

Lasley Holiday Letter - 2016

At the end of last year's letter, we optimistically thought we'd have the bathroom reno completed by Jan 1. Well it took a couple of weeks longer than that due to a recalcitrant shower door, but it's done now and it's as wonderful as we hoped.

At the end of January, Dan went to Nashville for a big industry trade show. Laura came along for the music, food, and boots. Dan successfully launched 5 new products to meet a new UL requirement, which put them ahead of most everyone else in the business. It also started the most difficult period in Dan's career, as one of those products had a hiccup. While it was much better than the previous device, there was one minor problem that became a major headache. After losing sleep for a few months, the issue was resolved, and Dan could move on to the next project.

In February, Jacqui and B9 came for late Christmas. Since both were working retail, it was difficult for them to align their schedules, but eventually we had a delightful weekend. Later that month, Ditto came to visit. Since it was the same weekend as a Back to the Well gig, he got to see us perform on stage. He took some nice videos.

Ben continues to succeed at Redfin, while Yanessa brings quality to the PlanGrid team. They continue to explore the great outdoors, including a grand tour of the Northern Rockies in Idaho and Montana.

Later in the Spring, Laura completed 4 years on our HOA board, having accomplished a lot. Her final task was to recruit some new members, and she left the board knowing it was in good hands.

Laura's parents came to visit one weekend, and we went to Florida to visit Dan's Mom two weeks later. They are almost as busy as we are!

Dan's next trade show was in Las Vegas, and Laura tagged along again. After the work was done, we stayed for a few days to hike several parks.

Part of Dan's job is to visit partner companies who either have a tricky situation or are interested in a new product design. This year he visited Phoenix, Seattle (twice!), and Chattanooga. Wherever he goes, he tries to make time for dinner with friends in the area. One consequence of these long flights was a really sore back. So Dan was off to PT (again!), where he learned to swim on the floor, along with other strange - but effective - activities.

In June, Laura and Dan escaped to Bermuda for a long weekend. What did we do? We rented a Hobie Cat and skimmed along the western coastline and the Great Sound. It was a pleasant way to relax for a few days.

Our band has been building a solid following, and we booked 5 gigs over the summer. A few were soft, but most were excellent!

As you may recall, Jacqui had decided that vet school wasn't for her, and she spent much of the year exploring other careers. She looked into Physical Therapy, as she had spent much of her youth working with PTs for various soccer and wrestling injuries. She enjoyed catching up with those PTs, but decided that it wasn't the career she wanted. She also came to realize that while she was good as a retail salesperson, the store structure and dynamics were not to her liking. At some point, she remembered going to work with Dan almost as often as she went with Laura. She started to look into Engineering, and met with a very helpful advisor at Worcester Polytech (WPI) and they settled on Mechanical Engineering. During the second half of the year, she has taken 6 classes, acing them all (including Thermo!). We anticipate that she will be accepted into the Masters program for Spring 2017. If all goes well, she will graduate in June 2018.

This summer, B9 was promoted at T-Mobile and given his own store. As indicated by his rapid rise through the ranks, Ben has evolved his success with customer service into solid management and leadership skills.

In July, we were smacked in the face with the fact that our cohort is getting older, even if we are not. Our good friend David had a minor stroke on July 4th. Since he was intending to host the Riverside Jam a few weeks later, we thought that we'd have to cancel. However, a few of his friends local friends were able to organize a benefit for the same weekend, and since we all had

hotel rooms, we went up and jammed on David's behalf. There were many fewer musicians - just the core group, but the turn-out was impressive.

On top of all of that, we still got in a lot of sailing on our catamaran "Sonja". You may recall that "Hilfy" suffered some hull rot at the end of last season, and we bought a slightly newer version of the same boat, this one with red trim. Hence "Sonja". We sailed almost every weekend day that we were in town and not gigging, plus a few weekday evenings. We were in the water before Memorial Day, and our last sail was on Oct 18th, when it was 78F! We love the extended season on the Chesapeake.



In August, we went to Milwaukee for a luau - complete with hula dancers! This occasional gathering of fraternity friends is a lot of fun.

As mentioned last year, being part of the local music scene has introduced us to several really good bands, and many really nice performers. So when the local radio station started their annual House Band competition, we knew 3 bands in the running. We had fun going to the battle of the bands. Maybe next year we'll give it a go.

Laura continues to encounter and overcome challenges at her work. Her core team is now very cohesive, and they receive praise from many sources. According to the "no good deed goes unpunished" rules, Laura was recruited to help implement the new EMR for the multi-hospital

organization. If you've ever been involved in something like this (EMR, MRP, or other large enterprise software system), you know that the task is huge, but it's better to be involved than to let someone else install it for you.

At the end of the month, we went to Alaska. We enjoyed 5 days of bright sunshine, the first they'd seen in 6 weeks, which meant that Denali was as majestic as can be. Oh, and we were almost on a first name basis with a grizzly. The trip was relaxing and exhilarating at the same time.

In September, Dan retired from refereeing. A combination of changes in the local referee organization, and a lack of free time (see above) meant that something had to go. Dan had started back in 2002, and he will miss it. But if he ever decides to spend more weekends involved in soccer, he's pretty sure it will be as a coach, not as a ref. And of course we are still playing on Tuesday nights; our team even won a playoff game!

We went up to Exeter for the annual alumni gathering, which was enjoyable despite the recent changes and challenges that the school is facing. In October, Laura went back up to see our good friend Connie receive the John Phillips Award for outstanding service outside of the Academy. Connie is a renowned researcher in vaccine-based cures for cancers, and her story is amazing.

With no further renovations planned, the last update to the house was to add some artwork. In addition to some colorful scifi prints, we added two commissioned paintings, one of mountains, and one panoramic seascape, complete with Hilfy sailing by. These were done by friends of ours from way back, which makes them extra special.

In November, we went to two scifi conventions, one that was strictly artwork, and the other that included authors and all those weird con-activities. We got to reconnect with some authors and artists that we knew, and we were introduced to some new people as well. Oh, and the Cubs won the World Series!



We decided to host both Thanksgiving and the Black Friday Music Jam at our house. David has almost fully recovered from his stroke. He says that he can still feel the differences, though they were hard for us to observe. Thanksgiving dinner was wonderful, with 6 friends from the late 70s enjoying turkey and relaxed companionship late into the evening. The jam was fun as well, with a smaller group who could explore songs in more depth.

As December arrives, Laura will be off to DC for a conference, and then we'll settle in for a quiet Holiday season. The band is on hiatus until January, but we'll go out to see our friends play.



Who knows what next year will bring? We'll keep gigging, sailing, and playing soccer. We haven't made any formal travel plans, but I'm sure we'll go somewhere, sometime. If you are near where we end up, we'll be sure to look you up. If you find yourself in the Philly-Wilmington-Baltimore area, let us know - we'd love to see you.

We wish you and yours another year of health and happiness.

Love, Dan and Laura

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