

Kelly & Greg Christmas Letter 2021

For those of you that know me well, you know that I have a slightly less than stellar record of responding to texts, phone calls, voicemails or really any other form of communication. If you ever been a victim of my chronic procrastination, I promise you it's not personal. It's not you, it's me. That being said, I thought what better way to stay in touch with friends and family than to write our very own Christmas letter (following the tradition of Mick Brown) to update you all on the comings-and-goings Kelly and I have been up to this year. I know the written word might be a struggle for some of my friends but don't you worry; next year I am planning on administering the letter via FaceBook META virtual reality downloaded subconsciously into the tracking chip that we will all have implanted with our fifth vaccine booster shot.

Obviously the COVID slogfest has been the news story of the year yet again this year. Last year, my coping mechanism was to grow a caveman beard on only half of my face for 2 months for no other reason than it made me chuckle (see below). As healthy and mature of a therapy as that was, 2021 has more been about Kelly and I settling into our little household routine and really defining our marital roles. We've known each other over 10 years now so there aren't that many new surprises but it's more about figuring out who handles what around the house. For example, Kelly makes sure the utilities are paid on time, carries out full-blown construction projects on the backyard and buys herself new cars when she's bored. Me on the other hand - I am responsible for the grocery shopping, folding the laundry and making sure my little pumpkin feels pampered each and every day. Some people might scoff at the idea of a husband handling the more delicate chores but take one look at this picture and you tell me who the man of the house is:

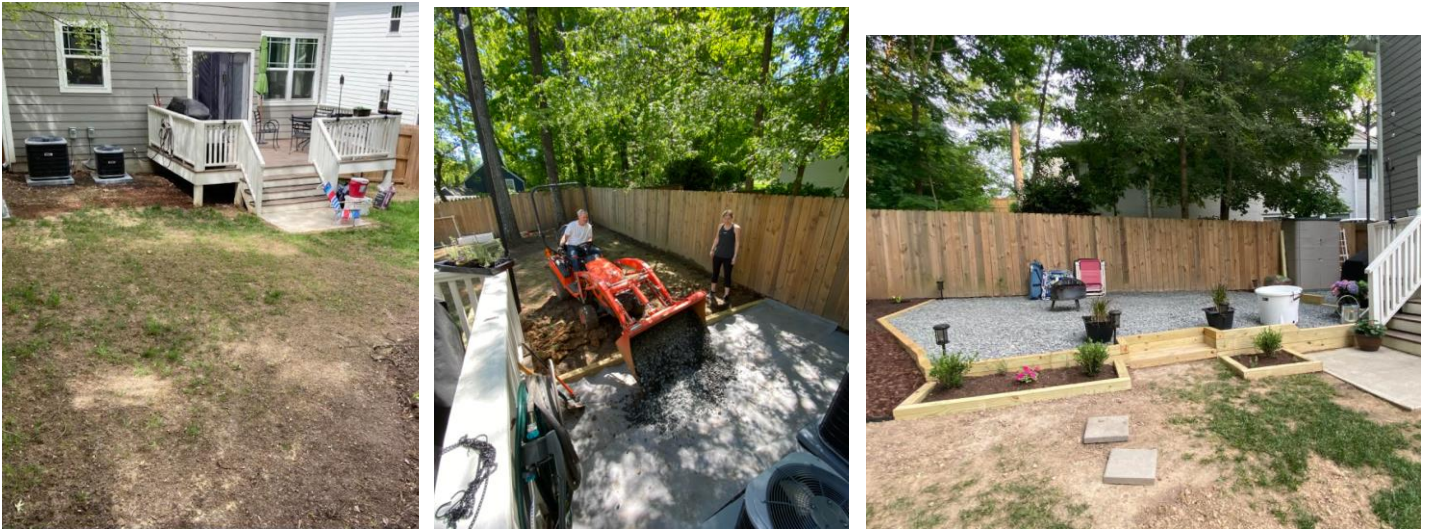


The modern American man

Fortunately, both of our jobs have survived the pandemic although both us are working from home more often than not. I am still working at a large medical device manufacturing company in the Raleigh-Durham area. I am 100% remote so much of my day revolves around making sure I don't sleep in too late to interrupt my mid-afternoon nap. As long as I can regurgitate our company's "core values" and recite my commitment to the "customer experience," I think I can hide the fact that I am effectively Peter Gibbons from the 90s movie Office Space after he gets hypnotized. In a hilarious twist of irony, they recently decided that I should manage a team of 8 young engineers. I never considered myself much of a role model, but I've seen enough Bill Belichick press conferences to know that the key to successful leadership is to always maintain a curmudgeonly demeanor in public. Kelly is also still gainfully employed right down the street at a small "custom exhibit house" which is an unnecessarily complicated way to describe a trade show booth designer/manufacturer. Surprisingly they were able to pivot during the lockdowns and have kept their doors open despite trade shows essentially falling off the map. Almost all of Kelly's travel to shows has been curtailed which is great news for blue collar workers nationwide who now don't have to worry about incurring her wrath on the trade floors for a misplaced tv monitor. Now she has plenty of free time to explain to me that whatever I may be doing, I am doing it incorrectly.

