

Christmas Letter 2022

I guess it is customary to start the year in review with January 1, but what fun is that? If you know me, I have never been one to strive for normality. I've seen "normal," and I want no part of it! That should be evident by my recent marriage last July. Who gets married at 76? The answer is, "I do!" and I did. Now that I have sprinted out in front and spilled the highlight of my year, where do I go from there? This could be the shortest Christmas Letter in my over 40 years of sharing my life in this way.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2023!

If you have ever read any of my "short posts" on Facebook or previous Christmas Letters, you know there is always a proverbial "Mike Drop!" and then a lengthy follow-up. So, grab a drink, perhaps a stiff one, and some munchies, and sit back in your favorite reading nest to jump on board this year's 2022 Year in Review.

First, I will apologize for my earlier "sprint to anyplace" analogy. I have not done any of that nonsense since I tried to sprint across the street in the rain and pulled my Achille's tendon. I was in my 40's then.

Before I review the previously mentioned wedding, I better go back to Christmas 2021. One of Marilyn's Christmas presents was a gold band ring. But it wasn't a connected ring, it was a spiral. The accompanying note basically restated my open-ended proposal of marriage. I knew there was a hesitation on Marilyn's part due to some resistance of a few in her family, and I left it up to her if we would actually get married. The spiral ring symbolized the spiral existence we have with recurring relationships from lifetime to lifetime.

After Christmas, with sub-zero temps on our heels, we headed down to Florida, and settled back into "resort living." While we were not social butterflies, we did start making more close relationships with fellow snow-birders. I was able to overcome some of my introvertedness by hiding behind my camera as I used my photography skills to chronicle campground events from the Dog Show to the Pie-eating Contest and later to the St Patrick's Day Golf Cart Parade.



There is an esoteric study of numbers called numerology. It is a little like astrology but it uses names and dates to indicate “vibrations” of your life. It shows the personal year for each calendar year of your life. They go in cycles of 9. A one year is a year of new beginnings and nine is a year of endings. This is “Numerology 101” in a nutshell, a VERY small nutshell. I bring this up because 2022 was a “one” year for me. My first one year was 1950, the year my Dad died. Other one years include 1968 when I was married, 1977 when Krystal was born, 1986 when Kim was born, 1995 when Krystal left for college, 2013 when I retired. Now, it is 2022, and shortly before we returned home to the cold North, Marilyn revisited her decision about marriage, and she said, “I will.”

The second quarter of 2022 was consumed with wedding plans. The first decision we had related to the officiant for the ceremony. There was one person we considered who was close to both of us. Cindy Luton is a certified Unity teacher, but we didn’t know if she could officiate weddings, or if she would want to perform ours. The answer from her to both questions was a resounding, “Yes!” The ceremony was set for July 2, 2022. The church was open for that date. The vibrations of the numbers were excellent, and we were a “go” for Wedding Day 2022.



As we look back, we agree it was certainly “meant to be.” Everything worked out. If you have planned a wedding, you know how many things have to come together including people, venue, catering, and at our age, even health issues have to be considered.



Remember that first paragraph above, about not being normal? Well, our wedding was anything but normal. Our guests were seated to the sounds of 50’s-60’s music. I made a short introduction and announced, “Elvis is in the building.” Then the ceremony commenced with me singing a love song, “Love

Me Tender” as I strolled down the aisle.

When I reached the front, Marilyn, as beautifully radiant as a teen bride, was escorted in by her grandson, Luke. What a heart-warming sight that was seeing her come up the aisle. I was filled with emotion and wanted to cry with joy, but I couldn’t.



My 76-year-old brain has limited short-term memory, and it was a necessity that I was able to read and continue singing the lyrics without teary-eyed-blurred vision.



After some inspiring words from Cindy, we got out our “cheat sheets” for our self-written vows. Marilyn went first. She had kept me completely in the dark about what she was going to say. I thought I was the comic in the family, but her comment about NOT PROMISING to reply to my texts immediately, but promising to laugh at my jokes, even the ones originating from the 7th grader inside my head, had the attendees roaring. What an act that was to follow with my less-humorous promises.

So many people enter a second marriage trying to act like the first one didn't exist. We did just the opposite. We both had good marriages and a great deal of respect for our deceased spouses. We celebrated that fact with references to them in the ceremony. It was a day I will always remember, even if I forget most of the other recent days and events.

If you would like to see the video of our wedding click on this link below

<https://lx2unlimited.com/2022/08/06/easy-link-directly-to-wedding-ceremony-video/>



The summer was not without its share of projects at home. I had moved most of my personal items into Marilyn's home, and it became "our" house. I also moved some of the big items like furniture and even my big refrigerator. Being old school, we have that independence that relates to "we don't need help and can do it ourselves." And we did! That previously mentioned refrigerator was a particular challenge. I got it on a two-wheeled dolly and out the back door of my house into the waiting trailer in the garage. It was a tight fit through the back door, but when I started out the open garage door, I discovered it was taller than the opening. I didn't like the idea of laying the refrigerator on its side because of the movement of refrigerant in the system and the age of refrigerator. I did everything from letting air out of the tires to detaching the trailer from the hitch on the truck and dragging it with a tow chain with the trailer tongue on the ground. In the end, I even used a big floor jack to raise the garage door header the last couple inches, and it was out. The couch and dining room set were much easier but still a challenge. I think I did enlist the help of Kim at one point.



