

20th Anniversary Edition

That's right, this is the 20th time we've forced you through this letter. Clearly none of you are paying attention to the modern anniversary gift list, or we would have received a lot more platinum. Or any. At all. The traditional gift is china, but seriously, have you met us? Tell you what, it takes about 5 catalytic converters to steal an ounce of platinum. Get that in the mail to us and we'll forgive your oversight.

Over 20 years the stories and the people have of course changed. Sometimes it's prosaic because we lost or found an address, sometimes it's sad when we've lost someone, but more often it's happy as we've added friends and family. No matter the year, we always look forward to this connection and you're all especially in our thoughts at Christmas.

Last year, while you were racing through Episode 19, we were in Bretton Woods, NH with Keith's parents, sister, brother-in-law, and the kids for a week of skiing and (bad) snowboarding. Funny thing happened. We walk into the rental condo and mostly there's no condo. Like floors. Kitchen. Bathrooms. A locking outside door. Things you will definitely miss in a condo. Kudos to Gary Plotkin and his family for somehow making room for all of us at their place in case we needed it, but within an hour we were blessed enough to find a house. An hour and a half of shoveling and moving in later and the bar was set up. Great week. We saw Gary and Dan plus their kids, who witnessed Keith most likely break his tailbone trying to snowboard for the first (and last) time at 52.



Both sets of parents celebrated their 53rd wedding anniversaries this year. Congrats to all. John and Judy are in Brimfield, near Keith and Jo and enjoying being back in a house vs. the senior apartment. John spent a lot of time on projects around the farm, and both John and Judy help with the kids and everything locally. Frank and Michele are in Raymond, NH, near Shelly and Jeff and their kids, and came out to visit the farm for about a month on a multi-state swing through Illinois and Florida before heading home.

Megan is 18 now. We had a great weekend in Chicago to celebrate, although the planned surprise of the family traveling in was botched by demon CoVID. As we type this, Megan has 5 days of high school left. Read that again. Yup. She was so far ahead in her first three years, that her senior year consists of classes every other day only through December. Megan is working on a life plan, but it won't be direct to college. Internships, a job working with horses, something to help her pay her upcoming rent bill (not kidding, Megan). Rewind to the first part of the year, however, and Megan spent it unable to eat without getting sick. Early on, Megan's service dog trainer correctly predicted the problem. Then it took 9 months to convince the doctors to listen to the dog trainer. Once we did, Megan had a surgery done by a great local surgeon and a surgical nurse lead that we happen to know through baseball, horse riding, and mutual local friends and that was solved. So hallelujah. The headaches finally have a medicine that is managing them fairly well, although not perfectly. The joint pain is ongoing. There may or may not be another syndrome that needs a surgery, that's TBD. It's nice for Megan to have something that was actually fixable. The kid deserved a couple wins. Megan completed training Twix (the Shepherd) for gluten detection and physical support and has been taking her to school. That's a first for the school, as is the December graduation (with another person who went to Montessori school with Megan... hmmm... maybe there's something to that.)



Mason is 12, still spends most of his time in the house running around half naked (the trail of clothes from the door to wherever he plops himself down is maddening, but predictable) and is still enjoying baseball, still doing robotics (interest

waning), and on-line games/VR with friends (and sometimes random “friends of neighbor’s uncle” that we need to boot). After Keith’s Uncle Cos passed away we kept his golf clubs and Mason wants to learn, so the clubs will be adjusted for Mason and we think Cos will be very happy with that. We can whack balls a few hundred yards at the house, so practice is easy. Until we run out of free junk balls. Mason saw his first MLB game when we took him to the Cubs / Cardinals game on a perfect day this summer with a friend. Mason is in his last year of the junior robotics team. He’s said he isn’t interested in continuing; we’ll see how that goes. We hosted his entire grade (remember, small school) at our house with another family over the summer, in what we think will now be an annual tradition.



Jo and Megan are both still competitively riding and doing very well. The picture is just a fraction of stuff they won. This year was a combination of Reining (if you watch Yellowstone or The Last Cowboy, you’ve seen it and some of the people they occasionally ride against – they’re the ones who can’t act) and Ranch Horse work (part of the story of where your steaks come from). This time of year, they are planning what the whole next summer of shows and trips will look like. We avoided a 10-day trip down to Ocala in July. Not sure if that will happen again this year or not, but at

least the entire complex is air conditioned. The alternative is probably death. Jo has Ace and Wyatt, the youngster. Megan still has Juice who does well but can be grumpy. We *never* pick on Megan about their personality match.

Keith dealt with the first world problem of working back up the airline status chain. Traveling still stinks. Being places is still great. Work trips were scattered domestically plus one in Tijuana. In Tijuana we (in daylight) walked (past many, many heavily armed guards) to a restaurant suggested by an Uber driver. Turned out to be one of the best restaurant meals Keith has had. Later we learned Anthony Bourdain recommended that restaurant over every single restaurant in San Diego. In another trip Keith surprised Connor and Paige (and his parents) by showing up for their birthdays in NH.

The family took a trip to California around a couple work events for Keith. We rented a place in the Oakland hills on top of a ridge and traveled around to Big Sur, saw redwoods, got sandblasted and had a goodbye for Uncle Cost at Pfeiffer Beach, drank wine. Great time. Keith and Jo also took a long weekend to Cancun just to chill. Oh, and because it was our 25th wedding anniversary this year. It is so hard to sit in perfect weather and have people bring you drinks and food all the time.



Keith’s been making some trips back to his fraternity house in Troy, NY, where he’s been working on restoration projects for the 1890s mansion. If you’ve seen the HBO show “The Gilded Age” the house is in it (lawyer’s office interior and Clara Barton’s exterior). It will be in season 2 as well. Another spring trip had about 25 college friends and a large reunion had over 100 (technically from across a lot of decades). Gary (of no-condo fame) and Dan came to visit the farm in May. Horses were ridden, a dam was built (really), beer was drunk, a music festival was festavaled and a good time was had by all.

Keith and Jo are still volunteering with CASA advocates. Keith is volunteering with Defy Ventures. And learning about Venture Capital, you know, for fun. Still working with two FIRST robotics middle and high school teams.

Projects! You all can’t wait to hear about projects. This was a big year. After 7 years... Keith still doesn’t quite have a workshop, but it is closer than ever. Heat and lights! Not one, but two working outlets! It will be a real shop by Episode 21 (which is probably going to be on line vs. printed). We converted one barn with a complete exterior and interior redo, working towards an in-law apartment. We put up about 300 feet of berm and plantings as the start of a multi-year exterior living space project.

Well, you’ve wasted another perfectly good hour listening to Car Talk... no, that’s not us. Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukah, Happy Kwanza. Love Keith, Jo, Megan (time to start writing your own cards, Megan), and Mason