

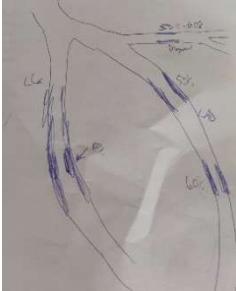


When our last Christmas cards went out in December 2018, we had just moved to Fayetteville, Georgia. Marc had started 9th grade at Whitewater High school, and Sean had started 5th grade at Sarah Harp Minter ES. Dave had recently taken over the Radiation Protection Branch at the Georgia EPD, and Catherine was a Professor at Clayton State. We had intentions of sending out Christmas cards last year, but a few things got in the way. So this year everyone gets the two-years-for-the-price-of-one Christmas card update.

We'll start with our excuses for not getting our 2019 Christmas cards out....

Dave, our main excuse:

Dave has been Program Manager for the Radiation Protection Branch of the EPD since late 2016. He continued coaching soccer, now for the Lazars Soccer Club instead of Henry County. He started as assistant coach for Sean's U12 team, but is now a U8 staff coach with a couple of teams on his own. After hassling him for a few years about getting a check-up, Dave finally went to see the doctor in fall 2019.



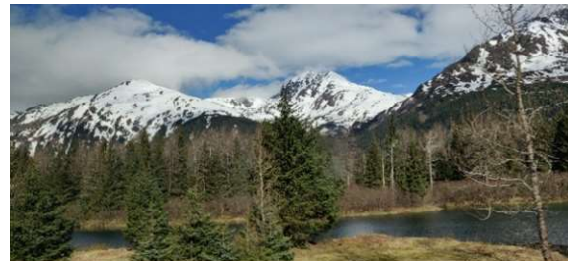
Given his family's health background, he asked for "the works". Between Thanksgiving and Christmas, he had several more tests and visits to the cardiologist which showed evidence of a 'cardiac event' some time in the past. We still don't know for sure when it happened, but we're suspecting it was in 2012 when he was training for the one half-marathon that he ran. More testing showed blockages in several arteries in the heart, and on December 23, 2019, Dave had 4 stents put in (Happy Festivus!). Amazingly, it was

done as outpatient surgery and recovery went smoothly, with just some fatigue due to the new medications.

Dave was back to coaching soccer in the spring and has started playing adult league soccer and refereeing as well. Thankfully, no significant injuries have ensued from that endeavor (yet). When Covid shut everything down in March, his job shifted to work from home, Teams meetings, and virtual inspections. This has worked quite well for him, and he is really appreciating not having the commute. With the extra time he has gained in his day, he started making homemade bread and bagels and has started building an outdoor kitchen area for his grill. He built a 16x10 ground-level deck with tiled countertops surrounding the grill. It is not quite finished, but is looking great. He has also built himself a new gaming computer, his first new computer in 10 years. (It's got a glass side and RGB lights in it 😊)



As part of his job Dave 'had' to assist in security sweeps for Super Bowl 53 and take a work trip to Anchorage in May 2019, unfortunately everyone else had school and couldn't go. He's promised to take us sometime.



Catherine, our secondary excuse:

In 2019, Catherine's job as Professor in the Math department at Clayton State was going well, and she was recognized for her hard work with the Georgia Power University Professorship in April. She was able to help with Sean's last Field Day at the end of his 5th grade year, and chaperone his class trip to FDR's Little White House.

Everything was going along as usual until the department chair unexpectedly decided to resign two weeks before the start of Fall semester 2019. She did not run away fast enough when the Dean called her, and was roped into taking on the position of Interim Department Chair. That made fall semester extremely busy with learning an entirely new skillset- managing department budgets, creating course schedules, and endless training sessions on hiring processes and other chair duties. At the start of faculty planning week for fall semester, she went in for her physical and mentioned a pain in her side that had kept her up for a few nights but had mostly gone away. One CT scan later and she was headed to the hospital, diagnosed with appendicitis. Unfortunately, what was supposed to be a simple laparoscopic procedure turned into a 6 inch scar and a week stay in the hospital. She rewarded herself for making it through all this with the purchase of a baby grand piano (from Facebook Marketplace), something she has wanted for many years. She really enjoys listening to Sean practice on it, but has not had much time to play on it herself as much as she would like. However, between the hectic nature of the



new job and Dave's heart, Christmas cards were one of several things that fell by the wayside at the end of 2019.

