

Our 2016 started with a chilly trip to Cheboygan in early January to witness the inspection of a 1940s vintage log cabin. The inside temperature was about -20 degrees, the bathroom vanity missing, the furnace broken, and the roof top and well un-inspect-able due to the weather. But we said, "We can fix anything," and returned that very afternoon to Haslett, happy the cabin and 16 acres on the river would soon be ours.

Weeks later, we ditched the Michigan wintry yuck by flying to the Amazon where temps were a mere 120 degrees warmer...unless you had hot flashes like me, in which case the temps were occasionally about 300 degrees warmer. To cool off, I spent more than a little time between casts sitting in the river...which held piranhas in addition to peacock bass. The rain also cooled me off, and in fact, we suffered more "wet butt" on the trip than any before. As the only woman in camp, I also got the distinct pleasure of squishing my way across very thick, springy leaf litter to take a leak in the pouring rain, only to discover as I sank down in the leaves



that my pants and underwear preferred to roll—not slide—when wet. While relieving myself, I wondered if coral snakes and anacondas hunted in the rain, because both had been spotted at our camp prior to our arrival. I also wondered why we hadn't brought rain pants. In spite of the rain—and not that this reaaally matters—my largest fish (15 pounds) was larger than Mark's (14 pounds), though not as large as that darn 82-year-old dentist from Texas (19 pounds). Shown above, one of the smaller ones (2 lbs.)



While preparing to get off the Amazon River, we noticed the rear floats on our floatplane were sitting low in the water. As we sat inside the sinking plane, the pilot loaded our gear to sink us down more, then used a small hand pump to pump a *lot* of water out of the floats. Without a word, the pilot cranked up the engine, took us downstream a bit, turned around quickly, and pumped and pumped and pumped the steering yoke as he accelerated, bouncing us along like bobble-heads dolls. He pumped and pumped until...right before a bend in the river...we rose above the trees just in time. The first person to speak was the 82-year-old dentist who yelled from the back of the plane: "I think I might have pooped my pants!" Yes, what fun indeed.

In March we closed on our cabin on the Black River. Afterwards: we replaced the carpet; stained the



outside; bought and picked up furniture with our pal, Jack's help; and our friend, Kay, made the perfect curtains! Because our chimney lacked a cap, I got to climb up on the metal roof...only to slide down to near the edge...where I quickly peeled off my shoes and socks and walked boldly back up the roof to the top...wherein my feet got sweaty and caused me to nearly do the splits on the roof peak. Not to worry, though, Mark threw up a safety rope the diameter of a clothesline, which I wrapped around the chimney and hung onto while adding

a chimney cap and sealing some holes at the base of the chimney. We also covered up all the vents with new hardware cloth, thus eliminating a wee bit of a mouse problem. The mice later showed up in our boat.

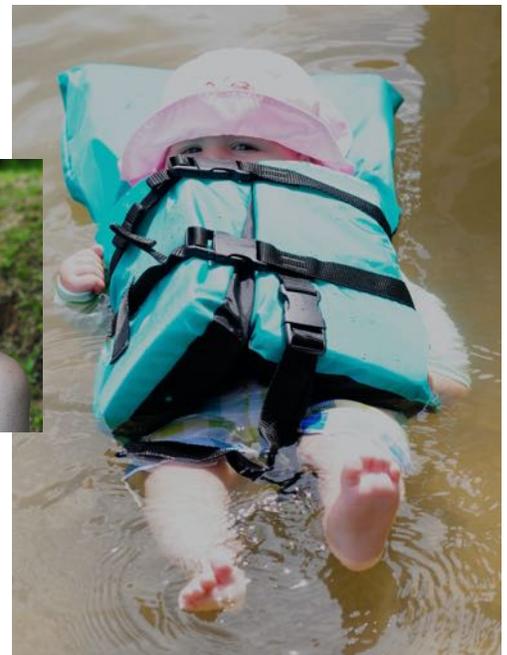


The rest of the summer was all about fishing, and not to brag or anything but I ended up with 3 Master Angler awards to Mark's one. Mark claims that I caught more large fish than him because he had to—how'd he put it?—guide the canoe or motor the boat. Poor thing. Good news though--Santa got Mark a fish finder for Christmas and he has more time off than I do in 2017 to catch big fish. We expect big things from him in 2017, now don't we?

More important than any fish, though, were the visits from the kids. Willi, Holly, and her fiancé, Zach, visited

us in March to paint Easter eggs (and yes, Easter Bunny hid them). In July, Willi, her husband, Brian, Becky, her husband, Eugene, and our grandbaby, Sofia, came up to our cabin. We all tried our hand at paddle boarding and enjoyed watching Sofs play in the water. Truly, a girl after my own heart!

A few months ago, Holly found a great job at Mt. Sinai hospital in New York doing 3D imaging for the neurology department. She and Zach are working on their wedding plans for September. Arthur, who's been teaching in Japan for the last 1.5 years, came home to see us for Christmas. He's found a girlfriend and Buddhism and hatched a plan that will take him to Seattle in May, which, per GoogleMaps, is much closer to Michigan than Japan. Yay! Arthur was sporting a bald head in honor of Becky, who, upon returning to Germany this summer, discovered she had breast cancer. She is well along with her chemotherapy and one of the toughest ladies I know. Her husband, Eugene, has been super supportive, and little Sofia—now a year old--has taken it all in stride. In fact, we're pretty sure she'll be striding all over their house any day now. Go Sofs!



In other news, my sister and her son, Collin, stayed with us during a college visit to MSU, and we saw my stepmom, Norma, twice this year, none of which is enough if you ask me. My mom developed an affinity to water and flooded her room 4 times in 2016. I am still looking for an ark building class, but have thus far come up short. Perhaps we'll have better luck in 2017.

(Left to right: Grandma Suzi, Norma, Arthur (on couch), Holly, Zach, Brian, Willi, Mark, standing next to our BFF Jack and his son, Justin, and me.)