May the force be with you!

While loons have infiltrated our political process and public anxiety regarding recent local and overseas events has begun to rise it is time for a diversion of galactic proportions. A grand cinematic illusion of romance and action set in a galaxy far far away. In a year filled with toy drones and exploding hoverboards, Kathy, Eric, and family have had another fascinating?? year.

Sis (12)

Courtesy of a recent growth spurt Sissy began the year by finally being able to reach the rear hatch of the van. At first she would need a running jump, then just a leap, and now on the tip of her toes she can calmly reach up and then shut the hatch.

Kidnap! - Our new extremely friendly rescue dog, Blue, licked all of the hair off of Sissy's ???? American Girl doll. Kathy scheduled time at the American Girl hospital using the official admission form. Kathy and Sis then packed ???? in a comfortable med-evac transportation pod (box), and shipped her off the the hospital where somewhere during the journey, she fell into the hands to the undisclosed assailants and vanished without a trace. Sissy fretted for weeks awaiting word of ????'s status or demise. After several months, Sissy’s concern over ????? unfortunate demise had begun to wane, when suddenly ????? appeared on our doorstep in a new transportation pod with a sincere apology from the hospital for the mixup and delay. She had obviously been well cared for as her hair had completely re-grown and appeared just like new.

Christian(14)

In all families and households there are little events that signal transitions like passing a certain milepost on a familiar roadtrip. Not one to shy away from sibling competition Christian had his own growth spurt. As he came bounding down the stairs one early morning he hit his head on the doorway at the bottom of the stairs knocking him ass over teakettle and landing him in a grumbling pile in the hallway. A sudden and stern communiqué that growing older brings both unbounded opportunities as well as risks and responsibilities. Fortunately, the headache resulting from Christian's encounter with the stairway door was short-lived, because he received a full drum set from his uncle Paul as a ????? present. Christian, who is attending Roosevelt also faced another conflict playing both on the freshman football team and also in the school band.

Paul and Thunder (20+)

Paul started out the year by getting engaged to his girlfriend, “Thunder”. She is also a musician and assisted him in putting together a band. The first thing that Paul discovered that the hardest thing about a band is not the many hours of practice, or the booking of gigs, but rather managing the personalities in order to keep a band together. He has continued his involvement in the “Vera Project” working toward being a “sound engineer”. With his band on hold, he put his knowledge to work scoring a ticket to the “Burning Man” festival and then traveled with Thunder to California to earn a living busking of the streets of Los Angeles.

Torie/Stephen

While much of the country has been basking in spring like weather the Pacific Northwest has experience mush heavier than average rainfall. The heavy rains have resulted in downed trees, swollen river, and washed out roads. Toria and her husband, Stephen, have been living out beyond the suburbs on the bank of the Sultan tributary to the Skykomish river. Not only did they have a front yard view of the surging river but also having the hiway washed away. After a summer of fun on the river they are moving back into the city of Everett.

Stanley

After years of living the college life Stanley graduated from with a chemistry degree from the University of Washington. Eric cajoled him into going through commencement ceremony with 8000 of his closest buddies. The graduation ceremony divides the graduates up into four streams with a dean of the appropriate college congratulating each graduate and handing them a fancy diploma with a promise of the diploma arriving shortly in the mail. Even with such an assembly line approach it takes nearly two hours, plus another hour listening to politicians in the blazing June sun. Stanley is now employed doing real chemistry stuff on a daily basis.

Chris

Chris picked the rainy month of December to rebuild the front porch which had developed a rotted spot after exposure to 25 years of Seattle weather. Much of the front porch was completed in two days, but now needs to be coated with an elastomeric surface that must cure in temperatures exceeding 50o F. Not too many of those in the month of December so a heating system has been devised to bring the project to closure.

Alicia

After a protracted illness, Alicia passed away in October. One of her life goals was to live longer than her own mother who had died when she was young. She met that goal by more than a year but was still taken far too soon.