Like Dave, the boys, and countless others, when Covid hit in March 2020, her job changed to be work-from-home. Losing her summers at home with the boys was probably the biggest downside to the new position, so that was a small silver lining in mess of a year that 2020 has been for most people. While she's been going to campus 1-2 days a week since August, she taught Differential Equations online via Teams this semester, which was quite a challenge. She is hoping that classes will be able to fully return to normal in the latter half of 2021, but also that teleworking (on non-class days) will continue to be regularly allowed for part of the workweek. She has gained a couple of new furry co-workers, who have no respect for personal space.



Sean:

Sean is now 12 and has moved on to the dreaded years of middle school at Whitewater Middle School. Sixth grade went well- he navigated lockers and class changes, and continued friendships with boys he had met in 5th grade and worked to keep in touch with his friends from Pates Creek back in Henry



County. Catherine was able to take time to chaperone a two-night class trip to Space Camp in February 2020, right before everything shut down from Covid. Both Catherine and Sean enjoyed the trip a lot, though Catherine probably enjoyed it more, getting to talk with docents who had been engineers for NASA during the 60s, 70s, and 80s. Sean finished 6th grade with all As, and has maintained his grades for the first half of 7th grade. We are very proud of him!

Sean and Marc have been lucky enough to be able to attend school partially in person from the beginning of the school year, and they both returned to fully (mask covered) face to face classes back in October. Sean and his friend Noah designed and carried out science fair projects in both 6th and 7th grade, nearly 100% on their own, in complete contrast with our experience with science fair with Marc. Just before Thanksgiving, Sean mentioned to us

“oh, I guess we made county science fair”, so we'll see how they do there in January. Sean is still a pretty picky eater, but is slowly improving. Hopefully that will help with his growth, as Sean is up to 4'10" at 12 ½ years old. He is finishing his 4th year of piano lessons and is getting pretty good. In 6th grade he started band and decided he wanted to be a percussionist like his big brother. Since Covid hit, he's been playing more Minecraft and other games online with his friends, using Discord to talk with them, and has spent maybe a little too much time on his Oculus game system. We have started Sean in Cotillion, in an effort to help build his skills with interacting with people he doesn't know, which Sean is very unhappy about. His obsession with llamas continues, and is inspiring his hair style, much to his mother's dismay. Sean has turned into quite the reader, generally having 2-3 books in



progress at any one time. He reads a wide range of books, from Dog Man graphic novels to the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy series.

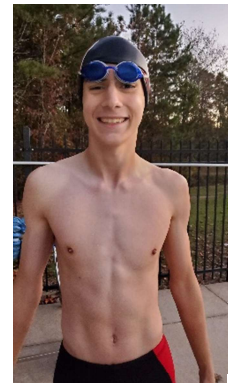


Sports:

Both Marc and Sean have been playing soccer for the PTC Lasers since we moved, though the Spring 2020 season was cut short (obviously). Marc was selected for the U16 All-Star team in the fall of 2019 and played U19/20 this fall. He is hoping to make the WHS soccer team this winter.



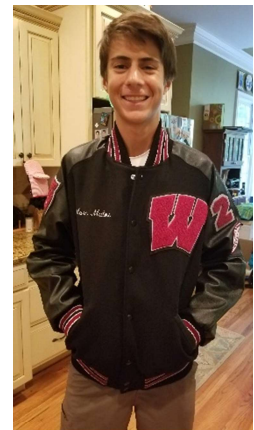
He has started earning a little money from refereeing, which is going into an IRA. 😊 Both boys swam for the Peachtree City Pirates swim team in 2019. We miss the comradery of the old swim team, but the new team did push Marc to be a better swimmer. Unfortunately, swim team was one of many things that Covid cancelled in 2020. However, we were able to have Marc swim 2 hours a day 3 days a week with the Tara Tarpons, a year-round team, and have Sean swim on a less-intense year-round team at the same location.



