

Merry Christmas from the Klines 2024

Dear Friends,

Many of you know that I don't like to think about Christmas until after my favorite holiday, Thanksgiving. But this year, with an election hangover, and Thanksgiving falling late, I'm ready to shift my focus - not to the commercial aspect of Christmas - but to a baby in the manger, Jesus.

So while the turkeys are thawing in the clubhouse fridge, and Tama is at church decorating, I'm starting this letter and thinking about how good God has been to us this year. We have shared good times with friends and family, traveled to Paris & Normandy, enjoyed our 50th HS class reunions, had adventures with Andy in Romania, and shared another year of milestones with my parents. God is good.

We are thankful and blessed, yet troubled by unrest in our world, our government, in society, and even in the Church (capital C). More than ever, we need Christ's example to guide us. I hope this Christmas season will be a time to reflect on Christ's example of service and sacrifice.

Thinking of you and wishing you the merriest of holidays, a New Year filled with promise, and all the peace-joy-love of Christ. Merry Christmas! Phil & Tama



Who,
being in very
nature God,
did not consider
equality with God
something to be used
to his own advantage;
Rather, he made himself
nothing by taking the very
nature of a servant, being
made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance
as a man, he humbled himself by
becoming obedient to death
even death on a cross!

Phil 2:5b-8 NIV



Our house project this year was a new front porch. We love how it extends the main roof line and keeps the view open out the front windows. Of course the project snowballed into new roof, gutter, chimney repairs, patio stones, modified screen porch, cement stain, sidewalk, lighting, handrails, landscaping and more.

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2024 began with a snowy Chicago getaway for Tama's birthday. We left in the wee hours to get ahead of a storm that was already blanketing the city when we arrived. We stayed in the Palmer House, and enjoyed a tour of this beautifully restored historic hotel with an enthusiastic guide from the Chicago Architectural Center. Famed for its live radio broadcasts from the Empire Room, halls were lined with B&W portraits of entertainers who performed there. They even still serve the original brownie recipe that Bertha Palmer used at the Columbian Expo in 1893.

February took us to warmer climes. Josh Johnson and Joseph joined us for our first week in the Orlando time share. We stopped to visit Keith's family in Tennessee, where we enjoyed hikes and exploring Knoxville. In Florida we spent 2 days at Universal and visited Kevin in Siesta Key. Hogwarts was fun, the Toothsome Chocolate Emporium a real treat. A highlight was hearing the St. Olaf Choir in concert.

Our second week was spent at a boat house we rented on Lake Dora, where Phil joined a "Cycle of Life" bike camp and Tama enjoyed some R&R. We loved the sunsets from the boat house! We heard a carillon concert at Bok tower, met Tim & Staria Boyer for lunch in St. Augustine, and looked up HS friend Mike Roberts to see him play Max in "The Sound of Music." On the way home we enjoyed Keith & Virginia's hospitality again, and stopped to visit Amanda Skye in Kokomo.





Top Center & Above: Eiffel Tower
Upper Right: Hall of Mirrors @ Versailles



Ah Paris - third time's a charm! Our long-awaited trip in March was my highlight of the year. We explored Paris on our own for three days from a hotel near the Arc de Triomphe. We visited the Eiffel Tower at dusk, took a day trip to Versailles by train, and visited the Louvre, the Musee D'Orsay, Sacre Coeur and Montmartre, and many sidewalk cafes, churches and neighborhoods. Our guide, LuLu, helped orient us to using the Metro, and led us thru the Latin Quarter and Le Marais.

On the fourth day we boarded a Grand Circle Cruise Line ship - the Bizet - to sail from Paris to Normandy on the Seine River. For ten days we enjoyed exceptional food and service, and guided tours of riverside towns, historic sites, farms and markets. We had free time to explore on our own, and Phil got to borrow a bike for a couple rides.

From Le Havre we were bussed to Omaha Beach and the American Cemetery - so many crosses! Our final visit was to the Caen D-Day Museum detailing the horrific Battle of Normandy.

We returned home with wonderful memories and a new appreciation for the sacrifices of the greatest generation.

