

I will honour Christmas in my heart
and try to keep it all the year.

Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, 1843

2016

AS WE HONOUR CHRISTMAS 2016 IN OUR HEARTS, WE THINK FONDLY OF FRIENDS LIKE YOU AND THE PERSONALITY TRAITS YOU POSSESS THAT QUALIFY YOU TO RECEIVE THE 24TH ANNUAL ALTERNATIVE INGLIS NEWSLETTER. BUT ENOUGH ABOUT YOU.

Geezerhood

Being my first full year of retirement and with Ian working less by being more selective about the cases he takes, we spent a lot more time together in 2016.

For instances too numerous to count, Ian suggested that we have officially entered geezerhood. I couldn't disagree. For example:

Now that Precious wears hearing aids, he keeps his ears even more impeccably clean than usual. One Sunday, he was on his side in the living room with hydrogen peroxide soaking in his ear, lying perpendicular to the glass wall.

Ian: Damn that sun! I can't read the newspaper with it shining through the page!

Toni (from the bathroom): Change your angle.

Ian: What?

Toni (louder): Change your angle!

Ian: What?

Toni: CHANGE YOUR ANGLE!

Ian: Tape my ankle?!

Toni: Ach.

And as always, Professor Smarty Pants continues with his penchant for using conversation-stopping words. For example:

Toni (in October): I'd like to castrate Donald Trump using a poorly maintained power tool.

Ian: Yeah, he and his "team" are a bunch of scofflaws.

Toni: Huh?

Ian: Don't worry, dear, one more outrageous tweet and the sarcophagus lid will slam shut on the guy's candidacy.

Toni (enraged): WHAT??!

And ...

The Cowboys-Redskins game on Thanksgiving had barely begun when rookie Dak Prescott handed the ball to fellow rookie Ezekiel Elliott, who ran for a touchdown.

Toni: WOO-HOO!!

Ian: Let's hope this is a propitious start to the game.

Toni (deflated): Huh?



The boring part

Ian's still practicing criminal law *blah blah* Toni is still writing a monthly opinion column for the *Austin American-Statesman* *blah blah* Burton continues caring for trees in Dallas and sells rocks and gems at festivals; Talula is in the ninth grade and a proud member of the National Honor Society. John (firefighter) and AJ (social worker) are doing terrific and acquired an adorable puppy. Erin is still working in Portland as a psych case manager, bought a place and vacationed in Berlin, Guadalajara and Iceland.

Reggae

In April, Ian experienced the reggae thrill of a lifetime when he got to see Bunny Wailer (Neville Livingston) in a small Austin venue. Recall that Bunny was one of the original Wailers along with childhood friends Bob Marley and Peter Tosh. His dreadlocks and voice were as great as ever, playing one hit after another for two hours straight.

And for the third June in a row, Ian traveled to the Sierra Nevada World Music Festival in Mendocino County, where

he camps and dances to reggae roughly from sunup to sundown. He sees Chad, Steve and Nick, who he met there his first year. Ian's old enough to be their father, but they have a rollicking good time. Ya mon.

Having gotten to know the area fairly well, Ian suggested we go there in September for the Mendocino County Fair. I was on the fence until he mentioned the sheepdog trial finals.



California dog nirvana

Handlers for Jazz, Win, Duke, Tag, Dickens, Ace, Gracie and Lark competed for the grand prize: a ribbon, belt buckle and purse totaling \$160. They needed to maneuver three sheep around a field; through a series of gates and a narrow chute; and finally into a pen — within a certain period of time.

Once a dog begins its trial, if anyone in the audience makes even a soft noise, they're greeted with "Shhh!" and stares that cry out, "You idiot!" The idea being not to disturb the dog, I learned the hard way. Sheesh, maybe those dogs aren't so freakin' smart after all.

Even though all eight handlers and their border collies were phenomenal, only four dogs got the sheep to go through the narrow chute. The judges awarded the *propitiously* named Ace as the champion. Handler Nancy Todd accepted the prize to thunderous applause.

Dickens came in second; Gracie, third; and poor Jazz came in last, even though he performed valiantly. Click [here](#) to see Dickens herd the sheep through the chute.

