
H A P P Y N E W Y E A R 2 0 1 8



1 January 2018

We celebrated our 50th anniversary December 2! It's hard to wrap our minds around that number, but it's not so much about that as a deep gratitude for our good fortune: together, happy, healthy and secure in our wonderful home in the rolling hills of central Virginia. The day itself was memorable with our participation in a big rally at the Virginia State Capitol against 2 big natural gas pipelines (more below). After, we had a special dinner (and were served complimentary champagne) at the wonderful *Can Can* restaurant in Richmond. And we've already reserved flights and a special little rental house next fall on the Greek island of Sifnos in the Aegean Sea ... we'll then backpack and enjoy some island hopping in the Ionian Sea before heading to Italy.

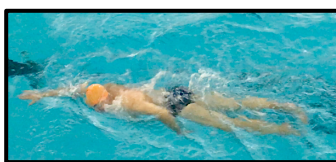
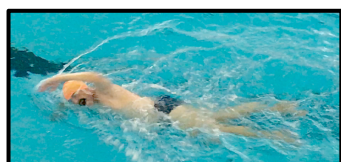
Diane experienced her first full calendar year of retirement. On Tuesdays and Thursdays this school year, she has been caring for Emma, Alex and Noni's 2.5 year old, in Richmond. Last year she cared for both Audrey and Emma 2 days a week. Audrey now goes to a fine pre-school 5 days a week and Emma 3 days, but, due to her age, Diane still wanted to give Emma one-on-one time this year. Next year, Emma too will go a full 5 days to the pre-school. Diane and I hope to travel more.



Diane has long enjoyed cooking special meals and goodies for family and friends. She has now taken it to a new level, often searching magazines and online for new recipes and then cooking for hours, filling the house with grand aromas. However, she was recently diagnosed as having pre-diabetes, so she immediately started learning how to change her diet (and mine). She already feels better. Both our daughter Kiersten, a very healthful and aware cook, and friend Hillary, have been inspirations. Diane has also now connected with a number of women groups and enjoys their time together.



On her 71st birthday in February, she *swam her age* by doing 71x50s (71x50 yards or 71 laps or 3550 yards)! This is significant for anybody, but especially for her, having started swimming regularly only since retiring. I also *swam my age* (72x50s) in December. (The still frames below from an iPhone video are blurry due to my great speed.) We now swim together most mornings.



A request for stories about our Peace Corps experiences in Libya prompted us to finally sit down and write about that significant time in our lives. You can read our *Libyan Stories* at <http://www.foraste.com/htmls/libyanstories.html>. It's amazing how some of these experiences seem like just yesterday.

A few years ago, I invited some friends from the pool to breakfast so we could get to know each other beyond our chats between swim sets. That group has stuck together and evolved into *The Breakfast Club*, which meets once a week to share everything from personal trivia to world issues. Diane also became a card carrying member upon retiring. Each of the (usually) 7 brings a different personality, background and array of life experiences to the table. We've even lingered more than once as long as 3 hours – one of the luxuries of being retired.

Bundoran Farm, the land, is a constant joy and treasure. New houses continue to be built, but all within the plan and inspired philosophy of conservation, preservation and limited development. This past year, I joined the Trails Working Party which mapped, studied, added and removed some of the 15 miles of trails, updated the maintenance plan, and designed and installed new trail markers. Using GPS, we now have a finished map at <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1dYwTvhY48SK63Y3q6aDU3PG-Xmo&ll=37.97969029197347%2C-78.67549424999993&z=14> (Click on this link and be patient; it may take a moment to load.)



