



# Oak Haven Happenings

December 2017

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

Varicks@aol.com

## Christmas Greetings from the Varicks

Greeting to all of our friends & family! We hope that you are all doing well. We love hearing from you.

We started off 2017 in Nebraska with Kristin's marriage to Philip Clements on the day of New Year's Eve. What a life changer that was for us, Kristin, the kids and especially Philip. We are still amazed at how God answered our prayers for a good and kind man that would cherish them. Philip has exceeded our expectations for being a great dad & husband. They all adore him. He plays all kinds of games with the kids, takes them on his errands, lets them help at Car Care Ministry, watches mov-



ies with them and so much more. They love having a Daddy, and Kristin just glows with happiness.

Winter was filled with house projects (which I enjoy) and getting away from the cold for 4 weeks down in Florida. We spent a couple of weeks with my parents and Melanie & Steve which is always fun, then went camping for a week to one of our favorite places to kayak at Alexander Springs, and then enjoyed a week at Captiva Island with Michelle & Corey.

Wonderful!

(We really appreciate having good friendships with all of our kids and their spouses.)



Spring brought the wonderful addition of Juniper to our family. She was born to Brian & Liz on April 18<sup>th</sup>. They are all doing great! Juniper is just like her parents and loves the outdoors and

being on the go. I get to watch her occasionally and we like to spend most of our time outside. She is my gardening buddy, along with our dog Kimber.



Summer's highlight was the birth of Evelyn on June 26<sup>th</sup> to Jennifer & Bryan! What a blessing for them to have two little girls. Aubrey, who is two, still gets a lot of attention and is willing to share with her baby sister. We watch them on Tuesdays and enjoy being involved in their lives. If we aren't hiking, we take them to the morning library program for preschoolers. It also is helpful to be up in Xenia weekly so Jim can work on our rental properties if needed.



In August we headed out to Nebraska and joined up with Kristin's family to go out to Colorado. Wow, I forgot how beautiful the mountains are out there. Jim & I got up early each morning for a sunrise hike and then did a more major hike with everyone late morning. We all enjoyed the spectacular scenery, swimming in the indoor pool, walking around the cute town of Breckenridge, and especially taking free rides on the gondola up and down the mountain. Jim had issues with HAPE (High Altitude Pulmonary Edema) and we left a day early because it was getting harder for him to breathe. Back in Nebraska we helped with projects and prepared for the solar eclipse. So glad that we were in the totality range and got to ex-

perience the eclipse with Kristin's family. The kids were super excited! It was great to be with them all.

Most of the Fall we were busy getting Kristin's house in Ohio ready to sell. That was a lot of work! Why we wait to finish up projects until it is time to sell I don't know. (Jennifer thinks that we should get our house ready to put on the market.☺)



In October we enjoyed a week up in Door County, Wisconsin with my parents. They are great travel companions! We enjoyed listening to my Dad's stories, playing shuffle board, and driving all over the peninsula exploring beautiful countryside and charming lakeside towns. I especially enjoyed bike riding at Peninsula State Park and Jim liked going out for an early morning run and ending with a swim in Green Bay.

Our final highlight of the year was a trip to Italy. Words can't describe that experience well enough, but I will try. We flew out in early November with a 12 hour layover in Madrid that gave us time to explore that city. We arrived in Venice very late and worked our way from the airport to Venice, up the canal on a vaporetto (boat) to our stop at the Rialto Bridge. The city was flooded with an exceptionally high tide and our Airbnb host was nowhere to be seen. Finally an hour later (midnight their time) our host (who was waiting for us at a different stop) came with plastic boots so we could wade through the 8 inches of water to our apartment. The trip went much better after that. Still Venice was my favorite city. So unusual! We explored all over the narrow cobblestone streets, stopping in at all the cathedrals that we came across. We were surprised that the elaborate St. Mark's Cathedral was built in 1015 when we thought all of Europe was still in the Dark Ages. History is so much more fascinating when you are seeing it. Then we headed up north several hours to Castelrotto, a small town in the Alps



de Suisi, the largest alpine meadow in Europe, The mountains there are called the Dolomites and are part of the Alps. This area was part of Austria for 100 years and German is still their first language. We did not do as much hiking because there was 12 inches of snow high up in the mountains. It was incredibly beautiful. We also enjoyed the local apple strudel for breakfast every morning. Then we drove west to Lake Como to the little town of Bellano, so picturesque with the lake surrounded by snow-capped mountains. We spent a day hiking to the next lovely town on the water, ate dinner by the lake and took the train back. Then we headed south to a gorgeous coastal area called Cinque Terre, (“five lands”). We hiked the mountainside trail connecting several of the towns. We stayed just north in a little town called Levanto. Our host had two bikes that we took out on this great bike trail that went along the coast and through some tunnels. So fun even though it was quite chilly. We were glad to head south to the Tuscany area, which is known for its “hilltop towns”. It really is true; you look out over the rolling countryside and see medieval towns on many of the hilltops. Florence & Siena were both enjoyable cities to explore as well. Michelangelo's David was breathtaking. So much history everywhere we looked. After five days there we ended in Rome for three days. We got to see the Vatican City, Pantheon, Forum, and the Colosseum. A lot of walking, but so fascinating. And we enjoyed eating gelato every day! It was an incredible 18 days!



But really the most wonderful thing was coming home. Jennifer has a plaque on her front porch that says “This is our happy place.” That is what our homes should be for our families, a safe place that rejuvenates us and makes us happy as we share it with those we love.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!  
Jim & Julie Varick and family

*From Paul's first letter to Timothy, <sup>Chapter 1:15</sup> Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. <sup>16</sup> But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.*