

Christmas letter 2016 + 110 days. There's a song that starts, "I'll write you a letter, tomorrow". Sounds like a theme.



We've been in the new place a year now, and it has been great. In three empty years everything you don't want is overgrown and everything you do want has rotted. None of that was a surprise, but we were surprised by how many projects we took on in year one. Too many and too boring to list them all out, but if you added up the burn piles from construction and clearing they'd have been the size of the house. Plenty more to do this year.. .and next...

All the grandparents got to work on house projects. Keith's parents had a long visit in the spring (the only reason these letters are finally getting sent is that they're here again now and mom G is stuffing envelopes) with Michele, Jeff, Paige, and Connor. Jo's parents still live in Peoria. Everyone plus many local friends helped on projects in various work parties. We cut trails into one side of the property this year including a shooting area, but unfortunately no deer for Jo's dad. We did have fun exploding pumpkins with the .50 caliber muzzle loader.

There are 21 horses living on the property (4 are ours). We have rented the use of the facility to folks who operate a boarding business and in the deal take care of ours so we can actually ride once in a while.

Jo's still a partner at Meadowbrook, where the story of the year is that we built a second vet clinic. The current building was designed for 2 vets... however we have 6. So we're quadrupling our facility size. It's an immense project that has been a full time job on top of Jo's regular full time job. The contractor's prediction was to be done in December. Keith's prediction was March. March was right. We had 700+ people at the open house when we opened.

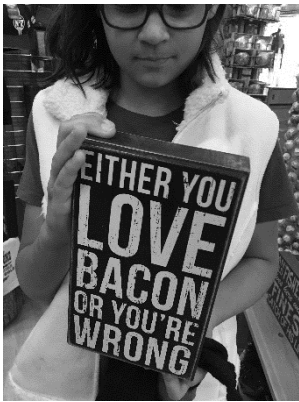


Keith is still at PTC (over 21 years now), but in another new role (as PTC is reinventing itself to lead IOT and Augmented Reality for product development companies). As to what he's doing... think about any time you've had an appliance break and how painful the process is to get it repaired. Now extend that to products of any scale, like, say, the US Air Force. PTC does a lot of work helping our customers design, sell, connect, operate, and service their products after they're designed and shipped. Keith's job is all the consulting strategy for that kind of work. That's boring, so moving on. On top of Jo's full time job and the construction project, she's had to deal with Keith being back to worldwide travel (France, Germany, Denmark, India, China, Hong Kong, and Japan – amazing coincidence that Lori Wilson was in Tokyo and able to meet up). Advice: 3-weeks away from home starting the Sunday after Thanksgiving is a bad plan with long-lasting repercussions. Jo is a hero.



Stealing a very good idea from the Strombergs, here is what the kids have to say this year [both kids had their part done on time]:

**Megan says:** "This year I'm in sixth grade. I'm at a new school (called Anew School, really), which I really like. I learned how to mow this year. At one point I rode the lawnmower up the guy wire of the telephone pole. It was an accident. I visited Nonna and Grandpa and Aunt Debbie and Uncle Rob for a lot of the summer and it was great.



I'm also doing gymnastics this year, where I continually almost break my bones one way or another. At one point I forgot what we were doing as I was running up to do vaulting, so I stumbled onto the bouncy thing and landed sprawled on my stomach. Fun times.

I also like math a little bit better this year (Even though I'm still bad at it). I'm working on fractions and multiplication. And to think I used to think that fractions were easy...

I still read and do art a lot. I can read and draw for hours and hours. I'm also working on piano. I can do that for a long time, too [Megan hasn't yet figured out that music is math]. There are a few things that I can focus on. A few (No, I'm not completely focused on writing this letter). I still ride the horses and am still in tae kwon do (red belt)."

**Mason talks and we type verbatim:** "Have a Merry Christmas. And a Happy New Year. Have a very jolly Christmas.

Wait, that doesn't make sense anyway, so don't write that [we ignored him]. [now singing] We wish you a Merry Christmas, we wish you a Merry Christmas, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. OK dad, what should I write now? Hi to Santa. Wait, now can I type? OK, you tell me what to spell... no, / type... [Mason types, after asking Alexa how to spell "awesome"] mason awesome. I love megan and dad and mom!!!! [about 300 more exclamation points were deleted] I love snow. I love [Mason runs to calendar to learn how to spell the next word, one letter at a time] Christmas."



We visited New Hampshire (Karams), New Berlin (Garguiolos), Lake Tahoe (gorgeous), and Steamboat (awesome) in 2016. Keith was able to visit Uncle Cos in California back in January. Great trips.

Love to all – Jo, Keith, Megan, Mason + 4 cats, 1 dog, and 4 horses

P.S. The puzzle in last year's letter was a Vigenère cipher explaining that the previous year's letter was an alphabetic acrostic. We've know you all keep these letters, possibly framed with the family photographs, so there should be no problem referring back to 2014 and 2015.

P.P.S. Bet: There will be flying taxis or flying Ubers before you get 2 more of these letters. Any takers?



So glad Tahoe beaches are all pebbles and not sand. Ow.

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Now we've lived, it's the world's largest pencil!