

Dear Family and Friends,

December, 2019

Don't you just hate it when you get older and all of your friends start doing exotic, enviable things? When they travel to places you have no hope of ever seeing, spend months relaxing in expensive resorts, retire so they can write best-selling novels? Or contract diseases so rare that they get written up in the *New England Journal of Medicine*?

Anyway, we certainly don't like it when *our* friends are successful like that. Which means we absolutely, totally, completely are NOT going to tell you anything that might sound like bragging, like Geoff's most recent publication, *Sabbatical Travel for Dummies*. Not us! Instead we'll tell you things that are sure to make you feel superior to the poor Kuenning family.

So we know you'll make fun of us when we confess that early in the year we took a 10½-hour flight to London. How stupid to go to Britain in January! And worse, the only thing we did there was to wait five hours for a connecting flight that lasted another 11½ hours. What dummies!

But that wasn't enough for these well-seasoned masochists. Nope, when we found ourselves in Sri Lanka (a huge surprise, because from the moment we left LA we thought we were heading to San Francisco—it's an easy mistake to make, since they both are two-word place names that start with "S") we decided it would be "fun" to sample the local train system. We hired a tuk-tuk from our hotel to the capital, Colombo, and hopped a train back at precisely 5 P.M. Imagine our surprise when the train wasn't crowded! And imagine our further surprise when at every stop more people got on, until we no longer had to hang on because the packed bodies held us up—and some passengers were sitting in the open doorway with their feet hanging out because there was just no room inside. No worries! Being crammed up against complete strangers in 95-degree, 80% humidity was always on our bucket lists, right? (Dummies.) After that adventure we vowed to never ride a Tokyo subway.

But it turns out that Sri Lanka has much more than trains. They also have elephants, so off we went to an elephant-viewing safari in a national park. That was a huge success, if you call sitting in a traffic jam of 50 Jeeps a success. There were indeed some wild elephants; we knew the pachyderms were wild because they were wearing party hats and togas. But naturally they avoided the national park because it was overrun with dummy tourists.



Bathing Beauties

properly intrusive parent had to check out her apartment to make sure it had heat and indoor plumbing, right?

Of course, dummies that we are, we failed to notice that the Republic of Georgia isn't just north of Florida like we thought. Imagine our surprise when we deplaned in Atlanta and discovered that Xandie wasn't there to meet us! Fortunately the ticket agents at Unamerican Airlines were very accommodating and booked us on the next flight out to Siberia, assuring us that it was "very close" to Georgia and we could "almost walk there." I suppose that's technically true, if only we had brought snowshoes. Or crampons. After a week of hiking we gave up and bought yet more plane tickets.

The great thing about the Republic of Georgia is that it is the birthplace of wine. Or at least it claims it is. And so we felt obligated to try every variety under the (feeble) sun, which certainly helped us to stay warm—although finding our way back to our quaint out-of-the-way apartment was a daily challenge. Georgian wine is delicious, as is Georgian food. They should try Georgian food in Atlanta.

Once again we returned home to relax, but somehow it seemed like another international trip was in order. Nothing like spending more money! We got our passports ready so they'd let us into Alaska, and off we went for a cruise. We had an absolutely spectacular time sailing boats around, but eventually we got bored and climbed out of the bathtub. Since the weather was nice (for Alaska) we didn't have a lot of



**Pat In Her Sari
(A Story in Itself)**

After another wonderful 97-hour journey home (we added that up right, right?) we rescued our poor dog from the kennel and settled down to relax... for a week or so.

Meanwhile, Xandie had taken a co-op job in the Republic of Georgia. You may recall that she did a co-op in India last year. Although that didn't go particularly well, it failed to quench her thirst for travel (she's a dummy too, although not as big a one as her parents). This time she worked for Open Caucasus Media, a tiny non-partisan company, and absolutely loved it. So, in keeping with our desire to earn the title of World's Most Intrusive Parents, in March we decided we absolutely had to visit her. After all, any



**At a Georgian
Winery**



Korean Palace and Traditional Clothing



More Wine Tasting

excuses for staying indoors, so Pat made some drawings and Geoff tried out a kayak. We're still not sure how he managed to get it up the totem pole (it might have something to do with that Georgian wine) but he insists he had fun in the process. On the way back home we bought a souvenir iceberg (they're a popular tourist item in Alaska) but it turns out it didn't keep well in Southern California. Dummies!

Now at this point you're probably thinking that anybody with any sense would decide to stay at home from that point onwards. Especially since Xandie was doing yet another internship in Washington, D.C., which *nobody* sane wants to visit in the summer because it's so hot and humid. But no, not the Kuenning dummies. Instead, off we went again, this time to South Korea, where Geoff needed to set up a computer server. (Don't ask why.) After that was done, he decided it was imperative to see a Korean

baseball game. Too bad he didn't check the schedule first. The taxi dropped us off at a completely empty stadium, and it took us three days to walk back to the hotel. But hey, he took a great picture!

After that we turned tourist and visited all the famous sights. Korea has about 4,398 palaces, all of which are gorgeous. And impressive. And outdoors. And big—really, really big. You walk for miles and miles and *miles*, hoping that at some point you'll encounter a cute little Korean kid with a lemonade stand. Instead, all you see is people (Korean and not) dressed up in traditional Korean clothes, which are slightly warmer than a down parka. It's a big tourist thing there. Only...did we mention that it was August? And that Seoul is quite a bit *more* hot and humid than D.C.? And that we went there during the two hottest weeks of the year? The people in traditional clothes had a tendency to spontaneously burst into flame, which was actually quite pretty (although we always kept our distance because we were already too hot).

Korea was a blast, but eventually the dummies managed to find their way back to relaxing old Claremont, just in time for Geoff to finish his sabbatical and start classes again (oops, there goes the relaxation!). Pat resumed her recent retirement by playing music, painting, and seeking volunteer "opportunities," and Xandie returned to Northeastern for her final semester. By the time you read this she'll have her B.A. in International Affairs with minors in Journalism and Psychology and, like all good modern graduates, be living at home and planning to apply to grad school because jobs are scarce.

Meanwhile, Geoff and Pat are busily trying to figure out whether they can swim the Panama Canal.



Ulsan Stadium

Love.

Geoff



(The Grump)

Pat



(The Goof)

Xandie



(The Sensible One)