SEASON'S GREETINGS 2019

"All the news that fits!" – Enlightening You Since 1993

It's December *already*, and that means it's time to curl up with a hot cocoa and a good Christmas letter (DUH! This one!) and settle down for a loooong winter's read… The ***Mistletoe Missive***, 2019 edition is HERE!

Record Cold – Record Flooding

The winter of 2018-19 was *COLD*! As proof, Davenport and many other cities in the Midwest set all-time record cold low temps on January 31… -35 degrees F! But that wasn't the only weather-related news of 2019. You probably heard we had a bit o' flooding here in Davenport, making national news reports when a levee breached in the downtown area on May 3rd… 60 years to the day of another calamity… the birth of my brother, my *much*, **much** older brother, Bob. Coincidence? I don't believe in coincidences!

Along with the breach, the flood broke ALL records for flooding in Davenport with a max height of 22.7 feet AND an unbelievable duration of 93 consecutive days above flood stage, *PLUS* 31 *more days* in October & November. That is more than one third of the **entire YEAR** with the river above flood stage! You could not find one single set of plans for building an ark in any hardware/home improvement store within 100 miles of here, *really*, we looked!

It's Trivial, but…

February 2, Groundhog's Day 2019, Dick & I headed up to Cedar Rapids to participate in Jim & Alice's church's Team Trivia Night. We got off to a good start, as we *usually do*. But this year was different… at the end of the night we had WON the contest! After many years of leading through part (sometimes most) of the night, in 2019 we brought it home and took first place. And then of course we did the only proper thing and donated the prize money back to the church.

Spring time also brings the annual Jeopardy On-line test. I took the test and did as well or maybe even a little better, but I am still waiting for the call from California… (**Jeopardy theme music**… DING!... time's up!) Maybe next year.

The Year of the Truck (or Car, or SUV!)

January saw the untimely demise of our lil' red 1990 Mazda 2600 pick-up truck. The engine control computer went out on it (again!) Years ago Dick found a guy on the internet who could "flash" the computer and getting it running again, but the truck frame was rusting through and it was time to say, "Goodbye, Mazda. Ye served thee well for many a year." Heading to the internet, this time to shop for a vehicle rather than repair one, Dick found a 2003 Ford Ranger in Madison, WI. "What?!" you say, "He couldn't find anything closer?" Well, actually, no. For this is a not your average

Ranger. It was in ***good*** shape AND it's a manual transmission. Yes! A "stick", a 5 speed, 2-wheel drive pick-up with just over 80K miles. So, we moved up 13 years and about 15K miles from what we had in the Mazda.

But that was just the beginning! After nearly 10 years I decided it was time to replace my "nearly worn out" VW CC. I mean come on, it had nearly 42,000 miles on it! Ok, obviously I don't drive a lot, but it was still time for something different. But what to get? I wanted another manual transmission car, like the VW, like the old Mazda, like the new('ish) Ford…well you get it… I like manuals! But as is probably NO surprise to any of you… they are *nearly EXTINCT*! But after some (internet) legwork I narrowed down my choices until I decided on a new… *Mazda!* Mazda just came out with a new 3 sedan… yes not only do I want a manual, I want it in a C-A-R, car! But wait, the manual is only available in the hatchback… DRATS! Back to the drawing board. But wait (*again*), in 2018 Mazda offered the 6-speed in the sedan… so I began a coast-to-coast search for a NEW 2018 Mazda 3 (in the summer 2019). Believe it or not they were out there, and deeply discounted. But I wanted a red car… uh-oh, not so many now. AND I wanted a light-colored interior, UH-OH! ONLY ONE left in the entire country, in Santa Rosa, CA! To make a short story long (I know, TOO late!), I negotiated the deal over the phone & internet, bought the car and had it shipped here. If you've never shipped a car, it can be an exciting(?) adventure. I arranged the shipping and was told they would call the day before the expected delivery. It left Santa Rosa on a Thursday afternoon and could take up to 7 days to get here. Well, Sunday night I got a call from the trucker. I thought, "Good, the car will be here tomorrow." I could barely understand him, as English obviously was not his first language, not a judgement, just a statement, and his Asian(?) accent was very thick. What I finally understood was "here" & "front". I had told them to stop at an empty parking lot a block from the house. We walked out the front, river side, of house to walk there. For those that know (AND those who don't!) River Drive is a 4-lane urban highway… NO PARKING, NO SHOULDER… *and* we live on a slight curve… *AND* **it was twilight!** The driver had stopped ON River Drive in front of the house & unloaded the car! That was one quick delivery inspection as I didn't want someone to come around the curve & make a "Mazda-sandwich" with the car carrier. All ended well and I love my new RED car!

