



# Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

## the 2019 - 2020 edition (oops!)

Once upon a time, in that season to be jolly I loaded up the dishwasher and yelled out "Seal Check" and I hear a seal across the waters answer back, her call as if from some distant rocky shoal, "Arp, arp, arp!" My mate has returned my call!! And the world is all better again once more (at least no water on the floor for this load of dishes ) as the dishwasher hums to life.. It is such little bits of love and whimsy that light our path on the cold and dreary days. ....And I can check it off on the white board!

Years ago I bought a whiteboard, from ITT, a beauty, aluminum, 12 foot long, but everyone left early on moving day, and it weighed too much, I had no help so I couldn't get it on my truck, and had to leave it. But it seemed of great value, a wondrous visual reminder of great things eminent, so I built a couple of smaller boards (4' x 8' ) out of alomalite signage that I had bought for my greenhouse (the coated aluminum is waterproof, and stout stuff). The first was a rough thing, unfinished, crude, hangs in our kitchen hallway full of weekly tasks, phone numbers, things that should be done but lack time, or interest, or enough money. Others, are a trapeze artist's death wish. It's been damaged by scratchy pads, indelible ink, endless use, and a lot of bad carpentry. But its twin is a thing of beauty, a vision, it sits on the floor of my shop, pristine, untouched, and glowing with unfulfilled promise.

On the back of every Scientific American magazine, back in the 1950's and 1960's was a French advertisement which promised to turn dreams into reality, " Visionnaire.>>>.. Realite' " or so it proclaimed. This is what that whiteboard in the shop represents, it taunts me. Meanwhile its counterpart in the house delivers every day, making dreams come true, maybe not in a pristine way, not like the flawless shop version, but one task at a time, one trek at a time, one book read, one construct, one contract, one phone call, "making a list and checking it twice," just one promise at a time. And oddly, that seems to me to be much of what Christmas is often all about: a reminder of Christ's birth, but also a reminder of Christ's promises, making a list and checking it twice.. it is just a whiteboard, a reminder, but at the top is written... "Christ is Born" And there is a list, because without the list, without surrender to task, it is just a lot of unfulfilled dreams, a dusty white board forever sitting on some shop floor in Whitley County, IN, a reminder of what could have been, what life could be, of the great goals, and the great steps not taken, "Do unto others," "love one another.". It is New Year's resolutions, tough decisions, rough prayers, and reaching out to others in need. It is Santa, and "Peace on Earth," and "Good Will toward Men," but the old fashioned way, the hard way, one task at a time. And when it gets a little worn, too many tasks, sweaty or dirty, maybe changing a tire, or fixing a sun roof, or digging up apple trees, then take a nap or call a friend, or just look at the top item on the board. Because, it is also time to remember and renew the season's joy, a reminder of snow flakes and ruddy smiles. And most times, yep, you can take that nap, if your conscience doesn't haunt, but your age does; if you hoard Christmas lights but never put them up, (that's me), or if you aren't one of those obsessive compulsive white board list "Checker-offers" :) Oh that white board, that White Christmas, it is truly both wondrous and tough :)

Family, every one is pretty much healthy. That is an amazing statement, for example, Jamie, our granddaughter has dived thousands of times in college competition and will be graduating in May. She is planning graduate school in math!! Her dad, our son John has flown thousands of miles as environmental engineer for St. Gobains. His wife Michelle, a civil engineer, has created massive structures for cities all across the US, while granddaughter Alex is finishing another year of college with a 4.0 while playing trumpet in hundreds of college orchestra performances... never missed a note. While I've actually managed a small container garden , cleaned the garage floor and. swept the kitchen :) Everyone is pretty much OK.

Daughter Jennifer's family has survived the year. Granddaughter Sarah has excelled in high school, starring in plays, singing in the choir, participating in church plays (as Mary, mother of Jesus.. still having trouble wrapping my head around that one), and doing well in class. Hard to watch them grow up. And son-in-law Wayne is building his private law practice. Sarah spent time at Camp Ella J. Logan, a camper

and counselor in training. Jennifer was the chauffeur for many of those trips, enjoyed visiting and talking to them as they flew by.

Thanksgiving this year almost didn't happen, then it sort of struggled (I was the cook, that explains it!!) and it finally it got off the ground, but barely. Picture shows old guy, granddaughter Sarah Warf, and sister-in-law, Nancy Halaburda. Marge and I are getting old, people are far apart the families are growing up and maturing, and Marge and I have had health problems. My pancreas, everybody wants to hear about that, right? Well, after two plus years of diagnosis, poking, prodding, imaging, MRI, CAT scan (no cats were found), endoscopy,, the diagnosis (drum roll), "Well, we don't know what that is, there are patches of fat (surprise! surprise!), signs of pancreatitis and the duct is blocked by a stone, but there's something here, and something else over there, uh, come back in 6 months and we'll do some more poking and prodding..". So I ask, can you remove the stone? And the answer, "Oh, no, the pancreas is too fragile, trust us." My brain says, "You're kidding right?" but I don't say it out loud. So, basically, I don't have a pancreas?no pancreas function, no insulin, no digestive enzymes, and think of all the fun that goes with that (or not, TMI). More turkey please!



Marge has had better health this year and after conversion of IPFW to PFW (Purdue University, Fort Wayne), her new e-mail is kimble@pfw.edu. She still can't get around, the doctors can't seem to stop her knee pain, but she's keeping busy, keeping the bills, taxes and me well under control. She also helps keep the family together. e.g. stopping the family never-Trumper's and me from killing each other. The good news, the swelling troubles she was having last year have subsided and she's been home, not in the nursing home. But I need to trim our diet a bit. There is something about having two growling hungry omnivores at arms length from each other that can be terribly intimidating. If someone could diagnose and fix that knee pain, I think she could walk?, There is still has some muscle left and it seems odd that the FW doctors haven't found a solution (but it's on the whiteboard!!).

Christmas, on the whole, was pretty quiet, e.g. have you ever noticed the difference between nativity and negativity is just the two letters.. the e. & the g., eerie right?. So, why no Christmas letter until now. Well, let's just put it this way, it was on the white board at the end of November. Sadly, so were a lot of good things, like insulating the house so that you don't need a heavy coat to do dishes :) and fixing the roof and buying a new tractor (we sold the old one... yea!!), and adding roof panels to the greenhouse. But I digress, all was pretty much OK, Then I sorted thru about 400 old Science Magazines, filled up the white board, took a few too many ol guy naps, and here we are... I can tell you all about advances in microscopy, or how mitochondria attach themselves to the nuclear membrane to provide power for reproduction... and the sun porch, my magazine repository, is now clear, ready for guests, no longer clogged by boxes, but the exercise bikes have moved out there (A lot less obnoxious, and a good excuse to ask, does anyone need an exercise bike?) Well, hope this letter finds you well, or at least entertained. We did discover where all our bird seed was going, a family of squirrels and a herd of deer have taken up covert residence in the brush. Feel free to come out and watch :) If we don't get back to it before ~~January~~ February 2021, Have a happy New Year and a very Merry Christmas. :)

The colorized version of this letter should be up at: <http://www.gunstar1.com/Christmas/C19.pdf>