

2017 Memories to Share

Another year has come and gone and here we are by the fire, having a sip of something delicious, reminiscing. We can sit and enjoy the fire after living through our first floor renovations! It's finally over and what an amazing year it was in our "new" house. One late addition was a sound bar to our giant TV. Thin TVs come with thin speakers, however, when it comes to speakers, bigger is better. So if you want to hear the TV you get to buy speakers; I don't mind closed captioning - but that makes only one of us.

We had our first visit with Cooper Muchmore, which means that there is a new Grandpa and Grandma in Cheyenne! WOW! We went to our annual Boys' night basketball game in Laramie and Amy got to come. The floor seats were great with sweaty bodies falling all around us. Too bad the home team didn't come down with a victory, but the fog was amazing when we left!

Amy was lucky enough to present again at the CCIRA international reading conference in February. Unfortunately, the event was marred by inclement weather. The streets were covered with ice and sadly, we went down a vehicle that morning. Luckily, no damage came to the driver. We lost the beloved VW Jetta that Amy bought with her Dad back in 1998. Although the car ran well and had sentimental value, it did not have much monetary value, and there were problems with it too numerous to mention. We donated the car to Catholic Charities. Our vehicles tend to be well seasoned, which means I got to experience car shopping on Craig's List with the help of Amy's brother, Brian. The experience taught me several things. My brother-in-law really likes to shop for used cars, people run dealerships right out of their homes, people buy cars from auctions and don't bother removing all the damage marks before reselling, and old cars with low mileage sell at a premium.

Although we are under the Buick age limit, we ended up with a large silver Buick Lucerne just like Amy's mom! We enjoyed the car up to the point where the engine overheated. Paranoia over a blown head gasket caused us to get another car. Our second car is a slightly smaller awesome Toyota Avalon from our neighbors, Tiffany and Alan. After some home diagnostics, the Buick is repaired and is back on the road. The RAV4 is still around and is now used for extra storage in the garage.

I also attended a 'conference' this year, the GABF. In case you don't know the acronym - it is the Great American Beer Festival. German costumes were popular as well as edible necklaces (typically pretzels). The festival requires the ability to drink both good and bad beer. I enjoyed the beer from Sunriver, just outside of Bend, OR. If you are ever in that area and want to pick some up for me, my address is on the envelope ☺.

Once again, we went to the St. Patrick's Day parade. This year we had to find a new home to view the parade due to the sudden closing of McCormick's. We ended up across the street at Mangiamo Pronto. Although not exactly Irish, they were Irish for a day, and very accommodating. This is the first year we stayed downtown after the parade. We spent the night at the Capitol Hill Mansion B&B located near the Molly Brown House. It's a just right (sobering) distance from the parade route. The morning after breakfast was a suitable follow-up for a day and night on the town.

We had an awesome time at this year's school fundraiser in our handmade Star Trek outfits. I was even able to re-use it for a Halloween costume. Now we don't always have to go as M&Ms.

The end of school/start of summer vacation was to the Lake Tahoe Resort in South Lake Tahoe. There were a couple geographical revelations about this trip. There is an actual lake in Lake Tahoe, it is in the mountains, and the lake is very close to Reno. We traveled to Lake Tahoe on Memorial Day weekend. The resort was busy during our arrival but emptied out on Monday and the rest of the week was quiet. We had no trouble driving around to find places to eat and things to do. We did have a minor paddleboat 'incident'. We rented a 2-seat paddleboat and paddled out to the transition of the water from green to blue where the water gets deep. Upon turning around to paddle back, the water kept going under the paddle so we got stuck. The water is much too cold to get in, so it looked like we might be in for a day on the water. Amy may have begun to panic. Thankfully, a boat came by and towed us back to shore, though at first, thought we were just being friendly and waving frantically. We were the only customers at the boat company so we got a lot of attention as we were pulled to shore. Next time we'll take some oars with us.

Amy struggled to stay healthy the last half of the school year so she attempted to recover with a relaxing summer. Her days were spent reading, binge watching Netflix, and napping with the cat. It turns out this did not help much at all. After a trip to see the allergist she discovered that she is highly allergic to, wait for it... the cat. She was also diagnosed with kitty-induced asthma - which she hasn't come to grips with yet. Apparently, that's what makes her sound like a long-time smoker in the morning. So it looks like Kami will be our last cat. Kami is still with us, mostly. She lost another tooth this year. She's working her way towards Toothless, from **How to Train your Dragon**. We noticed the problem much sooner this time so she didn't lose as much weight, but she may have some trouble catching mice now.

