

Beardshall Merry Christmas Letter

MS: 109 Gleneagles Drive, Hattiesburg MS 39401 (601-544-7896)
VA: 8150 Little Creek Hwy, Dublin, VA 24084 (601-402-8784)

December 30, 2024

What We Did in 2024

Events of 2024

- **Jan—March 2024** - We spent the winter months in H'burg. Elmer rode his new e-bike. Ann worked on her book: 9 out of 12 chapters finished in Part I: *Places Our Ancestors Called Home*.
- **May 2024—June 2024**—Time to return to the beautiful mountains of Southwest Virginia. We arrived in time for one of our favorite festivals: Ceres Day. We took a road trip to western PA to visit Elmer's beloved hometown of Clintonville PA. We stopped in Pittsburgh to have lunch with his siblings.
- **July 2024**—We returned to Hattiesburg to enjoy the streaming versions of the Tour de France and Olympics.
- **August 2024**—Returned to VA in mid-August.
- **October 2024**—Hurricane Helene affects our mountain area.
- **November 2024**—Returned to Hattiesburg for the winter
- **December 2024**—Celebrated our 63rd Anniversary. Bill's family here several days before Christmas.

January/April 2024 — Elmer rode his new e-bike in MS and dreamed of riding in mountains. In March we had a visit from Dana Niday from Bland. She flew into Gulfport and stayed with us for a week. We really enjoyed her visit and appreciate her making the effort to visit us. Elmer showed her the sights and the good bike routes of Hattiesburg and South Mississippi. You may remember that last year I finished a draft of the first part of our family history, *Places Called Home Trilogy*, specifically, *Book 1: Places Our Ancestors Called Home*. **This section was all about Elmer's side of the family, including the family stories of the Beardshalls, Gastgebbs, Linsleys and Grays.** I sent a link to the draft out to all that I thought might be interested. As I mentioned last year, I am not publishing a hard copy, but will supply links online as I finish sections. I welcome any and all feedback and corrections if you read it. In 2024 I completed a draft of several chapters on my side of the family (the Hardys and the Mays), but they are not ready for prime time. In the coming year, I will be working on finishing up my portion of Book 1. I will send links as they become available. Most of the research has been completed but the writing remains to be done. Stay tuned!

May—June 2024— We returned to the cabin in Virginia in late April for our 16th summer. We are very tired of traveling on the crowded interstates so we took a scenic route through eastern Alabama, into Tennessee, and ending up for the night in Sevierville. From there it is less than 200 miles to our cabin in Bland County VA. **We settled in, welcoming our “deer” friends at the cabin, and seeing our “deer” friends at different events in Bland, Ceres, and Wytheville.** One of our favorite festivals takes place the first week in May. It is called Ceres Day. Ceres is a local community that has maintained its identity through an alumni association at the former high school. There are always lots of tractors and farm equipment displays, crafts, bluegrass music and good food. During this time period, Elmer rode his e-bike for the first time in the mountains. It provided assistance in getting up the steep mountain roads. Lin came for a visit soon after we arrived. By the end of June, it was time to return to Hattiesburg to watch the 2024 Tour de France streaming on Peacock without commercials. As mentioned earlier we took a route home off the interstates. This time we went across TN, down through west Alabama into east MS and home.

July—August 2024— We were safely back in our beautiful home in Hattiesburg by July 1 to begin watching the *Tour de France*. The scenery and competition was fabulous this year. The TDF began in Florence, Italy, progressed through France and ended in Nice. Even if you have no interest in professional bike racing, just watching the tour from the helicopters, etc. on streaming TV offers a better view of Europe. The exciting part of the 2024 TDF was the performance of the G. O. A. T. aka Tadej Podagar from Slovenia. **He won 2 grand tours (TDF and Giro d'Italia), several one day races and the Road Racing World Championship.** As usual it was a very hot July in MS but we got up early, exercised by walking or biking, and were inside with a/c for the hot parts of the day. The *2024 Paris Olympics* started in late July and continued into mid-August so we stayed until they were over.

