

Hello All!

One of my high school friends sent me her annual Christmas letter while I was in the midst of feeling sorry for myself. I decided to review the year in an effort to convince myself that my life does not suck, even though a very important part of it is missing (Jonathan of course). So with slight modifications, here it is. By the end of it I was grateful for the gift of life and family. However, it took awhile.

We try to stay busy, and are pretty much successful. I am my father's child and we do travel a lot. I am still working as a paralegal for a very nice family lawyer who allows me to take off when I need or want to. So Terry and I spent our Thanksgiving month cruising to Hawaii, attending lectures about the culture, admiring the beautiful sunsets, enjoying the entertainment and eating way too much food. We are blessed with friends (and grandchildren - although they were not on this trip) who like to travel too.



Lake Havasu



Madison at Restland



Sunrise Flight



We started 2018 in Lake Havasu, flying in and out of LA, visiting Mom and Dad at Rose Hills, renting a car and driving. I am never happier than when I get a chance to fly, preferably in a window seat, taking pictures of the magnificent beauty of the skies. Even better when we luck out and get a sunrise or sunset flight.. I feel closer to God, and to Jon then.

We visited Jon at Restland with his daughter Madison when we got back. After dropping her at the airport for her flight back to Santa Fe Texas I managed to total the Nissan. It was raining. Terry said ‘I don’t think she is going to stop’. Sure enough, she didn’t, the car was t-boned. Terry was transported to the hospital for a scrape on his arm. It may have triggered his afib. However we were still alive, even if our car was not.



In February we took the twins (Maddox and Tristan) to East Texas to our time share, The Villages, visiting the Center for Earth & Space Education. Got to see a helicopter land right outside the door and watched a space movie full of the celestial beings: moons, planets and stars. Tyler isn’t as small as some of the towns I have lived in, but it has that small town feel. Watched movies, ate Mexican food and drank Starbucks flat whites, an update to the traditional coffee shops of the past.

In March over spring break we took Jon’s brother, Uncle Nick, along with Maddox, Madison and Tristan (Jon’s children) on their first ever cruise on the Royal Caribbean out of Galveston. Our first family meal was at a seaside restaurant in Galveston.



It was also their first time in Mexico and their first time climbing a Mayan ruin, holding a monkey and riding in a submarine. They had a first breakfast with Shrek, learned to be flowriders; enjoyed live shows and hung out at the onboard kid’s club. The boys especially enjoyed tasting all the different foods offered at dinner. Madison pretty much stuck to chicken at every meal. Unless of course

chocolate was involved. Johnny Rockets on the top deck, was perfect for late night shakes and hamburgers. Definitely no shortage of food.



Roatan



Cool Submarine Ride



Climbing ruins at Quintana Ro



Late night at Johnny Rockets aboard the Royal Carribean.

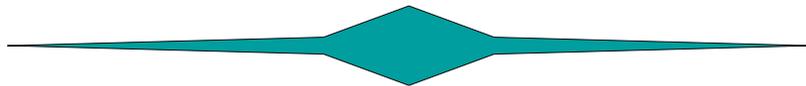
One last stop:
SBW was always with Jon



Late March we escaped to nearby Granbury, a rather quaint smaller town by the lake with multiple entertainment venues. We saw an Elvis look alike at Granbury Live and wandered around the historic haunted homes.



The next weekend we took a roadtrip to Cherokee Village Arkansas where Brother Bob lives in his \$16,000 bargain. He and his wife retired there. She was our age and had fought a long battle with breast cancer that eventually migrated to her brain. Marlene died shortly after Jon. Brother Bob lives alone with his two friends (dogs) so Terry and I wanted to make sure he was okay. I can't believe he will be 80 this coming May. We spent a night in Little Rock on the way up. Bob took us on a tour of his new homeland wanting to convince us that it was civilized.. Ate at a restaurant with a beautiful view. Assured ourselves he was doing pretty well even though he was all alone. Encouraged him to drive south, confident he would not do it.





