

2020 Christmas 'Howdy y'all' from the Helgrens (www.helgren.com)



December 24, 2020

Twas the night before Christmas and in the Helgren hacienda, we all was a thinkin' "Will this COVID ever End-a?" But the house wasn't gloomy with the threats of pandemic, we celebrated Jesus, who is here as our Medic. He'll heal the great hurts that plague all humankind, and bring us joy and the love that's Divine.

A year like no other. But every year has renewed challenges and setbacks so, in many ways, 2020, in hindsight, was like many others.

We started the year with house rockin' and rollin' with the Hein clan gathering for Stella's 89th. Somehow we managed to pack in the clan here and at Karen's and even managed to bust Stella out of the care facility where she had been staying. Nothing adds to holiday joy and stress like family! (I survived...)

We all know what kicked in in early March but despite that my sister Mindy and her husband Dick, came down for a bit of sunshine and a change of scenery. That only lasted two days before their cold feet had them high-tailing it back to Chicago.

Debbie's mom, Stella, died on April 6th. Because of COVID restrictions, both Debbie and Karen had had only limited access to Stella, but God opened a door on the evening of April 5th as Debbie was contacted and allowed to be with Stella who died peacefully with Debbie at her side. It wasn't a COVID related death, but hard all the

same. We are thankful for her life and her love and for the years with us here in Texas.



For better or for worse, in July we threw caution to the wind and headed to the west coast to see my sister Holly in Oregon. Along the masked way we spent time in Salt Lake to see Sam and Jonas and Heather! We had a great time with Holly and Jeff with hiking and kayaking to keep us limber. COVID precautions make for some interesting moments but traveling to see family was worth it. We spent a couple of days at the Hein cabin in Idaho. Holly and Jerry are such welcoming hosts at the cabin. Squooze in a little cabin construction project as well.



Most of my **major** household projects are complete but sister in law, Karen, was prepping to sell her house and move to PA. That gave me an opportunity to exercise my handyman skills in the absence of my own projects. We also got Karen packed up in a POD and she spent a few weeks with us before heading north. Hein family connections are sparse in Texas now.

It has been an interesting year for Deb. She finished her years as a BSF teaching leader having meetings and giving lectures using Zoom. What would have been normally a leaders fellowship and send off was a car parade past our home to thank Debbie for her service. The end of year hiatus of BSF would have normally (there's that word again..) resulted in her having a summer of rest, but that was just about when she returned to work as a PT for Forte Rehabilitation. No rest for the weary....well, SOME rest..she did manage to carve out some R&R with friends down on the coast in November.

For me, it was also an abby-normal year. Nothing like moving 350,000 class members to an online format over a couple of weeks. Add to that yet another transition from one outsource contractor to another; new faces, new technology and new procedures. It is remarkable that I survived that much transition in a short period of time while maintaining my sanity. I did have some time (while Deb was on the coast) with Jonas and "Dear Ol Dad" construction, helping him with some 'nearing the finish line' work on the basement. Sam and I planned, and then skipped, multiple fishing trips. Hope for some time in Alaska and maybe the Gulf of Mexico next year.

Jonas and Heather managed to get into and out of South Africa where Jonas' company has some activity before the virus shut things down. We are thankful that both he and Heather are gainfully employed at jobs they have had for years. We stayed with them over Thanksgiving catching up with them and the dogs (with a little more finishing work on the basement).



It was also great to be with Sam, who dined with us in our hotel room in SLC where we stayed for my birthday night (it's just before T-Day). Sam continues his work in logistics with CR England and although he works from home, he seems to spend most of his time outdoors. He got some fishing in but also ran, biked, hiked and climbed his way out of the COVID doldrums. Unfortunately his peripatetic pace also ended up in a serious biking accident in September with a nasty break to the head of the humerus (NOT funny). A chance for PT mom to apply her skills "closer to home"!



We finished the year with Sam and Jonas and Heather spending Christmas with us which we absolutely LOVED! A cautious gathering, but also one gift of many delivered to us by a loving Savior.

Praying for your safety and greater love in 2021!