

Merry Christmas to one and all!

I wrote my first Christmas Letter in 1983. That was half a lifetime ago. Through those letters, I chronicled my life as it related to family and friends with a bit of tongue-in-cheek satire, an ample supply of humor, and a great deal of exaggeration all stirred together with just enough philosophy and spiritual thoughts to satisfy my need to pass on my perspective of life. I never know where my writing will go when I sit down and start pounding keys. I don't have a plot or an outline in mind, and even if I did, I would never be able to follow it. I write through the inspiration of the moment. Once the basic theme is completed and the year has been chronicled, I go back and sprinkle in some humor to keep y'all interested enough to keep reading. I suspect this narrative will be no different.

Well, where should we start? You might think 2021 started like most of my years, cleaning up Christmas and getting ready for the New Year's Eve non-celebration. But, you would be wrong! I woke up Jan 1, 2021 next to my life partner, Marilyn,



in our new camper in Tallahassee RV Park in Florida's Capitol. We were on our way to spend the rest of the winter in Florida in this spacious campsite (at

left) in Crystal River. There we were greeted by a Disney World-like campground experience complete with lots of Christmas decorations.



Marilyn and I had been together for two years, but this was going to be the true test. We would be living together in a 34 foot trailer for three months 24/7. As they say Love it or Leave it. We loved it! We did a few side trips but basically, we

just enjoyed the weather and each other the entire time. Crystal River is on Florida's "Nature Coast" and is home to a large contingent of manatees (see below). There are not the pristine white sand beaches of the panhandle coast towns, but the lack of wall to wall tourists made this trade-off more than worth the lack of those beaches.



The RV Resort has large sites with palm trees, and the campground amenities include a heated pool and many group activities for residents. While the constant threat of Covid limited our participation, the outdoor life style made safe encounters with neighbors much safer.

We seldom ate out and even our one venture over to the Atlantic coast beach was possible due to the less dense crowd



there on the beach. It was delightful! We drove as far down the beach as possible, so as you can see, we were basically alone.



Early in February, Kim came down to join us for a week in the sun. She brought Sasha and Kira, her two dogs with her, and we all lived together

in our little camper. Her visit was one of our winter highlights.

Because of the outdoor lifestyle, there were many outdoor food opportunities. At lower right, you can see us having our valentine's dinner out on the patio.



At left and below, you can see dinner back at the campsite. It does not get much better than this!



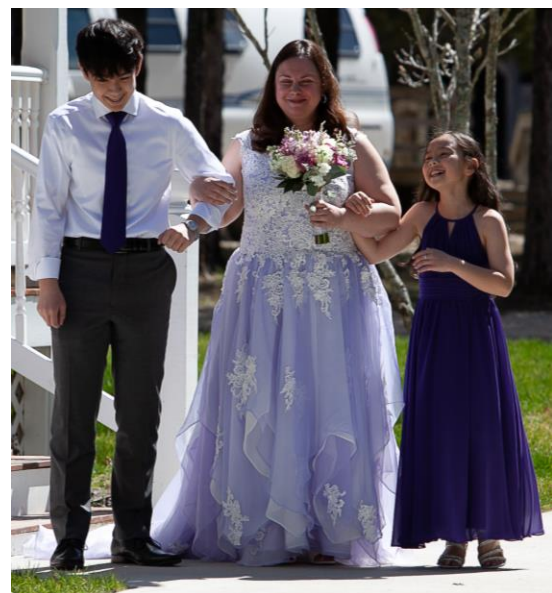
While seafood was high on the agenda, we also enjoyed day trips to hike and see the local animal population. We met up with a high school friend, Karen, at La Chua trail park. On the next page, you can see an assortment of alligators basking in the sun.

Just down the road from us, Homosassa Springs S.P. offered a large assortment of birds and other animals. See below.



Krystal's wedding to Jason (shown below: Krystal with Emmy and Josh) brought us

back a bit early, and from the time I pulled into my garage, I hit the ground running. I went from pleasurable relaxation in Florida to full-time work at home. Just before we left for Florida, someone ran into my garage door. I didn't have time to fix it before we left, so I screwed the damaged door in place and headed south. The first job after returning was replacement of the 16 ft. door. In the olden days, it would have been a simple one-man job for me. At 75, I needed Kim's help.



After first moving more of my furniture to Marilyn's house, I was back to RV technician. I installed a macerator pump on the waste line of the RoadTrek.

Now, April was in full swing and we were planning a trip in the van, but an apparent propane leak led to an inspection of the propane lines on the van. They were old and becoming brittle so I decided to replace them. Getting parts for this old system proved difficult, and April was nearly over before I had the van back together and ready to hit the road again

May brought with it more work on my house. First came a new wall to separate the main house from my in-law suite. Then, major electrical upgrades would supply separate electrical systems for the two units for possibly rental in the future.