Sydney's cast photo



Advisor to the star



Kelly, Maddox, Tristan in the Audience

In April we enjoyed watching Sydney's first play. SYD is about 10 months older than Madison. Son Steve and his former wife split custody and are doing a great job of raising a well balanced artistic lady.

We also returned to Granbury with the twins to see Elvis look alike, the blue bonnets and wildflowers dotting Texas highways courtesy of Barbara Bush, and let the kids run wild at Dinosaur Valley State Park where you can view actual pre-historic Dinosaur tracks. The highlight of that was the trail they took me on (Terry not up to navigating the trail). As it turns out neither was I. They left me by the river and scaled the rocks of what looked like to my old eyes a cliff. I had to find my own way back. Oh to be 10 again. And since we were close we had to visit Ft Wolters, in Mineral Wells Texas, now an industrial park, but back in the 60's was Terry's home base for training and his eventual departure point for Vietnam in 65. He gave us the tour of the now defunct fort, pointed out his favorite spots.



In May we flew to Minneapolis and drove to Cloquet for Marlene's funeral and had a mini family reunion. You know you are old when your family reunions occur during funerals. While there Bob showed us his old stomping grounds, including Frank Lloyd Wright's only gas station. Some of us went up to Duluth. Terry and I had a beautiful place at Beacon's Pointe on the lake.



John and Lila invited us to their grandkids karate tournament and the local music festival in a building decorated with some absolutely fabulous paintings done by Leah Yellowbird.

Terry, Pat, Maury, Jan, Anne, Lila, Bob, John

Jon's headstone finally arrived. It had taken nine months, but it was beautiful. We provided the photos and the design. It was beautiful and sad. It breaks our heart, of course. Over memorial day we went to an AA conference in Richardson. I have been sober since 1995, which is a good thing. I'm sure I would not have made it through the last year if I was still drinking.

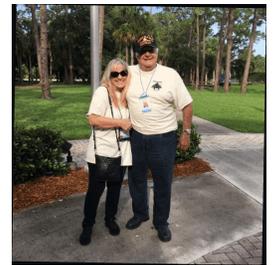


Terry and I visited our friend's grave in Arlington National Cemetery. Ray, who was the first person to show me around at my 30 year job with the City of Dallas, died in June shortly before Jon. He was Terry's best friend and a comrade in arms. They both served in Vietnam. He had a lot of health problems, but his love of alcohol was not helping any. He was a mean drunk to the people who lived with him, but he was always nice to me and Terry. Terry took him on some of his last trips to visit his veteran buddies. During the last year he was diagnosed with agent orange, but by then it was too late to do much for him.



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In June we flew to Ft. Lauderdale, for Terry's ASA reunion - Old Spooks and Spies in West Palm Beach. Nick, who lives in Orlando, came down to visit with us while we were there. He introduced us to Havana Cuban food, one of his favorites. Who knew?



One of our organized activities was to the Navy Seal Museum at Pepper Beach State Recreation Area. Nick loved it. He loves history. He is remarkably like my dad in some ways. We also went to The Acreage in St. Lucie - an out of the way oddity featuring a collection of artifacts, antiques and military memories. The afternoon ended with the launching of a coconut. We spent time with our friends John and Marcia, who we met at ASA years ago. The reunion ends with a flag ceremony in a local historic site (Armed Forces Park/Lake Lytal Park), old guys marching in formation, saluting the flag and laying a wreath for those who have gone on before them.



Terry, John, Nick



The Only Easy Day was Yesterday (Museum)



The Acreage



John and Marcia

Then Nick, Terry and I went to The Norton Gallery in West Palm Beach to enjoy the wonderful paintings, artwork and sculpture and wandered around Palm Beach Atlantic University. Just made me want to enroll in school again.

