

Chapter 19. The Latter Years

In 2002 we had purchased a new Honda van with which I had anticipated making several lengthy road trips, only one of which had materialized so far. Perhaps 2005 was going to be the time. In March, Dixie and I drove to Mesa for a few weeks of warm weather. The road trip was good, with snow on the ground but not on the roads we travelled. It was a real treat to come down from the high and cold plateau not far from Las Vegas and then to see green leaves on the trees and wander around in the sun in Zion National Park. On our return trip we detoured via the Grand Canyon and spent some time looking at that awe-inspiring gash in the earth, something that has to be seen firsthand to be appreciated because no photograph can do justice to it. We also made our way to Bryce Canyon National Park at higher altitude, including about 150 kilometers of slushy roads. It was very nice to see the area, even if there was quite a bit of snow and a cold wind. Making the long trip to Mesa by road once was enough, though, and neither of us was inclined to do it again. Flying there and renting a car locally is just that much more convenient.

A few months later we were on the road again, this time to Chicago, where I was to participate as a delegate from our classis in the deliberations of Synod 2005 of the Christian Reformed Church, on the campus of Trinity Christian college in Palos Heights. Apart from the formal meetings, the trip provided an opportunity to meet again some of the denominational ‘civil servants’ and others whom I got to know well during my stint as member of the Board of Trustees. And, of course, we stopped in Randolph on the way home to visit with some of the relatives there.

In October, Dixie and I went on a second trip organized by Bob and Mary VanderVennen, this time to France. The initiative for the trip apparently came from Mary’s brother who really wanted to visit the Normandy beaches where the D-day landings took place in 1944, marking the beginning of the end of World War II. I had never visited that area and that part of the trip was of interest to me also. Wilco and Audrey signed up as well. To make the trip more worthwhile, the four of us decided to tack on a week in Provence in the south of France. Our arrival in Paris after an overnight flight via Toronto was not auspicious because a bomb scare at the airport kept us from connecting with our guide and tour bus for about an hour. We were not so thrilled with the attitude of our tour guide Philippe but the sights in and around Paris, in the Loire Valley, and at the Normandy beaches were interesting. There was a lot of ancient history to absorb, at least temporarily (!), around the castles in the Loire valley and I found the visit to the D-day beaches helpful in understanding the serious difficulties faced by the invading allied troops. Reading about them in books is one thing but standing on a beach and facing a well-defended tall cliff is something quite different. A memorable incident on the last day in Paris involved six of us jammed in a small elevator that got stuck between floors for about twenty minutes. It took a while to get the information to the hotel staff, mostly by Audrey whose French was better than that of the rest of us, but eventually we heard a voice speaking English outside the elevator door and we were duly rescued. The hotel management graciously provided us with a free drink from the hotel bar.

The next morning Wilco and Audrey and Dixie and I were off to the train station in a *grand car* taxi, for the TGV high-speed train to Avignon, a nice ride for a few hours that did not seem as fast as it actually was. We were taking our time getting off the train at Avignon until we suddenly realized that the train would be stopping no longer than precisely three minutes. We made it, though. We picked up our rental car and were off on a tour of Provence, an area with lots of interesting people, towns and villages, and history. On the second day we discovered that our car actually was equipped with a GPS and, once we figured out how to use that, we found it very helpful in getting around. Roundabouts had multiple exits, street name signs often were well hidden, it seemed, and at least one of the B&B places we stayed at was on an out-of-the-way road so we needed all the help we could get to find our way around.



In Provence with Wilco and Audrey

We saw and experienced a lot of interesting things during the week, and thoroughly enjoyed the trip. So much so that Dixie actually explored the possibility of renting a place there for two or three weeks some time. A nice thought but so far it has not happened. Too many other things seem to have gotten in the way.

A few years earlier, I had acquired a scanner—with some birthday money

from our children—and I had begun to scan our large collection of family photographs and slides. To quote from a recent book by Jane Urquhart, “All of my ancestors and their houses sleep in closed and unexamined albums”, something that seemed to apply to Dixie and me and to our children as well. I decided, therefore, to collect scanned images of all the prints and slides we had of our children and to put them on a DVD for each of them. The project took some time but at the end of it each of the children had copies of five DVDs, with 500 to 600 images on each, complete with musical accompaniment. I first had to learn the process of making such DVDs, which turned out not to be too difficult on my Mac computer, and in January 2006 the first one—Elaine’s—was done. I finished the last one in August. At the time of writing in October 2010, those disks are out of date already, of course, and it may well be that soon they will no longer be playable because of further advances in electronic technology. I may just have to do it all over again—no re-scanning will be needed but the image collection should be brought up to date.

