

2017

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

Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, 1843

AS WE HONOUR CHRISTMAS 2017

IN OUR HEARTS, WE THINK FONDLY
OF FRIENDS LIKE YOU AND THE PERSONALITY
TRAITS YOU POSSESS THAT QUALIFY YOU TO
RECEIVE THE 25TH ANNUAL ALTERNATIVE INGLIS
NEWSLETTER. BUT ENOUGH ABOUT YOU.

2017

The Good

We're still living downtown and love our place. Hard to believe it's been 13 years. The biggest downside for me is the congestion and drivers on their cell phones. One day I pulled over my scooter to watch the streetlight go from red to green to yellow to red again as the person at the front of the line was looking at her phone. No one behind her honked because they were all on *their* phones. Ach.

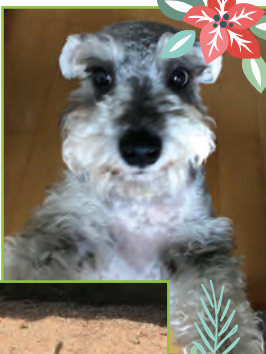
Ian's in the process of retiring in a slow crawl, mainly by severely limiting the cases he takes. He still manages his building with 17 attorneys (several virtual) and walks to work while listening to reggae and communicating with his turtle and bird friends along Shoal Creek.

I'm still writing my newspaper commentaries. I may not change the world, but by gosh I'm gonna have my say.

After a seven-year dog drought, we obtained Walter, a miniature schnauzer puppy. We got him off Craigslist for \$250, fleas and intestinal worms thrown in for free. He's nine months old now and ALWAYS fun.

We've never had a schnauzer and didn't realize what great dogs they are! They don't shed and are funny, sweet, smart and stubborn. He loves to stand, walk and dance on his back legs when he wants something, and grooming him is a new hobby for me. He spends time just about every day with John and AJ's Lily, his best, best friend and loves to dig there. Here they are playing chase in John's back yard with twin sister Barbara in background.

For more of "The Good," see "Wedding Bells" and "Vacation."



The Bad

'Tis the season to be jolly, so for 24 years I have refrained from injecting politics into the Christmas newsletter. Not this year.

I confess I have not honoured Christmas in my heart all the year — sorry, Charles. I don't know about you, but I've been cranky since I woke up on Nov. 9, 2016. I was so freaked out that I made an appointment with a counselor. A lot of good that did; she was even more upset than I was.

Writing commentaries about it relieves stress. Like the one just before last year's election, which basically said, "[WTF is happening?!!](#)" My all-time favorite was [comparing Trump with Daffy Duck](#). So so sorry, Daffy.

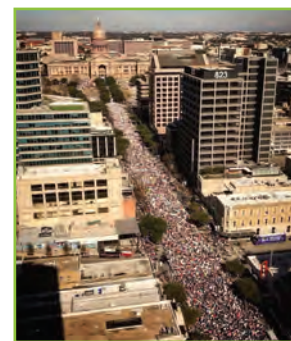
But the biggest stress reliever of all was marching in the Women's March — my very first march. It took place the day after the inauguration that had "the biggest crowd in history" according to Dear Leader.

But this march really *was* the biggest one in Austin history — 50,000 people filling the Capitol grounds and beyond and marching through downtown. Can you imagine? The atmosphere was electric.

My sister-in-law Nancy accompanied me and a bunch of smart, smart women from the state health department. Nancy's T-shirt read, "Buckle up, Buttercup. I'm that nasty grandma Donald warned you about."

People are so creative! Some of my favorite signs were:

- Super callous fragile racist, extra braggadocious.
- Not Mein Führer
- Twinkle, twinkle little Czar. Putin put you where you are.
- 654 days until midterm elections
- Twitler
- I've seen smarter cabinets at IKEA.



The Ugly

The vocabulary / morally-challenged guy with the Cheetos hair who looks like if the word "sleaze" became a person.

Speaking of VOCABULARY...

Ian continues this year to amaze, amuse and infuriate with his vocabulary. [See back page for definitions.]

Ian (fussy after waiting forever for the frozen lima beans to boil): *"They should use lima beans for the heat shield of the space shuttle."*

Toni: *"Brilliant idea."*

Vince Young has been a poorly behaved god here since 2005 when [he casually trotted over the goal line](#) for a 41-38 victory over USC at the Rose Bowl to win the national title.

