

December 2017

Dear friends & family,

2017 was my first full year of retirement, and I have to say — cliché alert — How did I ever find time for work?

Alice and I continue to have riotous fun: sitting around, reading books, watching Scandinavian mysteries, attending local concerts, and seeing eccentric friends, and the occasional foray into NYC (she more than I of late). Alice's bookbinding business continues to occupy and delight her — she lets me help out sometimes with graphics work (thereby improving my skills).

I've been hanging out with preservation and architecture nuts. In February I attended a symposium in Albany about preserving modern architecture; next month it was a statewide conference in Rochester, where I pretended (a) I was still working, and (b) this was my field. In May came a day trip with the Preservation League to view modernist houses in Long Island (see photo). Later in the year, while Alice attended a bookbinding conference, I made a pilgrimage to Wisconsin to visit Frank Lloyd Wright buildings (plus dinner with sister Helen and husband Marv).

At a charity event, I "won" a tuition certificate at a local college. Forced to learn something. I took a drawing class and rather enjoyed it.

For my 70th birthday (shocking) in June, we rented a small facility right on the Hudson River — a beautiful setting. One friend actually arrived by (his own handmade) boat. Another brought historic photos. It was great fun to see people from different walks of my life getting acquainted and enjoying each other. The only downside is that I still haven't finished off the leftover baked ziti.

In July, on the way to friend's wedding in San Francisco, I stopped in Phoenix to see Emma and meet the darling Parker Rae. (Her first birthday is today, as I write.) Emma's first break from baby was an October trip to New York, where we met for lunch. Next year Emma and Ryan may be moving to Los Angeles — which would be handy, since that is where Sanford and Courtney have now moved. He is working as a production assistant in movies, commercials and such, while she has a job — pay attention now — as a Social Media Strategy Planner for a short list of celebrities. I wonder if school job counselors have this on the list of career paths these days?



Naps and mystery novels are on the agenda



An early Venturi house transplanted to Long Island



My 70th birthday party with random revelers (June)



Visiting Emma & meeting Parker Rae in Phoenix (July)





Sticking to the agenda on Meddybemps Lake, Maine



Alice and Bette on the lawn in Brooklin, Maine



Screens from the (now) famous "Art Game"



Historical Society's 1830 Crawford House decked out the holidays

Our August vacation to New England was pure delight, largely thanks to the hospitality of friends. It started as just a trip to visit Alice's son & his wife in Boston, with a passing thought about maybe heading north into Maine for a few days. In Boston we had hoped to see friends Loren & Marcia; it turned out they would be in Europe, but they offered us their house in Arlington, which became our base for seeing the "kids," making excursions, and browsing their fine library. Before we left, Alice had mentioned our plans to other friends, two of whom invited us to stay with them in Maine. First stop was the silly sounding but utterly idyllic Meddybumps Lake, where our friend's family owns a (semi) rustic camp on a private island! We shared a few days in perfect peace with Cathy and family members coming and going. Then it was off to the perfect hamlet of Brooklin, Maine, where Alice's old friend Bette invited us to join her and her husband for their week in a wonderful "cabin" of about 1915, which they share with extended family. We made some great excursions together, but the front lawn offered what must be the prettiest view in Maine! As a mark of authenticity, both places had stuffed moose heads mounted on the wall.

Meanwhile, in real life, three boards keep me occupied: The condo board is the least fun but worthy work. The City of Newburgh's Architectural Review Commission gives a fascinating look at new local projects, mostly rehabs, as a stream of younger creatives arrive (mostly from Brooklyn) seeking affordable homes and studios in our historic, if often crumbling, buildings. The Historical Society has kept me busiest, with major repair and painting projects at our historic house, as well as a big push to be more professional in how we handle collections, maintenance, gift shop, and membership. We are making strides, but as with any volunteer organization, there are always people issues, disputed fiefdoms, and noses out of joint.

One personal project this year was publishing an account of the "Art Game," my first interactive design project done at the Eames office 40 years ago! You can find it in the May-June 2017 issue of interactions.acm.org. I also turned the article into a talk, which I gave at our local library in October and will give again this February at a professional conference in Lyon, France. (The location was a key factor in choosing where to apply.) Self-directed French lessons are already in heavy rotation. Alice will come, too, and we'll stop in London for a few days en route.

December brought the Historical Society's annual house tour — our biggest fundraiser. Crawford House was decorated to the hilt for the occasion.

For Christmas we are heading to Boston to celebrate with all three Vaughan kids and more!

Jim (& Alice)