Later that month we took the Tristan and Madison (Maddox was experiencing an eczema outbreak) to Amarillo to see the Palo Duro Canyon, enjoy a barbecue dinner and take in the spectacular live play set against the backdrop of the desert cliffs with live horses and firework ending the show. Couldn't miss the 11 Cadillacs or so stuck in the dirt by the side of the freeway, attracting quite a crowd of people more than willing to use their spray paint to make them even more vivid. Followed by a stop at a Huge Pair of Legs inspired by a similar set in the Egyptian desert. Followed by a visit to the Science Museum and the Helium Time Columns in the Helium Capital of the World (Amarillo) where the kids watched a real helicopter land right outside the door.



Cadillac row above
Pre show below



Quahnah Room



Waiting for the show

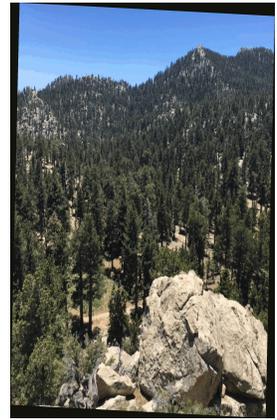


Big Legs



End of June the MMT (Madison, Maddox and Tristan) flew to Los Angeles International Airport, rented a car and drove to Palm Springs, toured the Windmill Farm, visited with Terry's sister Cherie in Huntington Beach, quick trip (however nothing in LA is quick) to the Grove and Hollywood Boulevard, taking a tour of the sites with Cherie and her daughter Kembra. Watched the 4th of July fireworks in Palm Springs and visited the local art museum. Our final adventure was a trip on the aerial tramway to San Jacinto Park on the top of the mountain. Loved the cooler weather. Madison and I took a walk on the wild side, getting slightly lost in the woods but finally found our way back to the museum. On the way to the airport we went to Nixon's Presidential Museum.





Skull from Mexico Tour



Terry plans all our adventures. He wanted to make sure that Jon's kids got to go on the vacations that Jon would have provided. He had exchanged for a timeshare in Brownsville. I do take a lot of time off work, but somehow we have to pay for these excursions. So on this one I was only there to help him drive down to Brownsville, flying back to Dallas to work. They had a good time without me, especially appreciated the escorted tour across our troubled border with Mexico.. When I flew back we spent the day at South Padre Island and the night at the American Idol Concert in McAllen.



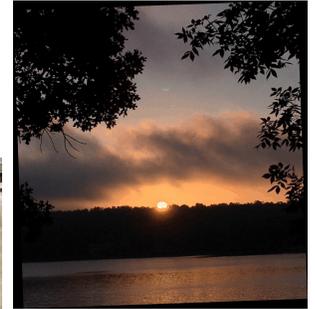
Their final trip was to Milwaukee with me as a driver/helper on the way up, flying back to work and then flying back to Milwaukee for the journey home. Terry's family is in Milwaukee so they got to see cousins, Aunt Linda, Uncle Bob, went swimming in a lake, went to the Wisconsin State Fair. We got a separate place. My only requirement was to have coffee at Alterras by Lake Michigan



Included was a stop over at Branson. Branson is another one of our timeshare resorts, so we could spend the night there for free. Well not actually free, but you know what I mean. The kids got to see the strip and race cars on one of the racetracks on 76. From my point of view I got a couple of flights for sky watching from my window seat..



Over labor day we met Brother John and wife Lila at Horseshoe Bend, a RCI resort about 30 minutes from Bob's. We saw more of the quaint little town of Hardy, went back to Biggers for a great lunch, enjoyed shows at the resort (Bob came over), discussed books and went to Bob's church on Sunday. They have a grief support group which has been a big help to him. He also hooked me up with griefshare emails that come each morning. Some more relevant than others.