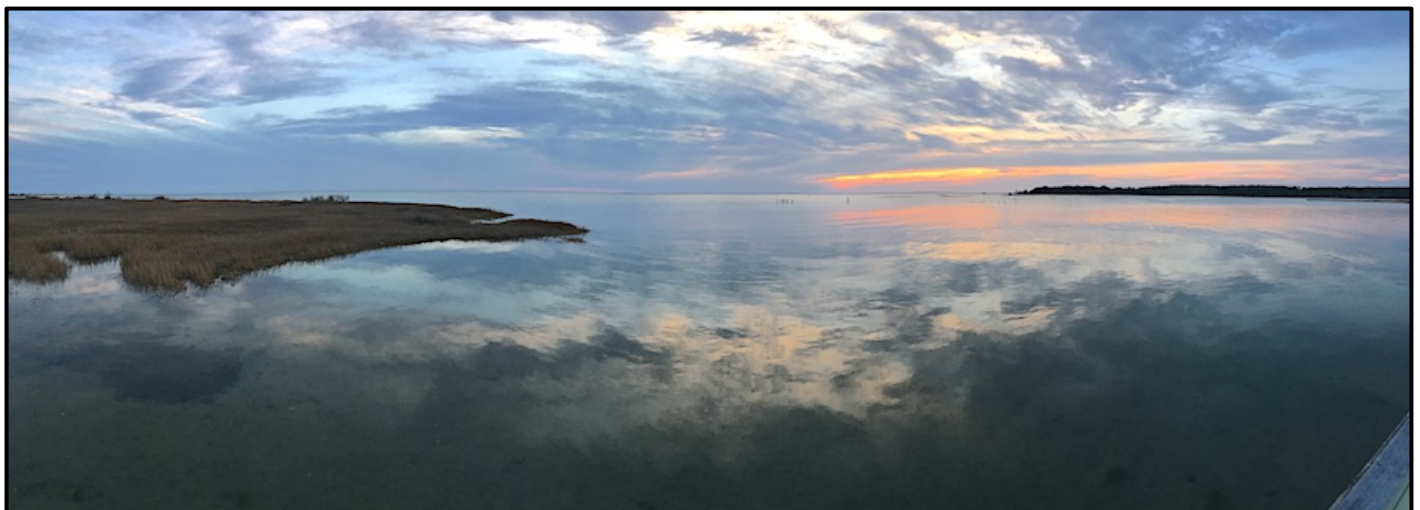
We continue to subscribe to the Charlottesville Symphony Orchestra, a fine regional orchestra which performs in the historic Old Cabell Hall at UVA (the University of Virginia). March's presentation of Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 6 (Pathétique)* was an especially moving experience.

Life wouldn't be the same without streaming, especially since, in our rural and wooded environment, we can't get cable or satellite and our off air options (via antenna) are quite limited. That said, we enjoy great TV (mostly via Netflix) like *Outlander*, *Poldark* and British mysteries and revel in great radio music (especially WGBH/WCRB Boston) and *YouTube's* classical music concerts where we can sit at home listening to astounding world class performances.

August 12 was a sad and disturbing day in Charlottesville when uninvited white supremacists encroached upon our town (we live 20 minutes south). We heard they were coming to protest the planned removal of the Robert E Lee statue from Lee Park and were

very torn about whether to show up to make a clear statement against their blind hatred or stay away to avoid the (real) risk of violence. A good and respected friend, born and raised in Virginia, wisely counseled that we not lend credence to their disturbing and outdated beliefs by engaging them. Thankfully, we stayed away. But others didn't and the confrontation was ugly. The memorial we attended afterwards for Heather Hoyer who was killed that day was sad but moving. *Charlottesville*, that one word, has now taken on new, unwanted and historic meaning. We didn't know what to expect in our daily lives when we moved from New England to Virginia, this former home of the confederacy. We were pleasantly surprised at what we found. There's still room for improvement, but Charlottesville is a good example of real, deep progress from not just those days when slaves lived on this very same farmland where we now live (nameless according to official record, named only as slaves) and the days in the 60s when white students at UVA, including a friend from Rhode Island, went to the movie theatre across the street from the campus and sat downstairs while blacks sat in the balcony. Now, we witness simple ordinary acts of normalcy and kindness among all people on a daily basis. The white supremacists who violated our town came to the wrong place.

The eclipse showed its partial face here in August, eerie and beautiful, an amazing reminder of the greater space beyond our lovely little planet. We also explored the Chesapeake Bay, attended 2 weddings and John's 50th college reunion where we reconnected with friends from long ago. We will do more exploring this coming year.





