

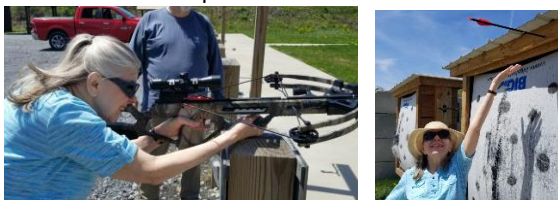
I ended last year's letter with a note about happy anticipation. The vaccine was on its way, life would return to normal. I completely misread the vaccine situation and was convinced there would be a shortage of vaccine leading to a black market. HA, did I ever get that wrong! The vaccine arrived, we got it, but life is still far from normal.

Unlike the fifties when we practiced hiding under our desks to avoid the Russian bombers that never came, the virus continued. I hoped the arrival of the vaccine would mark the beginning of the end. Boy, I was wrong again.

Matter of fact, I still don't feel normal. It was months before the "Wear a mask" signs came down from local businesses. We have avoided theaters and other large gatherings. We decided to closely associate only with friends who were vaccinated. Gladly, most of our friends are vaccinated.

In May we went to PA for Greg's birthday. It was a surprise party coordinated by Zach, who by then was stationed in CO. It was a good trip, and we came back feeling pretty good. Coincidentally, the covid numbers were at a low point then.

Henrietta tried out Ainsley's crossbow. With practice I'm sure she would improve.

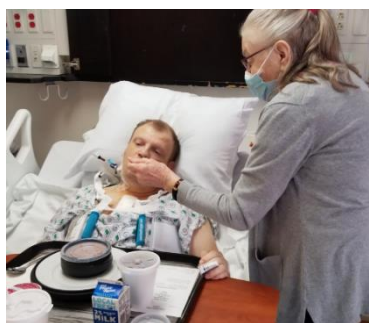


By July the covid numbers started to creep up so we went to NY to visit Susan and her family while we still felt safe doing so. Here we are having dinner at a cute little inn in NY.



We started in the gazebo thingy in the background but moved outside because the AC was busted. Five minutes after this picture there was a torrential downpour and we moved again, to an inside dining room. We didn't make hotel reservations for the drive home and ended up driving back straight through, I'm not interested in doing that again.

We had a very unexpected trip to see Bill in KY when he ended up in the hospital with heart failure. He had a quadruple bypass and a mitral valve repair. We went up after his surgery, but his hospital stay was longer than normal so came home for a few days and then went back when he was



ready to be discharged. Picture is renewing a mother-son bond. The nurse wasn't real happy about this, Bill was supposed to be feeding himself.

Our daughter-in-law Kelley, and her friend Vivian, came from PA and spent a few days helping him get organized. Susan has sent him some cardiac-diabetic meals to help him get started. We were concerned that the cardiac diet and all the therapies might be too much for him, but he's adapting well.

We are both doing great. We both completed our eighth decade in 2021, and so far, so good. I do notice that I spend a lot more time thinking' and a lot less time doing'. Technical information that used to be as easy to remember as my phone number or shoe size has become more difficult to recall. I feel kind of like I'm looking for the lone "Q" in a box of Scrabble tiles. And, like Scrabble, sometimes finding Q is easy, sometimes it's not. Speaking of Scrabble, we play 3-4 times a week. Henrietta wins 2/3 of the games but she's been winning for 50 years.

I know I could simplify my life if I'd reduce the number of interests I have, but I'm not ready for that. I do miss the bi-weekly writing group I was in, because I don't write without some outside pressure to do so. I decided to put away my illustration software for a while also, it was becoming more like work than play.

I'm still trying to get the house in shape so as we age in place here, as we hope to, there will be less maintenance. Things look a lot different from 80 than they did from 70. A big decision was removing the river birch in the front yard. It was beautiful, but also the single biggest maintenance issue I had every year. I was either cleaning the gutters, installing gutter guards, or cleaning the roof. The worst offense from the tree however is the constant onslaught of debris on our porch, sidewalk, and driveway. It would decompose, staining the concrete. I have a pressure washer, but it took a few days every year to clean the concrete. This year, in just a week or so after the pressure washing, the drive was completely stained again.



This led to our decision to hire a landscaper to remove it. The tree came down on October 5. I expected I'd feel remorse, but didn't. Instead, I felt joy when I looked at the roof and saw no debris. The contractor was supposed to

come back soon and remove the stump but has experienced a bunch of problems with his employees and most recently, himself, with a job site injury. So . . .we'll just wait.



I still love getting my hands dirty. Here, me (in long pants) and my friend Don are putting a trailer hitch on our car.

By July things looked pretty normal and we went to the parade. Here we are sitting in the shade on the courthouse steps, waiting for the parade to start.



There was a short mandatory shutdown that closed the mall last year. That meant no more daily walks for us. When they reopened masks were required so we didn't walk. We walked the neighborhood, and while we both enjoy it, the hills are tough for me with my asthma. This year, when the mask rules went away at the mall, we resumed our daily walks. We are blessed to live in a place with a thriving mall.



Here's Henrietta taking a break during her walk.



Another mall shot. No alcohol involved here, this is just the way Joann, a fellow mall walker, takes pictures.

I finally completed building a solid cherry occasional table that I started back in the 90s. In pieces this table traveled from OH to WI to TN, and then another move in TN. I finally had the time to complete the assembly and finish it. Some of the cherry came from my boss, Clark, in KY in 1980; some from a friend, John, in OH in 1992, and the top was sanded



flat by my friend Bob, in TN. Lots of memories in that little table. It has no definite purpose, but I use it as an occasional sewing table.



I had a surprise party for Henrietta on her eightieth. She was playing mahjong with some friends in the dining room. The guests for the party assembled in the basement then all came up the stairs. She was surprised!

Henrietta decorated the tree on Thanksgiving, while I put up the outside lights. We bought our first artificial tree at JCP in 1963, this tree at Delhi Nurseries in 1995. The tree has so many memories. The angel on top is old enough to be a grandmother, the angel hanging above in the manger beneath the tree it is old enough to be a great grandmother. Do angels have kids? Just wondering. OOPS! Henrietta just informed me that all angels are men.

We changed churches again. We are now attending a Baptist church, about a block from our home. It is a medium sized church with people of all ages. We go to the early service which is lightly attended. The church is close, friendly, and has a lot going on.

As we look back, we have so much to be thankful for. Our parents, our kids, and our friends. We can still laugh at ourselves and act like kids when nobody's watching.

Here we are making the best of a bad situation, waiting for the landscaper to come back.

