

*Merry Christmas 2016 and Happy New year 2017!*

It's again hard to believe a whole year has passed since Christmas 2015 and time to wrap up the year in a paragraph or two! Well the McKinley Family has enjoyed another domestically adventurous year with opportunity to meet up with special friends on several occasions.

A very exciting highlight of this year is actually the result of years of hard work and study; Rebecca completed her Bachelors Degree in Communications with and emphasis in Tourism and Entertainment from Cal State Fullerton last week! To enrich her college experience she expanded her repertoire by adding on Music Minor! Singing with several performing arts college groups and strengthening her music theory deepened the college experience. She graduates with Honors. In addition, she finally got accepted to the Disney College program, a dream come true for her. Though she has residency just 5 miles from Disneyland, she was offered the internship position...yes, in Florida! The acceptance comes with excitement and naturally some degree of trepidation. She has been meeting many people online who will be starting mid-January at Disney World with her. The lengthy and detailed process is impressive and almost military-like in nature. More news to follow in the next Christmas letter...

Ryan's world is expanding as well. He continues to initiate community events for the Airsoft, Paintball and RC Car populations as well as performing and enjoying local jams. We all had a great time at the annual Bluegrass Festival in Parkfield California with our special North Carolina friends the Jug Tucker Band!! Camping out and performing made this Parkfield Festival the best ever!!! In the wake of winning Skills USA Animation competition for California and being one of the top finalists nationally last year Ryan has added to his repertoire education in Industrial Technology. He continues to excel in his studies of Metallurgy and earned several difficult Welding Certifications through Cuesta College. He was selected as a college intern at Cal Trans! He has experienced a variety of hands-on activities working within facilities management and maintenance. He's adapted successfully to the demands of college and involved internship work. Whether at school or home you will find Ryan involved in a project, an event, or performing Bluegrass!

We went on a special trip to Colorado and had a wonderful time catching up Lisa's college roommate Stacy, visiting with Keith and Carla Stevenson, and checking out Real Estate even during a few lightning storms! Kelly acquired a dream of his life this year, a rare 5 string "Kay" Bass fiddle! It's incredible and adds to every group he jams with! It's all about that bass!! It's a wonderful addition to our collection and afforded Kelly and Lisa a whirlwind trip together to Reno where we met up with a gal bringing it all the way down from Canada! Thus the picture of Kelly carrying "Miss Kay" over the threshold of our beautiful room at the Peppermill. Lisa's new favorite resort...you gotta there if you've never stayed!! He also took several months to plan out a 200 mile John Muir Trail ultralight backpacking trip. Yes, he had Dave Gleason shave his head the night before...note the photo!! Kelly spends his time refurbishing the Datsun wagon, taking care of all the technical 'domestic' duties, helping his wife with college homework (coursework Lisa is taking for fun!), working out at the gym, playing Ultimate Frisbee, jamming, organizing performances for the McKinley Boys (see their Facebook!) all the while maintaining over 700 bridges in California!! He is a man of many talents and tirelessly supports the family.

Lisa topped 26 years at Allan Hancock College last week. Can't believe it!! She has had the special opportunity to ride with new friends on Rocky Mountain horses on the beach in Pismo. It's been amazing! Aside from keeping the family calendar, and still playing Ultimate Frisbee, she's now called a gym-rat by hubby. The strength training came in handy in cleaning up the 70' pine tree that crashed across the backyard in the last storm. Unreal!!

Kelly and Lisa are closing in on retirement in the next few years and are allowing themselves the luxury of even thinking about what that transition might look like....only until the alarm goes off for work the following morning. It goes without saying, we are grateful for lives, our love, our opportunities and involvement. We celebrate this Christmas with family and hope and pray you will take a moment to stay in the moment with those you are with this season. Count your blessings and be blessed in the depth of the meaning of Christmas for your life.

*Love, The McKinleys*

