
JANICEK CHRISTMAS



Good Tidings, Happy Tannenbaums, and Hot Toddies!

'Tis the season and we all hope that you all are happy, healthy, and hot. Well, at least warm. As I type this is 4-degrees outside of our hotel room in Overland Park, Kansas. Most of the lower-48 are feeling this crazy arctic blast that blew in from somewhere in the arctic earlier this week. If I had to pinpoint the exact origin of this arctic weather, I would pin it on the produce section of Costco.

Speak of polar stuff, if you know Elise and me, you know that we complete each other. We are yin and yang. We're the sun and the moon. We are the walleye from a frozen lake in the Midwest and the water moccasin from a tepid pond of murkiness in southeast Texas. I'm extremely punctual and she is... prettier than me. As you might know, writing this newsletter brings me a lot of stress and anxiety. Writing words is taxing and recounting the previous 12 months gets more difficult as I get older. I'm learning that as we get older, the days and weeks fly off the calendar exponentially faster. I think that has something to do with compounding interest and insoluble fiber.

It is 7 a.m. on Christmas Eve as I type this from the hotel room in which we stayed en route to Des Moines to spend Christmas with Elise's parents, Steve and Joanne. I know what I'm up against when it comes to writing the annual Janicek Christmas Newsletter. It's usually when "Fall" arrives in Texas, the temperatures

start to plummet to the low 100's, and I know that I'm going to have to write this here letter to our friends, family, and a guy named _StickyArms390_ who recently followed me on Instagram and really thinks that he and I should "collab."

I won't lie. There was an affirmative majority vote in my head a month ago that convinced me to not write the newsletter this year. But, I recently had one of those epiphanies in the shower. You know, that place where most epiphanies happen, like when you find yourself really contemplating if a body wash is truly "revitalizing."

So here I am. On a couch at 7 a.m. in a hotel room in Overland Park with the dog, who has never traveled in a car outside of the great state of Texas and has yet to poop, despite multiple stops on our trek, and us trying to explain to her basic mammalian gastrointestinal functions, while we can't feel our fingers, trying desperately to recount the events of this past year.



So this might just wind up as a kind of rapid-fire recount as I scroll through the photos from 2022, so warm up your figgy pudding and get cozy.

This year started with a bit of a scare. My mom had a partial knee replacement surgery a couple days after Christmas last year. I had to work, so Elise went to Sealy to take mom to her surgery, stay with her and help with her medications, rehabilitation, physical therapy, and follow-up appointments. The weekend after mom's surgery, Elise and I traded shifts as she had a photography job back in Austin. It was on my shift that mom's condition took a turn for the really bad. I'll spare y'all the details, but my shift ended with having to call 911 and having my mom wheeled out of her house on a gurney, loaded into an ambulance, and rushed to the ER. Come to find out, mom had a stomach ulcer, and the medications she was taking for her knee surgery made the ulcer flare like an expired Christmas tree in a meth lab. It was a hair-raising ordeal, but thankfully we all had our guardian angels looking over us and mom is healthy, happy, fully recovered, and walking just fine with her new, partially-bionic knee.

Now if that wasn't a knee-jerker (see what I did there?), according to my chronological list of photos that I'm referencing to recount the past year, we had some appliances replaced in our home. Right now I'm looking at a photo that Elise took of a gentleman on his back in our kitchen who is in the throes of removing our stove. So we got a new stove. Unfortunately I can't seem to find other photos, but I can tell you that at some points in this past year, we also procured a new refrigerator and a new microwave. I'm actually quite happy that I'm recounting these riveting life events because now I don't feel so bad about not getting Elise anything for Christmas. Just do me a favor and don't tell Elise that I didn't get her anything for Christmas.

I started a new job in December of last year. A good friend of mine recruited me and helped me start excelling at this job. In March our team of eight flew in to Boulder from our respective states to finally meet each other in person, discuss our books of business, and our team's game plan for the remainder of the year. And then we all were laid off in June when it started to become the trend for companies to fire people due to

the "economic downturn." After the layoff I took some time off, did a lot of running, and have since landed a new job that provides fulfillment in the form of money to pay for kitchen appliances.



