



Oak Haven Happenings

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Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

I enjoy this time of reflection in writing our year-end letter. It is interesting to see how we spent our time over the year. Were we building a close family? Did we have a good balance between work, play and relaxation? Were we working to stay physically, emotionally and spiritually fit? Were we helping others? Were we making fun memories?

We have had a very full year this year. Having Kristin and her six kids close means there is always something going on, whether it's sharing a meal, babysitting, going to the zoo, working on her house, picking garlic mustard in our woods, having a movie night etc. It's all good. We love being grandparents (and parents).

There always seems to be a project to work on. It's a good thing that Jim is a fantastic handyman. He and Brian (also a great handyman) renovated Kristin's master bath earlier this year and are now converting the boys' large bedroom into two smaller bedrooms (the way her house was originally designed). It is so rewarding to see all of the improvements coming together to make a beautiful home.

A major highlight for us this year was going to Florida for two weeks with Kristin and the kids in March. One exciting day was spent at Disney World's Magic Kingdom and the rest at a more leisurely pace on the beach. They loved it all! We also enjoyed playing in the pool all summer with them and camping up at Kelley's Island (OH) and Red River Gorge (KY).



Life is about to change drastically for them (and us as well). Kristin just got engaged in November to Philip Clements, a good long-distance friend she met on Christian Mingle about three years ago. They have decided to get married Dec. 31st in Nebraska, so we are quickly trying to prepare for a wedding. Very exciting! Their plan is to settle into Nebraska for a while. It will be quite an adventure for them. (We will miss having them only two miles away.)



Most of the work we do is managing and maintaining our rental properties. We added a three-unit in Goshen and a duplex up in Xenia this year, so now we are up to 11 units.

We try to schedule our trips to Xenia on Wednesdays (Jennifer's day off). It changes a day of work into a treat to get to spend time with Jennifer, Bryan and our 16-month old granddaughter, Aubrey. It's always fun to squeeze in a visit, have lunch together and sometimes go for a hike or work on house projects together. She & Bryan just bought a beautiful old two-story brick home with a wrap-around porch in the historic district of Xenia. They have been super busy ever since with refinishing the floors, painting and settling in. They also had new skylights and windows installed and it looks amazing! They are expecting our ninth grandchild in June!



We have another grandchild on the way as well: Brian & Liz are expecting a baby in April. We just found out that it is a girl! We are so excited for them. They had a great adventure this summer traveling Europe for 10 weeks. (The picture is in Mercantour National Park, straddling France and Italy.) Next will be an even greater adventure of raising a child. I am sure they will continue hiking, back-packing, and rock climbing. I volunteer to babysit when we go on trips together. We tent camped in the Smokies in April with them and had a wonderful time. The weather was perfect, Brian cooked great meals over the fire, and the hiking was beautiful with all the wildflowers.

Our biggest trip of the year was a two week trip out in California with Michelle & Corey in September. We spent 5 days in Sequoia & Yosemite, a week in Lake Tahoe, and 2 days in San Francisco. We had so much fun and it was special to share it with Michelle & Corey. The biggest highlight was hiking the 11 mile Panorama Trail in Yosemite and my favorite part was bike rid-



ing along a beautiful stream that ran into Lake Tahoe. Relaxing in the hot tub at night was really nice too. We loved the mountains!

The saddest part of the year was losing our sweet dog, Nikita, to cancer. We took her in for some simple bloating and the vet Michelle works for opened her up and found that she was full of tumors. To those of you who are dog lovers, you know how heart-breaking it is to lose your devoted friend. I still miss her even though we have a new dog, Kimber, who is very sweet too.

One of Jim's big accomplishments this year was on May 1st, my birthday. He ran the Half Marathon (13.1 miles) in the Flying Pig Race for the first time. He achieved his goal of running it in under 2 hours (1 hour and 56 min). Way to go, Jim! Another one of his goals (that I shared) was to hike up to Mt. LeConte in the Smokies. We hiked it together up and back in one day, 12.8 miles. A great way to celebrate our 34th Anniversary in October! It was a thrilling view with the Fall color and almost a 360 degree view at Laurel Point. I wonder what it looks like now after the fires.



As the psalmist said, **“I lift my eyes to the mountains -- where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”** I am thankful that we have a God who loves us and chose to send His Son into this world to save us. **“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior, who is Christ the Lord.”**

May God be with each one of us this coming year!

Jim & Julie Varick
& Family