



Janicek Christmas 2018

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

A lot has happened this past year, so grab your vaping pen, a mulled cider and crank up that Mannheim Steamroller. But first, apologies are in order. We neglected to send out the newsletter last year because of something. I can't begin to try to recount the reason it didn't get sent. That was a year ago and, as we get older and wiser we've all learned to not dwell on the past. I tried this sage logic with a speeding ticket in recent history.

"Sir, do you know how fast you were going back there?"

"Officer, that was just a blip in time that is behind us both now. We should embrace the now, and live that now to the fullest while it's in our grasp, forget about the past and be free with our selflessness and appreciation of all the beauty in this thing that we call life!"

"Sir, I'm going to add a 'Stupid Tax' to your ticket."

2018 was another life on the run for the Janicek family. It started with your humble narrator running the Bandera 50k in early January. This was a -32-mile race on, as the race description plainly states, "a trail of rugged and brutal beauty where everything cuts, stings or bites." I finished in 5 hours and 44 minutes, placed 29th overall and 10th in my division. My only "plan" was to finish in under 6 hours, and that was only so I could tell Elise approximately when I might be done with the race. It was a fun and new adventure, and I'm sure my ultramarathoning days are only getting started.

Elise ran the 3M Half Marathon later in January coming in at 2 hours and 47 minutes. On February 18th, Maly and I ran the Austin Marathon 5K benefitting the Paramount Theater. She and I took it slow and easy the first 2.5 miles, and then I nudged Maly at the end to pick a person out and go beat them. I singled out a lady for her, and Maly nodded it off. A few steps later, she had a change of heart and gunned it to the finish and beat the rabbit I'd targeted for her. That was a pretty proud dad moment for me.

Speaking of the oldest child, Maly has been doing great. She finished off the 6th grade strong last year with all A's and B's. Seventh grade is halfway done and she's doing equally well. Middle school is weird though. Your child must become independent very quickly. In elementary school it seems like parents are always involved and in the know. In middle school it is required that you get most of your information from your child. And you must learn to accept the monosyllabic "fine" as the answer to 97% of the questions that you ask. I've often wondered where that word "fine" even comes from. I remember telling my parents that everything was "fine," but it's not like they taught me that that was the answer to life, the universe and everything. According to the Anterior Pituitary Society For Confused Parents of Middle School Children, there are very specific hormones that are developing and/or changing during the tween years. Among them are the Adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH), the Luteinising hormone (LH), the Growth hormone (GH) and the Forget It, Nagging Elder (FINE) hormone. We still want to clutch onto her like she's our little baby bird, but have to remind ourselves that we've given her her wings, will and morals. We trust that she's leading the right path and while we might seem nagging to the point where answers are, "fine," we want both of our daughters to

always be open and honest with us, and trust that we will always be there for them, through thick and thin so long as we're their parents.

Other than a couple 5K races a year, which she has always eagerly agreed to do, we haven't really pushed Maly to do any extracurricular activities. This year she decided to sign up for lacrosse. She's been practicing since early this summer and really likes it. She's been in a club league since September and goes to practice every Saturday. The season doesn't actually start until the Spring semester, so we're really hopeful that she'll hone her competitive side and continue to have fun once she starts playing in games. She has also indicated that she wants to sign up for soccer, which makes us both (probably more so Elise) happy, and she says she's going to sign up for track in the Spring. I told her we're going to start doing track workouts during the winter break, so I'll really need to be mindful of making those workouts fun while keeping my own competitive side at bay.

So our Texas winter, which included three separate bouts with snow, passed. April rolled around and the girls and I loaded onto a plane and flew out to Boston. In June of 2017 I'd ran a 3:05 marathon in Snoqualmie which allowed me entry into the Boston Marathon. My sisters, Terri & Lisa, and my bro-in-law, Craig and Ron all flew in from the San Diego area to come and watch me race. We all stayed in an awesome 100+ year-old, 3-story home in Charlestown, MA. We took a chartered bus tour of the oldest marathon course in America the day before the race. On race day, I woke up before everyone, hailed an Uber to a bus that then shipped us to the start in Hopkinton. Note earlier that I said our Texas winter had passed. This was not the case in New England. On Marathon Monday it was 35-degrees, there was a 30 mph headwind and it was pouring rain. I wasn't out to set a personal record. I knew I wanted to finish the race in around three and a half hours. When the gun fired I just settled into a pace and tried to take in as much of the 122nd Boston Marathon that I could. It was trying at points because it was so damn cold, wet and windy. The crowd support the entire 26 miles was amazing, and I think that helped everyone get through the race. I meandered through Hopkinton, Ashland, Framingham, Natick, Wellesley, Newton, plowed over Heartbreak Hill, saw the famous Citgo sign a mile from the finish, and before I knew it, I was making the dreamlike right on Hereford and left on Boylston, and then I sprinted through the finish line. We had a great rest of our trip with the family, eating and sight-seeing our way through Boston.

We celebrated Maly's 12th birthday while we were all in Boston, and we celebrated Mara's 6th birthday shortly after we got back to Austin. Mara's growing like a weed and is halfway through her first grade year. She's doing great and has a bunch of friends. I just asked her what she did this past year. She said, "School and homework. Mostly school." She's cute, stubborn, sensitive, and probably the most resilient one of the family. She's the really cute, sensitive, caring and loving one. To me, she's our little but firmly planted rock. She's actually quite baffling. I can be having one of the worst days, and I'll come in from work and be quietly huffing and puffing and stomping around, but not really letting on, and Mara will just come up and put her arm around my hips and she won't let go until I hug her back. She truly puts things into perspective for us all. She has her struggles at school, and on the rare occasion she'll let it eat at her, but for the most part, she lets the past live in the past and she keeps herself in the present, seeing the glass half full. She's the living, breathing reminder of what I need to do. It's fun having a 6-year-old around to help us figure out what life's all about.

