



N&W class-J 611 W-bound at Montgomery Tunnel on 8 May.

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Dear Friends and Family,

We did no big projects this year and I made only one trip to note, so this is a fairly mundane annual report. I guess age is taking a toll as I again had several hospital visits, the first for back surgery in January. I am now pain-free in my lower back for the first time in years. Then plantar fasciitis (pain in my right heel) set

in in April. I fooled with it for months, then finally went to my orthopedist in October and I'm now pain free. Lesson? I hope so! I had a bout with very low blood pressure in the summer that lasted for a couple of weeks. By the time I could schedule an echo cardiogram and other tests the problem had abated so I still have no idea what that was all about. Finally, a sore shoulder this fall led to a return visit to my orthopod and an MRI. Treatment for a torn rotator cuff is ongoing but I guess I will live for another year or two..

I was pleased to have guests several times during the year. Tom and Paulette Irwin were here for a weekend in March and Mike Thomsen stopped by in June, all Penn State friends. Margaret Downs-

Gamble (left), a Sweet cousin who I had never met, was here briefly, also in June. Daughter Kathy and Jeff were here a couple of times and all three girls made longer visits in July (bottom), sadly during the hottest days of the summer and while I was suffering low BP. I'm sure there were a couple more but I'm having a senior moment right now. As Rick Perry once said, "Oops."



Historic research and preservation has become a major activity. In January I started scanning my thousands of railroad pix that I've been taking for almost 60 years. Some of the older color slides were already badly faded, requiring remedial work in Photoshop. Even b&w film deteriorates over time but JPG files are forever if one keeps moving them to new media. Then I got into old family pix, prints this time, also needing remedial work.



Then in March I got a call from a *Washington Post* writer who was doing a piece on my dad's work in the 1940s. Whoa! That set me to finding and archiving everything that Mom had saved about him, which led me back to genealogical work on my family ancestry. Mom

had done some research years ago and I, well-known packrat, had been accumulating papers and notes but nothing organized. Back to the scanner! This indoor stuff subsided for the summer but I got back to it this fall. I have joined ancestry.com, which is an important resource for genealogy. It is time consuming and very addictive. I have traced my father's line back to two sets of 5TH great grandparents, my mother's maternal line to my 4TH great. Char's family traces back to the grandparents of President John Adams and beyond. We've been here for a long time! I've ordered a DNA test kit to learn where my roots go beyond the paper trail. Stay tuned.

We again had a short sugar season, with cold weather in February delaying its start and a sudden warm up in March ending it early. Then we got into the routine of spring-summer: road and fence work, gardening, mowing, hay making, wood cutting, spraying. Lots of spraying. We are doing an all-out assault on invasive species. The middle of the 400 acres is pretty clean but bad stuff is encroaching from all sides.

All of the animals are well but Rudy had a bad time with fleas this fall. Alyssa gave him an unwelcome bath and we put him on Frontline but he is still not a happy kitty.

I said at the start that we did no big projects this year but there was one pretty big one and a couple of moderate ones. A neighbor has a trash dump that for years has been migrating across the property line. I do not like it on their place but I despised it on mine. Cleanup involved hauling off five loads of debris, probably over ten tons, and hauling in two loads of dirt to cover what was left. Then we cleaned out the garage and the lumber shed, both two-day jobs and badly overdue.



A project pictured in last-year's letter was restoring the Shockey Triangle. That area is now well grassed over and we made hay there this summer. I bought a tiny tract of land, less than an acre, that was the last in-holding on our border along US-220. I have no real need for it, just completion of the property.

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 2017.

Love to all,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John".