Northern California was as terrific as everyone said it would be. I'd never seen a [redwood forest](#); never been to a wine tasting; never seen mile after glorious mile of scenes that could pass for Impressionist paintings; and never run a car into a ditch.



It was dark, and a car was tailing me on Highway 128 when I approached a T-intersection to make a sharp left turn to get to the Anderson Valley Inn (delightful place). As I began to turn, a car arrived well into the intersection from the perpendicular street. After a jarring clunk, we noted that the car leaned far to the right and would not respond to the accelerator.

Just about that time, the townspeople who arguably caused the incident by not stopping a safe distance from the intersection, got out to "help." "People are always landing their car in that ditch, can't see it at night. You'll never get it out without a tow truck," he said, driving off.

The Professor got out of the car to assess and said calmly, "Straighten out the wheels and back up." Worked like a charm, and Ian was Hero For A Day.



Introducing ... Lily (!)

In March, John and AJ adopted Lily, The Wonder Dog. She's a white German Shepherd wannabe.

Click [here](#) to view Lily seeing a cow for the first time: *What is that? Will it hurt me? Will it play with me? Can I eat it?* Click [here](#) to see her romping in Shoal Creek.



National park vacation

Finding Ken Burns' and NPR's coverage celebrating the centennial of the National Park Service irresistible, we resolved to rectify our glaring oversight. We'd been to Big Bend, Guadalupe Mountains and Carlsbad Caverns with the kids, but that's it.

So, in November we took a two-week road trip to the Grand Canyon, Zion and Bryce Canyon national parks. When we arrived at the Grand Canyon, our sloppy history of disregarding weather when vacation planning came into stark relief. All I could think of was Perro's water bowl.

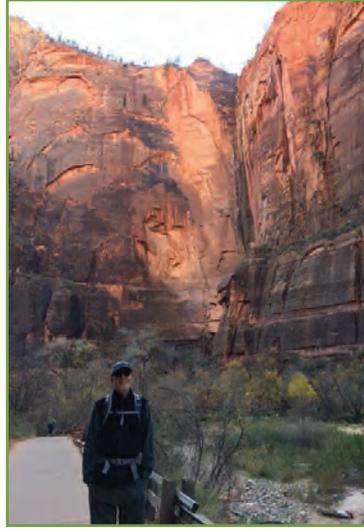
In the mid-1970s, we had a dog from Panama named Perro, a black and white husky wannabe. We got married in March of 1977 and honeymooned near the Pecos Wilderness. When our 1972 blue Datsun 510 station wagon ran out of gas on Highway 475, a nice fellow pulled over to help. Ian siphoned gas out of the guy's tank directly into his mouth, letting loose a series of expletives that rang from the Truchas mountaintops.

That night, as we set up camp in the snow, I hoped that one day our frozen corpses would be found so that our (presumably) worried relatives would know what happened. But alas we survived the cold and woke up the next morning to find Perro's water bowl frozen solid. Perro, on the other hand, had the time of his life, never tiring of bounding through the snow like a puppy.

After we broke camp, the Datsun wouldn't start. The Professor figured the battery water was frozen, and sure enough after he poured hot water in it, we were on our way. That night, we had a celebratory honeymoon dinner at an obscure restaurant in Santa Fe where we had the best bottle of wine ever. It was a Haut-Médoc, and we've had a soft spot in our hearts for the Bordeaux ever since.

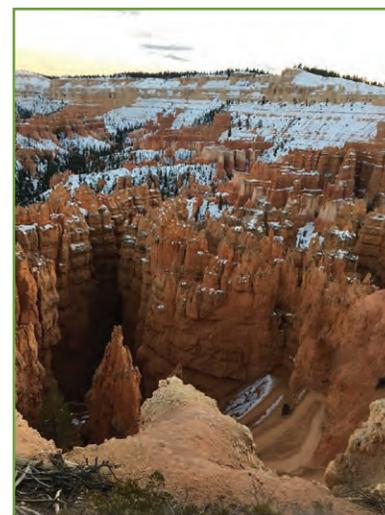
But I digress. All that was when we were young and stupid. We're old enough for Medicare now and apparently still stupid: the weather in the canyons was in the teens; snow and ice hampered driving and walking; and lots of places were closed for the winter. But it was all OK because we had a car that could handle it, and we were staying in lodges and hotels (not camping).