Kathy

Kathy slightly intrigued by the advertisement for flying trapeze lessons offered downtown returned from the fanciful side and decided to rather focus on something more practical like painting her van as an artcar. Kathy has already painted one Westfalia with a mountainside, waterfall, and a meadow and another that bears a striking resemblance to Charlie Brown's shirt, or is it Pekachoo, or maybe something else. She has now begun painting her van as Charlotte's Web. It is covered with silvery-white spider webs which spell out words associated with the story and lots of small to medium size colored flowers. Children stop and ask her about it all the time and it gives their parents a chance to promote the book and reading in general.

When not working on her van Kathy planned out another trip to Scotland with the Northwest Junior Bagpipe and Drum Band in which Christian and Sis participate. Eric and Kathy are now old-hands at this having made two prior trips to the World Pipe Band Championships when Paul was a member of the band. The band did exceptionally well taking first place in their division during qualifying rounds and sixth place overall. Following side trips to Sterling, Falkirk, and the Edinburgh fringe festival and Military Tattoo, the grand finale was to ride the Jacobite (Harry Potter) steam train between Fort William and Mallaig, gateway to the Isle of Skye.

Unfortunately due to flooding and ticketing snafu's Eric was force to go to plan B (thank goodness there is always a plan B). The alternate plan was to catch the train from Glasgow to London, then ride the Eurostar Chunnel Train from London to Paris, spend a full day at Disneyland Paris, site see the next day in Paris, and then make the return trip back through London to Glasgow. Seems simple enough.

The trip from Glagow to London, under the English Channel to Paris, and then on the Paris commuter exress (RER) train to the hotel fascinating and filled with wondrous sites, but thankfully uneventful. We woke up early the following morning and took the RER two quick stops to EuroDisney. Having somehow dodged and avoided any rainfall during our three weeks in Scotland (and incredible feat), the weather made up for lost time as the rain poured down in the early morning forcing us away from the rides and into the fabulous animations and studio displays housed inside. Kathy and Eric were absolutely fascinated while Sis and Christian took a somewhat less passionate view of the exhibits counting the minutes before the rain abated and they were able to climb onto their first "spin and puke" ride. By mid morning the rain had tapered to a light mist before the sun broke out warning the air to a beautiful 80 degree day. Chistian and Sis were able to ride all day, even riding with Eric and Kathy on the Pirates of the Caribbean and Ratatouille (so French, so amazing) indoor boat rides. Dinner, the Magical Musical Parade, and LaserLight display and Fireworks at the Sleeping Beauty castle rounded out the day. Next morning was sightseeing day with the Eiffel Tower at the top of the list, then lunch at a Parisian cafe before beginning the return trip. Eric, who always obsesses over being a little early for major connections, especially when there are security checks in a foreign country and potentials for significant delays, assured that we arrived in the mega Guar de Nord station about 40 minutes ahead of schedule. Upon entering there was tenseness in the air and soldiers with machine guns were at every entrance. We could see on the overhead reader boards that all the trains scheduled after ours had been cancelled. We were just starting to comment on the interesting development when a train station employee rushed up, identifying us by name (Eric is assuming they used facial recognition technology). In a firm tone and with no explanation they informed us that we had been re-assigned to an earlier train and had six minutes to make our way through the station, past security, out onto the platform, and into the train. Ten minutes later as the train departed the station we were riding in first class being wined and dined with drinks and food fit for a king. Upon arriving in London, we made the quick transition from St. Pancras to King's Cross and then onto a train headed for Glasgow. Only then did we become aware of a gunman who had been thwarted by two marines on our Eurostar train prior to entering Guar de Nord station from Belgium. Fortunately, the remainder of our trip was uneventful and we rivaled the young ‘uns as we peacefully slept in until nearly 10 am the following morning.

Eric

As Eric’s employer scrambles to leave liberal Seattle, the unions, and its aging workforce behind it has announced that his program as well as several others are being relocated to the Midwest. This, as well as some common sense, prompted Eric to discard his Windows 2000 and 286/386 slot1 processor linux machines and update to a Network Access Server (NAS) system. He has been sharpening his skills by taking continuing education training.

