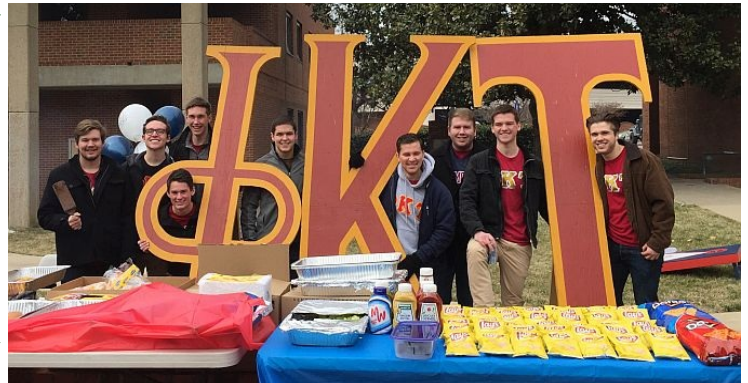


Mike & Jane's Annual Report

December, 2015

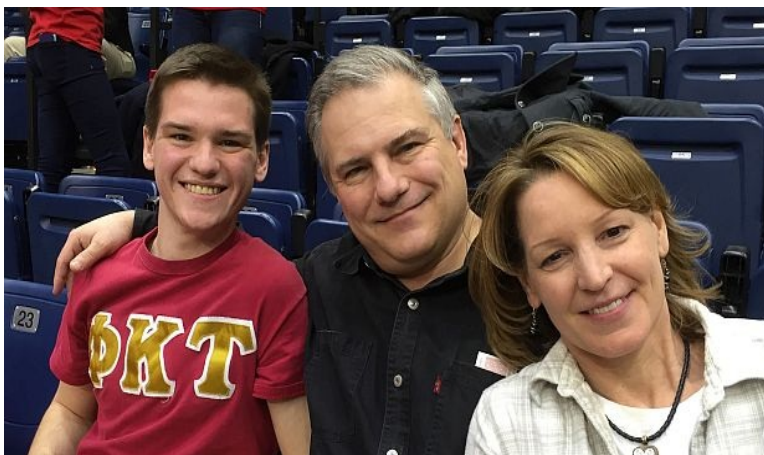
When we last checked in, Dave had finally recovered his car after four months in the shop, only to have it go right back in and get a rebuilt transmission. Fortunately, in January, Mike and Dave (keeping all fingers firmly crossed the whole way), were able to manage the road trip back to Nashville without any major hiccoughs, and Mike returned to Dallas that night before he could embarrass Dave beyond repair.

Maggie went back to school after the Christmas break as well, for the second half of her senior year in Ohio. She decided that the prospect of entering the real world after Kenyon College was not especially appealing and so immediately embarked on a tour of various graduate schools, visiting programs in Georgia, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Tennessee, finally winding up with a visit to one here in Texas during Spring Break. And after that, she was flown out to the Society of Toxicology Conference in San Diego,



Dave, his Fraternity Brothers, and Lots of Snacks

so we estimate she now has enough frequent flyer miles amassed to fund a trip to Mars. So eventually, in April, came the Big Graduate School Decision. Mike and Jane were, of course, rooting for her to stay here in Dallas, but after a visit from two large gentlemen she ultimately settled on the one on the East Coast. "Bruno" and "Nunzio" were very persuasive, and assured us that if Maggie attended school in New Jersey no one here would meet with an "unfortunate accident." *Capisce?*



Phi Kappa Tau Parents Weekend

Parents Weekend, and needed some help with the hors d'oeuvres. Even so, we still had a good time with Dave and his friends, once we got the aprons off, attending a couple of Belmont basketball games (Go Bruins!).

For Spring Break, Dave went wandering off with his fraternity buddies to some beach house in Alabama, and Maggie abandoned her test tubes and tadpoles (*Xenophilus V or VI*, we forget which) for a few days to visit.

