

December, 2023

Dear Friends and Family,

As the year draws to a close and the festive lights twinkle, I wanted to take some time to reflect on my year and share some of the highlights with you.

In early March, I drove to Lewisburg, WV to help celebrate my brother Jan's 79th birthday. On my way, I drove through the beautiful Shenandoah Valley, with signs of Spring becoming more abundant the further south I travelled. Although Jan now lives in the Denver area, he spent many years of his life near Lewisburg and raised his son and daughter there. His former wife's brother hosted a culinary extravaganza birthday dinner party for Jan's extended family and friends.

In July and August, I visited Jan at his home in Arvada, CO. We spent several days camping in the breathtaking Colorado high country south of Leadville, enjoying the stunning scenery and the crisp mountain air. We explored Twin Lakes, a picturesque alpine lake, took a day trip to Aspen over the famous 12,000' high Independence Pass, and did some trout fishing in the South Platte River just below the Antero Dam.

From Denver, I embarked on a solo journey to Montana, where I spent a week exploring the wonders of Western Montana. I started at Great Falls and drove to Helena, the state capitol, through the beautiful Missouri River canyon. From there, I visited the Gates of the Mountains area and the Missouri Headwaters State Park. Then, onward to the historic mining city of Butte where I saw the Berkeley Pit. Next, on to Missoula, a vibrant college town, which offered a taste of local culture. And, finally, to spectacular Flathead Lake and Glacier National Park.

Back home, our family came together to support my son Thomas and his wife Stephanie as they faced an unexpected kitchen remodel. A small dishwasher leak uncovered a more significant issue — a split drain pipe inside the wall behind their sink. That revealed a damaged floor and a black mold problem. After the tears stopped flowing, Tom and Stephanie tackled the project with determination and teamwork. They tore out drywall, engaged skillful contractors to replace plumbing, electrical systems and flooring, and installed new DIY cabinets themselves. Their resilience and dedication have been an inspiration to us all.

My daughter Carolyn, now in her 50s, has embarked on an exciting new chapter in her life, pursuing a second career as coach for elite ski racers. She has enrolled in the Master's program for Sports and Exercise Psychology at Springfield College, MA. Her passion for the sport of skiing is evident in her dedication to her studies and her coaching. When not hitting the books this year, she could be found at ski training

camps around the world, from Colorado to Argentina to Norway.

Her son Harrison is an elite ski racer in his own right, near World Cup ability. After two high school postgraduate years dedicated to skiing, he is now a freshman at Colby College in Waterville, Maine, where he continues to excel in skiing and plays golf after the snow disappears.

As for me, I'm grateful for my overall good health. While I deal with some heart issues, and experience persistent lower back pain, I'm fortunate to be able to maintain an active lifestyle. I've caught up on medical procedures that were postponed during the pandemic. I remain active by taking care of my home and yard in Sea Girt, which keeps me fit. However, I must admit that hiking at 10,000 feet in Colorado this summer was quite challenging!

As we reflect on the past year, it's important to acknowledge the significant events that have shaped our world. The ongoing conflicts in the Ukraine and Israel/Gaza are stark reminders of the challenges and injustices that persist in our world. Also, the fact that 2023 will likely go down as the hottest year in recorded human history on this planet reminds us that, although we may have made a start toward reducing CO2 emissions, we certainly haven't solved that problem.

This year witnessed a watershed moment in the realm of artificial intelligence, the emergence of two new, groundbreaking large language models: OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Bard. These AI systems are capable of engaging in human-quality conversations and generating creative text like email, letters, poems, computer code, musical pieces, etc. They have ushered in a new era of human-computer interaction and promise to revolutionize the way we learn, write, code and create.

On a lighter note, there seemed to be more buzz around Taylor Swift than any musical group since Elvis or the Beatles. Her evolution from a country music prodigy to a pop superstar was marked by not just commercial success but also critical acclaim, showcasing her versatility and artistic growth. Her "Eras Tour" became a cultural force, a dazzling, nostalgia-fueled spectacle celebrating her entire musical journey.

May this Christmas season be filled with joy, laughter, and the warmth of loved ones. Wishing you all a peaceful, healthy, and prosperous 2024.

With love,

Dave