But wait, there's more… Dick's X5 (BMW) had truly *terrible* reception since new on <u>the ONLY radio station he wants to listen to</u>, WBBM News radio, 780 AM. Yes AM! And lo' though they tried to fix it, the high-pitched whine was always present… but only on that frequency… could that be a sign he should listen to something other than AM radio (YES, but I digress!) What color should HE get? BMW, like all car manufacturers today, seems to think that all vehicles should be silver or black… eh, maybe white, too. And they offer 2-3 shades of each! Well they did offer the X5 in "red" (a very, ***very*** dark red… at night it looks black!) So, now our garage is stocked with all red vehicles. IMHO, all vehicles should be red.

Family & Friends

There were many activities this year with family members and friends who are like family. In February I went to the Cardinal & Gold Gala, a fund raiser benefitting 1st time college students attending my alma mater, Iowa State. I attempted to get all my old roommates from college to attend, but in the end, it was just myself and Brian Sinclair and his wife Deb. Others had some *pretty flimsy* excuses, e.g. "our daughter gets married the next day." The <u>*next* day</u>, it's not like it's <u>the same day</u>. Or, "uh, the weather is getting bad." Oh, yeah? So there was a multi-car pile-up closing the interstate between you and the gala, you could've driven around it!

Seriously, we did have a good time and are planning to do so again this next February. Now don't go and schedule anymore weddings, or snow storms, etc. (Wait? Do you ever really *schedule* a snow storm? Well, either way, don't!)

While I am ribbing my college roommates from Stevenson House, Birch Hall, RCA on the campus of Iowa State, I should give credit to Brian & Deb who proposed a date to get together in October for a football game, my first time back for a game **since the `80's** and I believe Dick's 1st time ever for a football game at Jack Trice Field. We attended the ISU-TCU game where **ISU prevailed handedly** over the "Horned Toads" (seriously, they are the Horned Toads!), 49 – 24. Dave Callan & his wife Sherri who drove over from Illinois, attended our tailgater, but sadly couldn't stay for the game due to a weather induced migraine, sorry Sherri. **: (** On a positive note, Don Scott & his wife Christine **surprised us all** by showing up for the tailgate party when we thought they couldn't come at all! But the Scott's had to head back to Des Moines, nee Johnston, because… wait for it, wait for it… *another daughter was getting married*! Well, it was the following weekend this time, but they were busy with planning/arranging/ etc. Ok, C&G Gala 2020, and Sept 2020 football game (the plans are already in the works…) NO MORE WEDDINGS you two, ***okay?!*** Did I mention the tailgate party was held in a garage because it was freakin' raining cats & dogs up to game time, ISU actually postponed the game for 2 hours because of said rain.

We don't look a DAY older, do we? Thank You Photoshop! (Yes, I pasted "yesterday's" heads on "today's" bodies!)

Closer to home, we had two high school graduations to celebrate. The first one in May was Dick's cousin John Carr's daughter, Brynn, who graduated from Marion HS (near Cedar Rapids, for those who don't know) and the second in June, *really close to home*, for Dave Canfield, son of our good friend (and handyman, jack -of-all-trades) Curt Canfield, from Davenport Central HS. We drove to Marion for Brynn's party, but didn't have to travel an inch for Dave's as Dick & I played host for Dave's party at our house.

Also, in June we saw the not completely unexpected departure of my brother Bob & his wife Sharon. They left Cedar Rapids after nearly two years up here, heading back to New Mexico. They'd **re-learned** to hate the Midwest winters and wanted to go back to a more favorable clime. It was nice having them closer, but Bob's girls (Crystal & Melissa) had both remained in NM. I'm sure they're glad Bob & Sharon have come back to roost in NM.