Beautiful Vistas

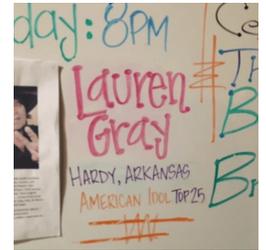
Bobs Constant Companion
His other dog more elusive

Memorial Bricks
Family Members

The Siblings

Biggers Bed and Breakfast

They had entertainment shows at the resort. The most interesting was Hardy's own Lauren Gray who was in the top 25 for the Idol. The next morning she was our waitress at Biggers. Big Voice. Sweet Girl



We were supposed to work the State Fair of Texas in September in Guest Relations. We, had completed the training. Terry worked one day and felt terrible at the end of it. We spent the week visiting doctors. We saw his heart doctor who said he was in AFIB. I mentioned that he had been through the torture for sleep apnea. They told us he quit breathing 73 times a night. Although he qualified for a sleep apnea machine, he had not received it. I was determined that he would. So I started to make a pest of myself. He finally got it on October 11th. He wears the mask at night and takes great pride in achieving 100%. I went to the training with him. It has made a lot of difference in his sleep patterns. We did both quit working at the State Fair however. He was relieved. I was a little disappointed, but I'd rather have a husband.



On the 13th we ventured to Granbury yet again to watch Beginnings - Tribute to Chicago at the Granbury Opera House. They were great. The 2nd show with Paulette Carson of Highway 101 was cancelled for unknown reasons. I really didn't know Carson or Highway 101, so it was not a problem for me. I just enjoyed walking around Granbury.

We did actually get together for dinner with Sons Steve and Mike, wives Melissa and Michelle, and respective children Sydney and Matthew. Sydney's birthday was the 26th

of October so it was an early celebration. Although they are in the same metroplex, we do not see much of them. Steve was upset but would not say why, claimed everything was okay. It may have been that one of their dogs, who they were very fond of, had some kind of problem which required he eat in a special chair, sitting upright, or he would not live. We talked about a joint family vacation in 2020.

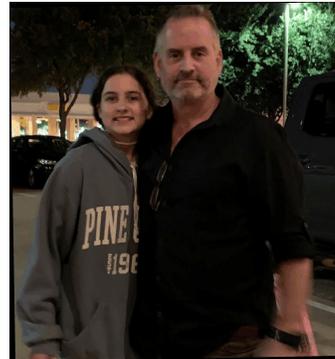
>>SYD and Matt



Mike & SYD



Pat & SYD



SYD and Father Steve

Which brings us to the Hawaiian cruise. We had a wonderful time with our four friends, 6 days of cruise, 6 days visiting 5 islands, 6 days back. For Thanksgiving dinner we had a luau celebrating five of the islands of Polynesia on the beach at Lahaina.. Learned a lot. Forgot most of it. But enjoyed every minute. We were on the inaugural voyage of the Eurodam (Copenhagen, Norway, Britain, Scotland, Sweden, St. Petersburg), which 10 years later took us to Hawaii. We stayed in the same room, rear of the ship with a wrap around deck. Four of our City friends/coworkers went with us.

We were home for Christmas. Even decorated some. Madison will be with us for part of the time. The twins came over for a trip to Marshall Texas where they learned to ice skate, took a sleigh ride and drank copious cups of chocolate. We had a Christmas Eve lunch with Mike and Steve and families

New Years we flew to Florida to visit with Nick and wife Patricia and her daughter Camila. The four of us are going to Savannah. Terry had visited Nick earlier to see his other brother from a different mother, one of Jon's best friends who had joined the army, and they went through Savannah. Both were sure I would love it. They were right. The proof is on facebook..

Although you wouldn't know it by our itinerary it has been a hard year. We think of Jon every day. Grief takes us unexpectedly to places we would rather not go. We are plagued with thinking there must be something we should have done while simultaneously knowing that there is likely nothing more we could have done. Committed to filling Jon's shoes at least partially, for his kids so the grief of losing a father does not extend to also losing their grandparents.

We have lived a long time. Either of us would have gladly given our life for Jon's. Neither of us can bear the fact that he is not with us. That he will never see his children grow up, marry, have productive lives. We hope he is in heaven watching his children and guiding them from afar, wiser in that part of the world than he was on this side. We can only hope to see him someday soon. We can't last that much longer.

Here's to an even better 2019!