



Oak Haven Happenings

December 2013

5330 Belfast-Owensville Rd., Batavia, OH 45103 (513)735-2440

Varicks@aol.com



Merry Christmas to all of our friends & family!

We hope that you are all doing well and enjoying this holiday season full of good food, fun activities, and special time with friends and family.

It has been an exciting year for us, the biggest highlight being our daughter, Jennifer's wedding. I'll give you a quick recap of the year (or maybe not so quick).

On January 9th Jennifer & Bryan Lutes announced their engagement (after completing 100 pre-engagement discussion questions that Jim had prepared for them to work through). Jennifer mentioned that she had always dreamed of having her wedding at Chapel-by-the-Sea in Captiva, Florida. We were going to be down there in March, so that gave us 2 months to plan a wedding and make her dream come true.



Shortly after the engagement, Jennifer & I had the opportunity to go to San Diego for a four-day weekend. She was flying out to deliver a couple of dogs for 4 Paws for Ability and I paid my way to go along. We had so much fun exploring the city and the California coast. And just being together was wonderful. It also gave us time to do a lot of wedding planning. Such a special time!



March came with the excitement of the wedding. We rented a 7 bedroom house on the bayside of Captiva Island for a week so all of our family could join us. We had so much fun enjoying the beach, kayaking, bike riding, and sharing meals together. The day before the wedding was extra special with a boat ride on the Lady Chadwick for a Wildlife Excursion. The dolphins put on quite a show for us racing with the boat and leaping in the air. Then came the rehearsal at the chapel and dinner at the Bubble Room. The big day was on Tuesday, March 12th. The wedding was at 5:30 at the Chapel with pictures on the beach afterwards. It was lovely! Such a beautiful bride & handsome groom. (I'm quite biased.) Then everyone headed back to the bay house for the reception. Brian & Liz were the master chefs and made a fabulous dinner for us all (~50 people). Instead of wedding cake, Jennifer requested key lime pies

(made by Jim) and orange crunch cake (from the Bubble Room). Yum! (The couple went on their official honeymoon in June to Germany, Netherlands & Belgium.)

We returned home from Florida to Spring where wildflowers carpet our woods. The white dogwoods and the pink red-buds are scattered throughout and it is so beautiful. We have several places that we visit every year to see the Spring display: the Cincinnati Zoo, the Cincinnati Nature Center



(multiple times), and John Bryan State Park. This year in early May we added Magee Marsh up in Northern Ohio for a quick get-away for Jim & me. It is a birding hot spot being on the migration route. We saw so many colorful warblers up close. What a treat!

Spring is also a busy time for our photography business, as well as working on our real estate investments. We helped Brian finish his Brookview flip and it looks amazing, especially the kitchen. All of our hard work really paid off.

Then the long days of summer came. We balanced work with lots of time around the pool: relaxing and playing in the water with our grandchildren: Gabriella (almost 8), Landon (6), Matthew (5) & Laken (2). The picture is of a 5K fun race called the Color Palooza that was held in June. Even Kristin's kids joined in the fun of throwing colored cornstarch on each other. Jim decided that he wanted to do his first triathlon sprint this summer: 750M swimming, 20K bike riding, and 5K running. With the race scheduled for the beginning of August, he worked hard preparing for it almost every day since last November. Jim did very well placing 37th out of 120 participants ranging from 19 - 68 years old.



After being home for 3 months we were ready for some traveling. Jim & I took a trip down to the Smoky Mountains in early August. Jim wanted to backpack and I was glad to do backpacking for one night and three nights in a hotel. Nothing like sleeping on the cold hard ground to make you appreciate a soft bed and hot showers. I really wanted to see a bear (but not while we were backpacking). On our last day we were coming back from Cades Cove a little disappointed that we hadn't seen any bears up close when a tiny bear cub ran across the road in front of our car. We pulled off to the side and got out of the car to make sure that it wouldn't get hit. As we watched we realized that his mother was still on the opposite side of the road. She came down the bank to the road,



walked out into the middle of the road, then returned to the same side and just stood there. The cub started crying pitifully in the tall weeds out of sight from us. We stood there watching, prepared to stop traffic if we needed to. After about 5 minutes the cub bolted across the street back to his Mom and they quickly disappeared into the woods. What a drama we were privileged to see!

In late August we went camping for the first time of the season up at Kelley's Island in Northern Ohio on Lake Erie. It is another one of our favorite places with a long sandy

beach, wonderful bike riding, and a fun area to kayak along the rocky north shore. Probably the most memorable part of our trip was opening up our pop-up camper to find that mice had made it their home for months. It was totally disgusting with all of the poop & pee, not to mention a dozen holes in the screen and canvas. We worked a long time that first day to get it to the point that we would sleep in there. We went on to have a super fun time with Kristin and her kids, plus Melanie & Hope, and over the weekend Jennifer and her husband and the kids' grandmother, Cindy, joined us.

Another highlight of the year was celebrating our 31 years of marriage. Jim & I went down to the mountains in North Carolina, saw the Biltmore Estate decked out for Christmas, and then spent a week at the Outerbanks of North Carolina at Atlantic Beach. Our favorite part was getting to see wild horses! We kayaked across from Beaufort over to Carrot Island where 33 horses live. It was thrilling to find them and watch them graze and interact. They were beautiful! I am wondering how they handle the winters without much protection or food.



Our last highlight for the year is a big one: Michelle is engaged! Her fiancé is Corey Hanson, a chemical engineering student. Corey proposed on November 11th up at Clifton Gorge Preserve. They are getting married the end of April after he graduates. Very exciting!

Whew, that was quite a year! God is so good and we thank Him for His many blessings in our life! The biggest one being that God sent His Son into the world to be our Savior and to die on the cross for our sins.

“An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”

Luke 2: 9-11

Wishing you a wonderful Christmas & a Happy New Year!

The Varicks