And another thing about June, it's a good month to get married, like Dick's cousin Steve Carr, to the lovely Alexa. The venue they wanted for their reception was only available one Saturday in June, the 22nd. Did I mention that Dick's Uncle Mike & Aunt Sylvia (parents of the groom) were also celebrating their wedding anniversary in June. It was a big one too, their **50th**. And oh, yeah, *it was the same day* as Steve & Alexa's wedding! That's a big **red-letter day** in the Carr Household (households!) Congrat's to all!

Speaking of big life events, we had three big "decades birthday" this year. In April Dick's dad, Jim, turned a spry 90, in May the previously mentioned much, ***much* older** brother Bob turned 60 and in September Dick hit the big **6-*Oh!*** For

Jim's birthday family members gathered for a dinner at our favorite Amanas restaurant, the Ox Yoke Inn. In attendance were of course Jim & Alice, Dick & myself, sister Dee Ann & Husband Jim, and their eldest Ryan & his wife Lindsey, along with a good portion of the Carr family. For Dick's birthday we started the weeks long event with a NON-surprise dinner party hosted by Ed & Molly Carroll (Ed is a law partner with Dick @ Lane & Waterman.) Molly & Ed were so gracious in having us over to their house where we celebrated with a about dozen other L&W folks and spouses. Dick & I had a quiet dinner at home on his birthday, then on "birthday weekend" we went out to dinner with more friends Saturday and on Sunday joined Dick's parents for our traditional Davidson family birthday dinner at the Ox Yoke.

But wait, there's more! Via *The Facebook*, I found out about and then attended a "CHS Theater Reunion". The class ahead of me (CHS `79) was having their 40th class reunion and a group of "drama-heads" decided to gather and invited people from several classes either side of theirs to meet up for drinks and conversation. I had the opportunity to see friends I had not seen since they graduated 40 YEARS ago! It truly was a Blast-from-the-past. Special attendees included our theater director, "Mr. Fred" (Bruce Friedrichsen) and assistant director, "Winks" (Joann Winkler). Bruce brought his slides from ALL the productions at CHS while he was there (`77-`85). We couldn't look at them there, but I was entrusted with them and have since scanned them all digitally and have made them available to all who attended. "Who is THAT?! Is that….?" Boy, **we really were young at one time**!

One final family celebration to note, Dick and I hosted Thanksgiving this year in our home. Partaking of the feast were my Mom and brother Doug, and Mom's sister - Aunt Gloria, one cousin - Corrine and her husband Mike and one of their three daughters, Riley, AND cousin Dino's youngest son Jacob. Unfortunately, Dino needed to pick corn and his wife Kim spent the time with her family. I brined & roasted the turkey, made the mashed potatoes & gravy, the fresh cranberry relish, and the dressing. What, no PIE?!? YES silly, we had pie! Baked by the skilled hands of Aunt Gloria (she's kinda known for her prowess with pie, and cooking in general!) I assume everyone enjoyed the meal, as I had no problem getting people to take home leftovers!

HEY! Didn't you go anywhere this year?

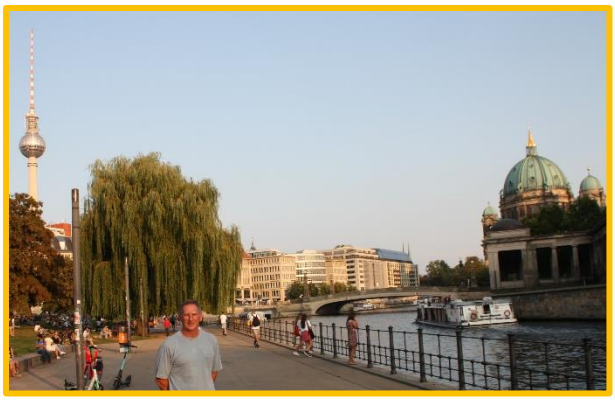
Why, yes, we did. We had two trips of note. The first was in May when we traveled west to California, Nevada and Utah. The occasion was the 150th Anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad and the "Driving of the Golden Spike" (which you *should have* learned about in school!) We were in Sacramento, CA where we visited the California Railroad Museum, the state capitol and the house museum of Leland Stanford (one of the "Big Four" behind the western half of the railroad AND benefactor of Stanford University). From Sacramento we turned east and ventured via

Amtrak across the Sierra Nevada mountains, over Donner Pass (yes, ***that*** Donner Pass!) to Reno, NV. There we got off the train and flew the rest of the way to Salt Lake City, UT.

