

Over the hill and through the deepest woods, to grandmother's house, shaboom!
Season's greetings and a very Merry Christmas to all our friends, internet acquaintances, relatives, and to anyone reading this - we wish you love and respect, high yields, and that big tasty garden crop like they always show on the back of every seed catalog. Like every year, it has been a rigorous and interesting time to be alive.

The year started with some very good news. In February Parkview Hospital, Dr. Parikh and his team, were able to reverse Marge's colostomy operation so that she was free from that burden. Nursing home care, lot of trips to Fort Wayne, then a very tenuous return to living a normal life which is still is a bit rough, she can't walk without aid, and therefore we have avoided travel unless necessary.

But I must say Marge caught me truly by surprise. In September, through a miracle with some massive planning and a lot of friends, she organized a wonderful 50th wedding anniversary party. It was set in the foyer of our church. And we were truly blessed by a lot of good friends, neighbors, and family. There were people I haven't seen for years, wonderful people there from throughout our lives. I particularly loved seeing Sheri DeYoung, a close family friend, and members of the IPFW chemistry department including Dr. Pacer, a colleague of my wife, a friend from the ACRES land trust, and one of my teachers in college many, many years ago. Bruce and Ilse Bye and Judy Steinman, friends from college were there. Judy's husband, Barry, from our original wedding party, was in Africa teaching!! Dave Mingle, and Howard Diehm (Boomer) two friends and former electronics instructors from ITT were there. My sister, brother, son and daughter drove thousands of miles to be there, and Marge's sister Nancy Halaburda and her husband with a lot of other people that I really appreciate. Loved every minute of it, which for me is unusual because such things usually stress me out, I get grouchy. But there was good food and a collection of music from throughout our lives, wonderful!

A special thanks is extended to the following people, Nancy Halaburda, who brought food and decorations; daughter Jennifer Kimble Warf, artwork; and Michelle Kimble, our daughter-in-law who provided the posters; and to Micci Becker who made music possible, & numerous church friends who served food, moved furniture, provided scheduling, etc. Thank you! ("Just Married, 50 Years Ago!!")

After the party, back at the farm, it was pretty quiet so I decided to tag with colored tape some of our crab apple trees for future grafting (In the Spring you can't tell, I've been known to graft an apple onto an oak. Hint, doesn't work.). And while I am terrible at it, my intent is to turn as many of those trees into Macintosh and Honeycrisp apples by rind and saddle grafting as I can find, perYoutube.

Found about 20 trees, some 10-15 feet from the lane, pleasant fall day, nice walk, what could possibly go wrong? Quick answer: no socks, a recurrent problem as it turned out. It seems crab apples prefer a bed of raspberry, rose, eleagnus and blackberry brambles, with an undercover of poison ivy.

Alas, the final blow. I needed to put the lawn mower away, winter approaching, but the garage door on the shop had become encircled by a 1.5" rope of poison ivy vines. Most of the leaves were gone and I've played this game successfully many, many times before, so I found a shop rag and some gloves, but I was wearing short sleeves. I pulled out the vine, cutting it into fuzzy three foot lengths with a shovel and I would have given the effort an "A" right up to the very end. But then, as I pulled the very last strand from behind a decorative trim board, slap, I was slapped by some leaves on the left forearm. Startled, I retreated hastily though the hairy debris (yep, no socks). But so close to being finished, I rationalized moving the last 20 sheets of plywood from the bay floor to behind a never used piece of equipment, and I parked the lawn mower. Victory!! Peace!!? Nope, forgot to wash. Two weeks later, adding a little diabetes and an old burn scar from my high school days, suddenly it was doctor time. I'd lost quite a few square inches of hide on my right leg. And after five weeks of hormone pills, silver nitrate treatments, burn cream, it's about 90% restored, and my arm doesn't itch at all (unless I think about it). So I'm doubling up, I'm not gonna take this intelligently or lying down (with my leg elevated like the doctor says I should), I just planted 600 more apple seeds. I'll teach em, I'll buy chaps and hire *teenagers. I'll wash with actual soap. I'll even wear socks. My thanks to Carl and Nancy Schwartz and their apple cider operation for the seeds. You only get about 5 seeds per apple so

600 seeds represents a lot of cider. & Sadly, buying bags of apples gets expensive.

