles? Well, it does!

For a day we left Seattle, and actually, we left the U.S. of A. and took the high speed ferry to Victoria, B.C. While there we toured the provincial capital, toured an old house, Craigdarroch (you

know how we are with going to see house-museums!), saw the gardens at Government House, where the royals stay, sometimes, if they are in Victoria, but not a real royal residence. And basically just had a good "walk-about" before returning that evening to Seattle.

One last stop of note while in Seattle, the original Starbucks, across the street from the Pike Place Market, ummm, what can I say… been there, done that.

And before you ask, the weather was beautiful virtually every minute we were there, a touch of fog in the AM a couple days and one occasion of a light misty rain, but overall warm and mostly sunny!

Summer – Family – Get-togethers – Etc.

Back in Iowa summer family activities were many. Late July had us venturing out to the Amana Colonies for dinner and a belated birthday gathering for Dick's cousin John, hosted by John's brother Joel and his wife Corrine.

A lot of the **Davidson-Peterson clan** was there to celebrate, but one particular family member absent in July made a special appearance in early August as Dick's Uncle Dave and his wife Jan were back in Iowa, from their home in Massachusetts, for Dave's class reunion. Where did we meet up with them? The Amana Colonies, of course!

(At right – Dick, Jim, Dave, Jan and Alice at the Ox Yoke Inn, Amana)

The Sorenson's weren't without their share of family occasions as well. The annual Sorenson picnic was graciously hosted by Mark's cousin Tim up in Clinton at Tim & Cheryl's house.

A few weeks later we saw Mark's niece Crystal as she passed through Clinton on her trek westward. Crystal had the opportunity to move from Virginia to Arizona with her employer, taking a new job in the Phoenix area. Now that left Mark's other niece, Melissa, still in Virginia by herself as Brother Bob (father of said nieces) and his wife Sharon had moved last year to New Mexico. *Never fear!* Melissa is planning her move out west to be closer to her Dad and Sharon and her Sis. Completion of that move anticipated to be in sometime in the spring of 2015… stay tuned!

And then in September it was Mark's Uncle Bob's turn to make a trip to Iowa from his home, this uncle not of the East Coast, but from the West Coast, Redwood City, CA. A goodly portion of the "local" Sorenson clan met up to chew the fat Dick & Mark's for an afternoon of socializing.

(Photo above – Mark's Mom (Sharon), Aunt Ginny, Aunt Carol, Uncle Bob, and Uncle Lonnie. *Not shown* – Box of ***Chicken 'n a Biskit*** crackers, quite **prominent** in the un-cropped version of this picture!

Whenever the phone rings after 10 PM, it's rarely good news – This held true for us in October when Dick got a call from his dad (Jim). He was at the hospital, but not for his own ailments, but because Dick's mother (Alice) had had a heart attack. *SHE'S DOING FINE NOW*, it was a "mild" one, but scary none the less. Alice had a stint put in to handle the severest of the blockages, and prescribed medication for the remaining issues and is currently attending cardio-rehab. There was a minimal amount of permanent damage, but she will have to cut out the cigars and scotch from her diet (for those that know her, that won't be hard; and for those who don't… ***that's a joke!***)

MORE TRIVIA! –

In September Dick & Mark participated in a fundraiser trivia contest supporting the non-profit Legal Aid Organization here in the Quad Cities. The team consisted of them, three other attorneys from Dick's office and a couple family members. The team was in **FIRST PLACE the *entire evening…*** until the "Final Jeopardy" question… *which was rigged!* It seems that the design of said question was so that practically any team could win if they got the final question correct, which was a multipart question and virtually impossible to get right. I don't recall what it was *exactly*, but it was something like "Put into order, smallest to largest by POPULATION…" 3 of the 4 Quad Cities along with I believe two more COUNTRIES (San Marino and maybe Lichtenstein?) Get any one out of order and you'd blown it! And as with the rest of the evening, do so **without** the aid of any resources… in other words, we couldn't "Google it"! It was still (mostly) fun, and it raised money for a good cause.

Jeopardy On-line Test answers:
Eucalyptus tree, a Mullet, and Heart of Darkness.

(Random picture of Boots, our sole remaining cat, who's **bugging the snot out of me** while I write this letter! Picture NOT taken during The Annoyance.)

Travel Note #3 –

An overnight trip was taken to Chicago the first weekend of November to see the legendary performer Bob Dylan at the Cadillac Theater downtown. It was a stop on his "Never Ending Tour" which as the name implies, has been in progress **since 1988**.

