SEASON'S GREETINGS 2020

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

Uh, did that just happen or was it just a "bad dream", 2020 that is. This year's ***Mistletoe Missive*** is likely to be briefer than normal, but I say this ***before*** it's written!

January… another Jeopardy test

To paraphrase Forrest Gump, "I took the online Jeopardy test… ay-ghen." And, ay-ghen, no calls from Alex. I should note, a small portion of my life-long dream of getting on Jeopardy has faltered with the passing of Alex Trebek. We'll see who they permanently replace him with this coming January, but it just won't be the same when I ***eventually*** do get there! (Not to put too fine a point on it, but it HAS been a life-long dream… I watched the *original* Jeopardy with Art Fleming as a kid.)

February… Forever True, ISU

For Valentine's Day this year Dick & I trekked off to Des Moines (nee Altoona) to attend the Cardinal & Gold Gala, a fund raiser held by the Iowa State University Alumni Association specifically supporting scholarships for first generation students, like myself. Last year I attempted to coerce most of my "ol' college chums" to attend, but due to previous commitments (and weather), we were three. ***But***, 2020 exceeded that total by a goodly margin. In attendance were:

(L – R) 1st row: Dick, Judy & Randy Timmerman; 2nd row: Mark, Deb Sinclair, Cy Clone, Christine Scott; 3rd row: Don Scott & Brian Sinclair. Not shown, but also sharing the table with us were also Benjamin Scott, eldest child of the Scott Family, and his fiancée Hailey Kellis. Just like at our football game reunion in Sep`19, it was "just like ol' times."

March, April, May… Boredom sets in

Yep, it can't be avoided… COVID-19 started affecting our lives, thankfully, only in very small & boring ways. We have had only a few people in our circle of friends and family infected, and ***thankfully***, all are recovered. AND… the vaccine is *on it's way!* When available, I will be in line as early as possible and I hope you all will be, too. To show you how boring life was at that time, the *only note* on my calendar (for inclusion in these Holiday Tidings) was… "Watched the Spacex Dragon Crew launch." For the "youngsters" out there in readership-land, I will point out that in the 1960's & 70's rocket launches were big news, as were "splashdowns" (Ben & Hailey, if ya don't know what a "splashdown" is… ask your parents!)

June… First of many postponements, cancellations, etc.

I was working on my Clinton High School class reunion committee, a "job" I fully and truly enjoy; we were prepping for what **should've been** our *40 Year Class Reunion*. We had already set the date late in the winter 2019, but then… COVID-19… we polled our classmates via email-blasts and Facebook & it was determined we should postpone the reunion. We met, socially-distanced, and decreed that we would have a 41st Reunion in 2021, for surely this "virus-thing" would be whipped before the end of 2020, right? But likely it would not be in time for a gathering in the late fall of 2020. Hey, we got it partially right, we postponed, just might have been off a bit on when science would conquer it… eventually.

July… Summer Time Vacation?

Nope, not a single solitary, ***recreational*** trip. But…

I did spend a lot of time on the road this summer, between Davenport, Clinton, and the University Hospital in Iowa City. EVERYTHING is alright now. I'll try and give you the "Reader's Digest" version (not easy for me, as you all know!) The patient was neither Dick nor I, but one of the "***toughest cookies***" I know, my Mother. The story goes waaay back to fall of 2019… oh, wait… Reader's Digest…. Mother had a what we thought was an infection from a bonk on the head from a carton of Blue Bunny ice cream. But it wasn't. That "fortuitous bunny attack" lead to several doctor's visits in Clinton which finally led to the first of numerous trips to I.C. for the final diagnosis of squamous cell carcinoma of the skin. It was near her eye and the doctors prepared her for losing the eye. Mom accepted that (what else can you do?) What DID she worry about? Her dog, Abby, and the inconvenience, in her eye(s), of my time spent driving her to-and-fro to appointments… *Mother! Really?* (this is where I will tell her *AGAIN*, I would do it all over again, but… *let's not, okay*?!)

It came the day of surgery, anticipated to be 6-8 hours, maybe more, and a subsequent 3-5 day stay in the hospital. I was there in the surgical waiting room for family members, one hour… two hours… three… my phone rings, an update from the doctors? I was called to see one of the surgeons. "How's it going" I said in so many words. Dr. Bayon replied, "very well." But wait?! I thought he was the "closer", why is he here *already???* I was a bit foggy and I literally had to ask, "Is it *over* already?" (it was around three hours). "Yes," he said AND she came out of surgery with BOTH EYES, in her head, where God put them! And the cherry on top of this "sundae", just one night in the hospital, and home the next day!

There have been several follow-up visits, an MRI with "unremarkable" findings… *that* is EXCELLENT in doctor-speak. Of course, I must add in closing that it is now official, my Mother, bless her heart, love her to death, is a "numb-skull". NO! Really, she has no feeling on the top of her head… what did YOU think I meant? Tsk-tsk! They removed part of a nerve in her forehead, the reason the surgery was endangering the eye. It is expected she will remain a "numb-skull", but we'll take it!

August, yadda, yadda, yadda… In Conclusion

You all (well, most of you anyway), heard we had a bit of a storm in Iowa in August…. The Derecho of 2020! Dick's parents (Jim & Alice in Cedar Rapids) got it the worst of everyone we know. A hole in the roof from a tree branch, many, many trees down, no power for a week. We lost one tree which did a small amount of damage to the deck on our rental house behind our house, smaller branches down here and there AND we too were without power for 6+ days ourselves. We were fortunate as "we know people…" we got a generator, delivered no less, the first night (Thank You, THANK YOU, Thank You Bryan & D.) With it we had enough "juice" to power the frig & freezer and a few lights. In the course of the event we got another generator and "wired" Jim & Alice's house with (heavy-duty) extension cords to give them a couple lamps, power their frig and run a couple fans. No one wants to do that again!

The election is over (really!), Dick is chugging along at L&W, I still do *some* I.T. work, but less every year and that's O-K! No Park Band activities, no travel, but we remain both happy & healthy and wish the same for all of you. With that, let's wrap up 2020 and "put a bow on it."

A Very Merry Christmas &

A Happier New Year in 2021!

Mark & Dick