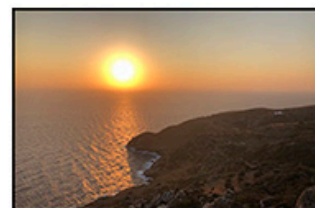
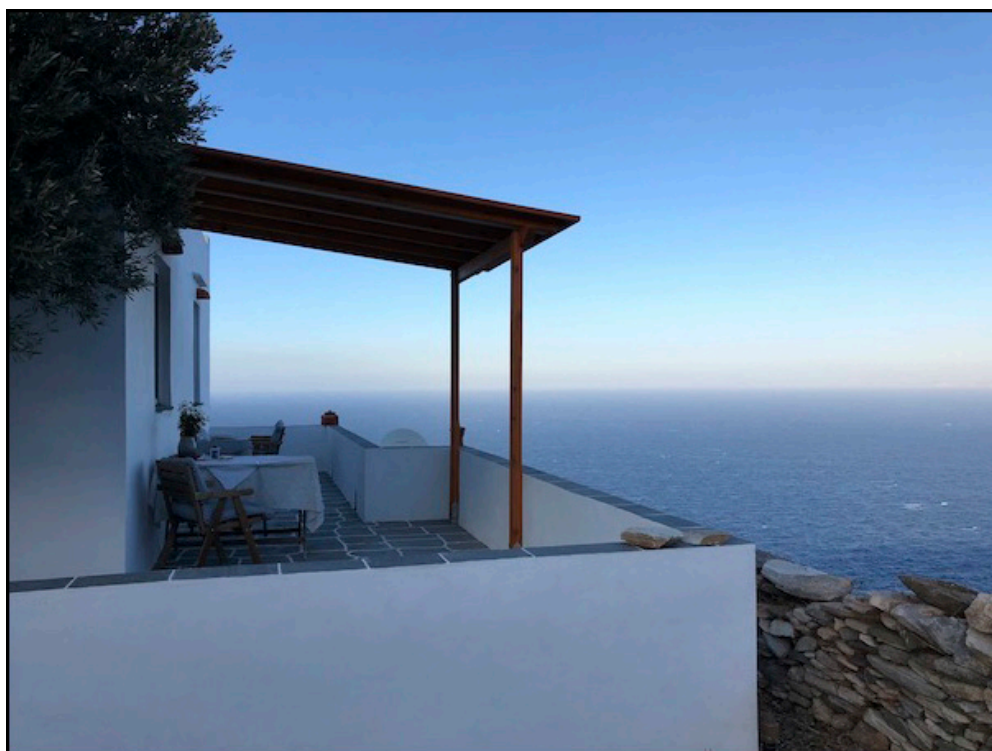

H A P P Y N E W Y E A R 2 0 1 9



Sifnos, Greece

1 January 2019

In celebration of our 50th anniversary (which was actually in December 2017), we travelled to Greece, Italy and Spain from 12 September to 13 October. The sunrise (*above*) was made from the patio of the magical little house (*below*) we stayed in for a week on the 5x10 mile island of Sifnos, Greece on the Aegean Sea. Each morning on the patio, high on the cliff overlooking the water, we were treated to a different sunrise. We found the house through Airbnb.com, as we did the other places we stayed in Rome, Florence, Cinque Terre and Barcelona. With passports, iPhones and backpacks, we made our way around and, in the process, got quite proficient at navigating by plane, ferry, train, metro, car and foot. We enjoyed many a small outdoor restaurant on traditional cobblestoned streets. And we walked and walked and walked.



Sifnos, Greece

We fell in love with this little island in the Aegean. The quiet, open space, water, sky, rocky landscape and people were very much to our liking. It was a delightful week.

Athens

We passed through Athens, visiting the Acropolis and the Parthenon, as we travelled to and from Sifnos.





Rome

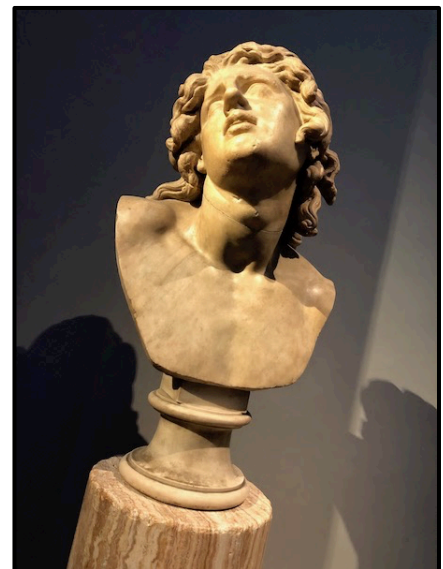
The beauty we found here was overwhelming. Not usually one for tours, we wisely decided to take one when visiting the Vatican Museum. Prohibited from photographing in the Sistine Chapel, we had to later recreate Michelangelo's famous painting of God and Adam on the stone plaza of St Peter's Square.





Florence

This was the heart of the Renaissance - for good reason. The art and architecture are breathtaking. And it was special to see David and the Duomo in person (below). Being a walkable city full of piazzas and small restaurants makes visiting it a delight. We were also completely taken by Galileo (in painting below) who is rightfully called the father of the scientific method, modern science and observational astronomy. In the early 1600s, he proved Copernicus' theory that the earth revolves around the sun (not the other way around). Despite being considered heretical by the all powerful church, he stayed true to the evidence he discovered through his observations.