August—October 2024— After the hot Mississippi weather, we were glad to be back in the cool mountains of Southwest Virginia. In late Aug-early September we made a trip to Cherokee NC to be with our friend, Lois Queen. **Lois' husband, Bill, passed away in late June and the family met in Cherokee to hold a memorial service for his NC relatives and friends.** Bill and Lois hold a special place in our hearts since they introduced us over 60 years ago when we were all students in North and South Carolina. Shortly, after our return to the cabin, the mountainous areas of NC, VA, & TN, were struck by the after-effects of Hurricane Helene. Needless to say, this was a 100 year event, very unlikely to happen in our mountains. We expect hurricanes, tornadoes, etc in MS, but certainly not in our mountain hideaway. Our immediate area had wind and tree damage and loss of power. Bland County has very little water so there was no flooding. Areas around the New River and especially western NC were especially hard hit.

What We Did in 2024

One of the trips we took this year while in the mountains was a jaunt up North to Western PA to the Clintonville area where Elmer spent a good portion of his childhood. We met two of his former neighbors, Lucille Johnson Keith and Mary Lou Johnson Sloan for a trip down memory lane. We visited other former neighbors and classmates and had a great time viewing the sights and reminiscing about the good times they had spent together in elementary and high school. On our way to Clintonville, we stopped in **Bridgeville to have lunch with Elmer's siblings and their spouses, Sue and Pat Varriano, and Tom and Carol Beardshall.**

In June, my brother Sam, patiently took me on a trip to Tazewell County VA where our father's family roots were. First, we went to the Town of Tazewell to do some courthouse research and find the house that our great grandfather built. We also located the stained glass window at the Methodist Church that is dedicated to our 2nd great grandmother, Mattie Davidson May. We were unable to locate the house without further research. On our return trip to Bland, we stopped in Bluefield VA where our father had grown up. We later were able to find out where our great grandfather, Samuel Davidson May, built a fine home in the early 1900s. So in late October one of the last things we did during our Bland stay in 2024 was a return trip to Tazewell to view and get an inside tour of the Bowen-May House.

Since our days as volunteer at the Bland County Historical Society have come to an end, we decided to volunteer at the Wythe County Genealogical and Historical Society (WCGHA) in Wytheville. It is a Regional Center that encompasses Bland County. Hopefully, we can be of help to those who come in exploring their Bland County roots. They also had need of a database programmer for both administrative and research projects so Elmer was able to help them in that respect. We look forward to continuing this volunteer work in 2025.

We left our cabin in Virginia in late October, a little earlier than usual. We travelled yet another route on our return home to Hattiesburg, again staying off the interstates. It was, by far, the best and prettiest route we have taken, albeit a little longer by 200 miles. We traveled across KY until we were north of Nashville. From Nashville, we drove the beautiful *Natchez Trace* to a point about 100 miles south of Tupelo. It was early morning on a beautiful fall day on the Trace. From the Trace, through Meridian, we journeyed home to Hattiesburg, glad to be home for the winter.

I can't address the events of 2024 without mentioning the Presidential Election. We are thrilled that President Trump won and sincerely hope to see improvement and recovery to our institutions from the disastrous Biden years.

November—December 2024: Shortly, after our return, I had lunch with Nila Johnson, one of the first people I met when we moved to MS. She has been away from the area for many years, but recently returned to be near her daughter. We have had several delightful lunches/meetings throughout the year when I have been in Hattiesburg. We have resumed breakfast with our neighbors, Karl Langenbach, Tina and Bob Byrd. **Bill and his family came early for Christmas and left on Christmas Eve. We hadn't seen the girls for about two years.** While they were here, Amydell fixed us a delicious steak dinner to celebrate our *63rd Wedding Anniversary*. Lin and family went to the cabin for Christmas and skiing at Winter Place.

We haven't really made any plans for 2025. We will be making a trip to College Station TX in early May for Brooke's Graduation from Texas A & M University. My plans are to complete Book 1 of the trilogy: *Places Our Ancestors Called Home* and get started on Book 2: *Places We Have Called Home*. Elmer hopes to get in many bike rides and continue his Red Cross Volunteer Work.

If all goes well, we will return to Virginia in late May. If you find yourself in Hattiesburg and/or Virginia, please stop by and see us.

Beardshall Happy New Year Letter

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Grandchildren Update

Brooke Beardshall is finishing up her degree in Environmental Biology at Texas A & M. She will graduate in early May. She has worked for the past 2 years with USDA at TAMU. She is actively applying to graduate school.

