



Well, hasn't 2020 been an interesting year?

We started the year off with an incredibly fun visit to New Orleans. We stayed in a house once occupied by Degas, owned by his cousins. It started as 1 large home, and then was split into two homes next to each other. Since the ceilings were very tall, the stairs to our second floor room were many. This ordinarily is not a problem, but at the time Sharon was walking with a cane due to extreme pain in her back caused by pinched nerves. We literally ate our way through our stay. We enjoyed a wonderful private 2-hour carriage tour and a private walking tour of the French Quarter.



On March 13th, Sharon abruptly retired, just after receiving her 5-year pin at Dignity Memorial. We got to celebrate that evening with our best friends, Claudia and Larry, who spent the weekend with us visiting from California. We had a wonderful visit. All of this was serendipitous since we all went on Covid-19 lockdown the very next week.

Within 2 months of retiring, Sharon had ditched the cane and was walking upright. No easy feat after spending almost a year walking hunched over with the cane. By the middle of 2020 she was walking normally a mile a day. So, while she didn't get to join all the craft clubs and do the traveling she'd planned when she retired (thanks to Covid-19), she benefited big time from retiring.



As with so many thousands of families this year, the last time we were able to see Sharon's dad, Bill Gruver, was on March 16th. After that he was shut into his assisted living facility. He had very little vision and was very hard of hearing, but he remembered to call her every day and, in his fashion, the conversation would last about 30 seconds. He was the 2nd resident to catch Covid-19 from staff and died on June 13th at the age of 97. He was aiming for 100, but is very happy to be reunited with his Kitten (Kathryn), the love of his life. He is memorialized with his beloved dragons at our home and at Victoria's summer home in Wisconsin. Sharon finished publishing his book as promised ~ (*BJ's War* available on Amazon). He is loved and missed, along with the other 300,000 Americans and 1,620,000 total human beings around the world.



In May, Norm was in Albuquerque, so Mikki celebrated Mother's Day by bringing his mom PF Chang take-out. They had great fun and good food.



Mikki's wife, Allyssa, was able to come down from Canada for a few weeks in August. Due to Canadian requirements to quarantine for 2 weeks upon return, she had to cut her time short, but they were able to celebrate their 1st Anniversary. Their big wedding has been postponed to August 2021. We are very thankful that there are now vaccines and have our fingers crossed that they will finally get their big wedding party and honeymoon. Of course, we are also praying that Mikki will be granted his visa so they can start living their lives together.

During September, we enjoyed a couple of camping trips to our trailer on Oak Creek and ended the summer with our annual stay-cation at Hotel Valley Ho celebrating our 41st Anniversary.

Norm was busy all year remodeling our kitchen. It is absolutely beautiful! Sharon did the design, cabinets were purchased and installed by IKEA, and Norm, with help from Mikki, did all the rest: demolition, wiring, rebuilding, new duct work, floor and ceiling. Sharon put up the wallpaper. You should come visit and see it. (BTW: drawers are the way to go!)



from this ~ to this



As with any project, we hit a glitch right when Norm was putting on the finishing touches. In October, he ran two fingers on his left hand into his router. Doing the emergency room during this pandemic is not an experience to be recommended. While he was being treated, they actually closed the hospital and were accepting no more patients. They had run out of personnel to handle the load. Norm was temporarily stitched up and had actual surgery three days later. He's had two surgeries and had to get Covid-19 tested before each. Of course, Sharon had to drop him off and pick him up at the door. Weird. He kept his fingers, but the nails are goners.

We took advantage of the low interest rates and refinanced. This gave us some cash which we used to get our front and back yards cleaned up of dead and unwanted trees, new irrigation, and new fruit trees into our backyard, while actually lowering our payments. Nice.

Our Thanksgiving was like everyone else's, devoid of family. It was Sharon's turn to cook this year, so we gave her sister their half of dinner on Wednesday. Mikki has been very strict about social distancing, so he stayed home. We counted our blessings and enjoyed our day by never shedding our PJs.



Christmas will also be sans family. We are struggling with all the death and dying of this year. Besides losing Sharon's dad, Norm's little brother, Doug, is fighting stage-4 cancer and our beloved companion of 13 years, Mr. Topper, has been diagnosed with kidney disease. We know many others have been grieving this year and we send socially-distanced hugs to everyone. Next year will continue to be difficult and as we claw our way out of this pandemic and all that it has wrought, we will stay positive knowing we have each other, family and friends. We celebrate all the first responders, caregivers, scientists, and government employees who have given their very best to helping fight this disease and we will continue to wear our masks, wash our hands, and social distance, no matter how it hurts, because we know it is the best way to stop all the pain we've all been subjected to.



So here's to staying the course and wishing everyone a safe and healthy 2021.

Love, Sharon & Norman



Norm



New Orleans



Clare with Grandpa



Norm and Topper camping



Mary with Ben