This year the rocket launch was both early and FAR away. The size of the rocket requires that it be launched in restricted air space. The Army base in Colorado Springs was not available so the launch ended up at Spaceport America in New Mexico. Spaceport owns all of the surrounding vertical airspace. However, the horizontal distance is an hour from nowhere. Nowhere being the town of Truth or Consequences, New Mexico - most notable for changing the town name to that of a game show in the 1950s. The launch was successful in that we were able to load the payload and watch it take off. Unfortunately, the fuel burned a hole in the side of the rocket so the rocket never went out of sight, only reaching an elevation of about 1,500 feet (which does not require restricted air space). This did make it easy to find the payloads and the rocket. The rocket came down about 100 yards from

where it was launched. The launch was done in conjunction with a rocket competition so we did get to see other rockets go much higher (about 30,000 feet). Following the competition, Spaceport hosted a dinner at the facility. We learned that for a mere \$250K you can buy a ticket to space on the Virgin Galactic spaceship. The adventure involves traveling to Spaceport for training and the launch. The trip is total of about 8 minutes in space before returning to Spaceport. So, for that amount of money, you don't get to go into orbit and you end up right back in the same place. Not sure how you market that one, but probably not the way I just described it.

We attended my family reunion July. The event has been in the same place for over 20 years now. This year we finally got in trouble with the law for making *too much noise*. A band came out and played one evening so, technically, it was the band that got in trouble. We also experienced another first, cousin Mike reaching back into the basket at Mass. He 'claims' to have inadvertently dropped an important piece of paper in the basket. To which the reply was, "Oh, you mean money?" We offered him some important pieces of paper as a replacement.

In August, we traveled with my mom to the town of Morrill, Nebraska. You might be thinking, after Truth or Consequences, why would we ever go there? For another space related event, of course. This time it was the Solar Eclipse. Although not our original destination, Morrill turned out to be perfect. It had many locations to view the eclipse, was not over crowded, and was in the path of totality. So we setup a shady tent just south of town and watched the eclipse. Passing trains provided the background music. We setup in a parking lot with about 30 other cars, most from home state. While getting setup I kept asking "Where's the moon?" I assumed the moon would travel across the sky and we would see it as it approached the sun. I failed to realize the moon was already right next to the sun, so the sun was hiding it. Thankfully one of us put on our glasses and realized what was happening. It was quite an event to witness. We watched the sun get covered up, took off our glasses for a few minutes, and then watched the sun come completely out again before we left. Apparently we were the only ones interested in observing that long because we were the only people left in the parking lot. Getting home was a breeze! 5 hours after leaving NE we were eating dinner at the table.

As summer ended we were lucky enough to get to see Matthew Kelly, a dynamic Catholic speaker. His message was inspiring and we were charged with doing something for our faith. We chose to begin a Mass journal each week marking down one thing that inspired or moved us during the service that we want to reflect upon later. It has been great so far. Only a few eyes glare at us when we bring out our phones during Mass to write it down.

The beginning of football season brought about hopes of grandeur for our Broncos. These turned out to be false hopes as the season progressed. Not being able to choose 1 of 3 QBs really means you don't have any QBs. Still searching for our next John Elway... Maybe next year we can find him. In the meantime, Sundays are filled with extra prayers (and suffering).

Our final space event of the year was the Orionid Meteor Shower in October. The night we chose to watch was a new moon and a clear sky. The shower didn't start until around 1 AM, so we set our alarm, got up (can you believe it?), and decided to watch from the nearby open space at Standley Lake. It turns out there was a little too much ambient light. We caught glimpses of things that may or may not have been shooting stars. They may also have been airplanes or insects or just floaters. Next time we'll drive a little further.

We hosted Thanksgiving for some of Amy's family. In case you were wondering, we didn't make the turkey. The food was delicious and plentiful and the weather was glorious! The new layout of our house makes it much easier to keep guests well fed and safe. We no longer have a step down from our dining room to living room so no one fell over the edge this year. Always something to be thankful for during the holidays.

The weather continues to be amazing which has allowed me several extra months for golfing. Amy is always noting that she is not getting enough exercise so I invite her along each week to take a walk with me but she refuses for some reason saying that it is not "exercise". Sadly, she missed my greatest moment this year - a hole in one! Unfortunately, nobody else witnessed it either, but I promise - it was amazing!

We are heading to California for Christmas this year. We are off to Avila Beach near San Luis Obispo and then north to Napa Valley for the first time. We do hope to see more than smoke and raisins, and we pray for those who have been impacted by such horrible devastation.

We continue to enjoy our couples' group, Supper Club fun, the theatre, and most of all, time with family. It has been a difficult time for many in our neighborhood, country, and world this year. Our prayers are with all.

We have been blessed this year and hope that this season of reflection and happiness finds a place for you and yours. Have a very Merry Christmas and here's to an amazing 2018! If you are in the area - we would love to see you!

Love, Royce and Amy

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Merry Christmas