

Happy 2016

Wishing you the best!
The Pochlmans



Happy New Year, All!

We left off last year with George in his 21 day "voluntary confinement" following work in Liberia. All went well -- we ate, drank, watched lots of basketball and did jigsaw puzzles -- and he counts the two-month experience as one of his greatest life privileges.

Actually, he finished the last 3 days of his confinement, along with Christin, in a side room of a courthouse in Breckenridge, supervised by Colorado Public Health. A year earlier, both had witnessed a very serious snowboarder caused accident rendering a six year old comatose and in a helicopter headed to Denver. After what turned into three days of testimony instead of the half-day suggested, the snowboarder was found guilty of wrongful injury -- actually the first case brought to trial in Colorado of its kind. Anyway, not to miss an opportunity to ski, George stayed on for an additional few days, finally free, and enjoyed wonderful Colorado skiing in late January with Christin and family.

I was at home continuing to nurse our now tripod dog, Khaki. Yes, she survived her surgery, her rehabilitation, including acupuncture, and is here to tell about it! She requires lots of tender-care, but, yes, Khaki lives on into her 14th year.

George managed to get back to Colorado a couple of more trips in late winter for skiing. I pronounced that I, the martyr I am, would stay back with Khaki IF George financed a Christmas holiday for all ten of us to ski together later in the year. More about that to follow. In addition, George flew back for Cam's spring break and drove the 7- Eleven developmental bicycle team bus to Moab where he helped supervise this great group of aspiring athletes.

In May, we left for twenty-three days in Turkey. We loved Istanbul as much as any foreign city we have visited and extended our stay in the city on both sides of an OAT tour. Once joined up with the group, we had a fabulous trip that included Izmir, a four day gulet boat trip on the Mediterranean, onward to Konya and Cappadocia. We are happy to have gotten this one bucket-lister in before so much conflict and upheaval.

We returned to a long, hot, NC summer that included days with younger grandkids, Nelle, now 12, and George, now 6. Mary Bennett continued her 11th year as coordinator of "Helping Kids with Hemiplegia -- UNC" camp. And, there was the annual trip to the NC coast with Jon and Mary Bennett, lots of days at the pool -- we even slipped in a trip to Asheville. Oh, I forget to mention that George was away two weeks with Cam again, this time in Tahoe for the National Bicycling Championships. He drove the bus one way; it broke down while there -- yup, it's still there, but they arrived back at DEN in a rental van with six kids and Christin, hauling a trailer, in time to avoid a second 24 hour cycle of rental. Better them than me!

Later in August, we met Christin, Lindley, now 19 and a second year Anthropology major at CU, and Cameron, now 17 and a senior at Boulder HS, for the Pro-Challenge Bicycle Race, starting in Steamboat. Great fun to follow, we moved about beautiful Colorado in order to see bicyclist out in the morning and in in the afternoon. The Bellians are really involved in bicycling since moving to Colorado -- Christin chairs the board of Boulder Junior Bicycling -- and many of the pro-cyclist actually make Boulder stays with the family. Both kids had to leave the Challenge early as Cam started his school year and Lindley went back for rush where she pledged Tri-Delt.

It was back to school here in Durham for Nelle, starting Middle school, and George, in Kindergarten. Nelle took up trumpet and chorus and she is doing really well with both, besides making some great grades. George, adorably ornery, has not yet declared any particular fine arts interest that rises above Star Wars. Ask him anything!

We left on the 18th of September for a birthday and anniversary celebration in Paris prior to beginning a 108 mile walk in the Ardeche region of France. You may recall that we walked the Portuguese Camino de Santiago last year and we got hooked on walking vacations. This time, we used an agency that provided support by booking an inn for one's stay at each day's destination. They also moved bags -- yahoo, no backpacks. It was spectacular and we made it, walking each day between 10 to 16 miles with the promise of amazing food awaiting us. Many nights we were the only guests in the hotel and dining room as late September and early October are at the limits of the walking season there, but we did all 108 miles without seeing another walk-thru hiker. Sometimes, however, we would just look at each other and say, "Can you think of anything, ANYTHING, we haven't yet talked about?"

Then, it was a week on the Loire with the Hendersons, good friends from here in Durham. Previously, we had done Canal du Midi, so we were easily drawn in on the planning for barging in wine country. It was lots of fun -- and we ate, off-season for a bargain, in four different Michelin restaurants while traveling on the cheap on our 42 foot barge.

Back in mid-October, we settled in for a fall to be remembered in NC. Every day, until after New Years, was Indian summer. George continued his volunteer work on the NC Mountain to Sea Trail where he oversees a 58-mile section (including negotiating for land rights); we both cook meals and stock shelves at Urban Ministry, the homeless shelter here in Durham; George bikes and exercises; I plan wine events for one of the Duke Campus Club interest groups; we puzzle; we walk; we go out for dinner; we have our little grandkids visit frequently. And, we enjoy weekend gatherings with Jon and family, right her in Durham. Now in his 12th year with Research Triangle Institute, as a medical anthropologist, we are glad his career brought them -- and us -- to Durham.

Then, December. George flew to Denver to stay with Cameron while Christin and Ken travelled to Hawaii. Yes, Cam and George skied the first weekend of December. And, Cam, who started his own beer brew over Thanksgiving, and George did beer tastings, splitting a bottle each night! Did I mention that Cam is a very creative and curious student? Let me jump ahead to say that this kind of inquiry, making beer, got him an *Early Decision* acceptance to Colorado College, a great liberals arts school in Colorado whose curriculum is one class for seventeen days, complete with a project or paper, before moving on to your next. He and we all are proud.

Then, on Christmas Eve, all Poehlmans gathered in Boulder at Ken and Christin's. Yes, Santa managed to find Nelle and young George in Colorado, and his spirit existed in the hearts of each of us as we celebrated good fortune and family. After the traditional holiday dinner on Friday, Christmas evening, we headed to bed for an early Saturday departure to Breckenridge for five days. All ten of us were able to ski together for the first time.

And, our one attempt to be profound and influential is to ask that you hold in your hearts the plight of millions of refugees and migrants who seek to be surrounded by loving others – the kind of love and generosity that we all know, without question. What we do take for granted in this country! Peace.

Betty and George