Ian (after reading that UT hired Young as a student recruiter): *"Well, that's a sinecure."*

Toni (irritated): *"A what?!"*

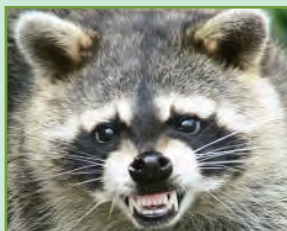
Toni: *"Ian, the granite by the kitchen sink is getting kinda dull."*

Ian: *"You need to polish it."*

Toni (irritated): *"With what — shoe polish?"*

Ian: *"No, dear. With carborundum paper."*

Toni (see the raccoon): *"With WHAT??!!!"*



Toni (after sipping a 9 percent beer): *"This beer's too sweet."*

Ian: *"Yes, it is a little cloying."*

Toni (see raccoon): *"It's WHAT??!!!"*

Ian ordered an iPhone X — a shock because he's always shunned Apple. A few weeks later, he got a message from Apple saying it would be shipped on Nov. 20 and would arrive on Nov. 28.

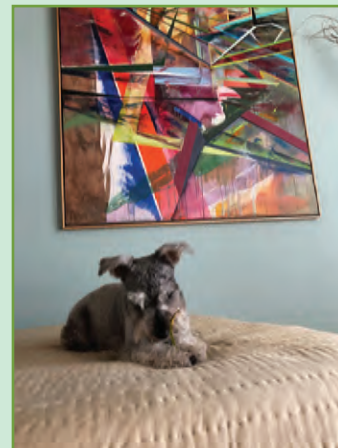
Ian: *"Jezuz. Are they sending it via Conestoga?"*

Toni (amazed and slightly irritated): *"Huh?"*

After pointing me toward his food with no results, Walter settled on chewing a leaf from the narrow-leaf ficus, thus dropping another hint.

Ian (good humoredly): *"You chewing the betel leaf?"*

Toni (amused): *"Chewing what?"*



With five seconds left on the clock, the Oklahoma City

Thunder (our cousin David Hayes' team)

had the lead when the Minnesota Timberwolves' [Andrew Wiggins threw an unbelievable 3-pointer to win the game.](#)

Ian: *"Is timberwolf a tree or a dog?"*

Wedding Bells



Hands down, the News of the Year — aside from getting Walter, the total solar eclipse and the Astros winning the World Series (!!) — is that John (firefighter) and AJ (social worker) got engaged. After being together for three years, he popped the question in Big Bend National Park on a camping trip with friends, who videoed the sacred event. AJ was totally surprised.

You can see it by clicking [here](#). The backstory to what was said at the beginning is that not long after they met, he asked her to go on a day hike to Pedernales Falls State Park, all of 42 miles away. AJ wasn't sure she should go on a "trip" with John so soon, so she called her mom, who agreed; so, that hike didn't happen. Hence John said at the beginning of the video, "Remember when you wouldn't go hiking with me that first time?" Then ... on his knees, "Well, would, would you go on a big, long hike with me now?"

We're crazy about AJ — and her parents, too. So, we're ridiculously excited. Look for wedding pictures next year.





For the fourth June in a row, Ian traveled to the Sierra Nevada World Music Festival in Mendocino County, CA, where he camps and dances to reggae roughly from sunup to sundown. Some great reggae bands come to Austin from time to time and god forbid that he would miss one. Here he is [dancing reggae with Walter](#).



The names of reggae bands that Ian loves are a constant form of entertainment for me: Chronixx, Alpha Blondy, Future Fambo, Ini Kamoze, John Brown's Body, Katchafire, Lucky Dube, Raging Fyah, Sizzla Kalonji, Soldiers of Jah Army, White Mice, The Neutral Sisters, Israel Vibration and Boom Shaka, to name a few. How do they come up with this stuff? Oh, maybe it's all the collie herb (unamused).

