

MIKE & JANE'S ANNUAL REPORT

December, 2018

*One more night, one more day / The past is getting farther away...
Someday I'll understand / When my road comes to an end...*

– The Expendables

When last we checked in, we were heading up to the metropolis of Waupaca, Wisconsin for a *Keslermas* get together featuring visits to places like *Little Fat Gretchen's Café* and *Cheesie Bob's Bleu Cheese House*, which, although perhaps not possessing the *cachét* of some of Dallas's swankier establishments, are a whole lot more fun. Back to Texas, and Christmas Eve over with Maggie's in-laws, with Christmas Day at home. After... it is always difficult to have to drop Dave or Maggie off at the airport.

Now that we are on the far side of ... thirty [we know, it's pretty far], figuring out Christmas gifts for one another is considerably more complicated, seeing as how each of us has enough commemorative collector plates to last six lifetimes already. Mostly from Mike's Mom. So Mike decided to give Jane something off of the "Texas Bucket List:" a weekend at a bed and breakfast in

La Grange (yeah, *that* La Grange) in January, where we got to pop down to

Schulenberg and tour the "Painted Churches," those being mostly built by Czech immigrants in the nineteenth century. We also attended a concert at the Bugle Boy, toured a Texas history and Texas Polka museum, and wound up at the local Dairy Queen on Saturday night for a *real* Texas small town experience.

Also in January, Maggie asked Dave what he wanted for his upcoming birthday in March, and Dave said he would love to see his favorite band in concert – but that Nashville was not on their list of tour stops. So we brought him in to see The Expendables at Gas Monkey Grill here in Dallas for a February 16 show. Dave even let us to come with him to the *epic* show, and we wound up the visit the next day with a couple of brewery tours and to *Guitars and Growlers* right here in Richardson.



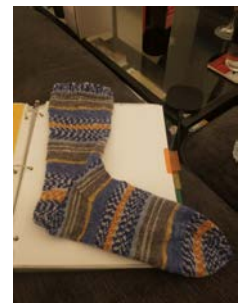
"Just let me know, if you wanna go / To that home, out on, the range – gotta lotta nice girls!" (Well, definitely one!)



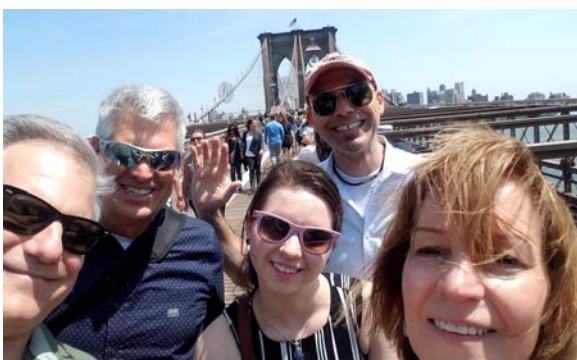
Dave with The Expendables. Both awesome.

And we would be remiss if we did not report on how Maggie finally achieved her *lifetime career goal*. See, when Maggie was three years old, Jane asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up. Maggie said she wanted to be a... "sock sewer." Pretty darned ambitious... but, in February of 2018,

Maggie actually **did it**, knitting the first of a pair for Dave. We are so proud. On the other hand, the whole thing has grown to border upon obsession (as of December, she is nearing *forty* projects completed in 2018). So one of these days we may have to stage an intervention, followed by sending her off to Knitting Rehab Camp. (To be fair, her husband Michael is not especially rational when it comes to *his* particular obsession, that being golf. At least he has resisted the urge to dress up in plaid knickers and a beret on the links. So far. We think.)



The First Sock



Selfie at the Brooklyn Bridge

In March Jane got some nice Kesler family time in, attending her nephew Nick's wedding to Jennifer Kuchta in Green Bay. Dave then rolled into town for Easter weekend, which naturally required a tour of a local distillery for

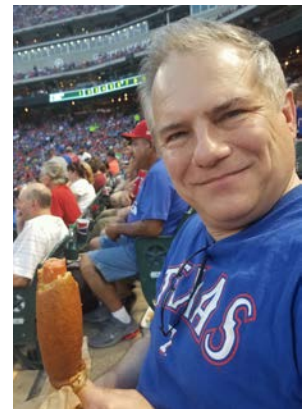


Dave's Easter Basket

some early treats unlikely to show up in Sunday's Easter baskets. On the other hand, seeing as how it was also April Fool's Day, maybe a fifth of Witherspoon's Cask Strength Bourbon was just right. Although, we are thinking that maybe Dave is starting to doubt the reality of the whole Easter Bunny thing, especially since he brought Dave a basket full of weird seaweed treats and bizarre contraptions.

In May, Mike started up on yet another series of Bar None rehearsals, interrupted only by Jane kidnaping him for a surprise trip out to visit Maggie and Michael. (She actually conspired with a client of his to set up fake appointments on Friday so that he would not suspect anything.) This involved a fun couple of days wandering around New York City with Jane's brother Joe and his partner Rony, having our nephew Chris, his wife Ashley, and their baby Mia visit for brunch at Maggie and Michael's apartment in West Windsor, and a whiskey tasting party with their friend Robbie.