Mom Wierenga reached her 90th birthday on 10 April 2006, and it was time for another celebration. The entire clan gathered for the occasion, including relatives from Neerlandia and Lacombe and from Wisconsin. Amazingly, more than twenty relatives came from Wisconsin for the occasion, including Aunt Jeanette’s entire immediate family. According to later reports from some, the celebrations were done with style and class. First there was an open house in the fellowship hall at West End CRC, complete with some formal presentations. Later in the day we had a fine formal dinner at the U of A Faculty Club, with more presentations, including a

historical picture show with commentary by Herman. Grandma had been a widow for well over half of her life already. Despite her age, she still lived in her own apartment in Summit Village and was able to look after most of her own needs, including driving her car to familiar places in the city.

Some time in 2005 we had received a visit from Agnes Amelink, a Christian Dutch journalist who a year or two earlier had written articles about Reformed Dutch immigrants in Canada, mainly about people in Ontario. She now wanted to write a book about the topic and wanted to include information about emigrants to western Canada. We met her at a gathering at Tom and Alyce Oosterhuis' place—a frequent gathering place for visiting dignitaries—and she decided to come and talk to us. I was able to give her copies of the 21 letters my father had written to friends and acquaintances in Holland during the first five years after our family's immigration to Canada in 1949, and Dixie was able to give her information about her father's work as immigration fieldman during those same years. Alyce also had provided Agnes with a lot of information about her family's immigration experience. During the following year Agnes completed the book, and in October 2006 there was to be a formal launch of *Gereformeerden Overzee* in Zeist in the Netherlands. I had read the galley proofs for the book, via Alyce, and I was especially interested, of course, in what Agnes had written about the Vanden Born and Wierenga families. Tom and Alyce were invited to the book launch, and Alyce arranged for Dixie and me to be invited as well. We decided to go. To make the trip more worthwhile we arranged to go on a week-long Dutch bus tour to Prague afterwards.

The trip started out badly because when we arrived at the airport I was told that the expiry date on my passport was too close to our departure date—Dutch rules required six months and I had only three months. I had assumed all along that simply having a valid passport was sufficient. The airline was unwilling to take me on board and we had to phone for a ride back home, on Thanksgiving Day no less. It was not a good time. Fortunately, I was able to get a 'rush' new passport the next morning and we were able to fly to Amsterdam that same day, 24 hours behind schedule but in time for the event we were to attend. There were some extra costs

involved, of course, but the manager of the local travel agency where we had booked our flight and tour was willing to share the responsibility and the cost.

We had never gone to a book launch before so that part of the trip was interesting. It included several speeches, of course, and a reception afterwards where we met a few people. We had arranged to stay with cousin Wim and Hennie in Zwarteboek and they generously let us use their car for a few days, including the trip to Zeist.



In Enkhuizen, Holland

The bus trip to Prague, including overnight stops in Germany, brought its own adventures and experiences, especially for Dixie, because except for the bus driver and one or two other people, no one on the bus spoke English. Not only that, they spoke a variety of Dutch dialects. All the commentary from the bus driver was in Dutch, therefore, as was the commentary from the Czech-born guide on our walking tours in Prague. Fortunately, Dixie could understand enough of it to make routine translation by me unnecessary. The Dutch passengers on the bus quickly warmed up to the presence of us foreigners and the trip proved to be very worthwhile.

Earlier, in January 2006, we received the sad news that Ian Morrison, a former student of mine who had just finished serving ten years as Dean of the faculty in which I had worked, had died as a result of a horse-riding accident. He was 57. He had been a popular and effective teacher and researcher in weed science as well as a competent administrator. His services to the agricultural community were recognized at the funeral service, of course, and in October 2010 he was inducted into the Alberta Agricultural Hall of Fame. I was pleased that Ian was honoured in this way and that Dixie and I were able to attend the event, where we at the same time caught up with a number of fellow weed workers and other acquaintances from my working life at the university. They included Fenton MacHardy whose house we had rented back in 1962-63, and who as Dean had called me in to ask me to take on the Plant Science department chairman position in 1970.

