

Dear Family and Friends,

December, 2025

A long time ago in a ~~galaxy~~ city far, far away...

Well, not *that* far away. But it was definitely longer ago than we'd like to remember. Pat and Geoff grew up during the 1960's, a time when life was simpler, slower, and stoopider. A time when The Three Stooges seemed like the epitome of humor, the Beatles were playing the best music ever written, and hairdos reached almost to the moon.

It was also the time of the "hippies." For those of you who weren't around to remember that, and have wisely avoided studying the history of the era, hippies were people who were "hip," which is an ancient Greek word meaning "with it, daddy-o" or "the bee's knees" or "groovin'."

Um, yeah. We're guessing none of those definitions help. Let's try again. A "hippie" was somebody who was tuned into the counterculture, always following the latest trends, never out of date. You know, a fashionista. Like the Ancient Greeks in their tunics.

No, wait, that's not it either. Hippies rejected those bourgeois symbols of decadence. They invented their own *new* forms of decadence. Things like sex, drugs, and rock-n-roll.

What's that, you say? Sex and drugs go back millenia? Of course, dummy! That's why the Greeks had orgies! And there was rock music even before the Greeks (although to be fair, in those days it meant banging rocks together). Trust us, nobody would have sat listening to Socrates if they hadn't had some powerful drugs.

But the important thing is that hippies have always liked to party. Pat and Geoff, each in their own separate way, thought that "partying" sounded like a good idea. So, not wanting to disappoint their generational peers, each joined the hippie movement. Pat grew her hair long and moved to a cabin in the woods near Seattle to "live off the land," which is hippie-speak for "It'll be a 20-mile drive to the nearest place that sells wine, but I'll save money by growing my own turnips." Geoff grew *his* hair long, added a beard, and enrolled in classes to learn how to braid his mane—promptly getting it entangled in his macramé project. Both of them danced a lot, partied a lot, listened to bands with misspelled names like "The Monkees," "Led Zeppelin," and of course "The Beatles", and imagined that they would never have to grow up.

But then they went and *did* grow up. Pat found out that living off the land is hard. It turns out that dancing doesn't always bring rain (although living in Seattle does). Partying went better, until Geoff woke up up in San Francisco—which wouldn't have been a bad thing except he had gone to sleep in Denver and was now in the back of a truckload of used turnips. (If you're wondering what a used turnip is, let's just say it makes good fertilizer.)

Years passed, during which both of them independently moved to LA in pursuit of riches. That went about as well as you'd expect: Pat's work as an *au pair* while attending college failed when she fed the kid's food to the cat, the cat's food to the fish, and the fish (not its food) to the dog. As for Geoff, he had a spectacular Hollywood disaster in which he tried out as a stunt double for Jackie Chan and wound up face-first in—you guessed it—a pile of used turnips. Dejected, they both turned to simpler pursuits and pretended to be normal people.

When Pat and Geoff finally met, they instantly recognized each other as former hippies, partied, got married, and adopted a baby. It was a busy week! But once they figured out a name for the kid (it only took 15 years) they settled down and finally started acting like real adults.

By now you're probably wondering what the heck all of this has to do with Christmas. The answer is, of course, "absolutely nothing." Hah! Fooled you!

But what it *does* have to do with is hippies. Deep down, Pat and Geoff never really forgot how much they had loved being hippies. And now that they're in their 70s the label has come back to haunt them with a vengeance.

(At this point our friends who are the same age are thinking "Uh, oh, here it comes.")

Yup, that's right. We're going to tell you all about that exciting old-fart experience, hip surgery. For those of you who haven't done it, this is a procedure where a doctor first tells you that everything is going to be fine and everybody you know who has already done it insists that it is wonderful and life-changing. Here's a hint for the rest of you: hold onto your wallet. The process involves taking your body apart into little pieces, replacing some of those pieces with random bits of metal, and then gluing them all back together according to one of those "Insert tab D into squizit Q" instruction sheets that you get from Ikea. If they do it correctly your hip might eventually start working again. If not, well, you might wind up with a squizit coming out of your ear.

Pat bravely went first. She had been slowing down for a couple of years before a doctor told her that no, walking like you're a peg-legged pirate in rough weather isn't a normal gait. So off she went for a hip replacement. We'll spare you the gory details; it's enough to say that the squizit must have wound up in the right place since her ears still work. But

afterwards there was a “recovery period,” which is doctor-speak for “I’ll likely be gone from my office when it starts to hurt so please don’t come back for six months.”

During that time, Geoff had to nurse her back to health. Since Geoff is a guy, that meant plopping her down in front of the TV, turning on the baseball game, and occasionally saying “You’re supposed to get up and try to walk now.” By the third day Pat asked for a baseball bat, which pleased Geoff greatly. “She’s finally learning to like the game,” he thought. Until the bat came swinging at his head.

But things got back to normal surprisingly quickly. A couple of months later Geoff decided that Pat was well enough to help him drive to San Francisco so he could ride his bike back to LA along the California coast. He’d do a bit of the ride each day, and she could take the same route in the car, meeting him at the daily hotel. It was a great plan! He explained it to Pat, who immediately reached for the baseball bat. But he eventually calmed her down by pointing out that while he was riding, she could visit lots of restaurants and wineries. That sounded pretty OK to her, so off they went.

As it turned out, though, there was a small problem: a long bicycle ride can be boring at times. On the third day Geoff lost concentration for a moment and...crashed his bike. That produced a broken femur, which is close enough to being a hip problem that he, too, can claim to once again be a hippie. Again, we’ll spare you the gory parts. Go see “Frankenstein” if you want to know.

So here we are, two aging hippies. The good news is that modern medicine is amazing (they actually *did* use glue) and we’re both back to walking almost normally. We made a “test trip” to Oregon to see Pat’s sister, brother-in-law, and nephews. That went well enough that we’re going to visit Xandie and Callum in the UK over Christmas, and Geoff is already talking about re-attempting his coastal bike ride next summer.

And Pat has bought a bigger bat.

Love,

Geoff Pat



First Post-Rehab Ride



At Haystack Rock in Oregon



Pat with Sister Carolyn
and Brother-in-Law Alan



Toasting in Tbilisi