Tama



Above: The Bizet held 100 guests
Far Left: Rouen Cathedral
Below: Our French guide, Lulu



They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted;
They fell with their faces to the foe.
They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

From "For the Fallen" by Laurence Binyon



I fell in love... with my bike... over 20 years ago. I was riding the Tunnel of Trees on my Cannondale touring bike when she passed me. It was love at first sight. I rode hard to catch up to ask the owner about her. When I got home I found one just like her at a shop in Battle Creek. We've been together ever since.



My LeMond on Blue Ridge Pkwy. May 2023

It's a LeMond Buenos Aires, red & white, like my high school colors, with a triple ring in front, for hills. Together, we learned to ride in pelotons and race in triathlons. We've traveled to Texas, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and all around the Midwest. We've had some close calls, break downs, flats, and accidents... some serious... but we've always stayed together. When we ride, I feel so good I sometimes break out in song.

In February I took her in for her annual check-up. She needed a new rear cassette, and it looked like she wouldn't be ready for our trip to Florida. I asked around and found a top of the line Canyon being sold on consignment. I was tempted. But then the part was found, and my LeMond came to Florida for the Mt. Dora bike camp.

Yet I couldn't get the Canyon out of my head.

She's light as a feather, has beautiful black graphite and electronic shifting... Oh, the temptation was too much. When I returned from Florida, I brought her home... and immediately felt guilty. I had jilted my love for a Thoroughbred. Yes, she's new and fast and fun. But we're still getting acquainted, and I'm not yet comfortable on her.

My other bikes are just work horses for the job. My mountain bike is a Mustang for the trails, my fat tire a Clydesdale for gravel. But my LeMond - she's a free spirited Arabian princess.

So I'm keeping her. She's reserved for the rides when I just need to glide, when not trying to race or even keep pace. She knows what I need, whether comfort or speed. Whatever she brings, she makes my heart sing.



Above: Riding the Dragon Trail this Spring with Bruce, Joe and Scott.



Right: Bruce & Amy at Brown County SP, Indiana. Joe B and I joined them for some great riding this Fall.



Left: Riding my mountain bike on the Warner Trail in Three Rivers. They keep improving this trail. I wear an idiotic smile every time I ride it.



Below: Fat tire bikes are great for gravel, sand and snow. We like to ride them on Mann Rd. and other gravel west of Three Rivers for a challenging ride after work.





Ruins of Chateau Gaillard, Normandy, offer a bird's-eye view of the Seine valley. It was constructed by Richard the Lionheart in 1196-1198 while he was Duke of Normandy, to protect his lands from King Phillip II of France.

Ruins dot the countryside of Europe in ways that often surprise. To find remains of something built so long ago, and to learn its place in a long history, is one of the things I love about international travel. Many of these ancient places are still in some manner of use.

In Romania, fortified cities like Sibiu once offered safety. We found fortified churches as well, where villagers would flee, along with their livestock. Safety depended on fluid alliances - Catholic or Protestant, King or Sultan, languages and heritage. The lines could change quicker than the local population could.

Vlad the Impala (Vlad Drăculea), whose birthplace we visited, illustrates these times. Responsible for the cruel death of 80,000 people in his wars with Ottomans,

Turks, Hungarians, Saxons, & Bulgarians, his life gave rise to the myth of Dracula. Today, Romania is a NATO ally and among Ukraine's top supporters. It has enabled weapons shipments, aided in the maintenance of military equipment, allowed Ukrainian pilots to train there on F-16s, and approved the transit of grain through its Black Sea port.

Trouble looms. Last week's Presidential election was called off due to Russian interference. Caught in the middle, it's wise to keep your options open. Andy is a citizen of both Romania and Hungary. Nora will have passports from 3 countries, adding Sweden (since Laura's family is Swedish). Different passports open different doors. Pray for peace, but be prepared.



