



Happy holidays family, friends, and favorite people!

We are feeling incredibly grateful and blessed this year. Our 2023 began in a new city (Oshkosh) and home that has turned out to be perfect for us—including a front porch, a movie and music room for Michael, and office room for me, and awesome neighbors. How we got here was amazing, magical, miraculous, and delightfully divine. Our move went smoothly, and we love where we are and people we're surrounded with, and truly feel blessed. This place, the owner, our neighbors and neighborhood, and city. Being much closer to family and long-time friends has definitely been appreciated.

Mike and I both joined the local Y. Michael goes more often than I do. One neighbor I see in Tuesday Zumba classes; another neighbor and I go for walks a couple times a week. (Mary knows all the dogs and all the kids in the neighborhood, so I've been introduced, and met a lot of neighbors this way.) Sometimes, I just go to the Y to bake in the sauna and or steam room. Mostly, though, I use their machines when I need it and especially in winter. I've started to explore and dabble in the Y360 online classes feature also and want to do more of that. Downstairs is perfect for that. Somewhere I have a yoga mat.

Mom Days:

- A wonderful tradition continues: Thursday Mom days. She's had a few more medical appointments this year that I've been able to attend with her. Being closer has felt like a double blessing. Our Thursday dates usually include lunch at Lakeside Park, a St. Vinny's stop, and often a Brownsville Library stop. One Thursday, we surprised her with an Oshkosh road trip, visit, and 'snuggle pass' to a new cat café that opened here. Planet Perk Coffeehouse added *Planet Purrrk Club* down a hallway that leads to a spacious shared, multi-purpose community space for students and groups (and cats) to meet and work in. They are partners with the Oshkosh Area Humane Society where adoptable cats and guests can enjoy time together (planetperkcoffeehouses.com/planet-purrrk-club). Mom loved it. (Photo gallery has pictures.) Michael is a wonderful chauffeur.
- February's highlight was celebrating Mom's birthday with Aunt Ceil in West Bend. Aunt Ceil's birthday is the day before Mom's (a year apart). When Cousin Sue and I found out we both spent Thursdays with our moms, it was a no-brainer golden opportunity. What a treasured, fun time to be together to celebrate. (Photo gallery has pictures.)
- Another Mom date was an overnight at our place. Timing happened to coincide with a neighbor friend's (another Mary) brother Scott visiting and a music jam session in our living room. Michael and Scott made music, and Mom, Mary, and I watched and listened. (Pictures in 2023 photo gallery.) That evening, Mike, Scott, and another one of Mary's brothers held a backyard neighborhood concert at Mary's place. I took Mom home in between.
- In November, Mom landed in ER and was hospitalized over Thanksgiving. (We brought her some pumpkin pie after our Thanksgiving dinner at Cathy and Mark's. Made her day!) She's home now and feeling much better and has Home Health Care helping monitor and assist her and us in keeping her feeling good. For now, her weekly card games are at her place instead of rotating venues. That, too, keeps her happy.
- Thursday's Mom Day this week was holiday-decorating at her house. That's our project here this weekend. Hallmark movies playing, bringing up boxes, going through them, finding places for things. Mike brought the tree up. Last year we skipped Christmas (moving day was December 27th), so this year, it feels extra special.

Michael - Music, Movie Nights, and Making stuff.

Michael still loves his music, reading, movies, and making stuff in the kitchen. Our basement has a music corner he makes frequent use of, as well as his movie room. Not many music gigs this year, although we did take an early morning road trip to Waukesha one Saturday where Michael got to jam with his former Saturday morning Café de Arts coffeehouse group. He was definitely welcomed; someone even moved so Mike could have 'his usual seat' at the table. In April, my sister-in-law surprised my brother for his birthday by having Mike play at his birthday party. Dan liked it, a lot. Then there was the annual music weekend in Door County. We always look forward to those. And since we're closer now, Dave and Becky invited us for an impromptu music day in summer, too. Again, being closer to people and places up here is a blessing.

Movie nights at Donn's have become another social highlight—especially for Michael and Donn because they're both movie buffs. Michael brings trivia for whatever movie we're watching. I come along, depending on the movie. Some of us

come to socialize for snacks and birthday parties and get to keep in touch with each other—Rose (who makes stovetop popcorn for our movies), Bill and Audrey, Goodie, some of Donn’s family and friends. Donn’s another connector, and really appreciated.

We got a Ruko gismo recently and Michael, especially, loves it! I’m not complaining; holiday decorating to Hallmark movies was nice.

Making Stuff – And Recipes

Michael made ice cream, using three ingredients, and it was delicious. Whipping cream, sweetened condensed milk, and vanilla—plus whatever one wants to add for flavor. Banana-Walnut-Chocolate Chunks was one batch; tiramisu was another. (Photo gallery has pictures and recipe link)

We’ve both experimented with gluten-free and vegan baking and cooking this year. I’m following a functional nutrition program for health reasons, and that’s added gluten-free and vegan (no eggs or dairy) to my eating routine—though I did take a taste of that ice cream Michael made. I was already vegetarian (thirty-plus years), so when either of us cooked or baked, it was vegetarian. (I feel great. My health care team knows what I’m doing and we’re monitoring things, and right now, numbers are going in a good direction. Win-win.)

Gluten-free and vegan has made eating out a little more creative; cooking and baking, too—though I’ve found some delicious recipes and foods I love, learned what I can substitute, and what I can order when eating out. Interestingly, Michael and I both are on a healthy, clean eating path—mine by way of a vegetarian life, healthy living, holistic wellness; his by way of books he’s reading, videos he’s watching, and his lifelong interest and catalysts. Amazing and fascinating how that all dovetails together. I have some delicious GF / Vegan recipes and some substituting food tips I’ve enjoyed this year I’ll happily continue to use.

