

**T**his year...

...was punctuated by our increased involvement in the health of Mark's parents, particularly his father. Alas, he died unexpectedly on December 2 after a couple days in the ER and a night in the hospital (obituary at [rtfoard.com/obituary/deane-ellis-deshon](http://rtfoard.com/obituary/deane-ellis-deshon)).



2023



Mark's Dad and Mom on his 91st birthday

For the past couple years, Deane's dementia had been steadily becoming more of a factor in his declining physical health and overall quality of life, as, except for eating, he had abandoned nearly all the things he once loved doing—reading, watching sports, listening to music. He had spent a few days in the hospital in September followed by 25 days in a physical-rehab facility before coming home to continue in-home therapy. After that, he had four reasonably good weeks prior to the end of November. Thankfully, Mark's mother is in good health, but she's mourning the loss of her husband

of 70 years; it's a massive hole in her life, as she'd been with him since she was 19 years old. We've been supporting them both and are now focused on supporting Mark's mother. This year, Jo Anne also lost a family member—her cousin, Jay—after a long battle with chronic pain.

**M**ark kept up with his work for BikeNewark, our local bicycle-advocacy partnership, and served our church occasionally—as coordinator of our extreme-cold-weather emergency housing for the homeless, discipleship team member, and sometime worship leader. This fall he agreed to represent our church again for the next few years as Lay Member to Annual Conference.



grateful for...

**J**o Anne continued volunteering with our church as a Stephen Minister, teaching, doing local mission work, setting up communion, etc. She also took on a part-time gig, testing elementary school students in one of our local school districts for a University of Delaware professor she had worked for previously.



chance mascot encounter on the beach

**B**oth of us maintained our social and spiritual connections with others. These weekly and monthly gatherings with special friends are a vital part of our lives. We also concentrated on staying fit, Mark with solo jogging, bike riding with friends, and some lifting and Jo Anne with yoga and spin classes and walking with our neighbor, Donna, and, of course, work in the garden.



...so many good friends

**V**acations included...

- Winter weeks in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., and Myrtle Beach, S.C.;
- A week with three other couples in the Outer Banks, N.C.;
- A long-weekend getaway in Charlotte, N.C., to visit Mark's cousin Jeff and family;
- A nine-day September retreat at Lucia Beach in Owls Head, Maine; **and were capped off by**
- A wondrous three weeks in Europe, most of which included our son, Jordan—5 days in England (Uckfield and Liverpool), 8 days in Belgium (Chimay), 3 days in Italy (Rome), and 4 additional days in Belgium (Brussels).



dinner with Jordan, cousin Cécile and husband Michaël in Chimay



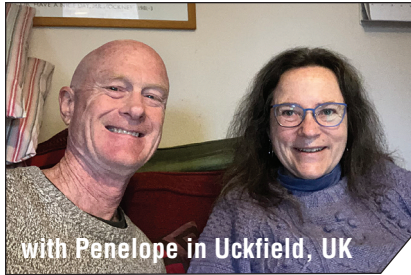
Mark with lifelong friends Vernon (left with wife Jacki) and Walter (below)



a few of the hundreds of photos from our European trip (at left and below)



with Jordan in Jo Anne's mother's hometown



with Penelope in Uckfield, UK



with cousin Yves in Chimay



with Jordan in St. Peter's Square in Vatican City



with second cousin Dominique in Brussels



with cousin Annette in Chimay



at Anfield in Liverpool

**W**e look forward to a Christmas spent with family and a peaceful time of reflection on our many blessings as we remember and give thanks for the life of Mark's earthly father. We wish you and yours a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year. May God bless you in the same way the world has been so richly blessed with the birth of Jesus, who most closely modeled the Creator by loving all whom God loves.

Love, *Jo Anne*  
and *MARK*