In the Grand Canyon, the mile-high-plus horizontal, colorful layers of limestone, sandstone and shale carved by water over millions of years was breathtaking. Some of our best vistas along the south rim were seen from atop adorable mules — John-John and Big Steve. The hiking along paved rim trails was the best ever. *Ever* I tell you!



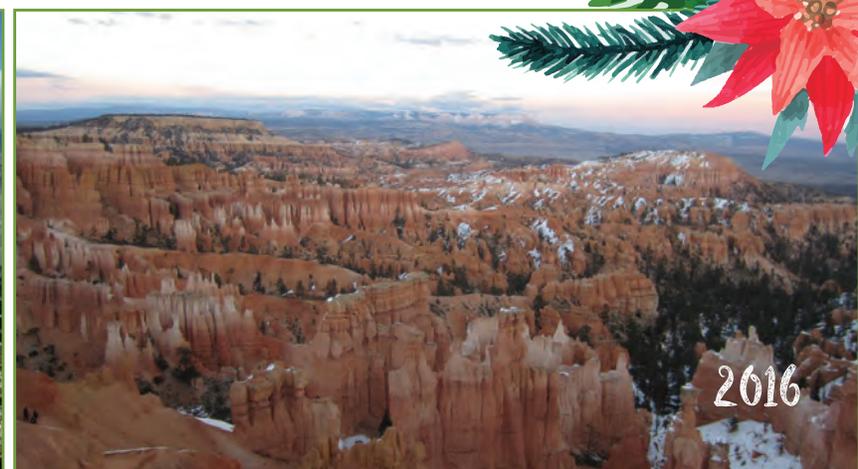
Up next: Zion. The reds of the sandstone cliffs were indescribably gorgeous, but the best part of Zion was the two corralled horses outside our hotel room back door. After a mad dash to the grocery store, we fed them a bag of baby carrots. There is no sweeter feeling in the world than horse lips on the palm of your hand. Even a leery Ian liked it, but not much.

Speaking of lips, "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore," escaped from mine with my first view into Bryce Canyon. Filigreed stone the color of burning embers was almost too beautiful to behold.



Out of colorful limestone, sandstone and mudstone, eons of erosion had formed arrays of spires and pinnacles called hoodoos. They are said to cast a spell, and that they certainly did.

We were going to go to Arches after Bryce, but alas we were too sandstoned. Stunning vista-wow, stunning vista-wow. We get it.

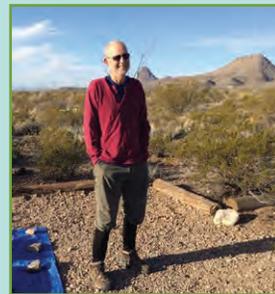




With hoodoos



Changing the tire after blowout in the middle of nowhere, the Old Ore Road in Big Bend



At Big Bend



At Anderson Valley Brewing Co. in California



The Fool on the Hill (in Northern California)



View from the tent in Big Bend



In February, the pope met with the patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox Church for the first time in 1,000 years. Watching the story on the *NewsHour* reminded us of one of our favorite beers, Buckethead.



Burton and Maja in their booth at the Round Top Antiques Fair



The Fabulous Talula



One of the highlights of the year was getting a group of NICU nurses together who worked together in the 1980s.



Burton's yard



Burton's Elijah



John with AJ's sister Rachel, a judo master, in San Diego



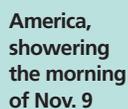
Firehouse screech owl in the house that John built



Erin's Pouncy



Burton's chickens



America, showering the morning of Nov. 9



The Fabulous Roberta Inglis



AJ and Lily



Tina on alert on the balcony



Here's wishing you a propitious 2017 FULL OF REGGAE, the stars and the moon, forests, a campfire, peace and quiet, ANIMALS and lots of APPLAUSE.



love, the Inglises

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