

As always, we love to send greetings to family and friends and pass on our annual update, hoping this finds you all well. Be ready for another romp through our last 12 months.

“Commercial Christmas” showed up around Halloween this year. Despite recent history we continue to be surprised by the march of *next* Christmas towards the day after *this* New Year, but we still hoped for focus on the right stuff more than the shopping. Especially remembering the tornado from last year, how blessed we all are, and how the families and community have and continue to rebound seems to put it all in the right perspective.

Forging on to the annual fun of jamming the year into a sheet of paper, it occurred to Keith that although he’s not on Facebook, JoAnn is, and therefore most people have already read/seen a lot of this stuff. Guess that means the Christmas letter has become some kind of anachronism, but we still enjoy doing it.

Home front news first. It’s hard to believe Megan is 10. Just yesterday she was...well, you all know how that goes. Keith and Megan just completed a FIRST Lego League season. Lots of time spent in tae kwon do (Megan is now a brown belt), horses, piano, reading, and video class. Megan’s favorite activity is still writing. No shortage of activities for Mason, now 4 (and a half, learning fractions), like tumbling, tae kwon do youngster class, skating this winter, and repeating or doing literally everything his sister shows him without regard to laws of physics or damage to property or self.

Over to the parents, Jo has increased her medical work with the vet practice, working hard on the practice management front, and has also expanded to chiropractic for horses. Plus she’s been able to ride more than normal, but still not nearly as much as she would like. Queasily typing is Keith, who has the flu at the moment (as do both kids and by the time we rewrite this JoAnn too), who is in his 19th year at PTC, 5th year working with Caterpillar, about to start his 4th year mentoring the FIRST robotics team in our town, and is (slowly) still working through tae kwon do (red belt now).

Really we should take notes on our trips and visits throughout the year to avoid the, “Was that this year or last year?” debate... but we don’t. So we just had that discussion. There were some great trips: Disney (Keith crushed the highest possible score on Buzz Lightyear), a road trip to the Atlantic and back, Colorado, Boston, Spain (work, Keith solo – he did ask Jo to go along), Germany (work, Keith solo), a special tour of the Fermilab particle accelerators (science is cool, and we forgot to mention Megan loves science), and Wisconsin Dells.

Unless you are from the Midwest you likely don’t know Wisconsin Dells. Very much like Niagara Falls (NY, not Ontario) and the Jersey shore, but they had to build the Dells without benefit of waterfall or ocean and put a lot of it indoors so it could run all winter. What a road trip: we covered more than 2,000 miles, 10 states + Canada, Keith’s parents and Aunt Lucille, the Munzipappa (there are three spellings, we picked one) family reunion, Shelly, Jeff, Paige, and Connor, friends in Maine + NH, the Atlantic Ocean, Niagara Falls, lobster rolls (so good), and Story Land (if you’re from the Midwest, that is a great NH family park) in 10 days, sleeping in 7 different towns.

Xanthan gum (which is excreted by bacteria and used to thicken food) is still part of the kid’s gluten free diet until some smart person cures celiac disease (don’t shudder, if you read your ingredient lists you’ll find it there too).

You’d think that with the two horses and cat we’d be satisfied on the animal front, but you’d be wrong. Zany JoAnn brought home another cat, a dog (Keith admits he’s always wanted a border collie), another horse since our original two are more or less un-rideable due to age and injury, and a large set of barn projects that are nearly done.

Love and prayers for everyone to have a very Merry Christmas and a most blessed New Year,

John Keith Megan Mason

P.S. If you didn’t notice, we buried a... well, puzzle isn’t the right word, but there’s at least something to try and notice in the sentences above. If you want a (possibly obscure) hint: Psalm 145. By now you’re on Google...



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