

## Goodbye 2016, Hello 2017!



Well, hey everybody. It's been a whirlwind year! I hope yours was ultimately full of love and life and goodness. There have been some difficult things on a global level, but the longer I live the more I realize I need to take my eyes off of the world stage (besides doing my civic duty) and focus on the local stage. We have the biggest impact in the world right around us, and ripples spread into ever-widening circles. I refuse to be frozen by fear. There is too much work to be done!

Speaking of work, I retired from IBM. I had a great gig there for 15 years. But it was getting more and more technical, and after trying to work successfully in 3 different technical environments, I called it quits. I need to produce and create. It felt like someone had tied my hands behind my back and attached a ball and chain to my leg. Excruciating. I do miss the web UI work, though. I was getting into web animation and responsive design (making a web page look good on all devices) and we finally got to drop accommodating older browsers.

My heart was torn, anyway. I keep being more and more pulled by the plants and the natural world – herbalism (my focus for this year is to finish up my studies that keep being put on the back burner) and gardening (I hope to have a farm “stand” at the end of my driveway this year). I also need to figure out how to maneuver all the laws of food production/having a business. But

that will come. I'm moving forward in this direction. We'll see what the future brings. It may only ever be a hobby/ministry. Only time will tell. Because I still like photography and writing and crafting...oh my! I will NEVER run out of things to do.

In the meantime, I am helping out at a local wellness bar. And doing some babysitting on the side.

Okay, enough about me! As I said, we had a great year. It was the year of weddings, for us. We had 4 – our daughter's, our "other" daughter's (my daughter's best friend, Erin), and our friends' daughter in January and then their son in September. What happy occasions to spend with friends and family!

And two more of Kelly's friends besides Erin got married. So fun seeing all these kids grown up and settling into their lives.

Here is a picture of our new blended family! (The wedding party is in this picture, too.)



Second gal from the left is my niece Carlene (some tall genes on Andy's side of the family). Fourth gal is Erin, who got married a month later, then Tracey and her ever-expanding family (she is having another baby in March), our parents, us, Kelly and Greg, Greg's parents, and on the far right is Greg's sister Kristina and Alex.

Speaking of Alex, earlier this year Alex started dating Caroline. We love her. And she is into words (an avid reader and an English teacher). She won my heart over the day we first met her when she ordered Red Raspberry Rage ice cream "because of the alliteration."



And speaking of love, Roby came from Italy to attend Kelly's wedding! Such a wonderful gal.



And, also, speaking of love. This guy.



Landon continues to delight all of us. He is such a joy. And quite expressive.



As for the rest of Landon's family, mom Tracey is still working as a surgical vet tech, dad Roberto is teaching tennis, and they still live in Norwalk, CT with their 3 kitties. And soon, baby girl Mahoney!

Back to Alex, he is still working at 9-Point Medical, in the finance department.

And Kelly is still working for the NYC Wine and Food Festival, while Greg works for Credit Suisse. They took some time off to go to Alaska for their honeymoon. The pictures Kelly kept sending us could make a person jealous!

Andy is still working hard at Reliance Engineering. He also has a little side vending machine business going. If you are local and your office wants a vending machine, give him a call!

So this year Andy competed again in the Senior Games. He started training at CrossFit in preparation for the high jump. And he wound up qualifying for the nationals in the high jump, long jump, and 200 meter race. He's going to compete in Alabama this summer in the jumping. We are going to rent an RV to go down there and see if we like traveling that way, in preparation for maybe

getting one ourselves in the future.



Andy continues to do CrossFit (he got hooked). So add that to tennis and basketball.

Me, I'm trying to get a regular yoga practice going. And my project this fall was to hike the Midstate Trail, some which goes through our town. It's 92 miles long, from the Northern border of Massachusetts to the Southern border, through the middle of the state. I'm hiking with a friend named Annie who has finished (she hiked a few sections closer to home before we started hiking together)! I did reach the end (with her), I just have a 12 mile Barre-to-Spencer section to finish up. And I got some micro-spikes to hopefully finish up this winter.



Hands raised in happiness, accomplishment, and celebration. That is my wish for you this coming year!

And let us all be the change we wish to see.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

PS I used Tracey's Christmas photo (I took it) at the top of this post. This would be our Christmas photo, taken by Kelly. This tells the story of our dogs, in a nutshell. Happy Holidays from Koda and Columbus.