Maly is now 16-years-old and is a junior in high school. As far as we can tell, she's doing well in school because the school has not yet told her that she is no longer welcome to step foot onto campus. She's actually doing really well in school. She earns A's and B's in her classes, is taking advanced placement courses, and is living the experience of trying to find a college at which she would like to attend in 2024. Elise and I are letting her sit in the driver's seat in this adventure as we believe that this a rite of passage and personal endeavor that will allow her to fully appreciate the research and considerations in figuring out how she wants to continue to put a dent in this universe. Maly has remained very active in lacrosse. She was voted to be one of the three captains of her high school team earlier this year, and she is also playing lacrosse for her local club team again this year.

Given that the child is now 16, this past year was also the year in which she acquired her driver's license. Not much unlike the story above of my mom's knee replacement surgery and having to later be rushed to the emergency room, I will spare you the exhausting details of me being the self-appointed driver's education instructor and will happily tell you that we now have a licensed teenage driver. And she is covered by our auto insurance policy. And hopefully you will now understand why Elise is not getting a Christmas present from yours truly this year. Liability coverage is the gift that keeps on giving! That has a ring to it, and quite the seasonal sentiment! See, I'm really glad I decided to write this newsletter because now I know what to write in Elise's Christmas card. I just hope I can find a store that sells cards late on Christmas Eve.

Mara is now 10-years-old, in the fifth grade, and in her last year of elementary school. Next year will be a new chapter for her as she enters middle school. She's doing really well in school this year and is excited, and a little apprehensive, about the big move to a new campus and getting to actually choose some of the classes she'll get to take next year. I guess the apple doesn't fall too far from the other apple as Mara is still playing lacrosse too. She plays for the Southwest Austin Girls lacrosse league, which is a feeder for the local high school program. Elise and I still see a hidden creative side in Mara that I'm really hoping she'll harness one day. She has a real talent for drawing as well as creating other forms of art. She also has an ear for music. Mara has this uncanny knack where she's able to hear a song for the very first time, and then she can hum the rest of it and tap her foot or fingers to it's rhythm.



Mara's also our little adventure buddy. She's pretty much game for anything be it profound or mundane. Elise has an errand and shopping buddy. I have a hiking and exploring buddy. And it's in those moments when

Elise and I do our damndest to remember that those moments are fleeting. We embrace the quiet time with Mara or the conversations on whatever bewilder us at that place in time. It's scary to think that we've got one child shopping colleges and our youngest who isn't really quite that young anymore. Mara has a lot of thoughts and opinions on a lot of things nowadays. Elise and I don't have baby girls anymore and the family conversations are of a much more adult-like variety these days. And a lot more of Elise's and my conversations these days are "collabs" in trying to remember where we left our reading glasses.

This summer we found ourselves in a unique position where we were able to haul both of the kids to Big Sandy, Texas for a week of summer camp. That meant that Elise and I had a whole week entirely to ourselves. So we decided that we'd seize the opportunity and go on a vacation. Our initial thoughts were to go somewhere far-fetched in the upper 48 but ultimately chose the responsible route and decided that we should probably stay relatively near northeast Texas in the off chance that we had to get back to Big Sandy in short order should something happen to either of the girls at camp. So we decided to drop the girls off and hop the state line into Arkansas and spend a week in Hot Springs, Arkansas. While Elise planned some adventures and site seeing for us, we both went into it with no real expectations other than to just have a nice vacation together. You know, by ourselves. No kids. Hubba hubba. Some much-needed "together time" where most of our togetherness was an exercise in finding the reading glasses so one of us could look online for the local restaurants that were open early enough for dinner. We did have a nice time together getting breakfast and coffee and the local shops, hiking the trails of the Hot Springs National Park, trying local restaurants, swimming in Lake Ouchita, visiting the Garvan Woodland Gardens, seeing a magic show at the theatre, and spending hours in pristine 104° mineral waters of the local bathhouses.