The summer was also consumed with outside projects. I planted two trees in the yard and did some landscaping in both front and back yards. I also

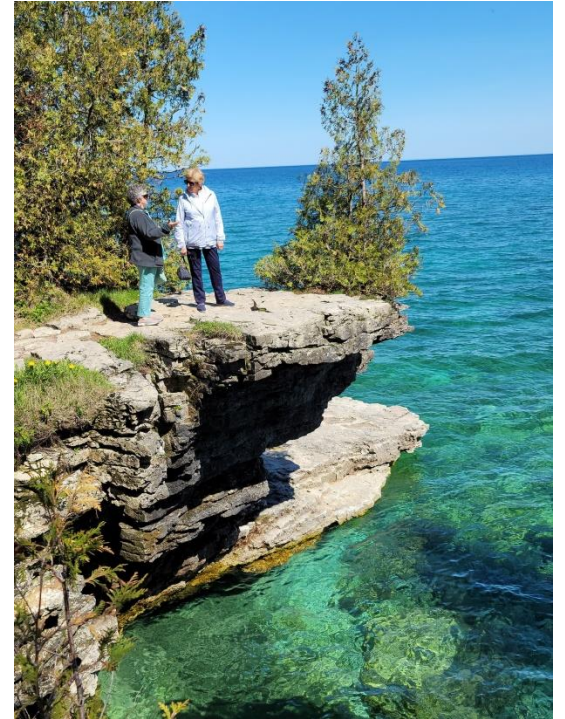


enlarged the concrete patio with 30 bags of concrete. I thought I had poured my last concrete because that is a young man's work, but sometimes you "gotta" do what you "gotta" do. At left, you can see Marilyn helping me with the pour and at right, all the bags of concrete it took.





We did take one mini-vacation last summer up to visit Nancy Feld in Door County and then across Lake Michigan on the ferry to see Julie Avery.



With that exception, we did not do much summer traveling. It wasn't because we didn't want to or plan to, but rather due to circumstances surrounding the means of travel. My 3-year van-project transformed my old Roadtrek van into a state-of-the-art traveling home. Unfortunately, it came with insecurities. While it only left us stranded once, it often had fits of stubbornness and would not start. This often happened as we were getting it set up to leave. I finally discovered the problem.

GEEK WARNING: Skip this paragraph if you are so inclined or read and get the low-down on the technical problem. While the truck starting battery was protected from discharge caused by electrical drain in the camper portion, the camper battery was not protected from discharge caused by drainage from the starting battery. Combine that with a security system that constantly signaled the car fob of security events, and eventually, that would run down the truck battery and the camper battery. With both batteries being drained, the alternator would then have to recharge both batteries and eventually it would burn out the alternator. I replaced it twice.

Discovering the problem did not ease the uncertainty any. It is hard to cure emotional response with facts. I'll refrain from a political comment here. Our last trip to Wisconsin and across the lake by ferry to Michigan had no problems. The problem was solved, right? No, we were still hesitant to trust it, and the inconvenience of the climb-over bed and confined quarters when we couldn't be outside was just too much. I sold the van to a new free spirit (shown at right) who is now enjoying it the way we originally did. That has put the travel camping on hold for now, although I miss it tremendously! Being in Florida for the winter in our luxurious RV is awesome, but it does not take the place of seeing the country one campground at a time.



The sale of the van gave us a good start to purchase a new boat. We bought an 18 ft pontoon boat. Trailer, boat and motor are actually 28 ft long, and that is a perfectly towable unit. We took it out several times at home on Lake Springfield and have had it out a few times here in Florida.



We both love the water and it continues to give us much pleasure. We decided it was purchased with honeymoon money, so it is aptly named Honey Moon. Now I need to make a logo.



When we returned to Florida in October, we were greeted by welcoming signs and "just married" decorations. It was heartwarming, and so thoughtful of our neighbors.

After settling in, I started a major project to upgrade the outdoor kitchen. We replaced a broken microwave with a high-end electric counter-top convection oven/air fryer. Then after repositioning the camper, I built a carpeted



wood deck for the kitchen and outdoor grill and griddle. The addition of the oven required redesigning the cabinets and removing the unused outdoor TV. Just when I had that finished, we purchased a washer/dryer combination to install in the outdoor shed. It required running water, hot and cold to the shed. Finding a way to dump the gray water into the sewer on the opposite side of the camper was the next problem to be solved. I installed a sump pump in a garbage can and ran the discharge into the sewer. Marilyn LOVES this addition. We had considered it before, and when I heard from a fellow camper that the unit was on sale with \$300 off, we jumped on it.



It was time for a rest, but then an older golf cart went up for sale in the campground. It needed work, but Marilyn liked it because it was cute and perky. We had to replace the batteries but still felt we got a good deal. That replacement was another time-consuming project. The actual replacement was not too hard, but researching the problem took many hours and much testing. With batteries costing over \$1000, I didn't want to make a misdiagnosis. I replaced the 500 pounds of batteries and hyperextended both knees, but now the 2013 Western golf cart has a new life. You might say it was reincarnated. With the new batteries, she makes it up the battery-killing hill to our spot without any problems. I told Marilyn jokingly, "You are one Lucky Lady that you have me to fix stuff." We laughed and now the cart's name is "Lucky Lady."

As I write this, we have been down here almost two months. Christmas lights adorn our piece of the paradise pie. As wonderful as it is here, we are getting things ready to head back to Springfield for the Christmas Holidays because as great as our Florida resort is, there is no place like home with family for the Holidays.



I hope all of you are able to enjoy the holidays with family and friends. Bless you all and may your New Year be filled with Love, Light, Peace, and good health.



Love and Light,
Dulany and Marilyn

NOTE: To those past and current English teachers out there, Marilyn did look over the finished narrative and made many "suggestions." I say suggestions because that is how I take them. I don't follow the rules all the time. To me, writing is an art form and I often take artistic license.

