

2018 Christmas 'Howdy y'all' from the Helgrens (www.helgren.com)

December 17, 2018

As the world becomes increasing digital I always enjoy taking y'all for a trip on the "wayback machine" using analog media. Somehow the feel of paper in the hands is so much more real than a click of the mouse to view a "page". The wheel of time continues to turn. It suddenly occurred to me that all my siblings were now over 60 and I remember way back when the "old folks" would get together at Christmas at my Gramma's house. What were they, 45 years old maybe? The view from this side of 60 looks remarkably good. I don't know why my folks looked so old back then. Probably didn't take care of themselves..or maybe having 5 active kids makes you age prematurely...

Speaking of kids...ours are awesome, as all children are. Jonas and Heather had another new addition to the family..of the 4 legged variety. I am not a dog lover by any stretch but I will admit that they have a couple of canines that are "OK". We swung through Salt Lake in August on our way to Paddy Flat for some "off the grid" R&R at Debbie's brothers cabin. We enjoyed the time with Jonas and Heather, always generous hosts. The visit was in reciprocation for their visit to Texas over Easter. We really enjoy those two. In a weak moment, and in response to their commitment, Deb and I will accompany them on a trip to Australia and New Zealand in April. A LOTR tourist excursion in the offing! Jonas continues to wear two hats: IT Director for Red Touch Media and CIO of Laduma, based in Manchester, England. Thankfully in the 21st century he can do both from home base in Salt Lake. Heather continues to shine as payroll accountant at Cementation, Inc. Those two are a gift and we enjoy visiting and being visited by them. Our Christmas this year will be in SLC.

Sam is still working for England Logistics as National Sales manager. He finally "proved" his national reach by visiting San Antonio as part of a sales call. We loved having him stay and he enjoyed it SO much he returned two weeks later to spend Thanksgiving with us (OK...he already had planned to be with us) But two visits in two weeks makes us yearn to be closer to "home" in Utah. Sam seemed to be constantly traveling throughout the year and, in a move reminiscent of his Dad, flew to Ireland just before Christmas to put him in the next higher frequent flier tier with Delta. We look forward to seeing him while we are in SLC over Christmas. We hope Texas continues to be a worthwhile destination for him in 2019.

Debbie and I continue in our Bible Study Fellowship "careers". Deb continues as a BSF teaching leader. Many changes with a brand new study, brand new procedures and new technology all add up to a year of challenge and fun. Another change is the status of Deb's Mom, Stella. In May, Stella developed a clot which led to the amputation of her right leg, her only "good" leg. Difficult decisions were made and she has moved to a long term care facility. A new chapter in our lives as caregivers, with and increased appreciation for God's gift of sister Karen's daily visits and attention to Mom.

Deb and I got some travel in with two trips to Paddy Flat (Idaho) in February and then in August as well as a trip to Chicago to catch up with Pete's sisters over the 4th of July.

For me, it was a year of challenge as well. BSF developed a new website. IT means "incessant training" as anyone in the business can tell you. Something new every day! This old brain just continues to absorb new stuff and I can honestly say I still look forward to each new day at BSF HQ. Of course, at my age, I just look forward to each new day :-). Age denial was a big theme as I have now dug up most of our yard and replaced our "beige lawn" with 6.5 tons of rock, 2 ½ ton "decorative" slabs and two pallets of sod. Not to mention 100 Asian Jasmine plantings. Just to stay in shape I also tore out and replaced the back deck. Debbie has been a good sport in being my "wing man" on these projects. Don't mess with her...she's "buff" now...

We have been blessed by family coming to visit all year. First we had Jerry and Holly, and then Jonas and Heather then Ray and also August came in for Stella's surgery in May. We had Sam visit us twice. August and his family came for Thanksgiving. It was great to have many able bodies available at Thanksgiving as we hosted Stella at our home and we needed to transfer her to and from wheelchair and car. Just remember that we are always ready for a visit from family and friends that may be traveling through San Antonio.

Traveling, being blessed by visits, seeing our God at work in our lives and those we love. These are the milestones that marked another blessed year. We pray that your lives find peace, flourishing and a growing wonder at His love in 2019.