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Three years into homeownership down in Durham, NC and the house is still standing which is a small victory in my mind. The same can't be said for the front or back lawn though which has progressively started looking more and more like the surface of Mars as each season passes. As much fun as I had mowing the dirt, we decided to solve the problem this Spring by turning the backyard into a Japanese-inspired rock garden - and by that I mean we threw a shit load of crushed rock over the dead grass. Rather than botching it ourselves, we brought in the big guns for the job: Kelly's dad Paul Mooney. For those that know him, you know what that means. He knocked out about a week's worth of manual labor in a weekend, working 14 hour days while drinking 15-20 Bud Lights each day at the ripe age of 61. I made sure that he had freshly folded laundry each morning though.



Before, during and after photos of the Mars Reclamation Project

As much as things have stayed the same in the last few years, I did start to notice an interesting change in Kelly's behavior right after we got married. She would endlessly watch, rewatch and forward me cute baby videos online. She would loudly announce whenever she found out a friend, celebrity or general acquaintance was pregnant. She would reserve hours-long baby holding privileges when friends with newborns came around. At first, I thought she was just hinting at her appreciation for my youthful enthusiasm and boyish good looks, but it turns out she had caught the fever. The baby fever.



Three of the many children Kelly has commandeered this year

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I didn't need much convincing myself, so she jumped off birth control and away we went. Unfortunately though, sometimes the lord gives you challenges and roadblocks to force you to grow as individuals and as a couple...by which I mean that Kelly and I have been having unprotected sexual intercourse to coincide with her 2-3 day ovulation window each month for well over a year but still no fertilized eggs as of yet. The doctors have no explanations as to why (tubes are clear and swimmers are swimming) which is both comforting and frustrating. We have gone through the normal humping stage (my favorite stage), the IUI stage (turkey baster baby), and now we are on the IVF stage (petri dish baby). My participation in the whole process has been quite bovine: show up to my milking sessions and try not to fuss too much. Kelly on the other hand has been poked, prodded, stirrpped and pumped full of massive quantities of hormones with names that neither of us can pronounce. It's quite astounding watching the effects of hormones on the human body. She even managed to cry during a 30 second commercial on TV the other day. Credit to me for resisting the urge to explain why Coca-Cola's cynical advertisement practices are just leveraging faux nostalgia to encourage brand loyalty. If marriage has taught me anything it's that sometimes ya just gotta pick your spots.

But in all seriousness, we are trying to be as transparent as we can about the whole process because it's a human experience that I think more people struggle with than you see on social media. Kelly has been an absolute trooper throughout the entire ordeal but there have certainly been challenging days. We owe a ton to all of you, our friends and family, for supporting us and giving us plenty of distractions while we keep plodding along. I'll just be glad when we get to the point where we birth a human life that sucks us dry of all our physical and financial resources for 18 years straight.

There were plenty of other noteworthy events that happened in the Brown/Mooney families this year as well but in the interest of trying to actually send this letter before 2022, I'll just drop some photos in the back here. I'll close the letter by leaving you with a little recommendation: if you text me and I don't respond just go ahead and text Kelly and ask for me. She loves it when people have to do that to get ahold of me.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year everyone!

Greg & Kelly

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Kelly & Carolyn showering their sister Lauren (left – not dressed as baby) who gave birth to Logan “International” Lozier being held by the youngest looking grandma in history (right).



My sister Ellie’s kids (Drey, Jimbo and Leah) wreaking havoc (left) and my brother & his girlfriend Lauren looking downright prickly (right)

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Brown brothers in Charlotte, NC for Patriots/Panthers (left) and a bunch of degenerates in Buffalo, NY for Patriots/Bills (right).



My brother Andy and wife Erin expecting a new podcast listener in January.



Ellie and the Bridges clan enjoy the farm (left) while Leah embraces her inner pirate (right). A truly hilarious photo.



A healthy Momma Brown down in NC taking in some local culture and Mick Brown rocking the outrageous ponytail.

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Hermit Island: Danny and Fanny striking the fear of god in bag toss opponents (left) while Kelly learns to shuck her own oysters (right).



Doctors were concerned that the vaccine wouldn't take because my bicep was too big.

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My buddy JoCo's wedding in Los Angeles (left) and moving our friends Ali and Jeremy out to Denver (right).



Kelly signing the lease papers and posing in front of yet another new Jeep Wrangler.

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Crew of 30 canoeing the Delaware River, PA (top) and crew of 2 driving on the beaches of the Outer Banks, NC (bottom)