



SEASON'S GREETINGS FROM KIM, DAN AND SARAH

Volume 22

2016 Year in Review

Merry Hanukkah, Happy Christmas, and a More Than Pleasant New Year!!!

Despite having a lot of really nice moments (some to be highlighted in this review), 2016 is not going down as a favorite. Any year that ends with the election of Donald Trump is problematic at best. For the few of you reading this who actually wanted this outcome, I sincerely hope you are proved right even if it is at the expense of me losing all faith in my ability to reason. I'd rather have a thriving country, improved world affairs, and a restored appreciation of the electorate than the comfort of trusting my intellect.

Okay, enough of contemplating macro-politics. Let's return to the minutia of the lives of the three most important people in the world to us three: the three of us.

LOWLIGHTS

I entered 2016 with the belief that an anti-intellectual, areligious (which I highly respect under normal circumstances), compulsively lying reality star with no political or military experience, and a history of sexual harassment and racism, had no chance of being elected commander in chief. I was clearly wrong about that. But it wasn't my only misjudgment. I also was under the false belief that my bones were relatively unbreakable based on my freakishly dense bones as reported years ago. Apparently, being in the top 1% of bone density doesn't prevent one from breaking his metacarpal in his hand after a fluke slip on a routine softball play. Even after the event and immense pain and swelling, I didn't accept it as a possibility and continued to live my life in denial for a week before finally getting it checked out by a doctor, only to learn of my fracture. So for a month, my hand was jailed in a cast for a crime it didn't commit and I had to work and live with the fiberglass monstrosity and an ever-growing stench made worse by the summer heat. The only upside is that I now have a better appreciation of my right hand and I grew a little more ambidextrous out of necessity. Plus, sometimes it's good to spice things up in the bedroom or with myself. It was like taking on a new, more awkward self-lover, who now still regularly makes visits.

Another hypothesis shattered was that our family would never be a victim of crime as long as we lived in one of the most statistically safe (and boring) areas of San Diego. Not long after my cast was removed, our cookie-cutter track home on Springside Road was burglarized while Kim and I were at work and Sarah was at school. The police suggested that the intruders were probably in the house for less than five minutes and made a beeline to find jewelry. Evidence of that was they didn't even take things like Sarah's iPad, which they had to have passed by. Our first reaction was that the trick was on the burglars since Kim was wearing her wedding ring and she doesn't have a particularly impressive jewelry collection. But the reality turned out to be that there were several thousands of dollars worth of pieces, including diamond earrings I bought Kim for our 10th anniversary and, worse yet, family heirlooms. So, even after recouping some of the cost via insurance, it was a real bummer. The only thing good to come out of this was that the evening of the break-in, we sent Sarah to sleep over at a friend's house to take her mind off the scariness of the situation and Kim and I waited until about 10:30 p.m. for the police to arrive. That gave us time to stream Deadpool, which we found surprisingly entertaining. Clearly it would be overstated to call that a silver lining. So let's call it an aluminum sheathing.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Most of the year wasn't nearly as bad as the lowlights outlined. We continue to be aware that we have a relatively charmed life and even when there are extended moments of melancholy, it is clear that we objectively should be happier.

By the Numbers

Trader Joe's black bean and jack cheese burritos consumed by me: approx. 325

Avocados consumed by me: approx. 600

Money spent on these 2 items: approx. \$1500

Years left in my life if they find out that avocados or bean and cheese burritos are dangerous: 5 to 10

Ages at the end of the year: Sarah, 11; Kim and me, 47
Years married: 21

of softball games won by my team over the two seasons in 2016: 5, (losses: 18)

Years at my Job JCC: 11;
Year's at Scripps for Kim, 2.5

As I am composing this sentence, it's already January 2, making this the tardiest review in the two-plus decades it has been penned. Thus, for no reason other than trying to get this out before we get deeper into the year, the remainder of this will be written in bullet points.