Now truth be told, we *believe* it was Bob Dylan, based on the rest of the audience's reaction, but you couldn't prove it by us! It was not that we were that far from the stage, we were about 4 rows back in the mezzanine, it was just that the stage was so, so very **dark** you could not see their faces! And to complicate things further Robert Zimmerman, a.k.a. Bob Dylan, wears a wide brimmed hat while performing… or at least whoever was on stage was wearing that wide brimmed hat. I'm not kidding*, it was dark!*

But now we can at least say (we think) we (might) have seen Bob Dylan in concert… *probably*.

SIDEBAR: The last time our paths nearly crossed with Mr. Dylan, Dick & I were in Italy, it was 1997. While in Rome we went to the Vatican, it was a Sunday in September. We didn't know if the Pope (then John Paul II) would appear, but we were there! We over heard amongst the people in the throng inside St Peter's square, that we would NOT be seeing the Pope on this day. The reason? He was out of town… attending a Bob Dylan concert in Bologna!!! Don't believe me? I saved the article from the Quad City Times upon our return from abroad, see it here on my website…

http://www.markspage.com/dylan.pdf

THANKSGIVING x 4 – We started the "Thanksgiving Season" off early this year by inadvertently celebrating Canadian Thanksgiving, albeit one day early. Let me explain… my brother Bob and his wife Sharon had planned a trip back to Iowa the second weekend of October. My Mom thought we could get together for dinner on Sunday of that weekend and Aunt Gloria (Mom's sister) and her eldest daughter, Corrine, were going to join us. Great plan, but… Bob & Sharon's flight got canceled! And with them only planning a 4 day visit and Sharon having to be at work immediately upon their return to New Mexico, they couldn't afford any further delays, so the trip was canceled in its entirety. But as Mother said, just because they weren't going to be there, there was no reason for us to skip a meal… *mothers are so very smart!* So we carried on with our Sunday dinner plans, Mother, special guests Aunt Gloria & Corrine, my brother Doug, and Dick & me. Once we sat down to eat, someone noted that it was but a day shy of Canadian Thanksgiving, so we unilaterally declared it our *un-official Canadian Thanksgiving*. After all, we did have turkey and stuffing and all the fixings… that's **number 1**.

Number 2 – We were graciously invited to partake in the *official American Thanksgiving - Manchester, IA edition* with Dick's Aunt & Uncle (Sylvia & Mike Carr, Alice's brother) at their home. We were joined by Dick's parents (Jim & Alice) and three of Dick's four cousins on the Carr side, and their respective families: cousin Carolyn & husband Scott Shives and son Samuel; cousin Elizabeth & husband Derek Wild and their son Jett, and cousin Steve Carr. Good eats, good company and an overall good time.

Number 3 – On the Saturday of T-Day weekend we returned to have *official American Thanksgiving - Clinton edition #1*, with my Mom and brother Doug. This time main course?... Ham, and for dessert?... Pumpkin Cakeroll with Cream Cheese filling (I had already taken pumpkin pies up to Manchester… I like to bake ya know!) Wait! That's only three, you said FOUR! Yep, one more time!

Number 4 - The last occasion, *official American Thanksgiving - Clinton edition #2*, was also on T-Day weekend, this time Sunday evening, at the home of our friend Dale Kruse. Earlier in the day Dick had been playing during the Bettendorf Park Band's appearance at the annual Festival of Trees in Davenport. Oh, had I mentioned Dick joined the Bettendorf Park Band? Well, he did, clarinet, played at Middle Park in Bettendorf during the summer and this was the last performance for the year. Anyway I digress, Dick put his horn away and we trundled up to Clinton, again, yes Dale lives in Clinton… just a block and a half from where I grew up, it's a small world! Did I mention, Dale grew up only about a mile away from the farm where my Mom grew up… the world is truly getting smaller! Anyway, short story long, more turkey, more stuffing, more good times.

Another Passing –

Virginia "Ginny" Sorenson

1943 - 2014

The Sorenson side of the household suffered another lose late this year. In the first week of December we we said goodbye to my Dad's youngest sister, Ginny, after nearly a year long battle with cancer. As was uttered so many, *many times* at her Celebration of Life service, she was "a VERY special person." Words were never truer. So with the holiday season upon us, and her family, son Tim (& Cheryl), daughter Julie & grandson Noah, and daughter Jill and grandchildren Brett (& Lani), Emrie and Landon, dealing with her lose, please hold them in your hearts as they grieve.

(To the right - One of my *favorite* pic's of Aunt Ginny taken by my late father, just a "few" years ago [circa 1965])

In Closing…

It is our sincerest wish that this missive finds all of our family members, friends, old & new acquaintances, everyone whom we have crossed paths with this year… *happy*, **healthy** and enjoying life. Remember the good times; live in the here and now; don't dwell on regrets, and help others to do the same. If this inspires you to do an act of kindness or reconnect with those you've lost touch with, then my job here is done. Peace be with you all.

Merry Christmas &

A Happy New Year!

Mark & Dick