Bryce Beardshall, also enrolled at Texas A & M, in the Corps of Cadets, with a major in Agricultural Economics. Bryce was inducted into the Space Force and has an ROTC Scholarship. This new branch of service holds exciting prospects for him. This past year he took a trip with the TAMU Corps of Cadets to Spain. This coming semester his major offers a course abroad in Edinburgh Scotland.

Anna Michael finished her first year at the Royal College of Veterinary Medicine (Camden Campus) in London. She is now at the Hawkshead Campus in Hertfordshire outside of London for her final 3 years.

JR Michael has been submitting the problems and solutions for math problems on AI sites on the Internet. He was recently hired by META to work in AI.

Welcome New Family Members

Great Niece: Ingrid Hubble d/o Dalton and Rachel Kennedy Hubble

Great Nephew: Archer Ian Jones s/o Dan and Korey Beardshall Jones

In Memoriam

Our nephew, Greg Hubble, died suddenly before Christmas last year. We mourn for Greg since he was such an upbeat, enthusiastic member of our family.

Hollie Ryder, our friend and neighbor for many years, died in February. We always enjoyed time spent with the Ryders and listening to Hollie's stories and accounts of their travels.

Bill Queen was Elmer's friend and colleague in the USC NROTC. Lois, his wife, and Bill always held a special place in our lives since they introduced Elmer and me.

Links to Pages of Interest:

Places Our Ancestors Called Home: Part I: Beardshalls, Gastgebbs, Linsleys, Grays

[A Trip Down Memory Lane: Our 2024 Trip to Western PA](#)

[Bland County History is Anything But Bland](#)

Winter 2024 in Hattiesburg



Pictures from Dana Niday's Visit in March



Breakfast and Conversations Between "Old Salts"



Ann Contemplating Next Chapter in Book, Camellias, and Lin Pays a Visit

Scenes from Little Creek and Surrounding Areas of Southwest Virginia



Ceres Day Scenes



Our New Volunteer Spot: WCGHA in Wytheville



Anna at Winter Place in nearby Flat Top WV this Christmas

Year in Pictures 2024—Trips



Sam in front of the Litz/May Mansion in Tazewell. Maggie May's birthplace.



Beautiful Stained Glass Window in memory of Mattie D. May Tazewell UMC.



May/Bowen House, home built by Samuel Davidson May in Tazewell



Lunch in Bridgeville with Sue and Pat Varriano and Tom and Carol Beardshall



Ann relaxes in Florida on a recent visit to see Lois Queen



We met Lucille and Mary Lou Johnson for a tour of Clintonville and surroundings.

Year in Family Pictures 2024



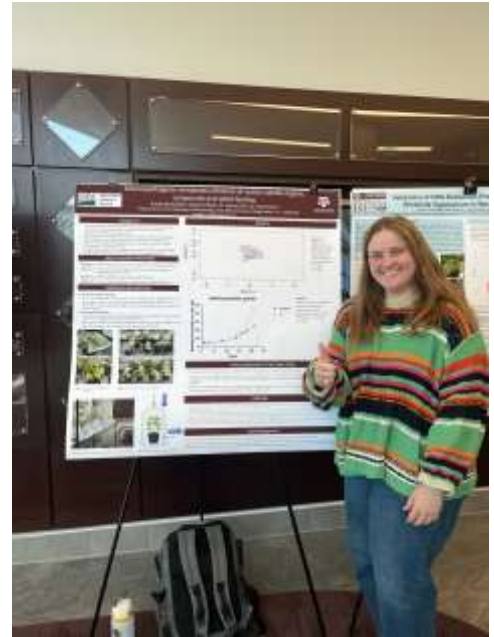
Left: Bill Beardshall Family at Lake

Right: Bill and Amydell in San Francisco



Left: Bryce with TAMU Corps of Cadets

Right: Brooke with award winning poster at TAMU



Lin and Ryan on a cold Thanksgiving Day at the Cabin



Ryan and JR on their 2nd attempt to attend a MAGA Rally



Anna with rabbit during her "small animal" rotation at vet school in London

**OUR 63rd WEDDING ANNIVERSARY
12/23/1961—12/23/24**



^a
**Our Parents
Sam & Helen Hardy
Norma and Elmer Beardshall SR**

Our Wedding Party

BLAND VIRGINIA—PLACE OF OUR WEDDING 12/23/24



Happy New Year 2025!