

Phil's "SPRING!" Letter 2025

Donald John Trump won the 2024 Presidential Election. Who'd a thunk it?

2024 was a good year for the Browns, albeit a slow one. Read on...

Late summer of 2023, I spotted a Sierra Club trip to Nepal to spend a week helping to rebuild a small village from the devastating earthquake a few years ago. Perfect!, the trip would operate out of Kathmandu late January 2024 until mid-February. Sue gave me the trip as a Christmas gift and I prepared to live in a tent on the slopes of Nepal, without electricity, for a couple of weeks. Warm socks, sleeping shoes, solar battery power pack, and the chance to get up a couple of times a night from a sleeping bag on the ground.



Those that know me know that I didn't inherit the best foot genes, though Dad gave me lots of good gene too. I have a wonderful podiatrist that I see monthly for foot checkups and to keep an eye on a couple of wounds on the bottom of my left foot. This foot has seen a lot of surgery over the years and it's still a kludge. My last visit before I left, Dr. Yvonne took a culture from the wound, and I was off. A couple of days later, when I turned my phone back on after the Newark to Dubai leg of my journey, I got the word. The wound was infected with klebsiella. I was to start treatment with oral antibiotics that I had taken with me in case. Half a day later, I was in Kathmandu.

I'll include some photos of Kathmandu from the trip. It's a wonderful country with a culture most different from ours. In Kathmandu, the capital, there are some medical services. It's not like the U.S. I knew the Sierra Club trip would be taking us two days away, to Badel, a passage by Jeep and a good part on foot. ON FOOT! I honestly began to get quite nervous about taking an infected foot so far from skilled medical help. Yvonne (the podiatrist, we are on first name terms) suggested it might be wise to come back to Boulder, and I was fully in agreement. It meant losing the experience and the expense of a trip I looked forward to, but returning was the safest thing to do. So I booked flights home Kathmandu - Bangkok - Munich - Denver. Sad but a huge relief to be back. (Here's the link to the same trip this year.



I really enjoy visiting Nepal. But it is not the place to be with a medical difficulty. I wonder if I will ever go back.



Please go in my stead. <https://outings.sierraclub.org/trip-detail?id=25513A>

Yvonne and I decided that I should have surgery, a third time for me, to correct the problem once and for all. It's basically a bad bunion (hallux valgus). But Yvonne no longer does surgery, so I turned to another doctor. The surgery was March 25, 2024, a fusion of two bones. As of the last CAT images August 22, the bones had not fused at all. I suspect the surgeon (unnamed) was lax in preparing the fusion site. So far, almost a year later, the foot is perfectly useable but I have a carbon fiber plate in my shoe so the toe will not flex. All seems well, but the foot was a huge drag on the year since I was sporting a "cast-boot" through the summer (which my left knee didn't like much.) Enough of the foot, I'm most thankful to still have two functional ones.

Late in 2023, I received a nice honor from the Federal Aviation Administration, FAA. For 50 years of safe flying (no crashes and no violations), I received at a banquet The Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award. I'm still very active with EAA here in Colorado, and still visit Oshkosh every year, though this past summer I had to rent an electric scooter in deference to my foot. I was not able to get into my

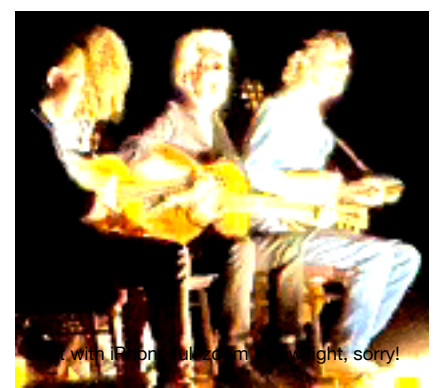
homebuilt Pixie due to the inflexibility of the foot, but hope to be able to do so for the flying season in 2025. (I forgot to include this last year!)



In August, Sue and I did go to see a Graham Nash concert (The Hollies, Crosby, Stills & Nash, etc.) at hundred year plus old Chautauqua Auditorium here in Boulder. She has always been a fan of the song Our House which Graham Nash penned, and while I had her distracted, I snuck off and bought an autographed copy of the lyrics. Christmas gift, and it found a prominent place on the wall! I'm thankful that I bought it before the concert because about five minutes before the start, the power failed! Late daylight streamed in through the holes in the walls but we all expected the concert to cancel. It did not. With flashlights, it became an acoustic only concert. Nash in the middle of the photo s=and it was very hard to hear. But I did hear "Bus Stop", one of my favorites.

https://youtu.be/oSprHUjAFK8?si=Mk_sP1EwwpdIK1Nq

The concert repeated the next night with electricity. We heard it was ear-splittingly loud!



with IP on a public domain. I'm sorry!

