



Oak Haven Happenings

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Greetings to our friends & family!

We are doing great and feel very blessed with all that God has done in our lives. As the kids are now older (and a couple have moved out on their own), we have more time for each other. We just celebrated our 27th wedding anniversary in the Shenandoah Mountains of Virginia enjoying the peak color of Fall. Life is good!

Trips

We started off the year with a winter trip to Red River Gorge, KY staying in the General's Cabin with just our kids and our dogs. A wonderful get-away setting with its own woods and pond. It was so special to be together: hiking, playing games, and relaxing in front of the fire.

Then in February, Jim & I went to Florida with my parents and my sister, Melanie & her husband,



Kristin, Brian, Jim, Julie, Michelle, and Jennifer at the Chicago Botanic Gardens. (by Susan Varick)

Steve. We spent a week on Hutchinson Island and a week on Captiva Island. We enjoyed a vacation as three couples, though it felt strange not to have our kids with us. (We must be getting closer to retirement when we have more free time than our kids do.)

In March we took three of our kids (Kristin had to teach) on a seven-day cruise to the Bahamas. We departed out of

Charleston, SC, which is a nice destination in itself. Brian & Michelle have always thought that a cruise would be the best kind of vacation. We found some great rates, so it was our chance to find out. It certainly met our expectations of great food, entertainment, island hopping, shopping experiences etc. We had great fun exploring each of the islands. Our highlight was probably the day we rented mopeds and toured one of the islands (although it was very scary driving through the traffic when we hadn't mastered moped driving yet).



In May the whole Gordon side of our family went on a camping trip to Buck Creek State Park in Springfield, OH. It was nice to relax as a family, play shuffleboard, volleyball, ultimate Frisbee, and just hang-out together.



We went up to Chicago in July to visit Jim's brother, Steve, and his family. As always we enjoyed our time with them. We also had great fun kayaking along the lake front and watching fireworks at the beach.

A week later, Jim took three of our kids and the cousins on their annual backpacking trip to Red River Gorge. (Jennifer & I relaxed by the pool with my parents.) Despite a drenching rain the first day, they still had a good time and are ready to do it again next year.

In August we had a "girls' trip" to Amish country for the Kidron Auction. We enjoyed seeing all the beautiful quilts and driving the countryside. Plus we had fun buying a lot of bulk food at the Amish stores. We then spent the night at Mohican State Park and enjoyed shuffleboard and hiking. What a delightful and special time with my girls.

Labor Day we traveled to

Kelley's Island, up in northern Ohio, with my parents and Melanie and her kids. It's one of our favorite places to bike ride, plus we love the sandy beach that the dogs are welcome to play on. We always have a blast when our family is all together.



Kristin

Kristin (24) is teaching science at Imagine School in Dayton, OH. All 325 students come to her twice a week for what they call a

"special" like art, music and gym. The kids love the hands-on-learning, games and computer activities that she provides. Kristin is in her best element; she loves the flexibility and freedom to design her own unit studies for grades K-6th. She received a big compliment from the principal who told a parent, "We've struck gold with Kristin!" A big draw for the kids to come to Kristin's class is her pet rat named Einstein. He is very loved by the children and they all take turns holding him.



Kristin is sharing a house with Jennifer, doing most of the cleaning and cooking to offset rent. She likes to see how little she can live on and has brought her grocery bill down to \$16.00 a month. She is also a master gardener and created a bountiful garden of vegetables and flowers.

Another major highlight for both Kristin & Jennifer was their preparation this fall to become foster parents. They have just completed all the requirements: 36 hours of class training, safety and fire inspections, physicals, home visits etc. They are hoping to have a child or two placed with them by Christmas.



Jennifer

Jennifer (23) loves her job as service dog trainer for 4 Paws for Ability. Even though she works very hard and sometimes long hours, it is her dream job. Besides training dogs, she helps teach classes, coordinates the foster dog program, and goes to a prison in W. Virginia once a week to train inmates how to work their dogs. Next month she gets to go to New Zealand to teach a class! Wow! She is super excited and is planning what she should see on her vacation time after the class is over.

Jennifer's house has gone from livable to lovely in the past year. Last winter we worked on the dining room and added two white beams on the ceiling for a classy look. Then the kitchen received a face lift by painting the cabinets white, replacing the knobs, adding new white wainscoting, wallpapering the top half, and a new French door out to the sunroom. Then in November

she hired someone to lay prefinished wood floors that we had bought at an auction. What a difference! The girls are very pleased with their home. Only the kitchen floor and the sunroom are left to do.

Brian

Brian (20) is engaged! He just asked Elizabeth Little, his girlfriend for two-and-a-half years, to marry him. After he proposed at Eden Park, he had her parents and us at the Precinct Restaurant waiting for them to arrive. It was a great surprise and so special to be included on their important day.



Brian graduated this past June cum laude with an Associate's degree in Interactive Multimedia Technology at the University of Cincinnati, Clermont College. He is now learning all the aspects of our Oak Haven Photography business. As I write this, he is out taking basketball pictures. He has been a great asset to our business.

Brian is getting more involved with Elizabeth's church down in Felicity, OH. He is co-leading a "life group" for Jr. High kids, as



well as doing videography for the youth group. We are pleased that he is being used for ministry.

Michelle

Michelle (19) has had a busy year. She graduated from high school in June, but has almost completed an Associate's degree in Marketing Management at UC Clermont. This fall she had the opportunity to do an internship with the Purchasing Department at the Cincinnati Zoo for ten weeks, working three days a week





*Kristin, Julie, Michelle
Nikita, Lobo, & Brutus*

and living next to the zoo in intern housing. The other two days she took two classes at Antonelli College in their Interior Design program, as well as an on-line Marketing class at Clermont College.

Another highlight for the year was the Clermont County Fair. She & Kristin made pies, cakes, breads, candy, and flower arrangements. Because Michelle had won the Bakery scholarship, her pies and cakes went for more money at the auctions (\$175 profit). It was pretty exciting.

This year Michelle (and I) fostered three Golden retrievers and one Lab: Denali, Brutus, Lobo, and Rokr. All of them are fantastic dogs! Many people wonder how we can give up dogs that become a part of our family. It isn't easy, but it is well worth it. These dogs go on to make a major impact in the lives of their new partners, sometimes even saving lives, but definitely enriching and enabling the lives of their new family.

Outreaches

Besides our monthly involvement at the Owensville Commons (independent senior living apartments) and the food pantry that my parents run out in Quercus Grove, IN, we have also gotten involved in the Owensville Historical Society. Jim is passionate about preserving history. He is enjoying his roles as Program Coordinator and Webmaster. He's also agreed to do the newsletter, be a trustee, and interview people to record their histories. My favorite meeting was a house tour to three historic homes in the area.

Home

Improvement:

We thought the addition would be done by this Christmas, but while it's not done yet, we are making progress. I have to remind myself that we are working on a big project. I also slowed our progress down when I changed the design

after seeing how much light was blocked after Brian drywalled a closet in the center of the addition. The new design is so much better.

Just before Thanksgiving a stone mason finished a stone walkway up to our front door. It looks wonderful and ties the house and landscaping all together. We had fun the next couple of weeks landscaping. All in all, we are very pleased with the transformation of our house into a home that suits us perfectly both in function and in looks.

Conclusion

Thanks for being our friends and family! Not only is this newsletter our way of sharing our life with you, it is also a great way to record our "history" for this year. Take the time to record and share your "history" as well. Your children and future generations will thank you.

May God be with you!

With love,

The Varicks

