

Lasley Holiday Letter - 2017

For the first time in many years, we celebrated New Years at a party. We went to Baltimore and had a wonderful feast with friends, and then watched the fireworks from their rooftop. Spent the night in a nice hotel, and had brunch with Connie, after hearing her sing at church.

We headed out to Chicago to see Laura's parents, which turned out to be the first of several trips to the Windy City. This time we went to the Field Museum, which was very cool. A later trip featured a private party at the Shedd Aquarium which was even cooler.

Among the biggest accomplishments of the year was the success of our band "Back to the Well". We had 10 gigs at 7 venues, expanding our repertoire to over 70 songs, and actually having 2 bars contact us for gigs! We have really gelled as a band and we're having a lot of fun. In addition to all of this, we continue to go out to see rock bands and meet wonderful musicians. Bands with crazy names like "The Whitewalls" and "The Northern Rednecks", "Retro 45" and "Tongue & Groove". We even did a mini pub crawl and saw 3 bands in different bars in the same night. This is a very supportive musical community.



Soccer continued every Tuesday night. Each week Laura improves, while Dan tries not to lose his touch. In one session we won the championship of our division, but then we lost our striker and fell back into mediocrity. But every season our passing and teamwork gets better, and we have more fun each week.

Dan continued to manage his team of engineers, improving existing products and integrating new technologies into future devices. He is working more closely with industry partners and the relevant UL section, which allows him to travel a little for trade shows and conferences.

Laura has her neonatal unit humming along. The quality of care is both higher and more consistent, resulting in fewer babies being transferred to specialty centers and happier families and hospital administration.

We went to see GMa Laz in March, overlapping with Jacqui and Oliver's(*) visit. Always a relaxing trip. Later, we went to Uncle John's 90th birthday party - an amazing accomplishment - he is following the Keith Richards regimen.

We redid our big deck in Trex, which turned out very well. We enjoyed many dinners with Al Fresco this year.

The hospital gala featured Laura's NICU, so we got a table for her NICU crew, dressed up and had a great time. Afterward, a bunch of us headed out to a bar to hear some friends' rock band, still dressed to the nines.

It had been a very long time since we'd been to the BVI, so that's where we booked this year's sailing trip. The last time we were there was 1999 with Ben and Jacqui. Much remained the same as we remembered, but there were changes too. It was stormy the first 2 days, but then it was sunny and warm. We visited new harbors and saw plenty of sea life. It was sad to see the devastation after the hurricanes that came through a few months later.

Laura really likes exotic restaurants - she's a "foodie". There is a family of restaurants here in Philly that does that farm-to-table fusion thing, She keeps dragging Dan along, and he doesn't starve. Our friends like it too.

With little maintenance required for "Sonja", we were out sailing on the Chesapeake before Memorial Day. The spring was cool and rainy, so the water didn't warm up until much later, but we had a lot of fun. We discovered that one of the fitness programs could be used for tracking our wanderings, so we signed up for Strava and you can see that on windy days we average 7-8 knots, with top speeds close to 20 knots.

Jacqui and Oliver(*) continued to move their careers forward. Oliver now manages a T-Mobile store much closer to their home, and Jacqui is continuing to advance her studies in Mechanical Engineering. We went up to visit them in May, and played a little heavy on their responsibilities as "homeowners". They had been a bit lax in the maintenance projects, and since they might be moving out in another year, some things just needed to get done. They reacted to this somber discussion by getting engaged the following week.

Since we gave up on the tandem, Dan and Laura each bought a bike, and the very next week, Laura tore her calf muscle playing soccer. This had multiple ramifications: she couldn't ride her bike, she couldn't play soccer, and she had to play guitar from a barstool - at a local bar. Rehab has taken 5+ months.

Jacqui and Oliver(*) started looking at wedding dates, and every weekend had one conflict or another, so they decided to get it done on Monday July 10th - only 6 weeks after they got engaged! We simplified as much as we could, kept the important parts, gathered whatever friends and family we could, and took the photos you see on the website. Well and truly done. So now they are Jacqui and Oliver Goodwin(*).



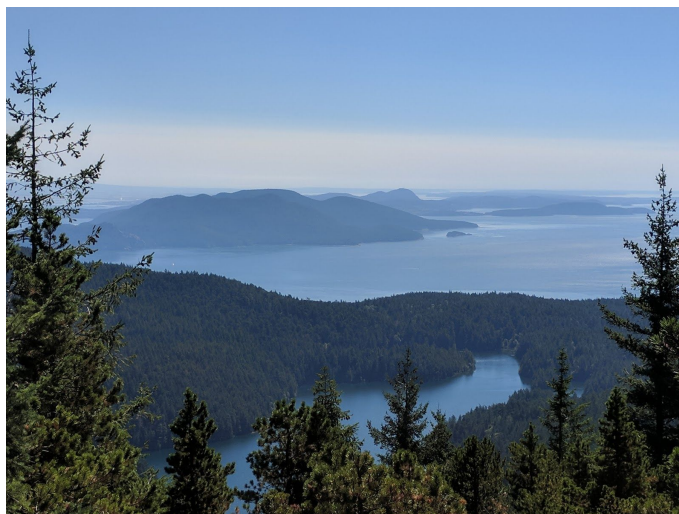
Dan's sister Barb came to visit for the first time in forever. It was great to see her in a relaxed setting. She too is getting used to her mostly empty nest.

