



Life is all about learning Life's Lessons; and one thing can be said about 2012. It has certainly been a year with lots of learning opportunity. I have also found it to be a year of rewards. If I had to narrow it down, I would call it the Year of Karma. For the business minded, karma is the results you receive from your life of investments. For the more common folks, it's like a fart in the shower. "So shall ye sow, so shall ye reap." The biggest challenge is recognizing and understanding the lesson.

For us, the first hard lesson was the loss of our beloved dog, Kira. We didn't have her long, just a couple years, but she was a very big part of my life. We walked every night whether I felt like it or not. Hot or cold, rain or snow, when 9PM arrived, we better be on our way. After one of these walks, she went into distress and we found that her stomach had flipped over and was twisted. We had 20 minutes to decide if we should spend thousands of dollars on an operation that often was not successful. It was a difficult decision but we had to let her go. I still miss her very much.

We had planned a vacation to Rocky Mountain National Park for July. Pat realized that without knee surgery, she would not be able to do any hiking while we were there; so, she looked into a knee replacement. On February 24th she became the proud owner of a new complete titanium knee. I offered to just bolt on a new gate hinge but she wanted something a little more stylish. Physical therapy lasted 7 years. . . . OK, it wasn't a full seven years but it sure seemed like it. When they tell you to schedule PT, I think they know it stands for, Patient Torture. With a new knee, it is important to get full flexation as soon as possible. If you don't, you will have an irregular gate the rest of your life. They have two basic tortures. The first one is to take your foot and push it toward your butt. When they get it there, they insert it up to the ankle. The next process is for straightening the knee. You lay on a bench or the floor and three linemen from the Bears jump up and down on your knee. If that does not work, they have the old fashioned rack. They anchor your hands above your head and pull on your leg. We were sure they were just going to pull the new knee off the upper thigh. They stretch and press down on the knee at the same time. When Pat started therapy, she was just a little over 5 ft. 3 in. Now she is 6 ft. 6 in. With a few more sessions she could play center for the Over 60 Olympics basketball team. By April she was back to work. She is doing well now. Except for the torn shoulder. She is scheduled for shoulder surgery in January. This will be another 6 weeks off work. With retirement planned for the end of May, she just has a short time left at work.

At right: Pat trying out her new knee.

I was not so lucky with my eye. If you recall, I had a botched cataract surgery last year. After two follow-up procedures that didn't do any good, I decided to quit going back for my weekly appointments. I am scheduled for an exam later this month to see just how bad it still is. I'm considering legal action.

A good part of this year was consumed by extensive work on Kim's house next door. By Kim's house, I mean she lives there. I have to think of it as investment property to justify all the time and money I keep putting into it. We are all familiar with "The Money Pit"; well, this is a black hole! She moved in the end of last year but there was still a lot to do to make it completely livable. Not the least of which was a complete



scraping and painting of the outside. There was also a lot of legal work required to buy the house. Getting everyone to come to agreement was a stressful feat as family matters often are. By spring, the final paperwork was complete. It has gone from the neighborhood eyesore to a thing of beauty. It is an adorable little white cottage bungalow just right for Kim. It is nice having her next door. You should recall that I mentioned this was a year for karma. When I was a kid, I hated to take out the garbage and often didn't. Now, somehow I find myself taking out the garbage for 2 houses. Yup! KARMA!

When I wasn't working on Kim's house, I was working on Steve and Krystal's basement. They went from a completely unfinished basement to what seemed like a 47,000 sq. ft. finished subterranean palace. I was on my knees a good part of the year laying that 47,000 sq. ft. of ceramic floor tile. Fortunately, I didn't have to put up or finish the drywall; Steve hired another guy to completely mess that up. I was often covering his errors with trim work. In the end, it turned out beautiful. They had Thanksgiving there this year. One Half of the Koreans in the US were there. They were all seated around one very long table. The food was great as was the company. We solved the food service problem by texting our food request in to the serving end of the table. Then Joshua would put your order on one of his remote control Lego vehicles and drive it down the center of the table to make delivery. It is times like these that makes one appreciate having all the family back in town.

A mid-March gathering for Toy Dorgan, Olympic speed skater, who now lives in Australia started a string of SHS class of 64 class Gatherings. I counted 11 events we organized. Most were at Fulgenzi's but we also went to The Hibachi Grill at T&C and Az-T-Ca by Schnucks in Montvale. Many of the events featured guests from out of town. One month, we scheduled two events for multiple visits. The gatherings are always fun; but sometimes a bit stressful to organize. Next year, we will be attempting to remove the stressful aspects but continue the tradition.



In July, we headed out to Colorado to meet up with several classmates at Rocky Mountain National Park. We went out through Kansas with a two night stop scheduled for Kanopolis, KS. The plan was to explore the nearby wildlife salt marshes. If you recall, it has been very dry this year and the marshes reflected this drought with endless salt flats in place of the marsh. It was sad watching the few remaining birds trying to find food and water in ponds smaller than a roadside puddle. We are still in a drought condition here but out there it was almost like dessert. Yes, it was as dry as over-baked biscotti. I can usually find some humor in everything but this was an exception. I can't laugh about it. It was depressing. It is like eating a rock. We were glad to move on out of Kansas.