It was now time to try again for a vacation in the Roadtrek to the Ozarks. Fortunately, we were able to get out of town without mishaps.

Alley Springs S.P.
here we come! We spent about a week down there before heading back home and completing my "move-in" to the Lakemere address with Marilyn.



June started with a rearrangement of Marilyn's basement. I purchased a BIG TV



and brought over furniture and my sound system for a better theater sound. It has now become our entertainment room.

With most of my furniture now at Marilyn's, I decided to expand my workshop into my now normally vacant garage. That became the project for June. I added some new tools I have wanted and rearranged everything several times till I was content with the new shop. By mid-July, the new workshop, with added tools and new additional workbench, was ready for a project! Not so fast. Before I could start on the new island for the Camper, I had two leaking roof projects to complete.



It was mid-August before I was able to start the new camper butcher block Island. (Below right) And it was

near the end of August before the island was finished with the new oversized sink and new faucet as shown on the next page.

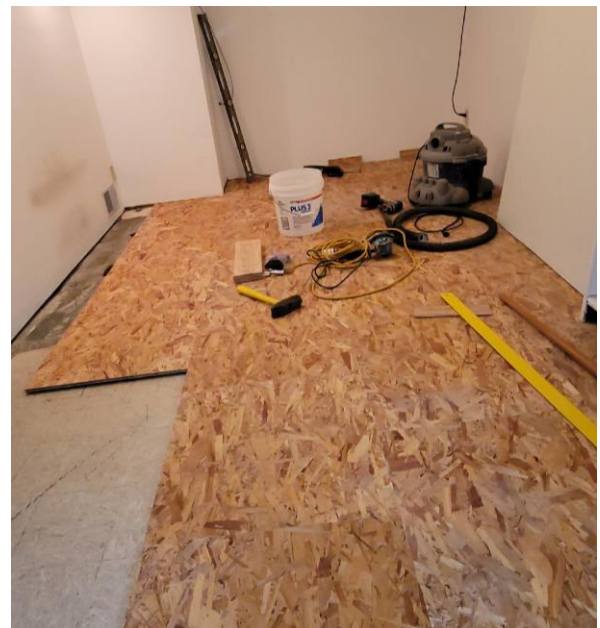




The next project was to replace the dining table in the camper with a new walnut desk top and real office desk chairs. By the second week in September, The camper upgrades were complete. Our mid-October departure was right after



Marilyn's class reunion. I made a last minute decision to replace the furnace in my "Little house on the alley" before we left. I didn't want to leave it to limp along while we were in Florida. So, the first week in October I removed the old unit and replaced it with a new high-efficiency unit. By using everything from a 5 gallon bucket to my portable workbench as cribbing, I was able to walk it from one height to the next and eventually into the opening. (See next page.)



The furnace installation was completed just in time for me to install a promised raised floor in the basement for Joshua. His bedroom in the finished basement was the plot for the movie "A River Runs Through It. The raised floor provides drainage for any water seepage that might occur after a major rain event. The interlocking system was then covered by a waterproof vinyl wood-look floor.

Then we were finally on our way to Florida. We moved on to our new site ready for 6 months of paradise with just a quick excursion home for Christmas. It didn't

take long in our site to decide we wanted to get a permanent site, and leave our camper there while we were home for the summer. We had to move into a better site with the permanent option. So, our new Florida lifestyle started in a new premiere site on November 1st . We will be residents there until at least November 2022. It was so nice to drive back to Illinois for Christmas without having to tow the camper. We will be taking the van back down the first part of January.

We had Marilyn's family here for Christmas on Thursday and my family was with us Christmas Eve. We both have a couple more doctors' appointments before we can head back but head back, we will!

In summary, or as we called it in high school, Cliff Notes: This has been a dichotomy of hard physical labor in Springfield counterbalanced by complete relaxation in Florida. It is the better of two worlds. We feel blessed to be able to do these things, but even more blessed to be able to do them together. Neither of us expected to find love in our 70's but love found us. I believe we had a life together a long time ago, but that life was cut short, and we have been waiting to finish now what we started then. Pat and I finished what we had to learn together in this life, and she was able to move on. I stayed to finish up another life with another soul, and I am so glad I did. Never give up looking for that lost love. When it is time, love will make it happen

May 2022 bring y'all a new year of Peace and good health, but above all ,may it bring new or continued Love and Light with that special person.

Love and
Light,

Dulany
and
Marilyn