We did the annual music jam, this time near Baltimore. It was a smaller group, which meant we got to play more. The next day we went out on our friend's racing sailboat, Kaimana, and cruised around Baltimore harbor.

Last year we had targeted entering a local band competition, but we discovered that all of the dates conflicted. We will plan better next year.

In the middle of August, Laura did something nasty to her back. At first we thought it was sciatica; it turned out to be her S-I joint (hip) pinching a nerve. Note that the rehab for these are completely opposite exercises. It was touch-and-go until her PT loaned her a TENS unit and she was ready to go...

... to the Pacific Northwest, where we went on a 6 day bike tour of the San Juan Islands, including a whale watch (orcas!), hikes, kayaking, and lots of excellent food. Luckily, the bike riding was good for Laura's hip and calf, and she finished the week strong.



Orcas: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/DslCkRZc7Fd0YLBZ2>



The scenery was gorgeous, and the Backroads staff was excellent. We were there for the eclipse and got this cool photo of the shadows of a tree.

Ben and Yanessa came up to Seattle and we hiked around the foothills of Mt Ranier for a few days. It was great to spend some quality time with them.

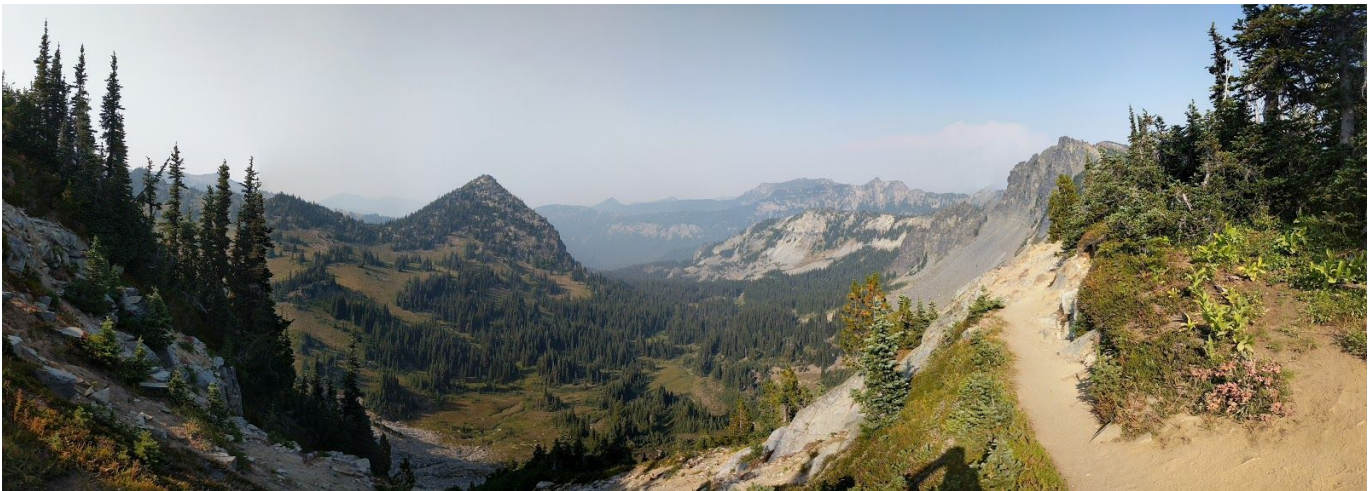
In early October, we went to Chicago for Laura's 40th high school reunion. There were ~150 people there, including 6 spouses. It was a great event. Laura went back to Chicago 2 weeks later



to celebrate the 60th birthday of two friends from college. Two weeks later, Dan went to Chicago on business.

With Oliver having to work early on Black Friday, we decided to join them for early Thanksgiving, along with another young couple. It was a delightful evening. December brings one last gig for the year before we head off to Minneapolis for Christmas with Spike in his new home.

(* You may recall that Jacqui's boyfriend was named Ben Olsen. We often called him "B9" so as not to be confused with Ben Lasley, who goes by "Ditto". Well B9 decided for many very good reasons that he didn't really like his full family name, so he and Jacqui explored various resources and settled on Benjamin Oliver Goodwin, with Oliver as his daily name. A probate judge agreed, roughly 2 weeks before they got married, and the Goodwins were created whole.



Who knows what next year will bring? We'll keep gigging, sailing, and playing soccer. We've got Jacqui's graduation from WPI and Dan's 40th PEA reunion, both in May. 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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