May involved two separate trips out to Kenyon College. The first one was to attend Maggie's thesis presentation. She gave a stirring speech, concluding with "[t]he TH response of KLF9 is clearly a robust biomarker of exposure to xenobiotics that are positively acting thyroid disruptors." Thank goodness she finally cleared *that* up. Then a couple of weeks later was graduation, where she was announced as "*Megan Marie Koenecke: artie baccalaurii magna cum laude et cum honoribus in biologia moleculare.*" So we gather that Maggie did really well in Latin, though she never mentioned actually taking any classes. Kind of confusing, really. It was fun to see her

Near the end of February Dave actually invited Jane and Mike to visit him out in Nashville: it turned out he was in charge of his fraternity's



Maggie and Michael with silly hats



The Ford Tourneo, parked in what turned out to be a very naughty place

long-term boyfriend Michael Colonna graduate as well, and to meet their friends and professors. We will miss Kenyon: a school of 1,600 students in Gambier, a town of 2,000, off in the middle of farmland in Ohio.

After Maggie's graduation, we had just barely enough time to repack, as the four of us embarked on a two week long trip to Germany to celebrate. The trip did not start off well. First, the flight was delayed by four hours, which at least allowed us to get in one last fix of Tex-Mex food at DFW Airport before leaving. Upon landing in Frankfurt after the nine hour flight, we reported to Hertz, only to learn that the nice car we had reserved had been given to someone else. The only thing available was a relatively enormous Ford Tourneo van, just the thing for negotiating narrow European streets.

We set out for Munich, stopping en route in Ulm and climbing 768 steps to the top of the tallest cathedral in Europe. Arriving at our hotel in Munich, we first learned some of the pluses and minuses of Germany. Plus: driving on the Autobahn is pretty nice. Minus: driving anywhere else, and especially trying to park, is a huge pain in the *schwanz*. We wound up having to find someplace on the street to stash the Tourneo, which naturally wound up towed off by the police before we had ordered our second beer that evening at the *Augustiner Keller*. So, the next day Mike and Jane had to take two separate trains then walk a mile in the cold, drizzling rain to the impound park. Where we had to pay enough Euros to fund the government of Greece for a month to get the van back. The hotel ultimately wound up agreeing to park the thing after a ridiculously comical attempt to find another spot on the street. (You would think that, with public transit out the wazoo – bicycles, buses, trams, trains, and for all we know rickshaws – there would be parking available. But you would be wrong.)



Sampling Craft Beer in Berlin



Maggie, Alex, and Julia after a few "Polish Flags"

Mike remarked to Jane that "you know it's been an interesting day already when you're looking forward to visiting Dachau as a step up in the overall mood." Fortunately, that turned out to be true. After tours, we moved on to Nuremberg, wondering why the GPS got so confused trying to find the hotel. Jane and Dave actually wound up obtaining a room at a different hotel, while Mike and Maggie eventually figured out that our reservations were at one in *Bamberg*, not Nuremberg. All that time spent brushing up on German in Duolingo on the Web was very helpful as Mike explained to the very nice *Hausfrau* that we did not need the room after all... Anyway, Bamberg was very charming, and from there we went to Potsdam and Berlin, Hamburg (mainly for the Miniature Wonderland: the world's largest model train exhibit), then on to Föhr, an island in the North Sea where we met up with friends Alex and Julia. We spent some time in Julia's mother's restaurant, *Das Wahlfisch*, where every meal ended with a round of "Polish Flag" shots. We then followed Alex and



Dave learning from Alex how to pour the German way

Julia to their home town of Damme, where we attended the local *Schützenvereingeschwindigkeitbegrenzunghoffentlichweinachstenvolkswagen* festival which involved so many guns and beer that we felt like we were back in Texas. Maggie, having just finished a class in the chemistry of brewing, actually kept track of all the beers we sampled in Germany: the resulting spreadsheet shows a total of 71 different varieties, including *Rauchbier* (“smoke beer”) in Bamberg, *Gose bier* (“Goose beer”) in Leipzig, and *Shiner Bock* (“Texas beer”) at the *Schützenfest*. (Well, maybe not really that last one.) We spent our last couple of days in Amsterdam before making our way home.

