

Happy Holidays to all from our family to yours!



As we climb through our 70s decade, we are finding we're slowing down. There are always many projects in the queue, and more being added all the time, but the energy to complete them seems to be fading. This is all part of life, and we're grateful to be living in a place that suits us, and in a good community of friends and neighbors.



Alice and our friend Candy Peterson have birthdays a day apart, and for years have been planning joint celebrations with their female friends. It is usually an open house at the Peterson home where they serve waffles, with choices of toppings, and there is great conversation all around. Every year when Alice gets home from the party she has a weary smile on her face. Weary because it is quite a bit of work to put on, and smiling because of the depth of friendship that is reinforced each year. In 2024, their birthday celebration coincided with the Finnish Heikinpäiva celebration in Hancock. Since Candy was scheduled to serve refreshments in her church on that day, they decided to invite their guests to enjoy Heikinpäiva with them. They had a great time.



Early in 2024, a group of us got together and decided to do something to celebrate the legacy of our dear departed friend Melvin Kangas. We decided to have a 2nd Monday of the month breakfast at the new local diner, Bosio's Biscuits, and we really look forward to our "Melvin Breakfast." It is a group of around 10 people who knew Melvin well. Sometimes we tell stories about Melvin (there are a *lot* of Melvin stories), and sometimes we just eat and chat.

It was the strangest winter ever in 2024. During typical winters in the Copper Country, we have to shovel



the roofs of our buildings a few times for fear they'll collapse under the weight of the snow. Many of the pickups in our community drive around with well used plows attached to their fronts. And it gets cold. When I tap the maple trees in March/April, the project almost always starts with shoveling the roof of the sugar shack, then digging a path from the shack to the woodpile. The lowest sap buckets on the trees hang about 2' from the forest floor, and I often have to dig snow out of the way in order to hang the buckets on the taps. Then I have to do the daily collection wearing snowshoes. Not this year. I was actually able to do my tapping using a wheelbarrow. I got a lot of dark syrup this time, good for baking.



We were worried that the small amount of snow might impact the filling of our new pond. Well, it filled just fine, and we were grateful to see the overflow we'd engineered and laboriously built worked perfectly. Several different species of critters used the new water source, which made us very happy.

In March, Steve and John put their home up for sale in Morgantown, WV, and sold it quickly. Then began the logistics of packing everything that was useful, and getting rid of what was not. We drove out to visit them to lend a hand. We all agreed that it would be best if their two cats, Agent and Agatha, spent some time in Elo with us during the move, so we became pet "grandparents" for a while. The cats knew us from multiple visits, and soon settled into a new routine at our place. There were ups and downs, which is always the case when new life enters your home, but we sure did become attached to them for the 6 months they were with us.



Spring arrived early, and with it the usual gardening chores. The chicken manure we'd put in the garden, along with some generous broadforking, worked well. We had good results with everything except the garlic. I think the garlic must have



been mad at us; that being the only reason I can think of for such a measly crop, unless the flock of wild turkeys that scratched around in the garden had something to do with it. We put up a temporary fence around the garden for the first time ever, which protected the onions and potatoes. There was watering, mulching, and weeding, and before long we began the harvesting. We're old hands at gardening by now, and find great satisfaction in seeing the bushel baskets of potatoes and carrots in the crawl space in the old part of the house, and the freezers full of beans, beets, squash, blueberries, etc.

Alice ordered more native plants from a local source again this year, and we got them in the ground without much fuss. While 72 years of wear on my body was one source of the energy sapping I was feeling, I also managed to come down with long covid, which made all my joints and my head ache, and my energy level to drop another notch. Add to that a case of walking pneumonia in both lungs, and it was challenging to get much of anything done.

In October, Steve rented a U-Haul truck in Morgantown and loaded up what was still stored there. John stayed with us during this part of the moving process. When Steve was about a day away from Minneapolis, where their new condo awaited, John and I loaded the pickup and headed that way. Steve got there about an hour before we did. We all worked together to get the truck unloaded, then treated ourselves to supper at a local restaurant. After dinner I started back to the U.P. I made it about 2 hours down the road before checking into a hotel in Turtle Lake, Wisconsin. The next morning I drove the rest of the way home.



In late October, Alice and I left for a 25 day vacation that we'd been planning for some time. We drove to Milwaukee where we left our car, and caught the train to Chicago, where we spent 2 nights. Then other trains to Washington DC for 6 nights, over to Philadelphia for 6 nights, then Manhattan for 6 nights, and then back home. It was a great trip that we have chronicled online at my blog: tedsoldan.com



That's the year in a nutshell. We hope 2024 found you well, and look forward to hearing your stories.

