

Another year, another new member of the family. Stephen and Lauren have a little bundle of joy named Gus, that cries all night and poops all day. It's quite cute apart from having to follow it around for the rest of its life picking up its poop in little plastic bags (and leaving them hanging on trees or railings as nature intended). Yes, Gus is a dog, a chocolate Labrador puppy with the energy of a fire hose. It's a cute dog but there is something fundamentally wrong with the whole dog thing. Surely they should be trained to follow us around and clean up our messes.

The new dog followed the Law of the Conservation of Pets. We lost the cat at the start of the year. It was sitting on the back of the sofa and just toppled over like a cartoon. I thought it was a hilarious trick until I found it had a stroke. The grandkids were here and they seemed to take it in their stride. Explaining the concept of death to a 2 year old and a 4 year old is surprisingly easy. On their next visit, Audrey (2) runs in the house all excited and announces "Cattie's gone. Catties's dead". Well, yes exactly.



Andrew Lauren Ellie Stephen Gregory Kelly Mick
Christine

Big Papi Daycare posted another good year keeping all three of Ellie's kids alive. I'm still besotted by them all - they are the frosting on the cake of life. We took the girls to McDonalds for a Happy Meal in the summer and Lyanna (4) asked me "Why would anyone get a Sad Meal". Why indeed. A lot of meals in McDonalds are Sad Meals unfortunately.



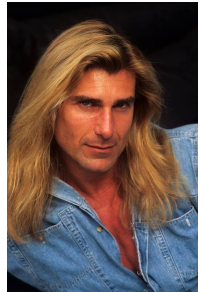
In surprising news, Andrew and Erin are expecting Baby Marchal-Brown in January (I'm pushing for it to be called Field Marchal Brown – gives it something to aim for in life). It was a bit of a shock after seven years of

marriage and no inklings of the pitter patter of little feet. Everyone assumed the time had passed and I have to admit I never got around to the “Birds and Bees” chat with Andrew. When they called Ellie with the news they told her to get Bob as they had some important news to share with both of them. She replied “You have cancer?” I mean, what else could it be? It's probably just as life changing but in a much better way. It's going to be tough fitting in another grandkid to spoil, but I'll figure it out.

Speaking of cancer, Christine is still fighting the good fight. It's not a serious form of cancer (well, as non-serious as cancer can be). She just can't seem to shake the damn thing. The treatment does a number on her bladder, which means a four hour drive to NYC entails numerous pit stops – it's like traveling with little kids again. It feels like we've visited every Dunkin Donut in Connecticut. Luckily Dunkies is the highlight of Connecticut.

Christine retired again. Maybe an extended period with me will change her mind again. We'll see how that goes. Her days are now filled with doing temporary work for her old job (this is retiring?) and shouting obscenities out of the window at the large fat squirrels that live on her squirrel/bird feeder.

My big news is the end of the Covid inspired ponytail. It was a great idea but became unmanageable. How can any sane person spend more than 10 seconds a day faffing around with their hair? Way too much bother. Here is a picture of what I looked like, what I thought I looked like, and what the family thought I looked like.



No, it's not a trick, the first two pictures are of different people. I know, hard to believe.

One highlight of the year was riding around our nation's capital on the annual DC Bike Ride. Me and ten thousand friends on a 20 mile ride through downtown Washington. It was great to see everyone flipping the bird as we rode passed the Trump Hotel. I brought some zip-ties, Qanon flags and an Indian head-dress in case there was a riot at the Capitol Building that day. Alas not to be, it was just full of senators obstructing one another and laughing at Ted Cruz.



It looks like the pandemic is going to be with us for a while. Yes, it's going on forever, just something else to manage in everyday life. I thought the continued pandemic enhanced the summer at least for us. We spent much more time outdoors and the local bars, restaurants, music places all made the most of the open air. Christine is still wary of indoor crowded gathering but I must say that places that ask for proof of vaccination make us feel more comfortable. On the upside, at least the government/Bill Gates/the Illuminati can keep track of us through the microchips embedded in the vaccine. We all know they've all got our best interests at heart. There again, they could skip the microchips and just ask Google and Apple, they already know everything about us.

Have a great Christmas and Covid-free 2022.