Come June, Dave came rolling in with some friends from Nashville, hoping to see a professional baseball



The Dilly Dog

team play. Unfortunately, only the Texas Rangers were available. Actually, the whole reason they drove some 1,400 miles here and back was to sample "Dilly Dogs:" hot dogs inside of dill pickles, all battered and deep fried: something one would only eat at the Ballpark. Or the State Fair. These were a much bigger hit than the Rangers, who lost as per usual.

Late July-August involved trips for the Guys and the Girls. The Guys went off for a week to find some place where cell phones do not work, so wound up in Alaska.

Dave flew in from Nashville, Michael flew in from New Jersey, Mike's cousin Frank and his son Dylan joined the group, along with Mike's brother in law Michael Zang¹, his son Nick, his father Clem, and a few other guys. There was not much else to do besides drink, play cards, fish, and hike (i.e., Guy Heaven). (Video [here](#)). Meanwhile, Jane and Maggie went off looking for a place where nobody spoke English, so met up with Mike's sister Betsy to tour Montreal and Quebec City, where they got their fill of cafés, museums, and itty bitty portions of French cuisine on adorable plates (i.e., Girl Heaven).

Learning new things is always fun, so we were proud to gain an essential life skill in August by learning how to (and how *not* to) open a champagne bottle with a saber (video [here](#)).

Speaking of the "Texas Bucket List," we crossed off another entry in October by cruising out to Eastland to visit the World's Most Famous Horny Toad (okay, the *only* famous horny toad): that being "Old Rip," who (legend says) lived over 30 years sealed in the cornerstone of their county



At the postponed-until-April Lobster Throwdown, with nephew Nick, grand-nephew Brantley, and woof-niece Lucy. And Louie the Lobster.



In Montreal. Or Quebec City. Or maybe Paris. Betsy was the only one who spoke any French, so who knows?

¹ The organizer of the whole thing. (Yep, we are a bit overloaded with Michaels in this crowd.)

courthouse. “RipFest” involved a small town parade, bands, classic car show, and various food and retail stalls around the courthouse square where we learned, among other things, that Texas emu oil can soothe sore muscles, cure baldness and sciatica, and probably bring about world peace.

For the second straight year, we got to go visit Maggie and Michael in New Jersey for Thanksgiving, which was a nice celebration to share with Maggie, Michael, Dave, Joe, Rony, Chris, Ashley, and Mia. The day was nicely capped off by a timely Cowboys victory against the Team-Who-May-Not-Be-Named from D.C. The next day involved a trip to South Philly to wander the Italian Market and provide a definitive answer to the eternal question: does Pat’s or Geno’s make a better cheesesteak? We dutifully tried both, and concluded that Pat’s had the edge: heck, it was nearly as tasty as a Dilly Dog! We then spent some time at a Viking exhibit at the Franklin



Rafting on the Kenai River



“Old Rip” is in that tiny coffin in the window

Institute, though Mike was disappointed that nobody mentioned Fran Tarkenton or the Purple People Eaters: it was just a bunch of old boats and coins and swords and stuff from a thousand years ago. Like, yawn.

And this Fall involves the second year of our family Fantasy Football League, where Commissioner Dave (and his able Co-Commissioner Michael) have been assiduously rooting out the regrettable collusion that tainted last year’s results. They started to get suspicious when Nick Zang got over 40 points from some dude named “V. Putin” in the “flex” spot. And so, after an exhausting full season of dedicated calculation

among 18 players... it’s **Mike vs. Jane** coming up in the final. We may have to sleep in separate beds after the big showdown...

Dave has also become a dedicated English soccer fan, often running off at 6:00 a.m. to cheer his beloved Manchester City on to yet another gripping nil-nil tie. Various other highlights: going to a “Prohibition Repeal” party at Witherspoon Distillery with our “in-laws” Joe & Kimberly Colonna. Monthly meetings of the “St. Urban of Langres Wine Society” for tastings with a good group of friends. [Man, we do have a lot of stories involving drinking!] Another couple of ACTS Retreats with church friends, one of which Mike directed, and the other Jane co-directed. Going to see John Cleese live, after a showing of



Stylin’ with the in-laws

Monty Python and the Holy Grail, and running into Mike’s sister Trish and her husband Michael afterwards.

General update: Michael’s still doing quite well working as a financial consultant at Protiviti in Manhattan; Maggie is plugging away with her research, a year or two away from finishing her dissertation in molecular biology; Dave is still enjoying his work as an internet marketing specialist at Tractor Supply in Nashville. We feel very fortunate: we are so thankful for our family and friends, and hope all of you have a delightful Christmas (and/or Hanukah, Bodhi Day, Winter Solstice, Id at-Adha... whatever you find inspiring), and may 2019 be a year of reconciliation, unity, and understanding!



Happy Zekes-giving (and Amari Christmas!)

Mike & Jane