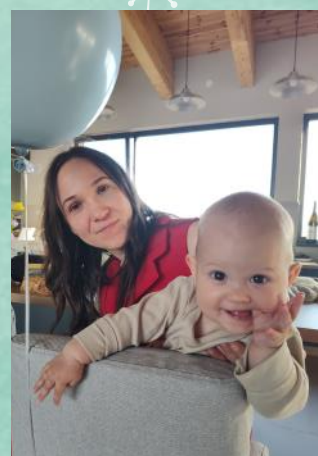
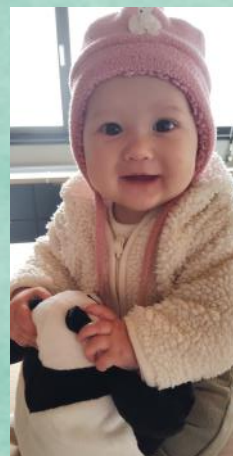
Bottom: Dracula's birthplace, a fortified church overlooks Biertan
Above: Cistercian Monastery of Carta, fortified church Copsa Mare
Right: a replica medieval cannon, remains of city wall in Sibiu





In October, Dad and I traveled to Romania! We visited Andy, our 2014 foreign exchange student, and attended the christening of his 6-month-old daughter, Nora. I was very honored to become one of Nora's 16 godparents. The party that followed was great fun, with traditional folk dancing (Andy played fiddle) and an unbelievable amount of food. We stayed on the family cattle farm, where Andy's fiancé (Laura), parents (Andras and Gyöngyi), sister (Csilla), and many visiting friends made us feel wonderfully welcome. We also found exploration, exercise, and excitement! Andy led us up a local hill, with a climbable metal watchtower at its peak, followed by a trip to the local ER to get Dad 4 stitches after he hit his head on the ladder's guardrail.

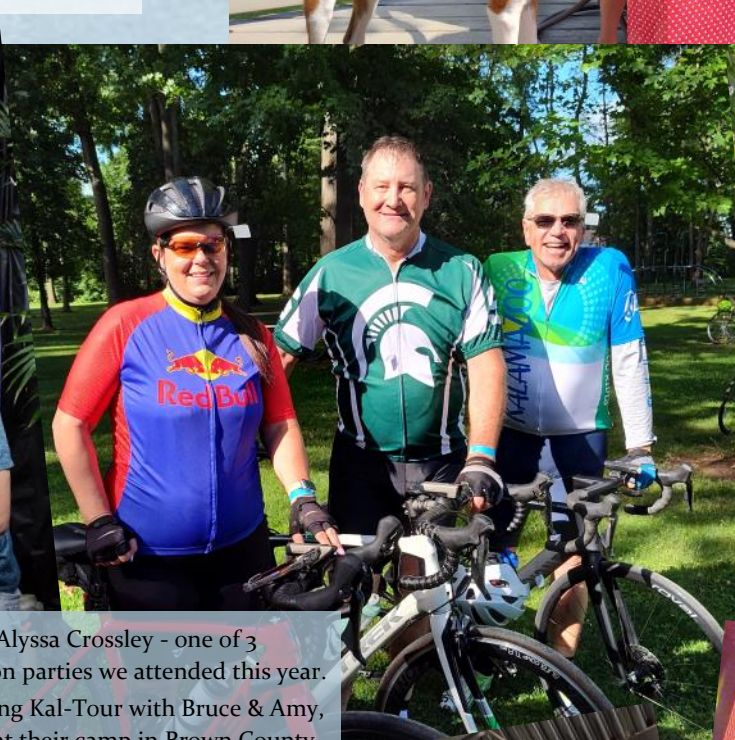
Thankfully it was minor, and we could all still go on the Romania Active bike trip in the Transylvanian Highlands! It was our first self-guided tour, and Andy helped translate as we biked 100 miles on rented bikes, seeing countless hills, herds of cattle and sheep, amazing ruins and churches, small, centuries-old villages, the Cârța Monastery, and the world heritage cities of Sibiu & Sighișoara. Honorable mention to local markets, parks, museums, springs, saunas, chimney cake, a sulfurous "stink bath" (from volcanic gases leaching out of the mountains), ancient fortifications, magnificent cathedrals, excellent breads and soups, a gravity bobsled ride in Andy's home town, and a very friendly, fluffy farm dog named Hector. It was an unforgettable experience! *Joseph*



Above: Christening, Andy's family, Nora, Csilla, Hector
Below: View from top of the Transfăgărășan Road, in the southern section of the Carpathian Mnts.



Above: Tama helps Mark Wright direct his last Melting Mann race in March.
Upper Right: Visiting Garns in Mackinac
Right: Arrow helps Alicia & Houston open wedding gifts.



Left: Niece Alyssa Crossley - one of 3 graduation parties we attended this year.
Above: Biking Kal-Tour with Bruce & Amy, cookout at their camp in Brown County.
Below: Thanksgiving with mom and dad. Tama cooked 100# of turkey this year!
Lower Right: Getaway to Sarnia with Jeff & Danielle. The Canadians were friendly!



