



Happy Holidays 2016

Well, it's certainly been an interesting year! We'll focus on the good parts.

We start the year with a family vacation on the island of Hawaii. Now that the girls are older, they can participate in a wider variety of activities. Angela takes Anya and Liya on a zipline near the sleepy town of Hawi, while Jan takes Bree on a hike in the Pololu Valley. Jan joins Liya for a snuba dive (like a scuba dive, but with a long snorkel hose) along a healthy reef in Kealahou Bay, while Angela and Bree do a regular snorkel. Liya did a school report about Volcanoes National Park, so we make a visit to the park to see its craters and lava tubes. The trip's capstone is a cold evening of stargazing at the Onizuka Center atop Mauna Kea.

Anya and two Debate Team friends gather their three families for dinner and a Parent Debate tournament. It's Moms vs. Dads; kids judge. The kids decide that the Moms clinch the proposition that the Chicken came before the Egg. The Dads' argument that dinosaur eggs predate chickens falls on deaf ears. (Much later in the year, Liya will participate in the Debate Team as well.)

Bree draws comics about a character named "Power Mom". In one strip, the father character helplessly bemoans, "We have no food!" Power Mom calmly replies, "Why don't we go to Starbucks Coffee?" Starbucks is Bree's favorite spot for a weekend breakfast. Most Saturdays, she creates an elaborate invitation for Jan to eat there: a code; a puzzle hunt; a questionnaire; an origami hexagon; or a Lego Starbucks diorama with a barista, cashier, patrons, and a tiny newspaper asking, "Starbucks for breakfast?"

We drive to Big White, BC, for our fifth year skiing with a group of other families from the girls' school. The group, about 20 families this time, gets bigger each year. During the week, acceptance decisions from Seattle's private high schools loom. Anya's happy to get into her top choice, a great school in walking distance!

Liya's 7th grade makes a class trip to New York City. By some miracle, a school alum scores the group tickets to the musical, *Hamilton*. The tickets are scattered throughout the theater — Liya and a friend end up sitting near Harrison Ford. Liya loves the musical. For the rest of the year, she listens to it constantly. ("Non-STOP", as the musical would have it.) For the school's annual Spring Concert, her grade sings the musical's complex opening number, "Alexander Hamilton". By then they all know it by heart, and nail it.

Anya's getting better and better at Ultimate Frisbee. Bree's become interested in learning how to throw and catch, and Anya becomes a good coach for her. Liya, for her part, shows Bree how to climb up into the big magnolia tree in our front yard — and how to carefully lower herself down from the lowest branch. The tree's bark is a bit dusty, which Bree doesn't like. She gets swimming goggles and wears those while climbing. She looks like a tree-climbing superhero.

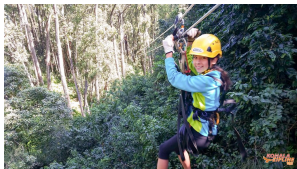
Jan does some final training trips in preparation for a big summer hike. In April, he and Liya backpack up the gorgeous Palouse Canyon in Eastern Washington. Despite the desert climate, they find an overhang sheltering a thick crop of edible miner's lettuce, making for a rare backpacking treat: salad. Bree joins Jan in May for three days of backpacking along the Washington coast in Olympic National Park. The coast's notoriously stormy weather holds off for the weekend, and they have adventures exploring tide pools, spotting sea otters, playing with beach flotsam, scrambling over steep headlands, and watching sunsets. In June, Jan and his brother Chris take their mom, Lyn, backpacking in California's isolated and underrated Lassen Volcanic National Park. They're startled when a curious bear wanders into their campsite, but he's friendly enough and just ambles off.

We celebrate our 18th (!) anniversary with a long weekend on Salt Spring Island in British Columbia. We stay at a cozy B&B near the town of Ganges Harbor, which turns out to have a fun Saturday market, good restaurants, and a harbor we explore on a kayak tour. One of the harbor's private islands has a large warning sign with big pictures of poisonous snakes — none of which actually live on the island, but the sign sure keeps trespassers away! We enjoy a short hike up Mt. Erskine, a park famous for its "fairy doors": teeny wooden doors affixed to rocks by local artists. We find three of them.

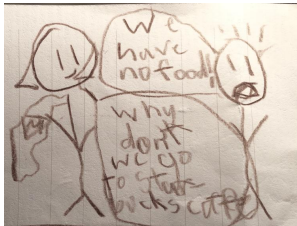
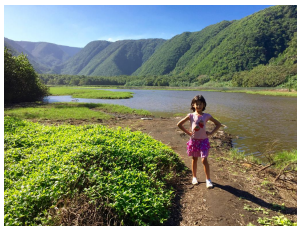
Anya makes a week-long school trip to England, including London and Bath.

Jan's high school friend Peter and his partner James visit us for a weekend. We take them to an Escape-the-Room event with our girls and our friends Bruce, Chris, and Laura. It looks like we're easily going to solve the room in time, when a secret door opens to reveal a second room full of puzzles. Rats! We also drive with Peter and James up to Whidbey Island and Deception Pass State Park.