The year 2006 marked the time when I decided to buy a digital camera. I had resisted the change from using slide film to digital for some time because I judged that until then the quality of digital images was not up to the quality of slide film. The trip to Holland and Prague was a testing experience for the pocket-size Canon SD700 I had purchased and I was more than satisfied with the results. Several large prints from images I made on the trip earned me ribbons in the camera club competitions in succeeding months. For greater versatility, I bought a digital SLR camera body as well several months later, compatible with the lenses I already had for the film camera. I thought that I would still be using the film camera from time to time but that has not happened, even though I still have one or two rolls of unused slide film.

Around the house a lot of things happened during 2006. We bought a new electric lawnmower, had the large and partly dead birch tree next to our deck taken down, and had the eavestroughs on the house replaced. I painted the window casings and door frames on the outside of the house—the siding was done the following summer. We sold the 1992 Mercury car we had had for 10 years and did a fair bit of shopping for a replacement, until we decided that we really did not need a second car at all. On the rare occasions when Dixie and I needed to be at different places at the same time we were able to borrow Elaine's car while she was at school. Now, in 2010, as our formal separate involvement in different church and related activities has lessened, the expected transportation conflicts don't exist.

I had graduated with my bachelor's degree in 1956, 50 years earlier. Accordingly, it was time for a class reunion, duly organized by a couple of my classmates, and fifteen couples came to a dinner and evening get-together in October 2006 for a very enjoyable time. A few unexpected observations by Dixie and me included the

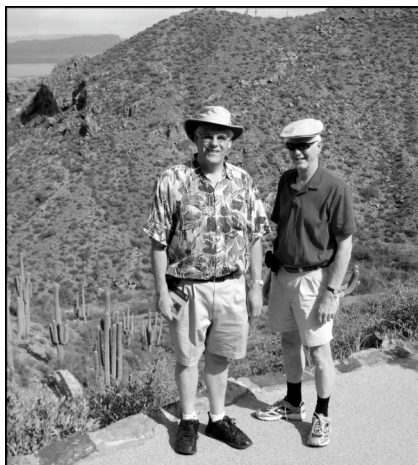
fact that all the classmates present were still married to the same spouse and that many of them had strong Christian church connections.

Mom Wierenga, in the meantime, had had a few health problems. One day we came home to a phone message, “I fell”. We immediately went to her place, expecting the worst. We found her lying on the floor, with insufficient strength to get up. She had lain there for some time already but nothing had broken, fortunately, and we were able to drive her to the hospital to get checked out. She was hospitalized a few more times after that and the time seemed to have come to find another place for her. She was not very happy about that but her condition was such that she could not take care of herself anymore in her Summit Village apartment. Dixie had been pursuing other possibilities already and, providentially, a room in Emmanuel Home became available at just the right time. Mom was still in the hospital but she reluctantly agreed to accept this opportunity. An important concern for her was that it was much further from her children and grandchildren in Edmonton. Nevertheless, she moved to her new place in February 2007, directly from her hospital room, and without ever seeing her Summit Village place again.

With the use of a rental truck we were able to move the necessary pieces of furniture and other items from Summit Village to Mom’s new abode; the rest of it found a place in our garage where most of it still is stored, despite my occasional soft ultimatums to get it out of there. Since we never did buy a second car again, however, the storage simply continues. Needless to say, we had to empty out the entire apartment and clean it. That was a bit of a chore but Jean came to help with that and it got done. There were a few interesting surprises among Mom’s stuff and we learned some things about her that we had not known before.

After a few months of adjustment Mom came to terms with her new environment and decided that it was all right after all, especially after she was able to move to a unit with a separate bedroom and with a view of nicely landscaped grounds rather than a parking lot. The bigger unit also could accommodate some additional pieces of furniture that, therefore, did not need to stay in our garage. Dixie is Mom’s consistent advocate and goes to see her at least once a week, with me going along frequently. At times Dixie also serves as a lightning rod for whatever complaints Mom may have, mostly things she does not mention to any other visitors. Most Sundays, Herman drives Mom to church at Inglewood CRC. On days when he is unable to do so she can watch and hear a television broadcast of the worship service at Trinity CRC next door.

