

The Skinny

TECHNICALLY-STILL-WINTER EDITION

(more photos at bit.ly/TheFullSkinny2018)

March 11, 2018

from the desk of **Peter Kauffmann**

(the Somewhat delayed, Kind of Intermittent Newsletter for the New Year)

Hello again! Long time no see!

Yes, as you probably noticed I didn't get a newsletter out last year. Sorry about that. There have been a lot of Big Life Changes going on, and with all the other things going on I never quite got the time to sit down and write this thing out. Good thing I worked the word "intermittent" into the name, I guess. I'm not finishing the writeup until March either, so the "delayed" part is integral as usual as well. However, this edition covers both 2016 AND 2017, so there's *plenty* to talk about.

Anyway, let's get on with putting some news in this newsletter! It's been a pretty action-packed 24 months since we last talked, so please forgive my indulgence with the length of this update, which still all but cuts out anything travel-related. To see the unabridged version (with TWICE the photos!) head over to:

<http://bit.ly/TheFullSkinny2018>



I promise you won't have to wait for the stars to align for the next one!

Big News: I Moved to Tennessee

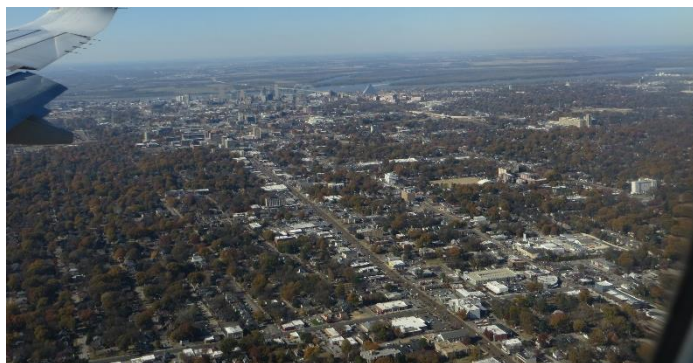
Far and away the biggest development of 2016 was that I moved to Memphis, Tennessee, to finally live in the same town as Julia after far too many years of a long-distance relationship.

In addition to having the corporate headquarters of FedEx, International Paper, and AutoZone, Memphis is also a hotbed of medical devices, so Julia's experience in orthopedics and biomechanics fits well into that. She's been working as a product development engineer here for a few years, designing ankle replacement systems.



Julia and I are pictured here in our natural habitat: on a camping trip

We're currently sharing an apartment in Midtown Memphis. Picture the funky, old neighborhood in your town with a bunch of restaurants and an arts scene and that's pretty much where we live, populated by a surprisingly large number of old hippies living in some gorgeous 1920s-era houses.



Memphis: The Bluff City, and home to an enormous pyramid

Long story short is that my "new" address is:

32 S Tucker Street, Apt 6
Memphis, TN 38104

(And note that I've been here for over a year now, so if you sent me a card at my DC address this holiday season, it probably didn't get forwarded to Tennessee. Whoops.)

If you ever find yourself in Memphis, or happen to be crossing the Mississippi on I-40, please look us up!

Walking in Memphis

Being here for a while now has given us an opportunity to hit up most of the major attractions, like Beale Street, the world's largest Bass Pro Shops (in the Pyramid, a former basketball arena), and the new Harahan Bridge ped/bike crossing over the Mississippi. We're still saving Graceland and the National Civil Rights Museum for when somebody comes to visit, though.



Eagle-eyed readers will notice this photo is of Bourbon Street. Beale Street is the same but smaller, and I don't have a good Beale photo.

As you've probably heard, Memphis is well known for music, particularly soul music. We have a number of music-themed museums to see, including ones devoted to Sun Studios, Gibson Guitars, and the Stax Record Company. All are worth a stop.

Memphis is also particularly well known for food, especially barbecue. There's a strong culture of preparing your own barbecue, particularly at the World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest during the Memphis in May festival. Cousin Scott happened to be passing through town during the 2017 edition and got a sense of just how huge it is.

As a result, there is no particular "Memphis style" barbecue, and you can find just about any style you want here. I mentioned during the Jan 2015 newsletter that Julia took me on a barbecue tour during our first visit, and it was AMAZING. Well, now that I live here I actually don't get around to as many restaurants as I'd like, so please do come visit so that I have an excuse to eat unhealthily more often.