JANUARY



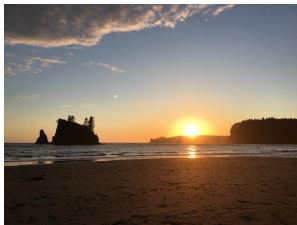
FEBRUARY



MARCH



APRIL



MAY



JUNE



Bree presents her North Carolina poster at the 2nd grade State Convention. She entices onlookers with donuts from Krispy Kreme, which she happily explains was founded in the state. The donuts were, in fact, why she picked that state.

Anya has her last day at her K-8 school! It's also the last day all three girls will ever attend the same school at the same time. Anya graduates in a nice ceremony at the Seattle Children's Theater.

JULY



Jan's business partnership, Component Kitchen, lands a contract with Google to lead an open-source project for web developers. Jan's happy to work on things that interest him, and to get the new project off the ground. He's keeping his fingers crossed that Google's sponsorship will continue through 2017.

Anya: "When are we going to get a cat again?" We bring home Mojo and Moxie, two male Ocicats. The brothers are cute and fun to play with. This mostly makes up for their hopping up on counters. Anya: "When are we going to get a puppy?"

Sabriya turns nine! The new kittens are a big hit at her birthday party sleepover.



Angela starts a new call as English ministry pastor at First Taiwanese Presbyterian Church on Mercer Island. She leads the English worship service, chairs the church board, and keeps an eye on outreach.

After two years of preparation, Jan leaves home for a 5-week hike across Washington State on the Pacific Crest Trail, a total of 515 miles (829 km). Jan's brother Chris joins him for the first week, crossing from Oregon into Washington over the Columbia River on the Bridge of the Gods (seen at the end of the movie *Wild*). When they reach the Mt. Adams area, Jan continues on his own, stopping off the trail every week or so to rest and enjoy hot water. (It is hard to express just how amazing hot water is.) He can only carry a week's worth of food, so Angela, Lyn, and Jan's friend Bruce take turns meeting him with resupply boxes. The trek is fun, but also far and away the hardest physical thing he's ever done. It's one thing to hike a long day of 18–22 miles (29–35 km), and another thing entirely to do the same distance again the next day, and the next. The hike goes as well as Jan could have hoped for: no injuries or illness, nothing breaks, and he doesn't get lost. The few miserable days of rain only serve to make the sunny days more appreciated. A special treat: retrieving geocached messages left for him in the wilderness last year by Bree and Liya! And since many people will ask: Jan sees a grand total of two (friendly) bears. The hike ends at a nondescript road in British Columbia's Manning Provincial Park, where Angela and the girls pick him up and bring him back to civilization and the miracle that is hot running water. You can see photos and stories from the trip at bit.ly/jan2016pct.

For the fifth year in a row, we spend a week at a family camp in the Lake Tahoe area. Anya starts waterskiing outside the wake, Liya celebrates her 13th birthday at camp, and Bree spends much of the week in the cabin with a fever. Jan's had enough of hiking for a while, but he and Angela do enjoy a short day hike up to Half Moon Lake in Desolation Wilderness.

Bree enters 3rd grade, and gets the same great teacher Anya and Liya had. Liya moves up to 8th grade, her last at the school. She runs cross-country for the school team. Anya begins high school with 9th grade, and surprises us all by joining the school's newly-formed cheer squad.

Bree designs and sews a lot of doll outfits. One evening, she hands out fliers: "A Strawberry Shortcake Halloween Fashion Show will be held in Bree's room at 7:30". She constructs a doll catwalk for the show, and arranges lighting. Jan provides a techno music soundtrack. Bree brings out 8 dolls showing off a Fall/Halloween collection; some dolls change outfits between turns. At the end, the dolls and the designer, Bree, appear for a final round of applause.

Anya turns 15. Early next year: driving lessons.

Bree researches civil rights activist Rosa Parks for a class project. She creates a poster, then dresses up as Parks and sits perfectly still for a living "Wax Museum" exhibition. She models her outfit and pose after a famous picture of Parks sitting in protest on a Montgomery city bus.

Liya develops a series of drawings featuring coffeeardvarks: aardvarks with a fondness for coffee. Friends express interest, so Liya creates an online store at coffeeardvark.com selling t-shirts and mugs. Essentially everything you can see on the site is Liya's work: the drawings, the organization, and the text.

One evening while we're both out or busy, Bree takes care of things on her own. She leaves notes: "I made my lunch! Please come check on me." We're delighted.

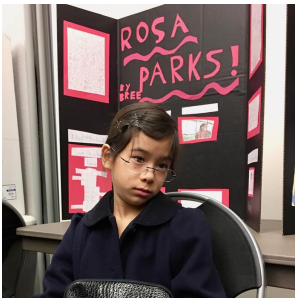
Liya applies to the same high school as Anya. Since Liya's a sibling, she receives the school's decision early: she's been accepted, and will join their class of 2021.

Merry Christmas to you, and a Happy New Year in 2017!

AUGUST



SEPTEMBER



OCTOBER

COFFEEAARDVARK



NOVEMBER



DECEMBER