Thumbs Up in 2024

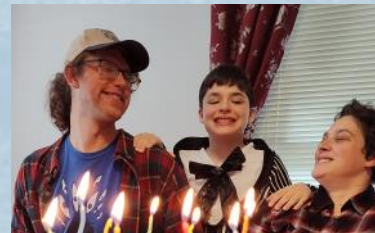


Left: Nora in the Tesla!

Phil's new (used) Canyon road bike

Right: Aiden's "Nightmare" birthday

Center: Biking before and after



Above: Phil with brothers Kevin & Keith at one of the "Burg Days"

Below: Rapt attention from Cami's fans at Mendon Riverfest lip sinc.

Right: Spencer Whittle met us at Kampers in the Book Tower, Detroit



Class of 1974 VICKSBURG HIGH SCHOOL



"The jock, the nerd and the hippy" are what Mike O. dubbed the "3 Mikes," who MC'd our Class Reunion dinner. Will they ever sing together again?



Left: Tam holds newborn daughter, Carrot, and holding his birthday cake.



Right: Enjoying Nora, Nora with Andy's parents



Bottom: Dad Kline's 97th birthday party



Milestones

- Jan 10: Tama's birthday. We celebrate with a wintry Chicago getaway.
- Feb. 29: Phil turns 17 Leap Years old. We celebrate with dinner at the Old Goat to hear Molly Konzen sing jazz.
- March 15: Welcome Nora - daughter of Laura & Andy - in Romania!
- April 20: Dad Kline's 97th birthday - see the poorly timed group photo below :-)
- June 22: Brian & Shelby welcome a girl; Lainey Kate! Grandma Kate is thrilled.
- July 26: Phil's 50th class reunion.
- Aug 8: We celebrate Tam Nguyen's birthday with his mom, sister and partner. We have ice cream cake & a kayak paddle.
- Aug 11: Great turnout for the Taylor reunion!
- Sept. 7: Birth of "Carrot", Tam & Phu Nguyen's 2nd daughter, in Vietnam.
- Sept. 14: Tama's 50th HS class reunion in South Haven.
- Oct. 1: Mom Kline's 92nd birthday includes a golf cart parade of well wishers.
- Oct. 29: Joseph's 28th birthday is shared with a "Nightmare Before Christmas" birthday party for Aiden, the son of Joe's friend Hunter.
- Oct. 30: Sister Carol's 70th birthday party is a fun surprise, as is Keith's unexpected arrival!
- Dec. 20: We plan to meet Emil and his mom, who is visiting from Azerbaijan. We've rented a VRBO in Bentonville AR near the bike trails!





*"Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king
Do you know what I know?
In your palace warm, mighty king
Do you know what I know?
A Child, a Child shivers in the cold
Let us bring Him silver and gold..."*

Tama sang "Do you Hear what I Hear?" at church this morning, and it struck a chord. The story of the wind speaking to a lamb who speaks to a shepherd boy who speaks to a king...

The song was written in October 1962, during the Cuban missile crisis. Its composer, Noel Regney, wrote it as a "plea for peace." He admitted years later that he was unable to sing it without breaking up, so great was the threat of war at the time.

Released after Thanksgiving 1962, it sold 250,000 - 45 rpm singles that year. It has been recorded by countless others since then, perhaps most famously by Bing Crosby the following year.



Sent with love
from The Kline Family
~ December 2024 ~

*"Said the king to the people everywhere
Listen to what I say!
Pray for peace, people everywhere
Listen to what I say!
The Child, the Child, sleeping in the night
He will bring us goodness and light
He will bring us goodness and light!"**

*"Do You Hear What I Hear"
by Noel Regney & Gloria Shane*

This little Child is our Hope, our Light, our Peace. May His light shine on each of you, and may we follow His example of humility, service and sacrifice. He will bring us goodness and light!

Praying for Peace,
Phil & Tama

He
will
be called
Wonderful
Counselor,
Almighty God,
Everlasting Father,
The Prince of Peace

Isaiah 9:6 NIV

Photo at top: Sunset on Lake Dora, FL.
Taken from the Boat House, Feb 2024