First, C++, then perl, then onto Python and web development training first through Cal State Fullerton and now the University of Washington. Eric will happily describe Apache web servers, tuples, hashes, sparse arrays, and parsers as if you had been transformed in time and dimension by a weeping angel in an episode of Dr. Who

It seems to be a requirement of the human condition that folks have worries that seem big to them and small to others. Eric encountered such a concern when Apple pushed out IOS 9 and it wrecked the text messaging on his old ultra reliable iPhone 4S. He retaliated by upgrading to a phone with an Android OS. Hardest was dumping Siri who had been with him through thick and thin since the days before Facebook went public.

Tracy

A friend of ours, Tracy, watched our house while we were in Scotland. The provided and opportunity to plant a large garden in the back yard to support the hive of mason bees that he had been nurturing since early spring.

# Callopie

# Upon our return from Scotland Kathy began preparations for a new addition to our household. Calliope, a childhood friend of Kathy and a former housemate had cancer and had received a terminal diagnosis. Twenty years ago she had moved to Chicago to pursue a career as a music composer after living in our house for a couple of years. She wished to move back from Chicago and to spend her final months in Seattle with her sisters and friends and would live at our house during her remaining time. After moving in Calliope was able to take a trip to Canada to see Teatro ZinZanni, take a trip to the Oregon Coast, and spend a Thanksgiving dinner with her sisters and family. She passed away in early December, leaving behind a lot of wonderful memories and a cat named Ziggy.

# Ziggy is a Bengal (cross between a domestic and an Asian Leopard Cat). He had been getting used to our dogs and they to him. For a week or so they had maintained a tenuous relationship before Kathy heard a scuffle coming from Calliope’s room. Rushing into the room, Kathy found Skagit barking frantically while Blue had Ziggy cornered and licking him with big slurpy swipes. After disentangling Ziggy and Blue, Kathy found a soaking wet, disheveled, and clearly annoyed cat. Any remaining tension between Ziggy and Blue has abated with Blue no longer warranting an occasional Ziggy tail twitch.

General

Passing of Eric Carlson

Angry bird box (phone)

Dog park - Fletcher, pumpkin, differing personalities of people and dogs. Work parties.

Puppy fetches ball, then Skagit all excited steals it away and then drops it not knowing what to do.

Blue - sits attentively, throw a treat, watches it intently and then blinks as it hits his nose.

It then falls to the floor, he steps on it so that he can't see it and then frantically searches

while attempting to keep Skagit from snatching it off the floor.

He can now catch it if there are no distractions.

Shell oil thing, kayakers.

New roof - signed on Monday, done on Friday.

New front stairs.

Gave up unlimited data plan.

Trip to Europe. Paris adventure in Guare de Nor. Facial recognition s/w

Exploding hoverboards.

Drones

Ziggy the cat. Dogs snuck past a retaining strap and cornered Ziggy in the bedroom.

By the time Kathy got in to the room she found Blue licking the cat.

Once they were separated Ziggy was wet and slobery and very annoyed.

Now they have reached a point where Blue sniffs Ziggy and he makes a tail twitch.

nimble inquisition

Hoverboards and drones.

Hint of rebuke.

Media - confederacy of dunces running for president*.*

Amazon offering to send Donald Trump into out space (take them up on it)

Nefarious

Christian - Graphing calculator

nuanced

Granola biscuits for christmas

Kathy arm and shoulder fixed

Kathy BlueStar stove.

Kathy discarding 7 sewing machines

If the trip gets too arduouse, Eric can partake in a pastry and a warm beverage of his choosing before opening his mind to three hours of intense hands on training in Python.

May you want everything you get for Christmas

Gifts - Four gifts - Something you want, something you need, something you wear, something you read.

Chris summer sabbatical.

Luna came to live with us.

Garden in the back yard.

Both vegans, Thunder planted a garden in the back yard.

Peach pit seeds - Edward and then Emily.