

Dear Family & Friends,

I'm feeling good about actually getting a Christmas letter done this year rather than the belated New Year's letter! It's amazing what a difference one year can bring. 2014 has been a year full of unexpected changes and transitions.

Wendy and I began the year with our first major vacation since our 2009 trip to London. We took a seven-day Caribbean cruise on the Holland-America line. It was a wonderful getaway for the two of us with stops in the Turk and Caicos Islands, St. Maarten, San Juan, and the Bahamas. It was Wendy's first cruise, but definitely won't be our last. Can't wait to take our next one!

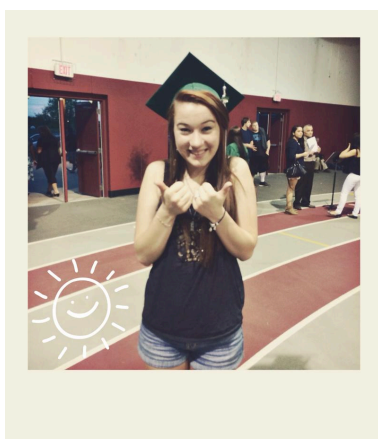


The spring months were spent in rehearsals for the world premiere of a play I wrote, *Ham Buns and Potato Salad*, which was produced by our local community theatre. Wendy starred in one of the roles and I sat back to watch and support the production. I was so happy that both Taylor and Madison along with a host of family and friends came to see the show. The show went well and was adjudicated by the Iowa Community Theatre Association (ICTA). One of the ICTA judges liked it so much she asked to direct the show in her hometown of Newton in the fall 2015!

Another momentous event came in the spring when Wendy and I solicited bids for the renovation of our house in Pella. We'd spent almost two years working with an architect on plans to add space and update our home. When the bids came back we came to the tough realization that it made more sense to build rather than renovate. We found ourselves quickly buying a lot in the Bos Landen development in Pella and began to make plans for a new house.



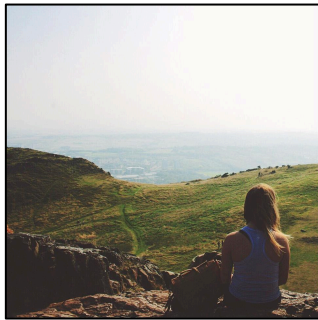
That was only a drop in the bucket of "momentous" spring events for our family. In April, Taylor and Clayton announced their divorce. Taylor continued to live in Des Moines and work with the non-profit Art Force Iowa where she worked with juveniles in the corrections system and began to dream/plan for graduate school at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland in the fall. She moved in with our friends, Kevin and Becky Roose, who graciously hosted and supported her during a difficult time of life transition.



Wendy's sister, Suzanna, who has been living with us since summer 2013, finished her high school career at Pella High School. We are so proud of her posting a 3.6 grade point average in her final semester. Suzanna continues to live with us and is working for a year. She plans to attend Hawkeye Community College and then the University of Northern Iowa next fall where she intends on majoring in theatre. She's working three jobs (Hy-Vee, Kaldera Restaurant, and Total Choice Shipping), spending her free time staying active in theatre (parts in both *Seussical the Musical* and *A Christmas Carol*, and the lead role in *Anne of Green Gables!*).

One of the more normal parts of this year was the time Wendy and I spent this summer at our place on Lake of the Ozarks. We enjoyed time with both family and friends getting much needed rest and relaxation. For years we've been blessed to use Grandpa Dean's boat during the summer, but this year he chose to sell the boat, which left our dock looking lonely and forlorn. Wendy and I resolved this issue by buying a cute little 1989 18' runabout and dubbing her *Apollonia*.

The summer was not without major transitions, however. Madison called to tell us that she'd applied on-line to be a flight attendant with Sky West Airlines. She was quickly hired, spent July in Salt Lake City going through training, and moved to Chicago in August to take her initial assignment flying out of O'Hare. By autumn she was back in Colorado and ended the year settled back in Colorado Springs where she hopes to continue flying while she finishes school at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs.



Taylor did realize her dream of attending graduate school in Scotland. She flew to Edinburgh in early September and is working on a Master's Degree in Arts/Event Management. It's a one-year program. She began the year in a class of 36 students from 25 different countries and she was the only American. It's been a huge challenge, but she's doing well. Wendy and I plan to pay her a visit in Scotland sometime in the summer of 2015.

Construction on our new house began in August. Wendy and I listed our house at 607 Columbus for sale in October and we sold it in mid-November. We will close on the sale in January and rent from the new owners until our new home is ready in late February. We are still reeling a bit from the busy year of changes and transitions, but we are grateful for God's faithfulness, appreciative of our many blessings, and looking forward to all that is in store for us in 2015.

We hope this letter finds you well and pray God's richest blessing on you and yours in the coming year!

Much love,

Tom, Wendy, Taylor, Madison, and Suzanna



Tom's blog: tomvanderwell.wordpress.com

Taylor's blog: love-taylor.com