

Another year flies by that is somehow really quiet and yet crazy busy at the same time. Sometimes it seems that nothing momentous happens, yet just living life is a hectic frenzy. Actually, that's more Christine than me, I tend to just chill the hell out.

The big news of 2014 is Andrew bravely riding into the Valley of Death, the Jaws of Hell. No, he's not running for congress; he's getting married. You would have thought that witnessing the living hell that is my life would have put him off, but apparently not. What's that dear, my life's bliss on earth? Yes, whatever you say, dear, and yes I'll take out the trash as soon as I finish writing this letter. The big event is scheduled for October to coincide with the leaves turning blood red, burnt orange and scorched-earth brown. Very fitting.

It's going to be a classy wedding – a big tent in our back yard. I know it's going to be classy because I'm in charge of the important aspects, the bouncy castle, music, and the beer truck. Yes, you can rent a truck with taps on the side. What did I tell you – it just oozes class. I know Andrew is a big death metal fan, so that takes care of the music selection. Of course, no celebration is complete without a bouncy castle. Maybe we'll have to get two – another smaller one in case some kids show up.

All of our kids are doing fine. They are scattered throughout the east coast except for Gregory who is still living in the basement. It works out well as Christine and I spend most weekends in Maine to return to find strange stains on the carpet and trash bags full of empty beer cans. “You are going away this weekend?” is more of a recommendation than a question. He went to a Patriots game last week which turned out to be the coldest Patriots game ever. It was so cold his beer froze. It isn't even that cold in Dante's ninth circle of hell, as Andrew will be able to confirm later next year.

Because of our quiet/hectic life, we find that we watch much less TV these days, so we cut the cable and now rely on bunny ears (no, not Christine's rabbit-like ears - a TV aerial), No more ESPN - the horror! Gregory thinks it's a ploy to get him to move out of the house. ESPN is like oxygen or food, an important element in sustaining life of males in their 20s. How can life exist without showing the top 5 basketball dunks of the day every 15 minutes? His solution is to go to his work's gym for an hour or two every evening and run on the treadmill facing the TV. One Red Sox games went into extra innings and he almost completed a marathon. And they say TV makes you fat and lazy; he begs to differ.

Big news on the weight front. Ellie and Christine decided to go on the “Whole 30 Plan”, eating healthy for 30 days. It's actually a caveman diet where you eat all the things that prehistoric man ate (except for no pterodactyls). Hey, what the heck, sign me up. Waddaya mean I can't drink alcohol, eat bread, dairy, or sugar! Interestingly it wasn't the beer that was the hardest to give up; it was breakfast cereal and bread. A vindaloo without poppadums, nans and rice just isn't palatable (and is too damn hot). I'm proud to say I made it all the way through and for breakfast on the 31st day I celebrated with a Guinness sandwich. Hmmm, just as good as I remembered. After 30 days Christine lost 12lbs, if she keeps it up she will cease to exist by October next year. She'll slowly fade away like the Cheshire cat, except all that will remain will be the voice “...and take the trash out!”.

We are planning a family outing this year – a trip to a Patriot away game. The top choice was Carolina since Ellie's boyfriend Bob is a Panther's fan, we thought it might be fun. He immediately vetoed the idea. For some reason he didn't think he would enjoy the company of seven rabid Patriot fans screaming at him for three hours. Especially since the Panthers were awful last year and the Patriots were predicted to win by a cricket score. Ironically, it turned out the Panthers won the game and it could have been the highlight of Bob's life (apart from dating Ellie that is).

Andrew

Gregory

Stephen

Ellie



We eventually decided on Miami in December. A hotel on Miami Beach, sitting in the sun by the pool sipping diquaries and maybe even take in the football game. I'll bring an extra Patriot shirt for Bob so he fits in. Stephen plans on making a week of it and heading to Key West and talked me into joining him. It's nice that my son values my presence or is it the presence of my wallet. A bit of both I suspect. I just hope it's not overrun with booze, drugs and scantily clad young ladies – I'd hate that.

Of course there has to be the year's most famous Christine story. Ah, so many to choose from . . . In summer we went to Bangor Maine (middle of nowhere - 100 mile from the nearest Starbucks) to a Phish concert. We stayed at a motel and the next morning decided to find a local diner for breakfast. The motel had a simple breakfast buffet and as I was checking out, Christine grabs some toast and jelly. "You don't want to go out for breakfast, then?". "Oh yes, don't even think of this counting as a breakfast!". Thus christening the now famous "pre-breakfast" or the popular "warm-up-practice-breakfast". It certainly brightens up her mornings when I inquire about the daily breakfast count.

Have a merry Christmas or whatever holiday you celebrate, a happy 2014 and if you have any trash that needs taking out, just let Christine know and she'll send me right over.