

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year

Welcome to 2020, the year of the Covid; sequestering, masked men and women everywhere; shuttered businesses, churches, and schools; ball games with people sized cutouts for an audience minus a few quarantined teams; and ultimately a chipper but sick president, maybe too sick to campaign; but the future is always bright. Marge gave me a list of some of the things she remembered from this year, trying to motivate me. I've since remembered a few more. So here are a few.....

*January - planted tomatoes in the foyer. We were blessed by our Church family. Patti Jagger brought food every Monday. Her daughter Brook cut Marge's hair here at the house, has her own salon. Her dad was a barber. Jeannie Byers has stayed with Marge when I'm gone and she and Dave have helped us a lot with transportation. :)

*February - Planted more window stuff ... it's too dry in here. It all died, ugh!!

*March - Beginning of the the outbreak. My projections based on Johns Hopkins numbers, were not pretty. Granddaughter Sarah's HS closed, switching to online classes, including Chemistry. Marge was able provide some help through the semester. Cousin Jamie helped with pre-calculus, and Sarah did very well on her exams. We were both very proud of her during this tough and frustrating year.

*April - President requested the governors to implement containment measures, and the curve flattened. We hunkered down. I expanded my container garden to 100 pots, mostly apple trees, began v-notch grafting. I really am baaaahd at grafting (4 of 20) this year. No regular garden started, my tiller needed to be repaired (both me and the machine) and I declared myself.. officially... OLD!!

*May - Our granddaughter Jamie graduated from Northern Michigan University, on Lake Superior, with a degree in math and is now pursuing a PhD at Michigan State University. Granddaughter Alex continues in Computer Science at the U. of Wisconsin - Stout. And our niece Meghan graduated from Indiana University, and was scheduled, before Covid, to work in Africa but is now working here in the states. Congratulations all, keep up the good work!!

*June - Marge finished the taxes and mailed them in. Had no idea how long it could take for a tax refund, hand processing of the forms under Covid was slow (late November).

*July - Marge started to pick up water again, went to the Parkview ER to check in for extreme diuretic treatment. While there, almost ready to leave, she choked on a chicken sandwich, which required a respiratory therapist and emergency treatment. Doctor put her in a coma to stop the coughing, scared the dickens out of me. They put her on a ventilator and gave her a shot the following morning to revive her (amazing, instant Margaret!!) but it was a full week after the incident before they released her. Unfortunately she now sometimes requires an oxygen concentrator. I used the time and anticipation of the wayward tax refund :) to hire local contractors, Brent Spaw to clean our lane, and Mason Maggart, to remove the brush and trees around our old house. We anticipate replacing the old house with a nice rental home and possibly a more manageable future home. Odd thing, I had noticed Mr. Maggart at Walmart working for a tree company, and asked if he knew anyone who could help. He gave me his phone #, but I waited. I hate starting things, silly I know. But it was my wife at the hospital that ran into his girl friend and helped initiate action, got me moving. Wow, did he ever do a job, a dozen huge trees, gone and cleaned up...

In cleaning the lane they offered to turn over a garden, hmm. So I planted zucchini, gourds, tomatoes, squash, turnips, and beets on the 15th of July, mostly on top of our septic field, but a miscellaneous bag of cucurbitaceae (cucumber family: squash, gourds, cucumbers, pumpkins & watermelons) along our lane.. It's called a fools garden, you really don't expect any fruit, just the fun of seeing things grow. But about 200 zucchini later, and a counter top still full of acorn squash, I now know why they call it a fool's garden (and who was fooled!).

*August - Somewhere in there I had cataract surgery on both eyes.. Made a simple mistake. For 73+ years I have been badly near sighted, got super used to it, the surgery "corrected" it. I had a choice, I just made the wrong one. But I did find some 4 diopter granny glasses at Teghtmeyer's hardware store that restored me to my previously functional near sighted state (a diopter is the reciprocal of the focal length in meters). And good news, I can see again!! :)

I also tried chip grafting (see Youtube). This is a peculiar method similar to the t-bud grafting which I learned to do on peaches as a lad and trainee under my uncle (former Texas A&M horticulture professor, now deceased, Dr. Edward Burns.), but it's done in late summer, not spring. The idea is, in the fall a bud forms in the axil of the leaf. You make a steep cut into a baby tree, ~45 degrees. and cut out a bud on that tree. Then from the donor tree, you cut a similar "chip," keeping the leaf stem as a handle, and wrapping it completely onto the baby tree with Parafilm M. Voila! With luck, one cloned tree! Beware the clones ... bwahahaha!! Unfortunately success for this new venture is unknown & we won't know until Spring of 2021 or until I remove the parafilm!

*September - Marge got a clean bill of health from the doctor. Yea!! I called the IRS. They had 17 million forms still sitting in trucks in Kansas or some such. "Wait until Thanksgiving," said the woman on the other end... OK. Now the zucchini started to roll in, I froze 50, gave away about 4 times that many. And I kept two very, very large ones for zeed (zucchini seed). Meanwhile, the lane provided a really prolific yield of decorative gourds, a few pumpkins, no cucumbers (100% rabbit food), and a load of acorn squash.. i.e. those not removed by the deer and rabbits. Turnips... well my sister's comment to me was something like, "Why on earth would anyone actually plant turnips?" They're still out there, looming in the winter darkness, waiting patiently to be picked. My grandfather used to plant them in August in my parent's gravel pit, then harvest them in the spring. Obviously, July is too early, because they are now the size of oddly colored volleyballs and still growing.

*October - Another local contractor "Peaks and Valleys" fixed the roofs on both houses, getting ready for winter. And after more than 60 years, we finally found a good piano tuner, Jeannie Byer's sister. It's really great to hear songs on key again, though Marge has trouble getting to and from. We need a transporter beam (Might use quantum entanglement? maybe we can just stand in front of the microwave oven?).

Now I'm starting to worry, no tax refund, end of October, I called my congressman, Jim Banks. His office confirmed that they "cannot find" our tax form!! Called my senator, wrote the president asking to fix the problem (probably what cost him the election).

*November - "We were truly blessed by the pandemic because we had a ZOOM Thanksgiving." Yes, my wife actually said that and I agree. About 20 family members joined us online to chat. We saw and talked to some people that we had not seen in years. Plus, made just the right amount of turkey and trimmings for the two of us (lasted exactly one week with nothing left over that needed freezing). Not as much fun or as nifty as a real Thanksgiving but "pretty darn." And, shortly after Thanksgiving guess what came in the mail, our refund check!! Yea, it wasn't for the amount listed on our tax return, we'll have to figure that out later on, but very close, and enough to cover the roof repairs, lane cleanup activities, and tree removals.

*December - Marge had a virtual doctor's visit. They haven't quite got the intimidation part down yet. I say that because I notice she had a very pleasant visit. I bought some videos, "Double Take," "Bait," "Mission to Mars," "Star Trek - Beyond." And that's pretty much the year in review. I did get a Gala apple grafted onto our big MacIntosh behind the house, so we may have Gala apples as soon as next year. Got a lot of new neighbors, mostly young people with kids trying to escape the city. And I cut some walking sticks if anybody would like one (really). I'm having trouble walking, went to rehab back in June and July, helped a little, I kept falling down. But not much falling lately just old and crotchety. You are always welcome here, with or without your mask and secret identity. Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Love to you all,
Ed and Marge Kimble