Colorado was not much better until we had mountains in sight. What an uplifting feeling to see them lift the horizon skyward. We had made reservations 6 months previous to get the site we wanted. It was Awesome! We were on the outer edge of the campground overlooking the Moraine. Longs Peak served as a backdrop for every sunrise and sunset. Upon arrival, we were greeted by the Kesinger's, classmates



from high school. They were camped next to us. As we backed into our site, they stuck their heads out of their rain soaked tent to wish us well. Then like a game of peek-a-boo, they disappeared behind the tent flap. We just sat in the truck and took it all in RAIN, BEAUTIFUL RAIN. The seven day camping limit passed too quickly but we made the most of every day and evening. During the week, several other high school friends (Bob Green, and Dave Allison came while



Jay and Joyce were still there; Carl Crouch came later in the week) showed up to pass the time and share a story or two. We were also joined by Travis Saladino, nephew and his dog Porterhouse. Family, good friends, beautiful weather and awesome surroundings, it just doesn't get any better than that. The trip back was through Nebraska. We had planned two

nights in Ft Kearny Nebraska but it was hot and dry there too; so, we just saw the sights that night and packed up the next morning.

August was saddened by the loss of Kensley Brooke Jones. Kensley was a precious child less than 2 years old but her beautiful old soul touched many including us in that short time. She was truly an angel and we all know an angel cannot spend too much time on this Earth. Diagnosed with leukemia in January, she had to leave us August 19th after a long and heroic fight. It has been a sad time for those who were left behind.



would lite on the screen and pull the screen threads apart to make an opening for his friends to get through. The line of assault teams was unending. We had to close the door and just turn on the air. We spent the early evening smashing the little devils. By morning, we had piles of dead bodies to sweep out. Sunday morning didn't come early enough. We packed up and headed out. Breakfast would be at McDonald's.

By October, we were over the mosquito induced paranoia and ready for more adventure. We took Monday off to check out the Spoon River Festival. Yes, I know the festival was for two weekends but we wanted to avoid the crowds; so we went on a Monday. That proved only partially successful. Yes, there were no crowds but also no event atmosphere. The Spoon River was still there but that's all. You might think that the Spoon River Festival only needed the Spoon River. That was my thought. Pat thought otherwise. As usual, she was right!

As September's shorter days started to limit our outdoor adventures, we knew we were fast approaching the dreaded winter cold and snow. We decided to take a few vacation days camped at Pere Marquette State Park near Alton, Illinois. The St Louis Balloon Festival was that weekend, so we combined a camping trip with the daylong balloon event. The weather was perfect; the balloons went up without a hitch. We were set up right beside the staging area; so, I got more up close and personal shots as the balloons inflated and sailed into the heavens. The normally long drive from the event to home was just a quick trip across the river and back up to the campground. The only thing that lessened the pleasure of this outing was the mosquitoes. The abnormally dry summer had kept down the population but as the late summer hurricane rain bands brought relief to the area, all the waiting mosquito population burst forth with a vengeance. They were big, they were many, and they were HUNGRY! Normally, I am not a mosquito target but this time everyone was fair game. There was this one big guy that





Our time in Indiana for the Covered Bridge Festival was much more rewarding. There is a week-long event with the weekends on either end. Unlike Spoon River folks, they were anxious to entertain/ feed you all week. With all that, came the crowds to match. We avoided the towns as much as possible but the fall colors were great and we were there in peak color times. We camped several nights among the yellow and red foliage but the night before we were to leave, a storm came through and many of the leaves were brought down. We had timed this one just right. Those coming

in for the weekend after we left would be disappointed by the lack of leaves. We always love the covered bridges but add in fall colors and you have a fantasy land of color and rustic beauty topped with a small dusting of history.

After just a couple days at home, we considered a day trip to Southern Illinois for that one last fall color fix before those greens, yellows and reds make way for browns, more browns and white. Kim thought she and her dog Sasha might join us; She called the ranger station to check on the local



color. Before she got the question fully out of her mouth, the ranger said, "Come down now, it is peak color this weekend." So, this weekend it was for our trip down to Garden of the Gods. We have been down there in the Fall and the colors were great then but the ranger was right. These were peak colors and they were spectacular. It was a long day but worth every minute we squeezed out of it.



Now, it is December. We are fast approaching Christmas. The autumn colors of nature have been replaced by the reds and greens of the Christmas season and the festive adornments of Chanukah. Unfortunately, our December has been exemplified by cold medicines and numerous boxes of Kleenex. We are hoping to be cleared up by Christmas.

We started our month with a celebration of Hope and healing at the Angel of Hope Memorial in Washington Park. The Celebration is in remembrance of those children who have left us too soon. We were there with Pat's lifelong friend, Jackie from Texas, in memory of her grand-daughter Kensley. The memorial was beautiful and the number of families supporting each other in this time of sorrow was remarkable. Now that service takes on a new importance after the recent shooting. Where have we as a society gone so wrong? Part of the answer might be in the news coverage. If you remember any name from the horrific incident, whose will it be? Will it be one of the children who have left too soon? Will it be the teacher who told the children she loved them; so if they were killed, they would have this as a last remembrance? Or would it be the perpetrator? His name has plastered the airwaves for days. Why do the media race to display every last tear? Why do they tug at your heartstrings with questions like "How did you feel when you first found out your child was a victim?" Why? Because it sells! Why do they go through every detail about the murderer? They do it because it keeps us watching. It is all about market share and that equates to money.

I believe our society has come to a "T" in the road. You can choose to follow the road to success and money or spiritual awakening. The paths go in opposite directions. You eventually have to let go of one to fully realize the other.

May this season of giving help you find your path to accomplish your destiny. May the Light surround you and protect you on your journey. May your own light from the depth of your soul shine forth and light your way.

Merry Christmas, and greetings of the season.

Love and Light,
Pat and Dulany



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