We only managed to get in one trip over the course of the year. Windstar has a number of small cruise ships and we booked the smallest, a four masted "schooner" which is powered mainly with diesel engines and one screw. But anyway, on November 19 we met the ship in Barbados and stayed aboard for 18 nights as we sailed across the top of South America and through the Panama Canal. We dipped into Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire, and then to Cartagena, Columbia. Tropical all. It was interesting that we arrived at Cartagena at high tide and the city streets near the waterfront were awash with sea water from the ocean level rise. On through the Panama Canal which was most interesting, and for the ships that use it, most expensive. An engineering feat from a hundred years ago, and recently upgraded, it saw many HUGE ships. Colón, the city on the Atlantic side, collapsed when the US pulled out of canal management. Panama City, on the Pacific side, was surprisingly big and modern. Small heavy railroad tugs' often called "mules", control and pull the ship through the locks. The whole process was well orchestrated, and it was clear that all had been done many times. The



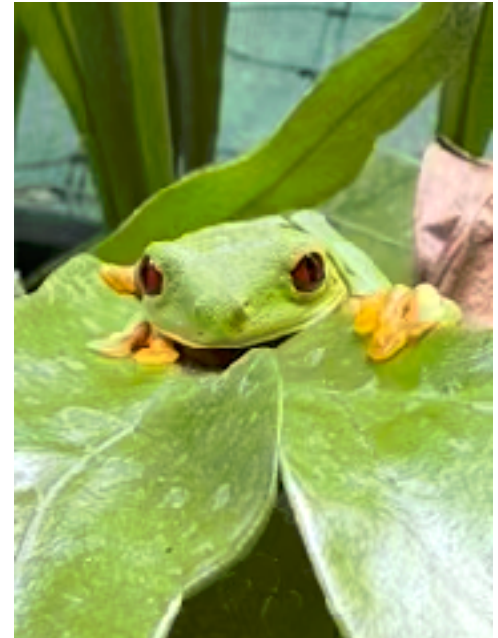
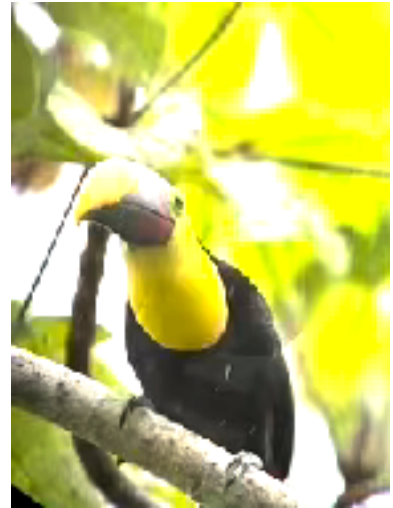
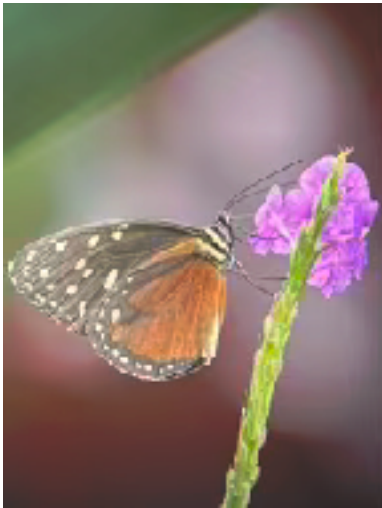
Panamanians seemed perfectly capable of conducting the canal! It was hot and humid the whole time, and ports of call were predominantly touristy. Being repeat customers, we were treated to dinner with the Captain and First Officer, interesting Europeans.

Whitespace! Oh no!!
Here's my left foot with
new hardware!





The most interesting part of the whole trip, to me anyway, was the final full day in Quepos, Costa Rica. We booked a side trip to a privately owned and managed rain forest and it was simply fascinating. The green and lush and wet was overwhelming, and the creatures that called the area home were very tolerant of the human visitors (much as they were at Galapagos some years ago.) Here's some photos.



Below is Keegan making bagels, one of his specialties. And they're good!



As you are well aware, this Christmas Newsletter has gotten horribly delayed, and as Easter approaches, it is still sitting on my e-desktop waiting to be finished. And nagging me.

The main problem is that we didn't travel much last year due to my slowly healing foot operation. And a year later, it's still healing, the bone fusion is beginning to fuse. So let me wrap this with a few more family photos and SEND IT!!



Here's a couple of daughter Lauren, Husband Abel Valdés, Bennett, 7, and Olivia, 5 in August.

They live near us in Lafayette, Colorado, and love the outdoors. Colorado is a great place to live!!





Oh, and I'm able to get in the Pixie again! It's all insured and waiting for decently calm warm weather to fly....