In terms of more typical day-to-day activities, there's plenty of recreation to do in town. We're fortunate enough to live 3 blocks south of Overton Park, a huge forested oasis. It's home to both the Memphis Zoo and a fantastic free 3-season outdoor concert series. We also live in one of the city's arts districts, so Julia's been nice enough to let me tag along with her friends to the theater.



The whole neighborhood comes out in force for Levitt Shell concerts

The main downside to Memphis for somebody who loves hiking in the mountains is that it's really quite flat. However, there are more than a few state parks and forests nearby, and that's helped me get my fix while we plan a bigger backpacking trip to the Ozarks, 4-5 hours away.

Old Job, New Job

Moving to Memphis also meant changing jobs. I was sad to say goodbye to the crew at Gorove/Slade after five great years, but I was fortunate to find a similar posting with Barge Design Solutions, a civil engineering firm headquartered in Nashville.

Gorove/Slade: The End of an Era

I had a great 2016 with G/S. The projects remained compelling, and I got to take on still more management responsibilities, including attending fortnightly coordination meetings at DDOT for a study of on-street parking usage that eventually counted and analyzed 105,000 cars.

I could have seen myself staying there indefinitely had I not had a compelling personal reason for making the move. Fortunately, everybody there was understanding, and luckily my farewell period got to overlap with some fun end-of-

summer socials. I'm going to miss all of my friends there (and in DC more generally), but I am glad to be able to have opportunities to come back to visit.



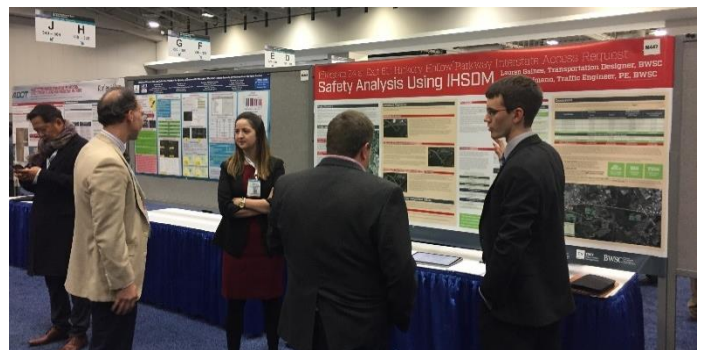
My last week coincided with summer teambuilding: go karts!

Barge Design Solutions: Same same, but different

Barge is a larger, full-service civil engineering firm, and I'm part of the 4-person Traffic group. We're split across 3 of the firm's 13 offices, so it's a diverse group. At the same time, nearly everybody else in the Memphis office is in a different business unit, meaning the days when I'm slammed everybody else leaves at 5pm and when they're really busy I feel weird leaving at... well, actually 6:15's about the earliest I usually leave anyway.

Only a small portion of the work that my group does is in Memphis, so that's given me the chance to travel to other cities in the region every couple of weeks, mainly to Nashville but I've also been to Chattanooga twice along with a trip each to Columbus OH and Columbus GA for project meetings.

The company also sent me to DC for TRB, the big annual transportation research conference, in January 2017. A big part of the reason I could go was the fact that I'm able to couch-surf with my DC contacts, so thanks to everybody who hosted me! While there, a coworker and I presented a poster about predicting future crashes along a corridor that the firm was designing. It was a great opportunity to share how we used data to advocate for safer design choices.



Lauren's and my poster from TRB 2017: <https://goo.gl/LCWLC4>

Back in the Memphis office, the dynamic is distinctly different from DC, but it's enjoyable. Getting to know more people born and bred in the south has absolutely helped to dispel whatever stereotypes I had before. I am pretty sure I'm the only person in my office who wishes they had a smaller car, though...

The company is also supportive of my extra-curricular work activities. In February 2017 I took (and passed!) the Professional Traffic Operations Engineer exam, giving me a second level of certification on top of my PE license and hopefully proving to clients that maybe I actually do know what I'm talking about. I also attended a leadership development course through the New Memphis Institute, a booster group for fostering and keeping young talent in the area.



All in all, the PTOE was just another frame for the wall

Travel Updates

This is normally the part where I devote 2+ columns to the year's flagship trip as a "centerfold" of sorts, but having two years between updates changes that a bit since there have been not one, not two, but FIVE weeklong trips since that time.

