



News from the Blue Ridge

Claire & Lorin Cranford

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Family Events:

2006 has flown by in so many ways. Increasingly I'm convinced that one reason time seems to fly by is my age. I hit the big 65 the first of November and began the laborious task of signing up for Medicare. After about two months everything is still not finalized. I would have to say, however, that the people in the Social Security offices that I've had contact with have been some of the nicest and most helpful people one could work with. It's just the long tedious process of getting all the documentation in place, along with switching the seminary insurance over to a supplemental policy.

Unfortunately, I'm getting the chance to test out the insurance coverage. Dec. 15-17 was spent in Cleveland Regional Medical Center in Shelby, and I have a date with CaroMont Health Center in Gastonia for Jan. 4. Severe stomach cramps sent me to bed and then to the hospital during the week of final exams in December. A fist full of tests, including ultrasound and CT tests, didn't uncover the source of the problem. They did rule out gall bladder problems and did uncover a small kidney stone. So I'm to undergo an endoscopy exam in Gastonia with the hope that this will reveal the source of the continuing stomach pains. I'm more than ready to find out the cause and then figure out a cure.

This year has been the year of the hospital for me. In addition to this problem in December, I managed to get a spider bite in May just after the end of the spring semester. That meant four days in intensive care at Cleveland Regional because the swelling etc. caused my heart to go bananas. But that mess had cleared up by the middle of June and I've had no lingering problems with it.

These days I'm feeling my age more than I wish. The advancing years mean I'm able to turn out less work than in the past. Learning how to slow down and accept the limitations have been some of the larger challenges of the year.

The other ongoing health issues have remained pretty much stable. The blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels have stayed close to the same, although the blood sugar problems are slowly increasing as time goes by. The neuropathy feet mess fluctuates up and down with pain sometimes severe enough that I can hardly walk and then at other times it drops down to a reasonable level that I can manage

okay. Strength in the legs is slowly disappearing, and thus I have to be extra cautious about stairs and such things. Sleep issues from all this keep me getting only about four or so hours of sleep at night and thus mandate a long afternoon nap to make up for the loss at night.

But enough of the aches and pains. Lots of good things happened in 2006 as well. At various times during the year we managed to see Brian and the kids, Donald, Hallie and their kids, along with Greg, Jennifer and their kids. Those visits were the highlights of the year for me. Spending some time with seven of the eleven grandkids made the year a joyous experience. We live at least seven hours away from the closest set and thus don't get to see them that often. All of them are growing up so fast. Katie and Michael, the two oldest, graduated from high school in May. Now Katie is a freshman at Texas A&M and Michael just graduated from the Marine Corps boot camp in December. He has infantry training and then the military language school ahead of him before being assigned to his first duty post. He is following in his dad's footsteps who finished the same boot camp training in San Diego twenty one years earlier.

Another joy of this year was the beginning of our rose garden. For many years I've planned on developing one in our yard. I managed to get about 50 bushes planted and growing this summer. Somewhat surprisingly, most of the bushes began blossoming by the middle of June. We managed to have fresh cut roses often this summer. When Greg and Jennifer were here in July, Anabeth and I went out each morning to get a fresh rose for her mother. She picked one out and I cut it for her to take to mom. We both had a delightful time doing this.

As Claire mentions in her section, we are getting into pictures more and more as time goes by. The framing and matting equipment is enabling us to produce customized picture frames for the scenic pictures that Claire has taken. A couple of Dell XPS 800 graphics computers have been added for Claire and I each to do more extensive work with graphics and graphic design. This is something both of us enjoy doing, and doing together.

This holiday season has again brought the reminder of the coming of our Lord to this sinful world. We rejoice in His salvation made available to all who will commit their lives to Him unconditionally.

Academics:

2006 has meant the development of a [Research and Writing seminar](#) for the new MA degree in religious studies that our department began offering this fall. Although much time was consumed in developing the course, it proved to be a rewarding experience in teaching it this fall.

Attending the regional SBL meeting in March and then the national meeting in November were important events. To see colleagues from other places, to browse through the massive exhibit area, and to listen to helpful paper presentations are always interesting and rewarding. With Claire always going with me, we get to spend some quality time together as well.

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☺ Claire's Musings:

2006 – Christmas

Well, this has been another very busy and wonderful year. I still struggle to keep up with everything between my job and photography, but at least taking pictures is great fun and not nearly as stressful. A few small jobs pop up from time to time. One Saturday Lorin and I attended a day-long Saturday framing and matting workshop in Charlotte and now have the supplies to mat and frame our own pictures. Lorin built a worktable in the garage and we are looking forward to making our own. This past fall semester I have been taking matting and framing class at Cleveland Community College and plan to take a digital photography class this spring semester. I really am serious about this all being a second career for me. I can't wait till I retire, but this hobby of mine is quite expensive for now.