We had already seen the "pretty" part of that leg, and instead of crossing the salt flats in the dark and pulling into SLC after midnight we arrived in time to check into our hotel and enjoy supper before retiring for the evening. The balance of the time in Utah we went to the actual Anniversary event at Promontory Point where the rails met (again, check your history books!) along with 10's of thousands of "our closest friends". We saw "Big Boy" the largest steam engine ever built, recently restored by the Union Pacific and now running to events across the country. In SLC we walked around downtown, Temple Square and visited the Utah state capitol. Boy-howdy, California has nothing on Utah, that capitol building is magnificent. While there, we took a half day and drove over to Tooele, just 30 miles west of SLC where I lived while workin' for the gummint from `87-`91. Geez, Tooele has changed! The army depot where I worked is one quarter the size with 1/10 the employment and yet the town appears to have doubled in size, go figure! There was so much there that was new, but the old part of town brought back lots of good memories. We even saw my old apartment (34 W Vine St, Apt #14… from the outside), and drove out to the depot, part of which (the part no longer belonging to the military) we could drive around.

The second trip was our late summer vacation to the Czech Republic and Germany, specifically Prague & Berlin. We walked all over old town Prague, seeing all the regular sites. Prague Castle, St. Wenceslaus Square, Charles Bridge, etc. One day we took the train out to the country side to see an old castle, Karlstejn Castle, quite a hike up a hill… who's idea was it to put castles on hilltops? Oh yeah, I guess there was a reason for that! In Berlin, we again saw more castles along with the Reichstag, the Berlin Wall Memorial Park, and another day trip out of the city proper to Potsdam (a suburb of Berlin today) to see the Neues Palais (New Palace in German) where Kaiser Wilhelm signed the declaration of war to start WW I. "Next door" is Sanssouci, another, even older, German Palace. Also, in Potsdam a short bus ride from Sanssouci is Cecilienhof Palace, site of the Potsdam Conference (*again*, check your history books, kids!) where Truman, Churchill & Stalin met to divide up the spoils of WW II. One more stop of note was the beautiful(?) Soviet monument (in the former Soviet quarter

of the then divided East Berlin). Oh my! They really saw themselves as "liberators" after the war and wanted the people to know how much they had done for them… you know, when they liberated them! HA! Bombastic is the first word that comes to mind!



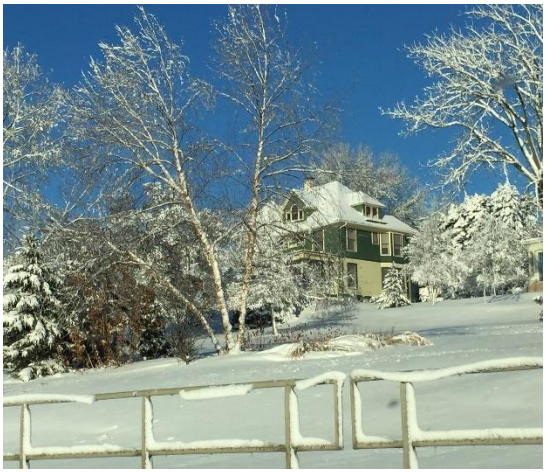
And in Conclusion…

Dick continues to shine at Lane & Waterman and has elevated his status in the Bettendorf Park Band, now functioning as the treasurer of the band's non-profit foundation. Just last month he heard they were approved for a grant he applied for which will allow them to get new, *proper* chairs for the musicians to use, doing away with the cheap metal folding chairs (as commonly found in a "Bingo hall"!)

I still dabble with the I.T. stuff, but when asked will tell people that I'm retired… so, please, *don't call!* **:)** No major house OR yard projects this past year. Dick continues to "wrench" on his `79 Beetle convertible and I still enjoy riding my classic `85 Honda Nighthawk (motorcycle), both weather permitting! The welcome mat is ALWAYS OUT here at 1802 E River, so if you find yourselves in our neighborhood, do drop in!

We remain both happy & healthy and wish the same for all of you.

A Very Merry Christmas and the Happiest of New Years!



Mark

&

Dick