

Every year we say we're going to write down stuff to remember for the Christmas letter and get it out early. Every year we end up relying on bad memory (Keith thinks Jo is talking about him, but he can't remember) to unload all the doings of the past year on you. Dear reader, this year is no exception. We hope we got it all.

In recent news, the kid's Montessori school ran into the problem of too much work for too little money and decided to close. We had two weeks this month to find them new schools for January. The kids are taking better than we are.

Megan (now 14) has had a headache since September... 2017. With other symptoms popping up and disappearing in ways that have stumped a herd of doctors from Peoria to Mayo. It's autoimmune something (our diagnosis). Megan has kept up piano, ukulele, voice, a little riding, writing, various forms of art, and started in the church choir, but she's certainly had a rough go of it this past year. We have a couple new leads and are probably heading back up to the Mayo clinic shortly. Megan could use your prayers to help get this sorted.



From all this hospital time we have been able to see how much better veterinarians are at customer service than human medicine. We'd need pages to write out the whole rant, just assume you read something eloquent and save the time.

Next year Megan is off to high school. If Megan had her 'druthers, "off" would mean boarding school. Yes, at 13 she announced she wanted to go away for high school. Not surprised, but also not prepared. We explained she had two problems to solve: getting accepted and paying for it. Unless we hold this letter until Easter (not without precedent) you're just going to have to wait to see. The odds are very long (more so on paying for it than getting in).



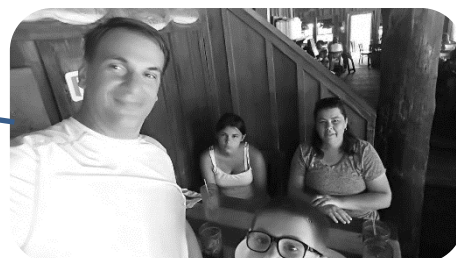
Mason (now 8) is in third grade and a die-hard Cubs and Bears fan (Keith failed, although he can live with the Cubs). He's graduated to making his own lunches and doing his own laundry will be next. Then, robots. Of course he only wants to build battle bots, but that isn't the end of the world. Both kids want to build a hovercraft to roam around the farm. No idea where that idea came from. Mason is still into Fortnite.

First at bat,
first hit

In some ways the kid's interests are right out of the 1950s and Leave it to Beaver. Mason is all sports (soccer passed, baseball and basketball now on top), video games, and rough and tumble. Mason broke his finger at basketball recently although he finished practice and it was the next day before we realized. Megan is all music, art, horses, singing, reading, and writing. On the other hand, Megan wants to be an ER doctor, loves science, and likes to sit in the tree stand whereas Mason has declared he wants to be a chef mostly (but also a part time engineer). It will sort itself out.

The family had trips to So Cal last winter (w/ M&D G and Uncle Cos), Nashville and Ft. Walton Beach in late summer (pre-hurricane), and New Hampshire (at Shelly and Jeff's) this fall. It also distressed us to find that both grandmothers must have spent the entire year dodging photographs because we have no recent shots with either one.

This is the best family shot we got
at the beach? Pathetic.



Jo's parents just celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary and Keith's parents have theirs in a couple weeks. 13 of us (and counting?) are heading off to Alaska next July to celebrate. Reducing that trip to a sentence or two in next year's letter will be fun. Keith's parents visited Illinois for two long stretches this spring and summer, and while here they put a big dent in getting the exercise room project done and helping with the kids. Jo's dad works a lot on barn projects and both help with the kids a lot. John also spent a good amount of time in his tree stand being mocked by deer that

showed up every night on the field camera but never once during the day.

Keith helped start and mentor another FIRST robotics team this year, this one based in our barn party room. We still can't get either of kid to care. Rookie team, but currently top ten in the state out of a couple hundred teams. Keith is slowly building a media room in the basement and working on barn projects too. It's hard to count, but his current job at PTC is something like the 15th different role in the 23+ years he's been there. After limping around for the last 10 years, Keith finally found a doctor willing to hack off his Achilles tendon, grind off an inch (yes, that much) of extra bone, slap on some hardware, and sew it all back together. The surgeon was surprised that Keith quizzed her on who made the hardware (Arthrex, a PTC customer, so all is well). 10 weeks of recovery and weight gain are half way done.



Megan learning to suture in mini med school

Jo is a partner at Meadowbrook Vet where the big new clinic is almost 2 years old and is still doing horse chiropractic work on the side. This year has had more time to train and ride horses (currently 4 of them) than the last few. There wasn't any big horse trip, but a few smaller ones for riding and a little showing. Jo has been working on the 3-year-old horse to learn roping and working with cows. The cows really don't have much to fear in terms of getting caught yet. By next year's letter that will be different. There are now 3 cats and still the 2 dogs. The barn cat is doing a wonderful job of making friends with baby mice. We think they want to grow up together.

Jo and Jagger (Jo has the hat)



We have been in the same house for more than 3 years! It's been 10+ years and four houses since that was last true.

We knocked some big projects off the list this past summer which means that the three-year plan for the property renovation remains exactly on track to finish in 10 years.

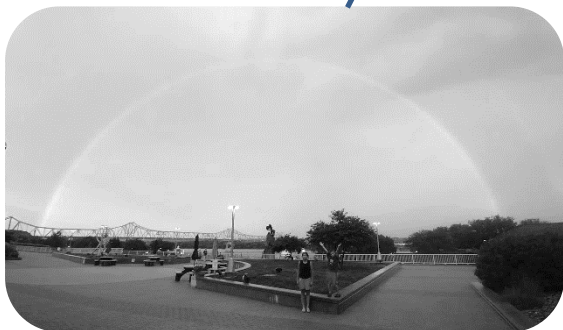
Trying to figure out if we can run the property on solar. More on that next year.



Mason, Connor, and Grandpa on a submarine

Megan and Poppy off to hunt (and to see exactly zero deer)

This is a super impressive double rainbow picture... in the color version



That's a wrap. We always wonder how many people read this all the way to the end. Merry Christmas. Happy and healthy 2019. Visit Illinois, we've got room!

Love,

Keith, Jo, Megan, and Mason
and Tegan, B, Luna, Anakin, Jack, Kimber, Clark, Apple, and Jagger