Both of us assisted Alex for 13 days during the summer, working on his Charlottesville rental house (which he bought and lived in after his masters and before moving to DC and then Richmond). Our main project was taking down 2 bedroom ceilings in the basement unit in order to install sound insulation and new ceilings. We not only installed new and better insulation, but used an interesting system to attach the sheetrock to aluminum supports, which in turn attached to the ceiling joists, in order to eliminate the sound traveling directly through the joists. Simple idea. A lot of messy work. We also did a lot of painting.

Later in the summer, we spent 3 weeks helping Diane's sister Jacki design, research, make selections and begin work on the complete gutting and renovation of the 2 bathrooms in her Hyannis condo on Cape Cod. While it took far longer than expected, it all looks wonderful now. We also did other hands-on work, like painting her bedroom.



Though working full days on the Cape, we often enjoyed morning walks on the Barnstable Beach. The water, sand, salt air, breezes and seagulls of Cape Cod are such a magical thing.



Our 4 grandchildren are growing well and happily. We love having them and their parents with us whenever possible. The little girls adore their older boy cousins and the older boys are so good with their little girl cousins.



Jett (Kiersten and Jason's oldest) is now 16. Wow. Yes, that means he's got his driver's permit. He is tall, handsome, strong and doing exceptionally well in his studies. He is on 2 teams at Albermarle High School: baseball and swimming. He was also selected for a travelling baseball team over the summer.



Eli (now 10) also plays baseball and swims like his big brother. He's amazingly adept on his new hoverboard. He has been greatly interested in the American Ninja Warrior craze and loves all kinds of physical obstacle courses, even finding physical challenges around him in things most people don't see. Alex and I just finished working 3 full days (in addition to design and planning work with Eli) on what we called *The Eli Project*, a few obstacles we built in the woods behind his house.





Audrey (now 4.5) is Alex and Noni's oldest. She is already tall and beautiful. She is in pre-school 5 days a week and has really taken to drawing and writing, sitting quietly focused on her work. She is a wonderful big sister to Emma, who tries to do everything Audrey does.

Emma (now 2.5) is full of energy and smiles, talks a stream and is very loving, much like her older sister. She loves her swing and keeps asking to go higher! Someday, she'll be riding with her Opa (Noni's father) in his motor glider. Both girls love reading and being read to. We are warmed by how Jett and Eli are best friends, as are Audrey and Emma, and how all 4 get along together so well. It's very touching.





Our 10 year old outdoor hound dog, Woody, continues to explore his woods, but now prefers sleeping inside on these cold nights. He's very gentle and loves it when the children visit. He's a rescue dog we adopted around age 3, and Diane thinks that whoever had him as a puppy must have loved him very much.

As mentioned above, we are strongly opposed to the 2 proposed natural gas pipelines (<http://www.friendsofwintergreen.com/the-pipeline/>). They are the 590 mile (42" pipe x 125' wide path) *Atlantic Coast Pipeline* which would run from West Virginia, through southern Virginia and into North Carolina, and the 330 mile *Mountain Valley Pipeline* which would run from West Virginia to Virginia. Our position is that they are unnecessary, would present great risk to the many bodies of water they would cross and to the drinking water of many, many people, do significant damage to much of our beautiful rural landscape (private and public), and would utilize eminent domain to force out or compromise property owners in many rural areas. (These will not pass near us, but we feel for those in its path.) We believe that *now* - at this time - all resources should be invested instead in clean sustainable energy sources.

We bid a very sad farewell to Barack Obama and have been greatly tested by having to live with his successor. What a shocking change. The current president diminishes everything he touches, and can't seem to keep his hands off of anything. We are saddened by what he has done and what his presidency means to our country, the world and our planet. Our greatest concerns are his blatant attacks on the environment as well as his insensitive and uncaring treatment of people. But we must hold on to our hope for the future and continue to work for the good of our country.

So, with great hope, we wish you and your family health and happiness in the coming year.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Diane" followed by a stylized monogram or initials.

Diane and John Forasté

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