* Application for this life altering experience can be found on our website at: www.gunstar1.com

But funny how these things go (not ha,ha, funny but that other kind). Marge had some damage from diabetes and circulation troubles, in almost the same location but on her left leg. So our doctor recommended a dermatologist in Fort Wayne. It's about a 50 mile round trip, and with my sweetie in a wheelchair, not trivial. But we got there, and 2 minutes later, "You need a different doctor, we'll get back with you." They never did but they did prescribe a cream (which didn't help)!. On the way home we bought some McDonald's burgers on Dupont Rd. and (tempting the fates) ate them in an empty mortuary parking lot. Also bought a new wheel chair. But then, going from Hwy 69 onto 30 we blew out the transmission on our Blazer. Drove the 25 miles to Columbia City at about 28mph, in first gear, to City Chevrolet in Columbia City. They added some transmission oil and gave us a repair estimate.. \$4600. Drove home, first gear, called AAA, towed it back to the garage, and we came to the conclusion that the cost and benefits of a new car vs. old car repair, at our age, were about the same no matter what we did. So you have to laugh (or cry, or join the circus) because those fates are really tricky!!

The granddaughters are doing well, Jamie is continuing her diving and is studying at Northern Michigan University, Alexandria is finishing high school, playing in band, and looking for a good college. Sarah has been participating in plays and has won several awards for writing. Nancy's daughter Meghan is doing well at Indiana University and is nationally ranked in figure skating. So we wish them all the best of luck in the year ahead.

Our daughter-in-law has been busy putting the finishing touches on several civil engineering projects, particularly proud of a river front project just ending. John, our son has been traveling throughout the country working for St. Gobains as environmental engineer.

Wayne Warf, our son-in-law has taken up private practice as a lawyer in Carmel, Indiana. Good location. He could use some work if anyone needs a lawyer. :)

Overall it's been a long year. Made a few new friends. Watched a lot of episodes of The Orville on TV and of Star Trek Discovery huddled near Marge's laptop with speakers in our laps. Discovery is on-line but not on TV, maybe a little too edgy? Been interesting. Orville is a hoot. 9PM Thur. on Fox

Went to the model train show at the coliseum last week. Bought an HO boxcar (I know, big spender). Brought down 20 inches of track from upstairs, a small bridge, and put it on the island in the kitchen with the box car on it, so you can now run the car back and forth by hand.. but watch out Cornelius Vanderbilt, we're on our way, we have a lot of HO track and bridges from Sheri DeYoung, from her dad's garage shop.. and now we have a box car, and a big sign that says Nickel Plate Road. (Marge and I both used to love riding the Nickel Plate to Chicago from Fort Wayne with our dads.). So maybe we will have time. We've got the space and I sure would enjoy that. You never know. Throw in a couple of Arduino's for track control and AI, might just work out. Oh, and I have just been informed we will also need to provide room for Marge's American Flyer trains from her childhood!

So that's about it. We have a leaky ceiling in the kitchen and a roofing contractor that we paid half the fee (so he hasn't shown up for a month or so, phone tag.). We have a black cat and a white cat with a black tail that hunt the place, they may have spooked him. Put in a container garden earlier this year on the porch on picnic tables. Didn't think ahead, blocks the pond view. Our crop consisted of two dozen pea pods, some green beans, a couple dozen really small tomatoes and a huge sunflower that grew from a large pot where I also planted a peach seed, The peach at end of summer was about 4" high, the sunflower was about 10', you could almost watch it grow. Just started a compost pile, maybe it will help next year's crop if the raccoons don't carry it off.

Applied for a greenhouse grant from USDA, didn't get it. Better luck next year. Baby tree foraging from deer, weeds, and rabbits here without a greenhouse runs about \$100,000 per year but since no harvest is expected for 40 or 50 years, so the loss is not realized. Sadly, the USDA doesn't really have a good model for that. "But I do," said the old grumpy guy....i.e. "Bah Humbug."

On that cheery note we finish this year's Christmas letter, and recall that distant lesson from an old Dicken's curmudgeon, that anyone can make the earth a little brighter place and can add a bit of love, respect, knowledge, and fun, a little bit like decorating a tree or hoeing a garden. Here are some pictures from our year.

Back Row:
John Kimble
Jennifer
Kimble Warf

Front Row
Margaret and
Ed Kimble

& Julia Kimble
Key just behind
John



Back Row
Nancy Shirley
Halaburda
Matthew Kimble
Sarah Kimble
Thelen

Front Row
Margaret Shirley
Kimble
Ed Kimble



Top: 1. Julia and Andrew Key 2. Display /Middle: 3. Dave Mingle, me, Dave Byers 4. Poster 5. Sheri DeYoung /Bottom: 6. Cake 7. The Old Guys (thanks Nancy for the framed picture)

