

# Joe & Anna's 2015 Year-In-Review

by Joe Hardenbrook (with ~~color commentary~~ valued input by Anna Sorensen)

Greetings Family and Friends!

As 2015 rapidly comes to a close, it once again falls to me (Joe) to bring you (YOU being a diverse cacophony of friends, family members, business associates, and general hangers-on) up to speed on progress made by Anna and I towards securing our inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of vacation time.

Let's start out with the big picture: 2015 was a great year. Anna continues to enjoy her work as Administrative and Finance Director for the Northern Alaska Environmental Center. Her work is challenging and detail-oriented, which she relishes. I spent the year as the Special Assistant to the Fairbanks North Star Borough Mayor. Mayor Luke Hopkins, a good friend and a great guy, asked me to come aboard for the final nine months of his term. Beyond work, we enjoyed a great year of visits by family and friends, travel to new locations both inside Alaska and Outside, and continued work on projects around our Alaska homestead.

## Anna Says:

Joe's style is...different. I suggested: *Dearest family and friends - we love you and wish you a very happy holiday season!* See Joe? Was that so hard?

The year began with the sad but touching passing of Anna's grandparents Joe and Anna Shoemaker. Married shortly after WWII, Joe and Anna made their home and raised their family in Greeley, Colorado. Having spent the greater part of six decades together, Joe and Anna departed this world just a few months apart. Early this summer Anna's uncle Dave also passed, succumbing to Alzheimer's. Words cannot convey how much they are missed.

**Anna Says:** Joe & I have both been so lucky to have loving, strong, and all-around remarkable grandparents who played significant roles in our lives.

In February, my parents Jim and Pam and niece Elisa Hatfield, traveled with me to Circle City, Alaska to serve as Checkpoint Chefs for the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race. A fine time was had by all and our efforts were sincerely appreciated by the mushers, handlers and race enthusiasts. Our good friend Brent Sass of Wild and Free Mushing won this year's race too!

## Anna Says:

Brent winning the Yukon Quest was a high point this year - we've supported Wild and Free since Brent's first race!

Our delightful but short Alaska summer was made all the more wonderful by visits from family and friends. Joe's folks continued work on their cabin just up the drive from our home. We enjoyed visits by friends from Canada, Germany and other strange and exotic locales such as Ketchikan. We spent a week down on the Kenai Peninsula harvesting salmon for the freezer and made a return trip for a friend's wedding in Homer and visits with the Moore/Shoemaker Family.

**Anna Says:** After years of dipnetting Copper River salmon, I joined Joe for my year of first setnetting this June near Kasilof.

## Anna Says:

It was a special treat to visit with cousin Fran Chavar during her RV caravan trip to Alaska.

Our little garden continues to be a source of pride and exasperation, providing us (and the local moose population) with a steady supply of healthy, delicious food. Speaking of food, we also purchased a commercial kitchen trailer this summer. We plan to use the trailer for catering and special events, but also for onsite processing and preparation of local foods. We plan to kick off this new and exciting venture, H.A.R.D. (Hardenbrooks' Alaska Remote Dining) Eats this coming Spring. Stay tuned!

**Anna Says:** We are looking forward to turning our love of homegrown, made-from-scratch foods in to our primary vocation!

**Anna Says:** We don't have kids, but we are lucky to have so many children in our lives! Last year we welcomed Jack, Maggie, Lucas, and Max into the Hardenbrook family, and Tillie into the Boylan (Sorensen) family.

In exciting family news, Joe's brother Jay (and wife Jessica) and his sister Jamie (and husband Tim) all discovered – on the same day – that they were expecting! In February, Jay and Jess will welcome Lucy and Jamie and Tim will welcome Clae.

Autumn saw more visits from dear friends and a fun weekend camping in Denali National Park. In October, Joe's time with the Mayor's Office came to a close, and we set out on an East Coast trip for Anna's cousin, Anja Sorensen's wedding in New York and Joe's sister's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary party in Tennessee. It was great to see our families celebrate such happy occasions. Afterwards, Joe was able to visit his Grandma Elsa in Oregon and his Grandpa Don and Grandma Jo in Idaho before spending some time with his uncles in Nevada. In November, Joe and his brother Jay spent a couple weeks roadtripping to football games across the southern states.

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**Anna Says:** We had a great time catching up with family this fall. Both Anja's wedding & Jamie's anniversary celebrations turned into mini-family reunions.

**Anna Says:** Our two dogs are Walter & TJ – both "retired" distance racers. TJ fell ill and passed away right before Christmas. She was a playful, quirky companion and we miss her greatly.

Snow arrived in late September and Anna enjoyed getting out on the trails with the dogs and her little mushing sled or skis. I spent the early part of the winter burning through the stockpile of firewood and planning grandiose vacations for upcoming years. We spent Christmas in Utah and Nevada, visiting our families and preparing for our next travel adventure.

**Anna Says:** Contrary to what he says, Joe is active in the community. The Goldstream Lions, Stone Soup Café, the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race – and a BUNCH of local political campaigns – all benefit from his volunteer efforts. We are really blessed to have many opportunities to be involved in our little-big community.

Anna continues to serve as the official race timer for the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks, which keeps her busy during the weekends. Anna also serves as the Board President for our local fire department and volunteers many hours for local charities and advocacy organizations. I (usually) make the morning coffee and (usually) do the dishes.

So, what is next? We will spend the first two months of next year down in Mexico, exploring the Baja Peninsula together with our trusty little truck. We are very excited – and a little nervous – about this adventure. We will be checking email and posting photos on Facebook – we hope you'll keep tabs on us! We plan on returning to Fairbanks (and work) sometime in March.

We are looking forward to another great and busy year in 2016. Between business ideas, home improvement projects and travel plans, we (I) should stay out of trouble. It seems like every day Anna and I tell each other how blessed we feel to be living and sharing this wonderful time together. From our amazing friends to our loving families to the beautiful place on this beautiful earth that we get to call "home," our life is good.

So, as Anna would say:

*To all our Family and Friends – We love you and wish you a very happy holiday season!*

With Much Love and Thanks,

**Joe & Anna**