After all that it was time for a warm break and we flew south to Mesa for a couple of weeks. We had rented Peter De Boer’s place for three weeks and had invited Wilco and Audrey to join us there for part of the time. Dixie and I had the place to ourselves for the first week, we shared it with Wilco and Audrey the second week, and then we left to go home again while they stayed the last week. The arrangement worked very well, so much so that we planned to do it again the following year.



With Wilco in Mesa



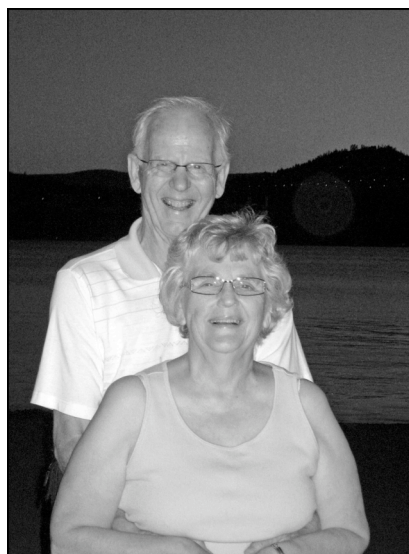
At lunch in the De Boer place

In the meantime, my doctor had been talking with me about the possibility that I might have prostate cancer, based on the results of routine blood tests. A biopsy was scheduled for some time in April; the result confirmed that, indeed, there were cancer spots. It was a scary time for a while. My first reaction—apparently not uncommon—was to opt for surgical removal of the prostate. We had further consultations about different treatment options with urologist-surgeon Gerald Todd, who had done Dixie's kidney surgery earlier, and with a cancer specialist at the Cross Cancer Institute, as well as with some people who had had prostate cancer; we decided to opt for the radioactive 'seed' implant treatment. A bone scan showed no evidence of spread of the cancer beyond the prostate, and the implant procedure was done in August. I had been led to believe that I should be able to return to normal activity within a few days after the procedure but that is not exactly how it happened. The preparatory mapping of the prostate gland and the actual implant procedure for the 90 or so small pellets were both manageable but it took several months before I felt 'normal' again. Perhaps there is something to a measure of physical decline with ageing after all. All blood test results since the treatment have been in an acceptable range, and the prognosis is excellent. Thanks be to God!

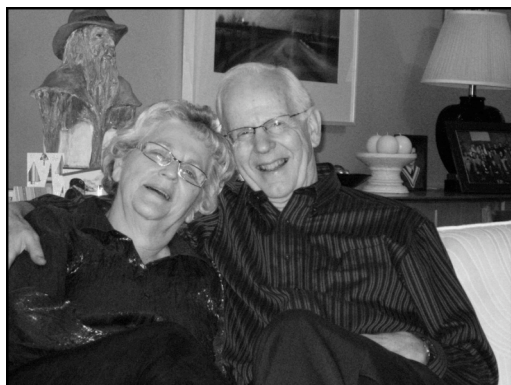
Clarence and Jean had acquired a waterfront condo in a new building in Kelowna and they generously allowed our family the use of it for a week in August. There was not enough room for all of us, though, so Dixie and I and Karen stayed at a motel not far away. One of the evenings we had parked in the guest section of the building parkade and upon leaving found that we could not get out of the place. We had walked from the condo unit into the resident area of the parkade rather than into the guest parking area; we could see our van behind a wire fence but we could not find a way to reach it. Our cell phone did not work in the building and we were already contemplating the prospect of spending the night on a cement floor. Karen then suggested that we use our car key fob panic button to attract someone's attention and, sure enough, the noisy horn soon brought a security person who showed us how we could find our way out. Phew!