What with the whole thesis trip, graduation jaunt, and Germany journey (try saying *that* three times fast), Mike did not have much time to rehearse, but still wanted to get in on a few skits in Bar None’s 30th anniversary show in mid-June. He has been participating in that show, on and off, since 1986, although he no longer thinks being discovered by a Hollywood talent agent is especially likely.



Bar None. The “Transactional Lawyer” Sketch. I guess you had to be there...



Maggie thinks Michael is off golfing with his friends

Back in the United States, Dave headed back to Nashville for the summer to work, take some classes and get settled in to life off campus for his Junior year. He continues to study Music Business at Belmont University, and has now added a Marketing major as well.

The rest of June was fairly ordinary, other than Michael commemorating the six year anniversary of the day he met Maggie by sending her off to visit a friend in Denton and taking Mike and Jane out to lunch. This was not exactly an enormous surprise, but it was nice of him. Anyway, Maggie and Michael got engaged not long after that. They have been together pretty much since they were 15 and 16 years old, and we are thrilled he will be officially joining our family.

Maggie, Jane, and Mike went up to Wisconsin for a Kesler family vacation in a cottage on the Chain of Lakes in Waupaca (Dave being busy with summer classes); it is always a wonderful time to hang out with family by the lake. Waupaca also proved to be the perfect place for Maggie to find her wedding dress. It was a bit awkward to haul back as a carry on for the flight back, but we managed, and Maggie then launched into a determined effort to get as much wedding planning as possible done before going off to graduate school in September.



Kesler-a-Rama, and that’s not even all of them.



Whiskey, whiskey, everywhere. Perhaps you should plan a visit.

And upon our return home to Richardson, we had a very nice whiskey-tasting party for Mike’s 55th birthday. There is actually still some of it around, despite Mike’s altruistic efforts to simplify the organization of the liquor storage area by drinking whatever is left.

It was nice to have Maggie hang around the Dallas area through August. Come September, it was time for her and Mike to embark on the big road trip to the East Coast, stopping in



Maggie and the Princeton Tiger

Memphis to have lunch with her friend Swati, Nashville for dinner and overnight with Dave (including going to a baseball game with Dave's fraternity brothers), and the Philadelphia area for dinner with Mike's friend Mariann. We eventually arrived at her destination in time to drop off most of her things, then pick up Michael from the train station. Michael started a job in Manhattan in August, so he and Maggie will be spending a fair amount of time bouncing back and forth on the 90-minute train ride to visit each other for a while. Anyway, Maggie started on her quest for a Ph.D in Molecular Biology at Princeton University with classes, and participating in various lab "rotations." At Kenyon, she was dissecting tadpoles. Her first lab

at Princeton involved dissecting chicken embryos, and her most recent rotation has her dissecting fruit fly testes and ovaries. The next step is probably individual atoms or something. We are having a hard time picturing the size of the knives she is using to do this.

As soon as he returned from the East Coast sojourn, Mike immediately jumped into another road trip, this time with his sisters Betsy, Katie, and Trish, up to St. Peter, Minnesota for their Auntie's 100th birthday. (She is actually their great aunt Angela Widi, but has always just been "Auntie" to them.)



Auntie's 100th. She's the one in the front.

With Maggie settled in out East and Dave occupying a rent house in Nashville with his friends, we were back to the whole empty nest thing, which still feels a little odd. But we are trying to compensate by expanding friendships and finding festivals and events around town we never had time for when overwhelmed with kids activities. For example, the Bloomin' Bluegrass festival in Farmers Branch (bring your own chair, enjoy craft booths, food trucks and music under the stars), and of course reacquainting ourselves with the annual State Fair, although if you ask us the deep-fried lobster tail at \$36 a pop is a bit much. We'll stick with corny dogs.

Speaking of corny dogs, we have had Jean Claude since adopting him in June of 2001. He was about four years old at the time, so by now he is about 133 in dog years. No wonder he wants a treat every time he goes outside.

So things are going reasonably well, all things considered. We hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and may the New Year bring health, happiness, and good fortune to you!



The Old Man of the Couch



Mike, Maggie, Jane, and Dave