Speaking of life. As I type this, fifty percent of the family is laid up, and has been for the better part of two weeks. Mara first got sick at the very beginning of December. She ran a fever and had a pretty nasty stomach bug. Then, while in the middle of our quarterly sales meeting, I had the black cloak of sickness suddenly draped over me. I went home early that afternoon and hopped into bed with a fever that kept me out of commission for the remainder of the week. About the time I almost started feeling human again, Elise and Maly both came down with fevers, chills, nausea, sore everything and nasty coughs. Doctors visits confirmed pneumonia for the both of them. So they've been down for the count for 11 days now. Elise went to the doctor twice and became flat out depressed just from being sick of being sick. Maly has missed eight days of school. Mara and I are trying to keep the ship afloat but it hasn't been easy. If I could have Santa bring me just one teeny tiny thing for Christmas, that would be a normal and healthy family again.

On a happier and lighter note, we celebrated Steve's (Elise's dad) 70th birthday this year. We had an early surprise party for him at his sister and brother-in-law's house in Hennessey, OK on Memorial Day weekend with all the brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, in-laws and friends.

A few days after returning from Oklahoma, the girls and I headed to Poway to spend some time in sunny southern California and to celebrate my nephew, Adam's high school graduation. And being a Texas fan, it pains me to say it, but Boomer Sooner as Adam chose to attend the University of Oklahoma this fall. We always have a great time when we go out to California to spend time with my sisters and their families. My bro-in-law Craig and I did a lot of running. And, as always, we did a lot of swimming, eating, and hanging out at the beach.

In August we road tripped it up to Des Moines to hang out with Elise's family. Then we all road tripped it east with Grandma Thurston to Milwaukee for the Stauss family reunion. After a couple days in Milwaukee, the girls and I headed south to spend a couple days in Chicago. We stayed in Evanston and took the L into the city for a boat tour of the city. And we did some shopping. We went to Millennium Park and saw Cloud Gate. We ate pizza at Lou Malnati's and devoured Chicago-style hot dogs at America's Dog. We went to the Navy Pier. And we went to the 95th floor of the Hancock Building to get a bird's eye view of all of Chicago.

After cramming as much of Chicago as we could into two days, we headed back to Des Moines. We hung out with Elise's family for a few days and spent a day at the Iowa State Fair before making the haul all the way back to Austin in time for the girls to get ready for their respective first days of school.

Just this past Thursday afternoon my mom was involved in a head-on collision in her little Acura with a Ford F-250 that was pulling a trailer. She took a fast ambulance ride to Hermann Memorial in Katy because surely there had to have been some kind of bodily damage. She wasn't able to call me until around 7 o'clock that evening. I happened to be on a Christmas light viewing run with my neighborhood run club when she called, left a voicemail that she'd been in a wreck and was rushed to the emergency room. After a few attempts back and forth, mom and I were finally able to speak on the phone. She didn't have much recollection of the crash beyond opening her eyes, seeing the smashed windshield and screaming because she wanted out of the wreckage. Aside from a sore knee, a bunch of blood and being shook up, mom said she was fine. While we were still on the phone, mom was waiting in the ER for the doctor to check her out again. I told her to call me back when she got more information from the doctor, and in the meantime, Elise and I would start making plans to come get her and take her home.

Mom called me within the hour to tell me that the doctor had released her. No concussion, no internal damage, no broken bones. Just a bunch of bumps and bruises. So I hopped in the car at almost 9 p.m. and drove the 130 miles to Katy in record time. And sure enough, while she was still a bit shaken up, tired and sore, she was lucky and came away from a gruesome accident with only bumps and bruises.



I drove mom back to her house and stayed with her a couple days. On Friday she and I drove into Sealy where the remains of her car had been towed. Seeing the wreckage it's a miracle that she survived, let alone with the relatively minor injuries that she sustained. We spent the rest of the day going to pharmacies and a follow-up appointment with mom's doctor. I made sure she was okay before I headed back to Austin on Saturday morning so I could catch up on work. We called mom on Saturday night and aside from being tired and still sore, she was still doing fine.

I'll say the same thing here that I said on the Facebook. God wasn't ready for mom yet. She still has work on this earth to do. And so do you and I. Since it's the holiday season and everyone's being all happy, lovey-dovey and charitable, I implore you to take a moment to take stock and appreciate the here and now, and those that are sharing it with you. Life can change in the blink of an eye. Be present and be thankful. Tell the ones you love that you love them. Had mom's wreck turned out for the worse, I'd be hard-pressed to remember what the last words I'd spoken to her were. If you're like me and sometimes have a hard time expressing your feelings with words in person, show them how much you love them. Some non-verbal expressions of love and gratitude could include things like: rap lyrics, a soft homemade pretzel with a little vieux lille beer cheese, fine art, crocheted motorcycle chaps, the old "pull my finger" trick, a loving noogie, or a hug. Or practice saying "I love you." I speak from experience when I tell you that the more you do it, the easier it becomes.

My mom will be coming up to Austin on Christmas Eve to spend Christmas with us. Steve and Joanne will be heading out on Christmas day and driving down from Des Moines to get here on the 27th.

If you're reading this, it means we love you. We hope this year has been good to you and the next one is even better. We wish you all a joyous and healthy Christmas and a Happy New Year!

With all our love,

Josh, Elise, Maly & MQTQ