In Victoria 2007



In Kelowna 2007

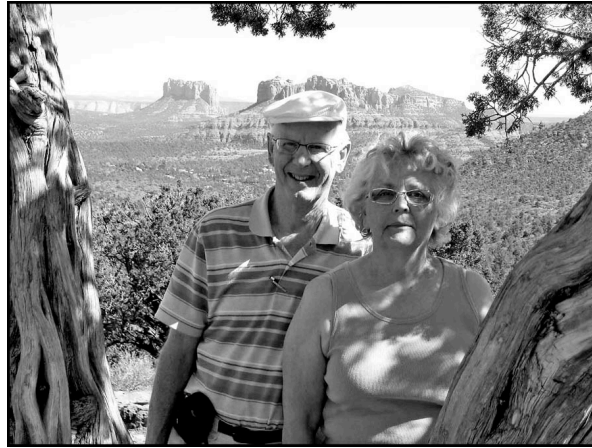
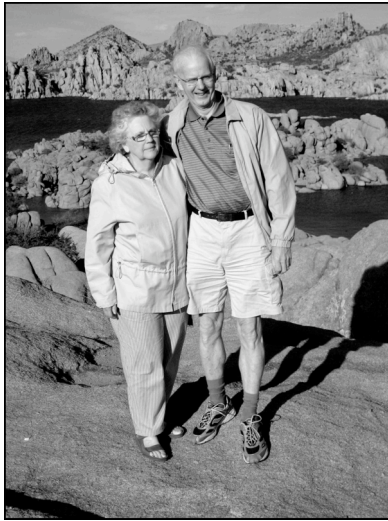


On the couch again

For a long time already, Mark's eyesight had been deteriorating slowly, as a result of choroideremia, an eye disease he inherited through his mother's side of the family. When he was younger it caused problems for him mainly in relative darkness or when he entered a dark room but by 2006 he decided he should no longer be driving, though he still would go hiking or running and ride his bike to work during the summer. Through contact with his eye doctor and choroideremia specialist Ian MacDonald he had become involved also with the

Choroideremia Research Foundation, an organization that was raising money for research towards finding a cure for the disease. In the fall of 2005, when Dixie and I were in France, Mark and a dozen or more family members and friends on 'Mark's team' ran in a fundraising marathon in Kelowna that raised over \$100,000 for choroideremia research. We had phoned from France to offer our encouragement, even though we could not be there ourselves. In November 2007, another fundraising marathon was organized, this time by the American arm of the organization. The event was to take place in Kitty Hawk on the North Carolina Outer Banks. Dixie and I, and Andy and Joan and their three boys decided to accompany Mark and Debbie and their children, for support and encouragement. Some friends of Mark and Debbie from Michigan and Maryland came as well and the whole group stayed in a rented eight-bedroom 'beach house' close to the Atlantic Ocean shore. Apart from being spectators to the marathon we also saw some of the scenery in the area and, of course, historical evidence of the Wright brothers' experiments with flight.

In the spring of 2008 we booked Peter De Boer's Mesa place for a month. This time Dixie and I had the place to ourselves for only a couple of days. Wilco and Audrey took the first week, after which we joined them for a week and they left again. Joan then came for five days and after that Karen came for a week. And the month was over again! It was nice to have the company but it did make our stay quite a bit busier, for example, by making two separate day-long trips to Sedona. It all worked out well, just the same.



In Arizona March 2008

We had already done some planning for our 50th wedding anniversary celebrations in 2008 but there was lots more to be done. We had booked the Dayspring Presbyterian Church hall for a dinner and celebration with family and friends on 16 August—when most family members could be there—and we had made the necessary arrangements with Elizabethan Caterers in Spruce Grove. We also had booked the large Lakeshore Manor in Oliver, BC, for a week's stay with just our immediate family.

In early June, around the time of our actual anniversary, Dixie and I flew to Abbotsford and drove south to Oregon for a week, to visit familiar and not so familiar places there. Along the Oregon coast it was quite cool and windy but in the Willamette Valley the weather was fine. We spent one night at the Spaans in Beaverton and also managed a visit with Sid and Jan DeWaal in Wilsonville, just south of Portland. It was a very nice trip despite the cool weather initially.

Our stay in Oliver with our children and grandchildren was wonderful, all in the same big house without being in each other's way too much. Talking with one another and hearing words of appreciation from our children was a moving experience for all. Similarly, the dinner celebration in August was a joyous occasion. Each of our children spoke briefly about one of the five decades of our married life and a few other family members and friends added comments from their own perspective.



Our family at Vaseaux Lake, BC in 2008



Celebrating 50 years of marriage in 2008

In one corner of the room people could watch a continuously running historical slideshow if they were so inclined, and a number of people actually did. Considering that my father died only a few months after he and my mother celebrated their fiftieth anniversary, Dixie and I are filled with gratitude about our marriage experience. It isn't that we always agreed on everything, but there never were any insurmountable splits or battles

and we thank God for that. We had agreed from the beginning that we would not fight or argue in the presence of our children and, according to our children, we were able to stay with that agreement.