Cinque Terre, Italy

These five villages on the northwest coast (including Riomaggiore, seen here, in which we stayed) were built where the mountains meet the sea. They are as enchanting as they are wonders in design and construction.

Barcelona is a graceful city where even the light posts are elegant.

And, though some 100 years old, we found Antoni Gaudí's architecture surprisingly modern and whimsical.





Mazagon, Spain

Our last full day on our month long trip was special, sharing good times, good food and good company with Maria del Mar (foreground) and her brother Ivan (in dark shirt at grille) who lived with us in Rhode Island some 30 years ago. We've stayed in touch all these years. Maria and her husband Paco hosted us in their home in Seville and their families and friends welcomed us at their family beach house in Mazagon in southern Spain. At left, is the view from the patio.

In August, we both swam *Save The Bay's* 1.7 mile open water swim across Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island from Newport to Jamestown. It was the culmination of months of training. This was Diane's 1st and John's 15th crossing. It was a spectacular and unforgettable shared experience. Our swims lasted less than 2 hours, yet the training, effort and completion provided a great sense of accomplishment - and we are healthier for it.

This was, like our big trip abroad, part of our 50th Anniversary celebration!

To read more about the swim, go to < www.foraste.com/htmls/swims.openwater.frameset.html > and click on the latest swim.



Above, before the swim, we are with our long time friends and support team of Daisy and Eric Broudy. Eric kayaked for Diane, providing both safety and navigation.



Top l-r: Jett (age 17), Kiersten, Eli (age 11) and Jason

Bottom l-r: John, Diane, Noni holding Emma (age 3) and Alex with Audrey (age 5)

For a number of years now, we've made this traditional family picture on Thanksgiving day. We hope to make many more.

Our dog Woody is now 10 years old. While still happy to roam the woods around our house, he likes to spend more and more time on his pillow just off the porch. He is astoundingly gentle and patient with everyone, as you can see.





A light snow on the trail above our house.

Bundoran Farm, nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia, is always special and (most often) a quiet place. Our house in the woods, surrounded by trees, provides beauty that changes seasonally, daily and (at times) hourly. Now and then, we are visited by big winds, heavy rain, snow (usually modest) and ice. The winds take pleasure in making the high canopy of the trees - many impressive - dance overhead. It's all a wonder to behold.

We are acutely aware of our good fortune. We live where and how we have chosen and - most significantly - have each other. And our children and grandchildren are close by (Kiersten and her family live in Charlottesville, Alex and his family in Richmond). Each and every day, we are thankful for this good fortune and the (generally) good health that allows us to enjoy it. We spend a considerable amount of time and effort maintaining the health we have, knowing that it could be – and some day will be – otherwise. And we think of those who are already facing difficult challenges in their lives.

We supported and volunteered for Leslie Cockburn in her campaign for a US House seat from our 5th district. She is a good person and we were disappointed by her loss. But we hope she will run again in 2 years. For now, we are greatly pleased with the majority gained by the Democrats. We used to pride ourselves on being independent but, in today's political landscape, find ourselves inevitably supporting the Democrats. We hope it will one day be possible to not view things this way, but once again on the merits of the individual person. Time will tell.



Earthrise, 24 December 1968, Bill Anders, NASA, Apollo 8

Earthrise and the path we're on (thoughts for the end of 2018 and beginning of 2019).

It's been 50 years since the manned Apollo 8 mission circled the moon and made the iconic image above known as *Earthrise*. Due to this anniversary, it and its significance are in the news again. The Universe – and our Earth – were formed some 14 billion years ago. A mere 2018 years ago, Christ was born, dividing our calendar years between BC and AD. Then, in 1610, with the use of the telescope he had developed, Galileo observed and published his findings confirming what Copernicus had theorized less than a century earlier, that our Earth revolves around the Sun, not the other way around. Galileo's observations were *physical evidence* of planet Earth's place in the Universe, a place far more modest than previously thought. It's significant to realize that, while this is now common knowledge, it was considered heretical at that time. Some things take time for us to understand and accept.

And then, in 1968, *Earthrise* gave us *poetic evidence* of the fragility of our planet and the common ground we all share. With it came the awareness that all life on Earth shares a *common spiritual grounding* along with, or beyond, the common physical grounding. As the poet Archibald MacLeish wrote back then, "To see the Earth as it truly is, small and blue and beautiful in that eternal silence where it floats, is to see ourselves as riders on the Earth together, brothers on that bright loveliness in the eternal cold – brothers who know now that they are truly brothers."

So, today we can look both back and forward and ask ourselves if we are doing what needs to be done to care for this planet, this sacred ground, this home of ours. Sadly, *scientific evidence* tells us we are not. As we revisit *Earthrise*, may our spirit be renewed and the path we're on adjusted so that when we say - as we so often do - that we hope the best for our future generations, that hope may stand on solid ground, not vacuous words.

We wish you and your family health, happiness and hope in the coming year.

Diane 

Diane and John Forasté

Bundoran Farm | 670 Hightop Drive | North Garden, Virginia 22959 | 434.326.5959 | dianeforaste@gmail.com | johnforaste.com