



Char's family in the cabin after her Celebration in April.

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15 December 2015

Dear Friends and Family,

This has been a very different year for me, as you might well imagine. Char's 80TH birthday would be tomorrow if she had survived and Saturday is the first anniversary of her passing. I suppose that I have not been hit so hard by my loss as

one who married young and spent one's entire adult life together. I lived alone for many years before marrying but that was a very different "aloneness" than currently.

Last winter was a bummer from start to finish. Besides losing Char, I broke my right wrist, had a world-class case of bronchitis, and had a hospital stay for surgery. At least that last item resolved a long-standing issue. Belle, our eldest cow, died in March, adding to the bleakness.

Winter was long, cold and snowy, too. We opened our trees during a brief mild spell in early February, then everything froze solid for a month. We made our first batch of syrup in mid-March and the second and last batch only two weeks later — a very short season.

The rest of the year went much more smoothly. We had a big celebration for Char in April. More than 100 family and friends came from all over the country. It was planned to be here in the cabin but was moved to the Bolar Ruritan Club because of an all-day rain and temperature in the low 40s, not what we hoped for at the end of April.



Shockey Triangle in process; below, finished.

We did three fairly big projects this year along with all the routine work like gardening, mowing, pruning, painting, hay making, repairing roads and fences . . . well, you get the idea. "We" I should point out, is me and Chris, the young man who works for me, who is a good friend and who is indispensable in keeping this place running smoothly. Project #1 was cleaning up the Shockey Triangle, which we started in March and worked at on and off all year. This is a one-acre tract on the south end of the farm. "Cleaning" consisted of removing several truckloads of trash, several more truckloads of rocks and moving around and grading smooth many truckloads of dirt. We now have a small but useful field instead of a mess.



Project #2 was moving and rebuilding a small shed, used primarily for garden things. It had no foundation

and was sinking into the ground. The main choices were reconstruction or a fire; we chose the former. We poured a concrete floor, turned the shed around so it faces north instead of south, set it on new sills, repaired the studs, siding and window and added a door and painted it. While we were in painting mode we also painted the roof on the kitchen / dining room part of the house. This shed was the last outbuilding still in its original red paint; everything now conforms to our color scheme of chocolate brown with almond trim.



Preparing to move shed; below, finished.

The third project was much smaller than the others. It consisted of building a causeway across the creek to access the trail to Piney Point. The former ford was eroding, leaving a steep bank to climb, which nearly flipped Chris' four-wheeler over backward. We collected rocks from around the place, some from the Shockey Triangle, and dumped in three truckloads of large rocks, two more loads of medium-size rocks, and finished it off with a load of #3 stone from the quarry. Chris then cleaned up the trail. While not intended for vehicle use, we can now get up it with the tractor for maintenance work.



I enjoyed having visitors several times this year. Daughter Kathy and Jeff came up from Roanoke several times and all three girls were here in August to go thru their mother's clothes and things. I still have a huge array of clothes that I want to give to any friend or family member who can use them. My canoeing friends from Penn State days, the Irwins and McKees, were here for a weekend in November. I did not do any real caving this year but I helped with work on the BCCS fieldhouse in May and spent several days on a digging project in Waterfall Cave in the summer and fall.



The new creek crossing.

There is always more to tell but I want to hold this to two pages so I will stop now. I look forward to your cards and letters and I hope more of you can come for a visit in 2016.

Love to all,