- I make my own veggie broth and often keep some in the freezer to share. It’s easy, delicious, no additives.
- Sweet-potato Peanut Stew is creamy and hearty, made with sweet potatoes and other veggies, veggie broth, coconut milk and peanut butter. (photo gallery picture and recipe)
- Vanilla-spiced pears. Used same recipe with quince (that I tried first time this year). Core and quarter pears, place on bottom of baking dish. Sauce has vanilla, water, honey, and ginger in it and gets baked until you smell its aroma. 30-45 minutes.
- Rhubarb Crumble. Used same recipe with cherries and apples. Made with oatmeal, walnuts, maple syrup, vanilla, a little salt, coconut oil, and bake. Easy, healthy, and really good.
- Baked potato with avocado and salsa or guacamole and salsa. Sometimes, I fry potatoes using coconut oil instead of baking. Before I put in potato slices, though, I add onion, mushrooms, green pepper, sometimes garlic, and then potato slices. Make up a bowl with potatoes—with avocado, and salsa; sometimes salt and pepper and other herbs and spices.
- Cranberry-orange relish made with fresh cranberries, honey, peeled orange, and an apple.

Are there foods I miss? Omelets, scones, omitting eggs and cheese from our traditional walnut casserole. (I still made it, putting aside some for me, before I added eggs and cheese for everybody else. Mine was still good and flavorful, only lighter.)

50-Year Class Reunion

Wow, how can that be! August 2023 was my 50-year class reunion. I was part of the organizing team and had a blast. Everyone was smiling, happy to be there. I got to greet them when they arrived. Even made it to an afternoon tour of our high school. That was fun. As we gathered, some classmates were easy to recognize. Others, I had no clue and simply laughed and asked them ‘Who are you? Don’t make me guess.’ (It was before nametags were handed out, and fifty years is a long time ago.) I loved that I could go up to anyone, everyone, and feel comfortable, at ease, welcome. I was never a popular kid. And even with ones that were popular, after fifty years, it didn’t and doesn’t matter. I enjoyed learning who people had become, where life had taken them, meeting their spouse (or seeing them again). Many came solo (spouse,

significant other probably knew they'd be mingling). Michael came along, though he spent most of his time at our table with Jill Z's husband watching a football game; Jill was an organizer-team person too. I love that we have a class Facebook group page and that so many pictures and memories and notes were shared; a lot of good memories and people.

Writing, Reading, and mostly Retired

I offered the idea of writing a story chapter to my classmates: *In 50 years of being an adult, where has life taken you? What have you learned? Who have you become?* It ended up not happening or being written. It's one of those ideas that sounds easy, and once started, turns out to be more challenging than expected. I didn't even write my own *chapter*.

When I look at my life, there are multiple chapters. Woven in there was our move last year; sorting and packing thirty-some years (of careers mostly); what's released and purged; what was kept; what's worth remembering or sharing. Writing is a vehicle for me; so is wonder and spirit and soul (WonderSpirit) and coaching and whole-being integrative wellness, resource curating and connecting, and love, and laughing easy, feeling good, being happy. As I'm going through things I've written, I have things to say from various *chapters* of my life that influence who I am now. As I go to medical appointments with Mom and put together Advanced Health Care Directives for myself, I'm like many others navigating this 'sliding-into-home' life stage.

So, my roles, how I give back, pay it forward, make a difference? I assist those who ask; as a resource / soul sister / confidant / coach / connector / collaborator / be of service where I can; it has to feel good on a soul and spirit level. While I wait to be asked or invited, I have my own life work to do, path to take, light to shine, playing to engage in, and good books to read.

Speaking of books, you'll find my name on some in a supporting role at vivianprobst.com. Author, linguist, soul sister, friend Vivian Probst and I met more than a decade ago in a workshop she led, later reconnected, and have been traveling together since 2011. Alongside her national consultant-trainer, business-owner life, her writing work showed up for attention. When life gave her deep challenges, solutions came in stories (sometimes in dreams). She wrote those stories, that became *The Avery Victoria Spencer Fables*. When her sister died in 2008, another story pushed its way in to lighten her spirit. *Death by Roses* won a new author publishing package in an intense competition held in Vermont in 2013. Vivian's 2023 book is *Breaking The Bias of English* and comes out of her linguist roots and social awareness. It's groundbreaking, innovative, interesting, insightful—and not everyone's thing. She again offers something positive one can do to neutralize said bias in English, using one word, *The*. I'll be playing with that one a bit, depending on audience and setting. See if you notice. Anyway, Vivian's a delightful and gifted wise soul and she included my name on the cover of this book, too. It's been a privilege and a pleasure working with this beautiful, brilliant light. I believe our lives are divinely interwoven and that people show up in precisely the right timing. She and her husband moved to Neenah in early 2022. Had no idea then that we would be moving to Oshkosh (20 minutes away from Neenah) by year's end. That is the kind of wondrous, magical, gift-like unfoldings that I notice and that humble, reassure, amaze, and delight me. I *get* the wonder and awe and spirit-flow of this life, the blessings.

Happiest of holidays, Merry Christmas, and blessings to each of you now and in the New Year! – Anne and Mike

Contact info:

Anne Wondra and Michael Robichaud

Address (NEW): 1840 Crestview Drive, Oshkosh, WI 54904

Home annemike87@yahoo.com | Michael's cell (NEW): 920-379-9780

Anne: anne@annewondra.com & annew@wonderspirit.com | Anne's cell: 262-544-4310

Our 2023 photo gallery and recipes are at: <https://annewondra.com/notepad/>