During the summer Tom and Janet Greidanus had suggested to Dixie and me the possibility of going on a one-week cruise from Vancouver to lower Alaska, as companions for Harry and Etje Groenewold. The trip was something Harry would very much like to do—it would be the last such trip he would be able to make, given his gradually decreasing physical ability. We thought it would be a fine idea, so on

27 August, Dixie's birthday, the six of us flew to Vancouver and made our way to the ship. The first night was a bit rocky on the open ocean but after that things were fine. We made stops at Juneau and Ketchikan, and also at Skagway where we rode the tourist train to Chilcoot Pass, of Klondike Trail fame. Harry managed fine in a wheelchair that we took turns pushing. During slack times on board Dixie and I taught Harry and Etje how to play Texas 500. Harry had physical mobility and speaking difficulties but there was nothing wrong with his brain! Sadly, Harry was diagnosed with further problems—lung cancer—in December 2010 and he died on 17 February 2011, age 67.

Earlier in the year, in June, we had received word that Leida Van Beilen in Brampton, Ontario, had died quite suddenly. Leida and her husband Dan had become our close friends when we lived in Toronto during the first two years after we were married. Leida had been partly disabled for the last seven or eight years as a result of a stroke and her sudden death was a severe shock. We had decided not to fly to Ontario for her funeral and, instead, made a week-long trip there in October. We visited with Dan part of that time and had the opportunity to watch a video recording of Leida's funeral service, a very meaningful time to sit and think and talk. Little did we know that within a year Dan would meet Julie, a widow about the same age as he was, and that a few months later they would be happily married.

A few weeks after our return home from the Ontario trip I woke up one morning (Sunday 27 October) with a seriously swollen and sore leg. A visit to the hospital emergency room soon showed that I had a DVT (deep vein thrombosis), in other words, a blood clot, in my right thigh. According to the doctor, it could have been related to my sitting still on a plane for four hours at a time on our trip to Ontario, but it could also have occurred spontaneously. In any case, I was immediately put on blood thinner—the traditional rat poison warfarin—and, fortunately, the clot stayed put. For the first week I had to inject myself with a related product once a day, something I did not like at all, even though it was totally painless. Gradually the swelling subsided, and six months later my leg size was mostly back to normal, without any negative after-effects.

In March 2009 we went back to Mesa for three weeks, with Wilco and Audrey there again part of the time. A few weeks after that we were planning to travel to Australia for Todd and Mel's wedding on 1 May. Shortly before that I got sick, however, with what I thought was a case of flu that would soon go away again. I spent two days in bed but it didn't get any better, despite antibiotic medication—that may even have made it worse. We delayed and re-booked our flights twice but I still was not in any shape to tackle the long trip so I encouraged Dixie to go alone, which she did. She had her own problems with hip joint pain and sciatica but she made the trip—it was very important for her brother Peter, all three of whose surviving siblings could be at the wedding, the first in his and his wife Anne's family.

In late 2008 Elaine had begun to suffer serious muscle pain and muscle spasms, so much so that she had to quit teaching and go on extended sick leave. It was not good for her to live by herself at that point, so she had moved out of her condo and was living with us. During the time Dixie was gone to Australia, both Elaine and I were

not in good shape at all and each of us made trips to the hospital emergency, by car or by ambulance—that scared our neighbours and also two of Elaine’s friends who happened to drop in one time just as she was about to be carted out by the paramedics. It was a difficult and scary time for both of us and, of course, also for Dixie who heard only what we wrote to her or told her on the phone.

Neither Elaine nor I received any helpful treatments or advice from our visits with the emergency people until one of the physicians made it his business to refer me to an internal medicine specialist. That specialist ordered a wide range of tests, none of which showed any abnormality that could be connected with my almost complete loss of energy for nearly two months. Even talking was hard work during that time. Friends brought some meals and planted flowers in the yard because I simply could not do it. Over a period of several months my energy level gradually rose again, I went back to walking, and by the end of the summer I could handle the yard work again as long as I paced myself. No clear diagnosis of the cause of my problems was ever found. My own speculation has raised only two possibilities, both without any supporting evidence. One is some unidentified virus infection; the other is side effects of the heavy-duty antibiotics that were prescribed early on to knock out whatever infection was thought to be somewhere in my body. I was not particularly concerned about not knowing a precise cause, however, and there was a measure of relief in knowing that there was no indication of any problems related to my heart or other vital organs.