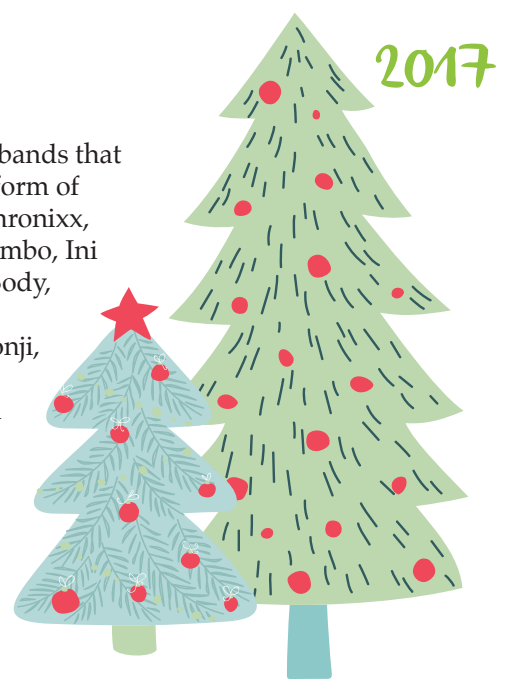
We're thinking of maybe spending summers somewhere completely different — the Northwest. So this year we visited four potential towns (Bellingham, Anacortes, Port Townsend and Friday Harbor (one of the San Juan Islands)). And boy were they foreign — no one up there knew what a "church key" was.

All of them were really beautiful, but Friday Harbor won by a landslide. It kind of called our names, and only 2,000 people live there! One of those folks is my best friend. And Ian's best friend lives in Seattle.

On our way there, just as we flew over the Washington border, it suddenly became a little darker when the flight attendant announced overhead, "That smell you're noticing is not the plane burning. It's from wildfires burning in Washington State and Canada." I immediately thought the wildfire stuff was a lie and that the plane really was on fire. "In!"

I thought, "Now's as good a time as any to die." Thankfully, I was wrong, and the smoke cleared within three days.

We shortened the trip because we were missing Walter too much. We've rented a place in Friday Harbor for September next year, if it hasn't all burned down, and we'll drive taking Walter with us.



Here's wishing you a **2018**

Full of Wonderful Things, like the stars

and the moon, animals, beautiful trails,

some solitude maybe and lots of

APPLAUSE.



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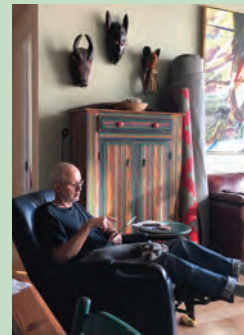
Walter with his BFF:
John & AJ's dog Lily



At the Texas Bowl in Houston —
Aggies vs. Kansas



Burton, a wet Walter
and John at Shoal Creek



Ian reading the
morning paper



At the Women's March



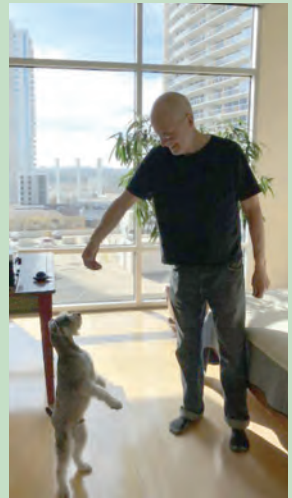
Twin sister Barbara



With Ian's mom and Inky the cat



Tina



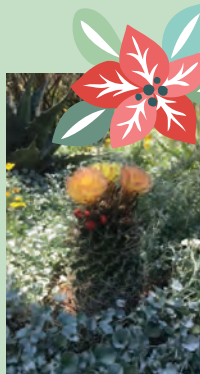
Still committing a federal crime:
money laundering



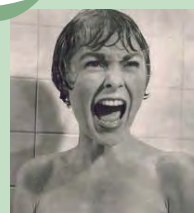
Ian, why exactly
are there Xs on
your sunscreen?
To distinguish it
from the newer
tube.



Burton's daughter
Talula, now 15



From Burton's yard



America, on Jan. 20

Definitions — who knew any of these??

Sinecure — a position requiring little or no work, but giving the holder status or financial benefit.

Carborundum — a very hard black solid consisting of silicon carbide, used as an abrasive. (Who would use an abrasive to shine dull granite?)

Cloying — disgusting or sickening (someone) with an excess of sweetness, richness or sentiment.

Conestoga — a broad-wheeled covered wagon drawn usually by six horses and used especially for transporting freight across the prairies.

Betel leaf — leaves from a piperaceous vine that are chewed in SE Asia for a mild stimulant effect. (Ian saw a lot of betel-leaf chewing when he was in India.)