



Happy Holidays!

Three jabs, a couple of hundred masks, and canceled trips were the hallmark of our year. But there was still a lot going on. We adhered to the protocols and limited dining in and crowds. Thankfully, no issues for us.

First up was a planned trip to the Outer Banks of NC. We decided to go in May, being fully vaccinated and assuming that the crowds would be minimal before schools let out. However, it wasn't COVID that canceled our plans but rather the Colonial Pipeline ransomware attack which left us unsure if gasoline would be available. We'll try again in the spring.



Our Rhine River cruise on Viking was postponed for the second time. We are now scheduled to go in early May.

We made two trips to Pittsburgh, one in June and the other in October. More on that later in the news.

We made our yearly trip to Sanibel Island, FL at the end of August. As with last year, we drove straight through both ways to avoid having to stay in hotels since FL was experiencing a very high incidence of COVID. The 12-hour trips were exhausting! There were more people at our resort than we expected, but it was easy to social distance on the beach. Hurricane Ida passed by far offshore while we were there. Usually, a tropical storm or hurricane will churn up the water and over the years we've collected some small, but decent, shells. However, we'd never seen anything like the huge shells we picked up this time. The largest is a bit over 6".



Jane has been very involved with Greenville Women Giving for the past four years. GWG has over 540 Greenville women, who each contribute \$1200, engaged in identifying and funding non-profit organizations in the arts, education, environment, health, and human services. Jane is co-chair of the Mentor committee for new members and one of the team leads for the Grants committee. Last year they distributed over \$540,000 to area organizations.

I finished my two-year stint on the board of our condo HOA. We continue to take classes with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Furman University. Classes migrated to Zoom after Furman shut down its campus in March. Starting in September, we were able to return to campus and classes resumed in person or as hybrids of in person and Zoom. Things have started to feel normal again.

I've saved the story of our Pittsburgh trips for last. It was the most exciting thing to happen for me in 2021.

In 2013, when I was 63, we moved my mother to Greenville from FL. In going through her papers, I found adoption certificates for my sister and me. I had no idea that we had been adopted! I was able to get some information from the adoption agency and Allegheny County, but Pennsylvania restricted the amount of information that could be released to an adoptee.



Pennsylvania changed its laws a couple of years later and I was then able to get an unredacted copy of a birth certificate which listed my birth parents' names. Using Ancestry, I was able to find info on them, both deceased, and that I had a brother and two deceased sisters (I'm the oldest). I did contact my brother, showing him the information that I had. He was mostly persuaded but said that no one in the family had ever mentioned anything about me and no one who could have known was still living. He wasn't really interested in taking it any further.

Three cousins on my birth mother's side learned about me and got in touch in July 2020, along with an aunt who lives in eastern PA. Since it was during the height of the pandemic, we could only connect on Zoom. However, this June, Jane and I traveled to Pittsburgh and got to meet my three Zoom cousins and their spouses in person. We had a great time that weekend! We went back to Pittsburgh in October for a big family reunion where we got to meet another cousin, an uncle, and a bevy of kids and grandkids. Everyone has been terrific, and they've made us feel like part of the family. I still have not met my brother or anyone on my father's side, but I have my fingers crossed. We plan on being in Pittsburgh regularly in the future. One of my cousins and her husband have already visited us in Greenville.

We continue to enjoy living in our condo and our easy access to everything in Greenville. Theaters have reopened and many of our other activities are coming back. And there are plenty of day trips to keep us occupied. It's been a great year!

We wish you and your family a very happy holiday season and a great 2022!

Jane & John

