

Wishing you a Blessed Advent, Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!



Greetings to all our friends and loved ones this Advent season. We've had a busy year!

In January Virginia's sister Carolyn visited. The three sisters



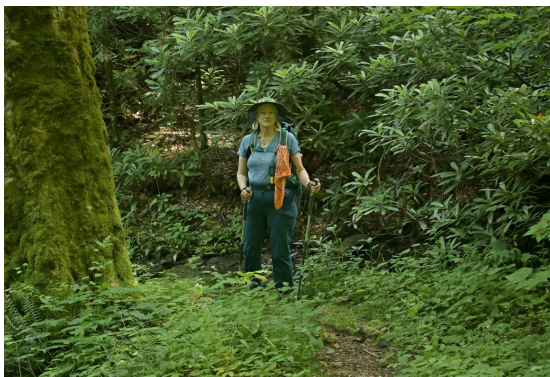
(Juanita joined us) traveled together to see the Tennessee Aquarium in Chattanooga.

We traveled lots this year. In February we made our annual "late winter swamp tour" (technically not swamps, but swampy enough), visiting Congaree National Park and Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, which has finally reopened after 5 years. We kayaked Cedar Creek in Congaree again, no mishaps this time.



In April we took Ro and James, along with William and Arwen, to see the total solar eclipse. We found a perfect location – Mesker Park Zoo in Evansville, Indiana. We had over 3 minutes of totality with no hype and no crowds, and a nice zoo to see while waiting.

For our 53rd wedding anniversary in June we went to the spectacular Amicalola Falls in Georgia and hiked into the Len Foote Hike Inn (a 5 mile hike is the only way to get there). It's very near the southern terminus of the Appalachian Trail and a frequent starting point for through hikers.

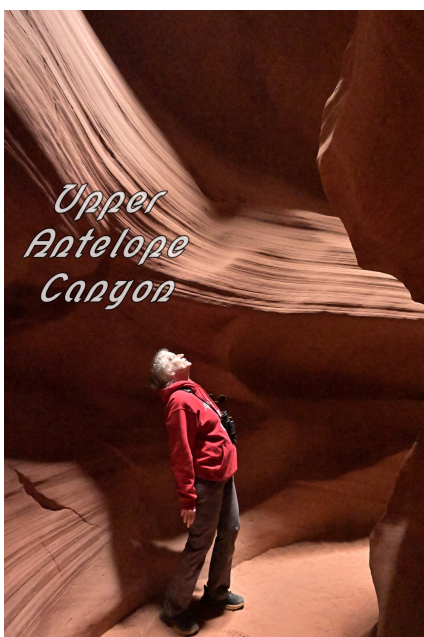


We had a wonderful week in July on Edisto Island with our children & grandchildren, Va's sister Juanita, and old friends Liz & Ernie High. Our first time on Edisto, and we loved it.



In August we headed northeast for 2 weeks. Our original plans had to be changed on the fly, but we visited old friends Larry & Maryjane Hartman in Pennsylvania, saw Niagara Falls, stayed with seminary classmate Harold

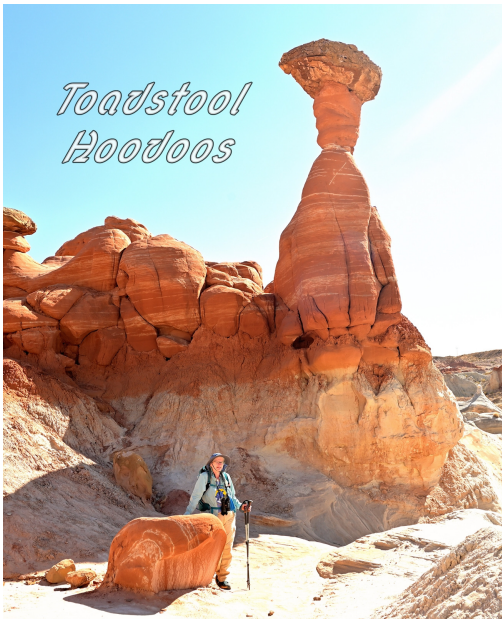
Hallock in Brunswick, Maine, and spent time in Acadia National Park. On the way home we spent a couple of days in Hocking Hills State Park near Logan, Ohio. It was a geologic wonderland. Now we need to return when there is water in the waterfalls!



In October we took a Southwest trip with Liz & Ernie we have been planning since 2007. We flew into Las Vegas and did a 16 day loop through southern Utah and northern Arizona, seeing too many wonderful things to talk



about in a 2 page letter. An unexpected highlight was seeing a very bright display of Northern Lights near Blanding, Utah.



This was not a good year for hiking. Between travel, various obligations, and some physical bouts (nothing serious) it looks like we'll end 2024 with about 300 miles, a little over half what we managed in 2023. We're still out there in the woods and hope 2025 is more productive.

All 3 grandchildren, Ro (10), James (9), and Merryn (7), are doing well in life and school. Ro and Merryn are Cub Scouts, James is active in Tae Kwon Do. Ro won 4th place countywide in the 4-H public speaking contest this year. We had hopes that godson Henri would come join us from



France for a few weeks of his summer vacation, but it turned out no airline will carry an unaccompanied passenger under 15! Hopefully in 2025.

Our three kitties, Mavi, Tuffy, and Little Girl, have settled into a truce and life is much calmer. They are pretty mad at us for traveling so much though.



We had a flood, byproduct of hurricane Helene, at the end of September. The Pigeon River in downtown Newport crested 5½ feet

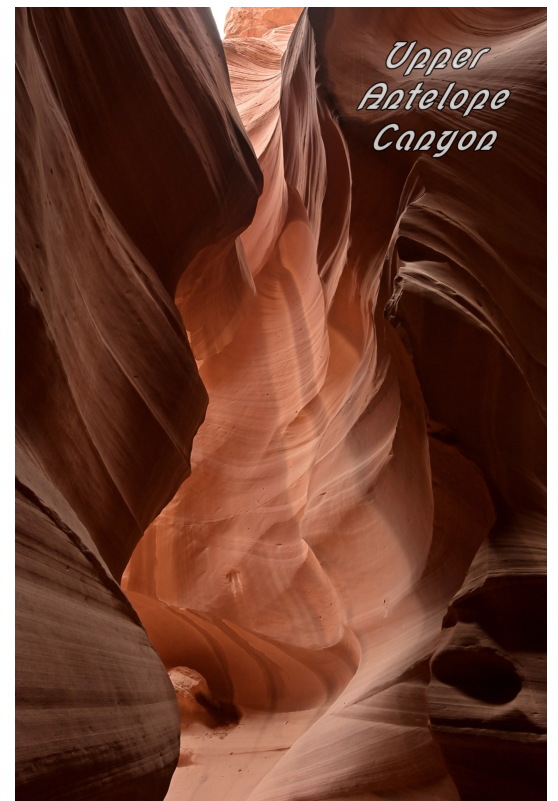


above its previously recorded high in 1867. We live on a high hill, we and our home were safe – but 5 blocks from us downtown Newport was underwater. Homes, businesses, much infrastructure, and some lives were lost. The city water supply was cut off for a week. Our county is still hurting, though we got off much easier than Western North Carolina.



David still supplies twice a month at Trinity Episcopal in Gatlinburg, and keeps busy with photography and doing “naturalist time” in the Smoky Mountain woods and other areas, like the Middle Tennessee cedar glades. One of his photos took a first place at the regional Tennessee Valley Fair show in September.

Va stays busy with her book and garden clubs, yard work, and cooking. She has become an ace at making all sorts of creative things from sourdough.



We wish you all the best in the coming year.

Virginia & David