

Merry Christmas! Happy New Year! Welcome to the end of the lost year! How was **your** year? Ours was very weird...

We've recently come across newspaper articles and photographs from the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic era, and it's uncanny... aside from the obvious visual antiquity of the items, it might just as well have been current events; keep your distance, wear masks, ban gatherings, close theaters, wash your hands, and so on. Eerie.

We couldn't have timed our transition into retirement – and into Maine – any better than if we had had prior knowledge of what was coming, and a schedule! We retired in January 2019... moved our legal residence to Maine in August 2019... sold the Woburn house in late November 2019... and finished the bulk of the Maine (main) house reconstruction about January 2020, with the only remaining work being the reconstruction/expansion of the back deck outside, the creation of the guest suite on the lower level (a.k.a. the basement, with its own bathroom and exterior entrance/exit), and the outside landscaping/terraforming. Then came March 2020... We're sitting here up in Maine – with one of the lowest COVID rates in the state and country – fat, dumb, and healthy! Lonely... but healthy!

We're settling in to retired life on the coast of Maine in fits and starts. Gene's life has revolved around things that involve a computer for years now, and that hasn't changed much. He still gets up early, makes a cup of coffee and retreats to his office to read online newspapers, which gives Lynn space to do her morning things and wake up at her own pace. Chores and errands get taken care of late morning into early afternoon. We have decided not to set up a mailbox at the end of the driveway – yet – so a daily trip to the post office gets us out and perambulating most days. We have a few appointments most weeks, and Gene's weekly grocery run usually needs a supplemental visit for something we run out of, or he forgot.

Lynn spends time in her quilt studio most days (it's **her** office!). She's built a few new quilts already, is finishing a lot of the quilt-tops that were built down south without easy access to a quilting machine, and is working on an efficient fabric-storage scheme so she can find what she wants quickly. She connects most weeks with her two quilt groups (Maine & Mass.) via Zoom™.

The latter half of the summer was spent planning and building the first of the gardens we plan to create around our new home. The construction-related landscaping around the house was *extensive* (more like ***terra-forming*** than landscaping!), but it didn't include gardens, just dirt and driveway and terracing and patios. Lynn can't get down and dirty with dirt anymore after the accident, and Gene doesn't even know which end of the seed packet to open, so we enlisted the aid of a just-getting-established horticulturist who lent his knowledge and muscle to the project, producing four garden areas (so far), two out front and two out back. If you want to see, peek at [<https://flic.kr/s/aHsmQW8kuW>].

Lynn's cataract surgery (both eyes) was a miracle and a nightmare at the same time. Her cyclic neural-esophageal cough (*about* 4-6 weeks on, and **about** 2-3 weeks off) played havoc with the scheduling of the first eye around the first of the year, then COVID hit... she had the second eye done in October. That's a long time to spend with one eye fixed and one eye broken. But what a difference now! Colors are no longer seen through a milky yellow haze... whites are crisp, blues are vibrant. It makes quilting even ***more*** fun!

Her thirty-year bout with the neural-esophageal cough continues. It's an unwelcome repeat visitor – sort of like an alcoholic relative that comes to visit frequently and always stays too long.

Gene finally got ONE side of the garage cleared out enough to get Lynn's car undercover for the winter. He's planning to build a shed in the yard this coming spring for storage of the rest of the "stuff" in the garage AND our rental storage space about 2 miles away. Money saved on the storage space should pay for the shed materials in less than 2 years. In his (***my***) defense, we did take the basement out of the mix as a new "guest suite" that's ready and waiting as soon as COVID becomes history.

"Cocktail Hour" is usually spent most days in the glorious, fantastic new sunroom, reading and listening to music as the sun goes down. We stream mostly British TV shows – with no commercials – for entertainment each night after dinner, and skip the news. We had a pet mouse for a while recently, but he left one night in a huff... right out the deck slider door and into the night without so much as a goodbye.

It saddens us to say that our lack of contact with our daughters has not improved. All we see of our almost 3-year-old grandson Alexander are photographs and short videos of him on ***Instagram***[®]. He looks happy and healthy and is adorable. We haven't seen him in the flesh in over two years. He may not even know we exist. We love them and wish them well none-the-less.

Gene & Lynn