

December 2022

It has been forever since I've written a letter to anyone! While this isn't an actual printed one (I guess I could print it out), it's pretty close. I am using an early Christmas gift from Mike - a Remarkable 2 writing tablet. I am in love! ☺

We didn't get motivated this year to do Christmas cards, so this is an alternative. I always liked getting the annual family letter in people's cards. Maybe this was the old version of social media?

We got the tree put up in December and some outside lights which are my favorite thing to do. My dad was not a fan of lighting outside decorations (probably because of energy costs) so I tend to do it a lot as an adult (older child?).

2023 has been a decent year overall - another "can't complain" type of year - you know what I mean. ☺ There have been several memorable events that are definitely letter-worthy!

Some time early in the year I (Aaron) started doing some research on other tech jobs. I've been with Automattic with nine years - the last five of that was leading the mobile team within WooCommerce. Woo is the ecommerce platform

that people can use on their WordPress sites.

My role grew a lot in the last couple of years but it started to give me pause with how I felt Automatic recognized it. That research led me to apply to several places to interview, see what they felt how my skills aligned with their levels, and bring that back to talk with HR. Ultimately I found my talks with Shopify to be more than just research. They are an ecommerce company entirely while Woo is only a part of Automatic's companies (they are a holding company). Leaving was hard but Shopify has been great. I am a senior manager in their Retail group which does the point of sale (cash register / checkout) systems. A little over a month after I started, Shopify laid off 10% of the staff, I kept my job, but the director I reported to got the chop. She was the reason I took that specific job, so it was a hard change. Things are better now and I'm hitting my stride.

In August, Mike and I took our first out-of-state trip since 2019. We drove from Milwaukee to Park City, Utah, stayed a week, then to Denver for a number of days, then back home. We saw a couple of our friends in Utah / Denver & my cousins and Uncle in Denver. We did a bunch of hikes and flew the new drone I got around the mountains. It was a lot of fun! We thought

the amount of driving would do us in, but it was great! We rented a slightly larger car and made it an adventure. Wunjo stayed with Mike's mom and Axle was boarded at his daycare place. They were really happy to see us when we got back! ☺

Since then, Axle has had respiratory problems. He has been on several antibiotics, cough meds, and several runs of steroids. He was showing really good progress. We took both dogs to get groomed at the end of November to the daycare place. A few days later, BOTH dogs started sneezing. Wunjo just finished a round of antibiotics. Axle is back on steroids and is getting an x-ray done tomorrow to compare to one from last month. Hopefully they both recover soon - we can't really leave them alone with the reverse-sneeze panic attacks they get. ☺

In July, we decided to buy a Ford F-150 to start camping again. We enjoyed the ~10 years at the campground in Wisconsin Dells as it was like having a cabin / place "up north". Now we want to travel around - possibly even do a bit of work with the trips. All depends on solid Internet and patience. ☺ We opted to order a 2023 model with all of the crap we want for towing. We are still waiting but hope to get delivery by Spring.

We still need to find a camper, but will wait to get the truck before purchasing that. We did not order the Lightning electric model. The wait times on that are even worse. The towing capacity of that model is fairly terrible and not conducive to a road trip at all. We ordered a F-150 XLT in Area 51 blue - a new color for this year.

We got motivated to remodel our master bathroom after discovering some active water damage from the shower stall. We thought about replacing just the shower - but there was a grey 1980s jet bathtub that we never used in there. Using that much water in a septic system is just asking for problems. They started the work mid-October and finished the majority at the end of November. There are still a few little things left for them to resolve but for the most part it is done. Now we have a modern bathroom and the rest of the house looks out of date. 😊 Next up is getting a painter to help refresh a number of rooms and get rid of the awful border wallpaper that the previous owners loved. I don't know how people manage to renovate multiple rooms in their house at one time. The noise/dust/etc was not a surprise but you don't really think about the little stuff that adds up. Using the guest bathroom, moving all your crap

into temporary places, the floor coverings, early wakeups, a dumpster in the driveway, on and on. Now we know what to expect if we remodel anything else. Both working from home with the dogs did bring its challenges too! 😊

Our parents are doing well. Mike's mom has been working at Festival Foods for three years now. She's doing well! My mom is also doing well! She still volunteers for several groups and keeps herself busy. We are all looking forward to getting together over the holidays.

Some other random things:

- I've been making pies lately - yum!
- Mike has been volunteering for the Trevor Project, helping at-risk LGBTQ+ youth.
- I'm still doing the biking / trail running thing although my focus has shifted to keep it safe so my body lets me continue for years 😊
- Legos have been fun again - lots of neat home decor things like Starry Night from Van Gogh, xmas decorations, an orchid, and on! 💕

We both hope to get to see more of you all in 2023. We've been fairly risk averse of Covid so that's limited the travel. Our road trip really opened up our minds and can't wait to do more travel!

Take care! ♡

Aaron & Mike