Last summer some of my pictures were put in the Blue Moon Art Gallery near my school where I work and one of them sold. Several months ago my pictures were put on display for a few months in the meeting room in our town hall of Boiling Springs. I felt quite honored to have those opportunities. Then in April I will have pictures displayed in the administration building in Shelby. Even more exciting is having my pictures in the Victoria Stephen Gift Shop in Shelby. I have more hopes of some pictures being sold there.

Last March I attended the North Carolina Reading Conference in Winston-Salem for a few days. I enjoyed the meetings, but the best part was spending time with a few of my teacher friends. I learned a lot from attending as many meetings as I could, but I enjoyed a class learning some line dances the most.

A very good friend, Virginia and her husband came to visit

North Carolina and that gave us an opportunity to visit a little. Virginia and I go way back together starting as best friends in elementary school. Since I am 62 that means we have been friends for a very long time. We lost contact for several years, but I think it is amazing how we have kept in contact through email for the eight years that I have been in North Carolina. She writes better than I do, because that is another thing that I don't keep up with as well as I should.

I am doing okay with my hearing aids. I have the most trouble understanding children's voices and since that is my job of teaching lessons and checking out library books to children, I have to wear them during the day. Most of the rest of the time I usually don't wear them. It is kind of nice, when the noise is too much, to be able to turn them off.

During spring break of last year Brian was attending some meetings in Atlanta, so Lorin and I were fortunate enough to have Clay (11) and Taylor (6) stay with us for a week. We did a lot of fun things and going to Tweetsie Railroad was one of the most fun activities. Angie and Carrie came down a lot and we all got to spend wonderful times together.

Greg, Jennifer, Andrew, and Anabeth came to visit us in July and we had a wonderful time together doing as much as we could. We got to see some great fireworks, went for a drive on the Blue Ridge Parkway and attended a baseball game in Hickory. The time flew by much too fast.

Angie, Carrie and I have had some fantastic times together. Most of the times I go visit them in Hendersonville and we head for the mountains. We usually look for waterfalls and go hiking, but no matter what we do I have fun taking pictures.

I have enjoyed the special times with family and friends and taking pictures every chance I get. It's been a good year and I have so much to be thankful for. I hope that all of you are doing well. Happy holidays.



✌ Lorin's Musings:

Reflecting back over the past year is always an opportunity to think about time and its meaning. Upon reaching 65 years of age in November, I think about time more and more. It's a rather sobering thought to realize that you have perhaps no more than a decade and at best two decades left on planet earth. This after already having lived over six decades. Such is the stuff of reflecting about time.

In the language of the Greek New Testament, time is approached in two basic ways. There is the "clock" kind of time as reflected in the word χρόνος (chronos). The forward movement of time is the central point. For ancient Jews and Christians time moved forward constantly and could be measured in terms of days, months, years etc. While our modern culture has defined points of time down to microseconds, the world of the NT never concerned itself with such small measurements. The smallest unit was ὥρα (hora), and for Jews and Christians it divided daylight hours into twelve segments that varied depending on the season of the year. Their life-style needed no unit smaller than that. We could learn a lot from this.

Eternity, to be ushered in by the return of Christ, continues this forward movement, but with no terminus such as death. The quality of experience becomes the decisive factor in that the Second Coming changes everything, and in particular roots

out all who are sinful and not a part of the family of God through Christ.

It is this movement of time that our old bodies feel sometimes so painfully and with such limitation. The promise of the ushering in of eternity in Rev. 21:3-4 has increasing meaning: *"See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."* (NRSV). The blessing of chronos is that every day moves us closer to that experience of the Lord's return to claim the church as His bride.

The other approach to time in the Greek New Testament is καιρός (kairos). The central focus here is on quality of time. Sometimes the English words "opportunity" or "occasion" capture one of the fine nuances of its meaning. Col. 4:5 is such an example: *"Live wisely among those who are not Christians, and make the most of every opportunity"* (NLT). Time, and especially, points of time, present us with opportunities.

Toward the end of life one ponders, What have I done with those opportunities that have been afforded me over time? Have I used them wisely? Those kairos moments such as the visits of kids and grandkids, the chance to impact the lives of students etc. -- these are the moments of time that make a life! Each Christmas season is such an opportunity, such a kairos moment. How are we using the time given us?