



Janicek Christmas 2016

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

It's that time of year again. In case you didn't notice, we accidentally neglected to send out the annual Christmas Newsletter last year. I blame the Electoral College. Or global warming. But fret not. As you'll notice, we've included last year's Christmas Newsletter with this one as a Double Feature Bonus!

As always, we hope this newsletter finds you happy, healthy, and in the thoughts and presence of those you love. It always baffles me how quickly 12 months can blast by. Another year has passed and, between you and me, I get kind of stressed when it comes time to start writing this newsletter (now in its 15th year). Don't get me wrong, I enjoy writing it, I just get all flustered when I try to jog my own feeble memory in the attempt to recount the past year. Thankfully the children are old enough now to where I can faithfully rely on them to help me recount the family happenings of the last two seasons (we only have two seasons in Texas: "Hot" and "Holy Hell Did You See The Tattoo on That Mosquito?!"). In fact, just this past weekend I asked the eldest child, "Leona, what in tarnations did we do this year?! I need to write the newsletter." "Dad, my name is Maly. And I don't know."

I turned 40 in January. I have a hard time remembering my sons' names. I often times just resort to "you," and "the other one," and "skeeter." I embraced turning 40. Thankfully Elise is nearly a year ahead of me in age, so I gauge my aging on her progression. I've decided that if she croaks at any point during any given year, I'll just need to eat more kale. Skeeter, the other one and Elise took me to La Traviata in Austin for a big hot bowl of cioppino for my birthday. Apparently when you ripen in age, your soft teeth crave soup.

The Sunday before my 40th birthday, and before graduating into the "masters" category of racing, I ran my first marathon in Houston. A marathon, in case you weren't aware, is a really stupid, long, crazy and painful distance to run. 26.2 miles. Of running. For hours. On your feet. While at the time of the race I wasn't 100% sure I wanted to try to do it, I wound up qualifying for the Boston Marathon. I've learned, first hand, that it takes a special kind of crazy to run a marathon. So much so that I'm running my second marathon this February. This, after I ran with 11 friends in the 223-mile Capital To Coast relay race from Austin to Corpus Christi this past October. I also ran an 8K in September where I took 3rd place in my age division, and a 10-mile race in November where I took 1st in my age division. I'll also race in half marathons in December, January, and then the full marathon in Austin in February. I like to think that I've left a bit of a mark in the local racing community with my short-lived running "career." However, after racing season is over this winter, I think I'm going to kick off the tired running shoes for a while and then sign up for my first ultra marathon. And then, at some point, I really want to run the Grand Canyon from rim to rim. I kind of like running. I obviously need more kale. Or a lobotomy.

This year Elise and I celebrated our 15th year of marriage. I gripe about how fast one year passes between writing this newsletter and 15 years of marriage have flown by. It seems like only yesterday that this cute stranger and I were exchanging jokes in the dark room of the St. Edward's photography lab. Elise planned our anniversary date and surprised me by taking me to watch the sunset atop Mt. Bonnell and then for a nice, quiet and romantic dinner at Fabi + Rosi. If the next 15, 50 and 150 years fly by, I couldn't imagine soaring through them with anyone other than Elise.

The first five years of our marriage were such a blissful emulsion of togetherness, happiness, fearlessness and dreams. And then we hauled off and had a kid. As I type this, I'm still baffled that the child turned ten-years-old this past April. Maly is almost halfway through her 5th grade year and will be starting middle school next year. While we haven't really sat down and discussed it quite yet, I think Elise and I will stay true-to-form and endeavor in this new parenting adventure by just taking it all in stride. With Valium.

Maly's had a great year thus far. She's earned high marks in school and is in her second year of Kiker Keynotes, which is the school's choir. This year she was voted by her classmates to be her class's nominee for student council secretary for the entire school. She and six other 5th grade class nominees spoke before the school body to solicit their votes. Elise and I watched our daughter fearlessly present herself to an audience of 800 children and faculty members and she did an amazing job. Maly's like me in most regards, but I think she gets her mom's gift for speaking and presenting. Had it been me up on that stage, I'd shake like a leaf and probably would've said something like "bigly" and then pooped my pants.

She didn't get the vote. There was a small sting of disappointment for Maly, but her resilience equaled her courage. There was also a valuable lesson in losing. Our hope is that this small scar stays with her forever and will remind her, among the other scars she'll get throughout life, to always try her absolute best and to not sweat the small stuff.

Maly is participating in Girls on the Run again this year. Girls on the Run is a great program that inspires young ladies to be joyful, healthy and confident, while training for a 5K race (this December). She seems to like it, and I like that she likes it. I might nudge her, because I'd love to be able to watch her compete in cross country when she gets into middle school, but I won't pressure her.

Mara turned four-years-old this past April. She's a Busy Bee and in her last year of preschool at St. Paul's Catholic Church. Next year she'll start kindergarten. We have one child who is leaving elementary and the other who is entering elementary. We will have been a Kiker Elementary family for 12 years when it's all said and done. I reckon it won't be long before the other parents in Mara's class will think it's so nice that her grandparents are so active in her schooling.

This year Mara learned how to write her name, and some other words. She does a really great job at writing her name. She writes it as MQTQ. Because of this, I kind of like to think of her as a little redheaded droid from Star Wars, like R2-D2. I'm hopeful that if she and I ever find ourselves in a dog fight together while flying in an X-wing fighter and we get hit, she'll be able to leverage her pre-installed space flight repair catalog so we can get back to Yoda's place safely and in time for some cheese quesadillas.

Elise is holding out that at least one of our daughters will want to take up soccer. While not certain, that ship may have sailed for Maly and recently, Mara has expressed interest in taking dance and gymnastics classes. I think we'll get her involved in one or both this Spring. Maybe Elise will nudge her to try playing soccer. In the meantime, I think Mara is fully content with going to school, playing with her dolls and toys, making multiple wardrobe changes daily, and laughing. If there's one thing in this world that I wish I could bottle up and save forever, that thing would be Mara's laugh. Especially that laugh when she finds something truly hilarious. It's that laugh that reminds me to find the humor in all things and to not take life too seriously.

Elise has been staying busy this year as well. She's room mom for both Maly's and Mara's classes, she goes to bootcamp classes multiple times a week and she joined an indoor soccer league this year. Her team, Incas, plays a game every Sunday afternoon. Attending her games has turned into a fun family event every weekend. It helps that her team is really good and can count their losses on one hand.

Elise and I are signed up for the 3M Half Marathon in Austin in late January. Elise walked/ran the same race a couple of years ago. She made a deal with herself that she'd run the entire 13.1 miles the next time she ran that race. So, she's been training. She's made it to an 8-mile training run, and I went with her on a 7-miler on a Saturday. That was a fun first for us. And I'm not going to name names, but Elise can hawk a mean mid-run loogie.

We hope this holiday season has you all chock full of love and laughter. We also hope you're afforded time to spend with those you care about, and reflect on life and the important things thereof. Let your guard down, open your heart and share yourself with your friends and family. And eat more kale. Or pie. Do the things that make you happy.

With our love,

Josh, Elise, Maly & MQTQ