And since the write up for those trips wound up doubling the usual length of the newsletter, my editor (thanks, Mom!) has wisely advised me to leave that out of the mainstream edition. So instead, check out the digital edition for more details (and photos) about these excellent expeditions:

<http://bit.ly/TheFullSkinny2018>

Hawaii: Kalalau Trail & the Big Island

Hiking and some R&R in the 50th State with the Shapiros



Kalalau Valley: absolutely worth the terrifying cliffside trail

Christmas in California: Death Valley & Joshua Tree NP

Checking off some more national parks with my mom and Brad



A whole week of stark and otherworldly beauty

Thailand: Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Ao Nang, and Phuket

Cultural attractions and natural beauty with Mallory and Kevin



Also: elephants

Canada: Banff National Park, with a bit of Jasper & Yoho too

Gobsmackingly gorgeous mountains with Julia's mom & family



And, for a limited time only: Glaciers!

Arizona: Thanksgiving in Prescott feat. the Grand Canyon

My mom's new town is a short drive from a *bunch* of hiking



Plus, Julia got to come this time. I think she enjoyed it.

The Lightning Round

There were a lot of other happenings from the year and not enough column inches to do them justice, so here's a rundown:

- Attended a taping of two celebrity Jeopardy! episodes at Constitution Hall in DC with friends old and new(er)
- Visited the White House TWICE, once for the spring Garden Tour and once to see the Canadian PM's arrival ceremony (thanks Alex and Daniel for tickets!)
- Only one wedding this year, in Southport, NC
- Camped overnight in Shenandoah NP with Julia and saw TWO black bears within 100', one from the car and one skirting the edge of our campsite (!)
- Returned to the Dolly Sods in WV for a long weekend camping over Father's Day with newly-minted fathers Haninah and Lee
- Wandered around the US Capitol after-hours using my ID from my role as a traffic sub-sub-subconsultant, including seeing the June 2016 Democrat "sit-in"
- Spent Thanksgiving 2016 and Christmas 2017 in Richmond with the Kauffmann clan
- Visiting New Orleans with the Shapiros over Memorial Day 2017, including liberal use of the City's streetcar system and a fascinating history-based cocktail tour
- The annual fixtures of an extended Fourth of July vacation with Julia's mom's family in NC and Labor Day with college friends in Johnson City, TN
- Several return trips to DC, including visiting the relocated Foamhenge and seeing some wild art exhibits, most notably the Kusama exhibit at the Hirshhorn and Wonder at the Renwick
- More Star Wars, including making costumes for the premiere of Rogue One (probably our favorite of the series?) and also Last Jedi with Julia. Saw each 4+ times.
- Drove 7 hours round trip to Hopkinsville, KY to see the Total Eclipse of the Heart Sun. Totality was easily Top 3 on my Most Amazing Things I Have Ever Seen list, even with

all those vacations this year. Mark your calendars for the next one on April 8, 2024; whatever it takes to get in the totality band is WORTH IT.

- I performed in a podcast about strange goings-on in a (fictional) Appalachian town written by my friend DJ! The full season is out now wherever fine podcasts are ~~sold~~ free and at LonesomePinePodcast.com
- I FOLLOWED THE WEINERMOBILE HOME FROM WORK
- Julia organized some awesome events for my 30th birthday; including an escape room and high-test go-karts around my actual birthday and a subsequent COMPLETE SURPRISE second weekend with college friends during an otherwise unrelated trip to Chicago
- Plus, gradually working my way into more social events in Memphis courtesy of Julia's very accepting friend group

In Memoriam: Sprocket C. Kauffmann, 2000-2016

For those of you that are wondering, Sprocket did not make the move, having passed away in August at age 15. He was a Good Kitty and a good friend during our time in DC. Fortunately for me, there is a cat shelter a few blocks away called the House of Mews (natch) where I can go to get my kitty fix without running afoul of our apartment complex's animal restrictions.



Conclusion

Thanks for sticking with me! I'm already several months behind schedule on this edition, so I'll keep this brief and stick to what I've said in years past: be sure to have a great 2018 and try not to get in too much trouble!



PS: We have 7 (!!!) gerbils now. Pictured here are the 4 boys, in a pile.