Elise is doing well. While she is much, much older than me, we are both in the dusk of our 40's. It seems like but a fortnight ago that we were in the solstice of our 40's. And but a yesteryear that we were sharing 40 ounce bottles of malt liquor before we had to haul off, start a family and become responsible middle-aged adults. After arising from her nightly slumber, Elise has to do her bedside calisthenics to get her creaky joints activated so can get up and do things like be the president of the board of the lacrosse team, studio manager for Jetter Photography, front office volunteer and room parent coordinator at Kiker Elementary, Mara's homeroom class's room mom, catechist teacher at St. Catherine's, and locator of the reading glasses.



Earlier this year your humble narrator found a little lump in a place we'll call south of the underwear equator. It didn't hurt or bother me, so I decided I'd keep an eye on it and see what it decided to do. I had a hunch that it might be a little hernia and there really isn't much you can do for a hernia beyond surgery. I was in the throes of training for the Boston Marathon and I didn't have the time to be out of commission for the weeks required to recovery from a surgery. The girls and I traveled to Boston this past April with Maly's best friend, Ava and celebrated Maly's 16th birthday. We all went and had a

wonderful dinner at Strega. I ran my third Boston Marathon two days after Maly's birthday, and while I was in the shower after the race, I realized that something was going to need to be done with my little lump of a training partner. When we got back to Austin, I scheduled an appointment with my doctor and, sure enough, I

had a inguinal hernia that would require surgery. So a few weeks later I found myself undergoing laparoscopic surgery for a bit of the old tuck and patch to repair the hernia.

And since then I've been 100% healthy and back on the roads and the trails. My race time in Boston the past April qualified me for the 2023 Boston Marathon, so Elise and I will be headed back to New England this spring for the 127th running of the Boston Marathon. This past year I decided that I was overdue in racing in any local events in Austin. In August a group of four of us from our neighborhood run club raced in the 10-mile Zilker Relays and came in 12th in our division. Around that same time I decided to sign up for the Austin Distance Challenge which is a race series put on by the Austin Runners Club. The challenge consists of the six big races in Austin. The first race is in September, and there is a race each month through February. The first race was the CASA Superhero 5k where I took 6th place overall and put me in the lead of the Distance Challenge. My original goal for the Distance Challenge was to win the Masters (over 40) division. When I realized that I was in the overall lead, I then decided that I'd try to hang on to that and see if I could win the challenge outright. I threw caution and practical thinking to the wind and decided to join a Ragnar Trail race relay with a bunch of friends from the neighborhood. We all ran 20+ miles each on single track trails through day and night over a Friday night and Saturday timespan. I ran a little harder and faster than I probably should have and had to wake up early on Sunday morning to run in the next race in the Distance Challenge series, which was the Daisy Dash 10k. I came in 10th place overall, 3rd place in Masters, and added a little more time to the overall lead in the Distance Challenge. The next race was the Run for the Water 10-miler in early November where my placement wasn't really noteworthy, but I did beat my previous person record by a large margin and added even more time to my lead in the Distance Challenge. And earlier this month I ran in the first of the remaining three half marathons (13.1 mile) of the race series at the Decker Challenge. I came in 6th place overall, 2nd in Masters, PR'd my half marathon time by over 2 minutes, and added even more time to the overall lead in the challenge.

I've two more races to go and if it's in the cards and I'm able to show up healthy on their respective race mornings, I'll keep pushing myself and hopefully achieve my goal of winning the series overall. And before that dust settles, I'll be jumping into marathon training to get ready for Boston on April 18th.

And with all of that, it's time to wish you all well until I find myself stressed again this time next year. As I type this right now, Elise is driving us through the frozen tundra that is central Iowa. We're half an hour from Steve and Joanne's house in West Des Moines. The landscape is beautifully covered in snow with the spruces poking out across the farmlands. Really I'm just assuming that's what the landscape looks like because I've been hunkered down over my laptop in an effort to finish this newsletter in record time without my reading glasses.

We wish you all warmth and love during this Christmas season. Bundle up together and cherish these moments you have with the ones you love. And don't forget to tell them that you love them.

We love you!

Jack, Elise, Maly & Mara