- Outside of the results of the presidential election, I consider this the year of Hamilton. Sarah discovered the music via her theater friends before she convinced me and Kim to play it. It turns out all three of us fell in love quickly with this incredible soundtrack. Despite not being partial to hip-hop, it was a revelation how compelling we found it. Soon after, Kim and I listened to and were enthralled by the 34 hour Audible book version of Alexander Hamilton written by Ron Chernow, Lin Manuel Miranda's inspiration. This fall, we also attended "Hamiltunes" which consisted of the entire soundtrack being performed by audience members who come on stage to perform the vocals of the song with some random improvisation of dancing/acting. Sarah was among this group and she received accolades as James Madison. We will be in New York this April and hope to see the real deal if life continues to treat us unfairly well and a friend's father is able to hook us up with face value seats.
- We took a week-long family trip to Anchorage, Alaska (no, it wasn't a cruise, which apparently, based on getting that question any time we mention this trip, is the only reasonable manner to travel). Instead, we unreasonably stayed mainly on land in Alaska and had a series of day trips where we got to see a significant swath of the largest but least populated state in the union that included glacier walking, day cruising, whitewater rafting, ziplining, and going on a tiny prop plane over glaciers through a rain storm with a staunch Republican senior citizen who looked to be one mooseburger away from a heart attack. Revelations from the trip included: confirming Alaska is beautiful, seeing a lot of wildlife is not a given, moose are dumb, T-Mobile surprisingly gets decent reception in Anchorage and neighboring cities, and it's cool to have the sun out at midnight.
- Other outings included Nor Cal and Las Vegas with my brother and his family. They were too short (the trips, not the people), but very enjoyable.
- Ernestine the guinea pig continues to live and squeak despite no photo included on our holiday card. This is not a cover up.
- We saw dozens of plays and musicals, mostly at the Old Globe and was lucky enough to see Billy Joel at Petco Park with a bunch of unusually entertaining individuals.
- Kim joined Rotary in her quest for personal development and to give back to society. I decided to play even more Words with Friends with my free time. Still as spouse of a world-improving Rotarian, I found myself assisting in good-doing a couple of times, which included pouring beer for a big fundraiser, and helping to paint a dilapidated school in Ensenada, Mexico. The latter was a particularly rewarding experience for all three of us and included less altruistic enjoyment including being with good friends and having the evening to relax and explore.
- Kim's interests weren't totally selfless in 2016. Enough time had passed since the interior remodeling that Kim felt compelled to expand to the outside. To her defense, the front and backyards were looking pretty rough, but I would have still have preferred logging into Union Bank to see a robust balance than the improved outdoor aesthetic. But like I noted with the last project, succumbing to Kim's wishes still was cheaper than divorce. To ensure we broke all prior spending records, just after the project culminated, we invested in a brand new Toyota Camry for Kim. To her credit, she endured lack of air conditioning and no car stereo before reaching this point, and through a lot of effort exerted by her (and more than I preferred my me), the front and backyard turned out well.
- This was Sarah's best year yet. She thrived, and mainly was a real joy to parent. Most recently, Sarah finally learned how to ride a bike and now is living the lyrics of Queen's Bicycle Race as she wants to ride her bicycle where she likes. Her talents really continue to expand. Sarah's communication skills are remarkable for someone so young, which bodes well for her current career plans to become an attorney (if Broadway doesn't work out, of course). She continued to do theater and became especially passionate about dance. She also added clarinet to her repertoire as part of 5th grade curriculum. Her school recital included Eye of the Tiger, and no doubt Rocky 3 would have had a different feel if they used her rendition. Incidentally, this last week we just viewed the third edition of the Rocky franchise after introducing Sarah to the Rocky movies several weeks back. Did anyone else notice that the third Rocky film is likely the most homoerotic boxing movie of all time (not that there is anything wrong with that)?

Annual Media List of Recommendations

Movies/TV

Zootopia
Anomalisa
Spotlight
Everybody Wants some
Deadpool
Guardians of the Galaxy
Popstar: Never Stop
Stopping
The Seventies
Better Call Saul
Black Mirror
Tony Robbins: I Am Not
Your Guru
Good Girls Revolt
Red Oaks
Crazy Ex Girlfriend
Transparent
Horace and Pete

Books

Hamilton by Ron Chernow
Girl with the Dragon
Tattoo by Amy Shumer:

SUMMARY

It was a year of heartbreak. I still haven't come to really believe Donald Trump is the President of the United States. Otherwise, some bad and a lot more good stuff happened (in quantity if not always degree). Here is hoping I will be totally wrong about Trump or he will be impeached by the time of the next holiday update, which will likely be around Valentine's Day 2018 if I continue the trend of procrastinating in completing this annual document.