Elaine, in the meantime, had been doing a lot of research regarding her problems, in books and on the internet, and she had located a physician in New Jersey who might be able to help her. Karen accompanied her on two of her three trips there, and Dixie went along once also, because Elaine was not able to make the trips by herself. The (very expensive) treatments she received were helpful and, thankfully, started her on the road to recovery. Later she also made several trips to Salt Lake City for similar treatments. In September 2010 she finally was able to go back to teaching, initially on a half-time basis, and to move back to her own condo. Thanks be to God for her recovery so far!



Vanden Born siblings and spouses 2009

Over the years my siblings and their spouses have come together with some regularity, sometimes in a restaurant, but more often in one of our homes, and there are quite a few informal group photos from those events. During the summer of 2009, for example, we were at Wilco and Audrey’s place, where the most recent group photograph was made. Most of us think it important to continue these gatherings and we are fortunate that we all live close

enough to each other to make it quite convenient to get together. We were at Wilco and Audrey's again in January 2011, for a fine lunch and social time together. Looking at old family pictures on a mini-screen and reminiscing about the earlier years surely is part of the enjoyment of being in the 'young old' phase of our lives.

Dixie had been dealing with hip pain and what was thought to be sciatica for some time already, and early in 2010 the experts decided that it was time to replace her right hip joint with new parts. The surgery took place in June and Dixie's recovery really took the rest of the summer, walking with a walker at first, then with a cane for a while, and finally without the cane again. She also was not able to drive for about three months, mostly because the right leg was the one affected. The new parts are working well, though I still help her with socks and shoes on a regular basis. The word is that she is not supposed to bend down to her right foot beyond an angle of about ninety degrees. What is not so clear yet is how long that restriction will remain in effect. In the meantime, Dixie has teamed up with neighbour and friend Alyce Oosterhuis as walking partners. In the fall of 2010 they walked outside, mostly three times a week, and after the winter set in, they have been walking in the West Edmonton Mall. When they are finished their walk they usually come inside to talk for a while and to drink some of my freshly brewed coffee.

After my mysterious illness in 2009, I did not do any walking for exercise for some time but, with clear encouragement from my physician, I picked it up again, outside during summer and fall, and inside on the treadmill in our basement during the winter, that being a safer place for it than on snow or ice outside. Sometimes I watch what passes for news on a TV set nearby, other times I have been known to plug a set of headphones into my laptop computer and listen to a recorded sermon or some music. It is not that I enjoy exercise so much in itself—though I do enjoy seeing the sights along the ravine trail to and alongside the river every time I walk there—but I know that the physical activity is good for me.

In May 2010, I suddenly developed what looked like a rash on one side of my stomach, just below the rib cage, that was identified as a case of shingles. The rash developed into a number of blisters that gradually dried up and healed again but nerve pain varying from moderate to severe, the after-effect of shingles, remained with me for about six months. It did not really stop me from doing anything, but it was energy-sapping as well as making me just plain sore. Fortunately, it never bothered me during the night. By the end of the year, the pain began to subside gradually but at the time of writing, eight months after it first attacked me, it is not yet gone. The pain level fluctuates and is more of an annoyance than a severe hindrance and I hope that it will fade away completely in the next several months.

We have not done any extensive traveling since Dixie's big trip to Australia for Todd's wedding in 2009, mostly because of health issues of various kinds. Just the same, in March 2010 we flew to Mesa for a couple of weeks of warm weather, and in August Dixie and I went along with Karen, Elaine, and Joan for five days in a house on BC's Sunshine Coast. A few weeks later, Dixie and I flew to Grande Prairie for a two-day visit with Duncan and Ann.

Recently it struck me how much some of our younger relatives and friends talk about their travels, both completed trips and planned excursions here and there.

When I think back to the times when Dixie and I were at the age these others are now, I realize that we too got around quite a bit then, so perhaps there is nothing new. It is also true, at least for me, that it does not seem so important anymore as it once was to experience exotic places and cultures. We have had our opportunities and we made use of them, at a time when both of us were able to enjoy it and do it a little more easily.
