

Dear Friends and Family:

You've heard about El Niño? It's this big rain-season we're supposed to get. Rain, rain, nothing but rain.

Well, forget El Niño and welcome to El Crapo... because that's what we've had this year!

I asked the guy "Where are the tulips?"

"Sorry pal, there are no tulips," he said.

"C'mon man, we traveled 7,000 miles for the tulips. Show us the tulips," I replied.

"No tulips for you! Come back in three weeks!" he said sounding like the Seinfeld soup guy!

And so that is how our year went. It was an El Crapo year.

We traveled 7,000 miles to Holland in April to see the tulips? It must have been an El Crapo winter in Europe because spring was going to be late this year, meaning we were not going to see any tulips... or even much sun, to say nothing about warm weather.

El Crapo didn't end in Europe because after we got home Jane fell and broke her leg and hip... five hours of surgery to put all the pieces back... oh yeah... we had a great summer with Jane confined to bed for so many weeks. Do you know that they show *Law and Order* around the clock? Same with *Raymond*. (Talk about El Crapo TV!)

Remember last year I spoke about the puppy? After the accident we had to give him away... just too much for us to take care of. It was a hard decision, but it was for the best.

Let's see. What other El Crapo stuff happened to us?

I went to my NY book convention... but it was a bust... I got just enough new web biz to pay for the trip. Most years I do three time that. It was an El Crapo trip.

We had to have the brick walkway in front of the house torn up and replaced because the tree roots made it un-level and un-safe to walk on. I would have taken out the El Crapo trees, but I had no say in the matter. (Like you are surprised about that?)

I could live without the brick walkway, but the El Crapo ice maker in our almost new refrigerator assumed room temperature (little play on words there) and we had to have it fixed. I still want to know how that cost \$375. El Crapo, man!

Hey guys, do you wear your jeans and shirts for a week or two? Sure you do. It takes them that long to get comfortable. You married? Yeah, you are... so forget being comfortable. Wives swoop down in the middle of the night and steal your duds and wash them. Ah, but, they can't if the washer and dryer go paws-up... so close your eyes and guess who had to buy a new washer and dryer. A thousand dollars down the drain (Get it? Drain?) It's El Crapo, man... oh yeah!

Are any of you old enough to have seen the movie *A Night To Remember* about the Titanic? You want a night to remember? I'll give you a night to remember. Wait until your dog comes in from outside around 11 PM and has had an encounter with a skunk... and she runs around the house and you can't catch her because your two legs are no match for her four. Yeah, you will remember that night for a long time... because you and your house will smell... El Crapo.

I know what you are thinking. "He's going to want us to send him money!" Well, no, but do you want to hear about the El Crapo stock market this year? I think my returns were enough to buy a Big Mac and fries. The S&P was the El&Crapo!

Turn the page over... it gets better.

OK, maybe the WHOLE year wasn't El Crapo. There were a few bright spots.

We booked a Tauck Tour on one of their riverboats to see Holland and Belgium in April. Jane always wanted to see the thousands of acres of tulips at Keukenhof, but it was not to be. There was still a lot to see on the trip and we had an especially nice time in Brussels (See our trip pix at <http://answer123.com/photos> ) And yeah, I froze my buns off!

Jane was recovered enough by September for us to fly to Florida on Delta (El Crapo) Airlines to celebrate my mother's 90th birthday. It was a nice visit and even though she was not feeling very well I know she appreciated us making the trip.

The new ice maker works really well.

I went to my 50th high school reunion this fall then to Virginia to see old friends Alice and Mayapriya and Amit Acara.

The new washer is "high-efficiency" and the new dryer is quieter and the clothes come out nice (but mine still disappear in the middle of the night.)

And the puppy is living at NorCal Aussie Rescue and loves it there... and Jane can visit him anytime she wants.

OK, OK, OK... yeah, it was an El Crapo year.

But when you have a year like this it not only makes you appreciate all the good years that came before, it makes you appreciate the hidden blessings that came in this one.

It was a broken leg and hip. But it wasn't cancer.

There were no tulips. But there were no terror attacks.

It was a broken ice maker and a busted-up walkway. But it wasn't a fire, flood or earthquake.

It was a bad business year. But it wasn't bankruptcy.

It was an El Crapo year. But no one died.

When you have an El Crapo year it makes you remember the old saying "I cried because I had no shoes... until I met a man who had no feet."

And after you've suffered a crap-storm... you realize that like all storms it eventually passes... and there are better, sunnier days ahead. And they have started. Jane is feeling well, I'm rolling out a new business service (<http://www.NewMediaCreate.com>) and we have lots of fun events to enjoy during the holidays.

As for 2016, it will be our 35th wedding anniversary so in July we are going to spend a week in Montana at the famous Triple Creek Ranch (<http://www.TripleCreekRanch.com>) enjoying a new kind of adventure.

Most importantly, as we grow older we have each other, we have Penny, the World's Best Dog, and we have Ziva, The World's Meanest Cat. We are in good health and we want for nothing.

It takes a hell of a lot more than an El Crapo year to keep us down, that's for damn sure.

So to all of you, our dear friends and family, we wish you a year filled with health, happiness and joy. (And if any of you want a slightly used El Crapo ice maker, just let us know!)

Jane, Al, Penny, and Ziva



Christmas 2015