Marc:

Marc is now 16 and over 6 feet tall. He is halfway through 11th grade, getting closer to leaving home for college, which I am not ready for. In February 2020, he took a week-long trip to France with his high school band. He did not bring Covid back with him, thank goodness. While he pulled a typical teenager and did not contact us at all while he was away, we were able to follow his trip through his band director's postings on Facebook. I think he spent most of his free time on the trip buying and eating his favorite treat, madeleines. He lettered for swim team in early 2019 and finally got his letter jacket that fall.

Since starting high school, he has picked up a boatload of activities in addition to the high school swim team, adding a few more each year. He plays percussion in the band, has been active on the robotics team, academic team, math team (who won 2nd place in their division at the regional math competition), Beta Club, and Ping Pong Club, and is also a member of the Spanish, English, and Science Honor





Societies. He went to his first homecoming dance in 2019 with friends, unfortunately no school dances this year. In 9th grade his mail-delivering robot project made it to the county science fair, and in 10th grade he made it to regionals. We are very glad that science fair is not required for Physics this year! He did well with classes when they went online in the spring, thanks to his years at Impact Academy in middle school.

Anticipating that Covid would mean no summer activities, his mean mommy made him take Math 1401 (Statistics) at Clayton State over the summer. Online, of course, but Marc surprised everyone by making a routine to work on the course for an hour or so every day right after breakfast. Like his brother, he's maintained all A's in school so far, though AP Language has definitely made him work hard for that grade. We were happy to learn that he scored well enough on the AP World History exam in 10th grade to receive college credit. We hope that AP testing will be back to a more normal process this spring for the 3 AP classes he's taking this year. Soccer and swim practice have been back in full swing this fall, so he's been busy almost every moment of the day, but he still finds time for video games and late-night reading. Marc is taking after both parents and showing an aptitude in chemistry as well as math. He was selected as WHS Chemistry Student of the year for 2019-20 and is doing well (so far) in BC Calculus this year.



Marc got his learner's permit the day after his birthday in 2019 and was able to take the road test for his permit a few days after his 16th birthday in May. His grandmother generously gifted him his Uncle Mike's old car, which has been a great relief to his parents, who no longer have to drive him to soccer and swim practices. It almost makes up for the pain to their wallet for the greatly increased insurance rates.

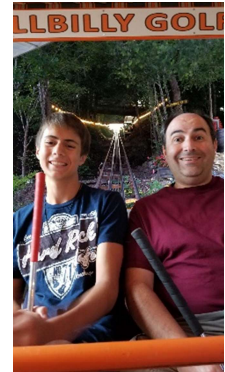


In July 2019, Marc spent two days working as an extra on the set of the Netflix show, Sweet Magnolias. The acting bug has definitely not bitten him, but the lure of easy money convinced him to do it. If you watch closely, you can see him in about 5 different episodes. I'm hoping he'll be able to do a little more extra work this coming summer.



Family:

In 2019, the family took a rare actual vacation to Gatlinburg. Everyone enjoyed whitewater rafting on the Upper Pigeon River and wants to it again. We rode roller coasters for two days at Dollywood. Sean even braved the crazy fast Lightning Rod once and was a good sport about waiting for the rest of us while we rode it several more times. He still won't ride any coasters with loops though, except for the Mindbender at Six Flags. We play Hillbilly Golf, rode a mountain coaster, rode the ski lift to the top of Ober Gatlinburg, and explored Tuckaleechee Caverns. Catherine also decided it would be a good idea to stop at Tallulah Gorge on the drive up and walk down to the suspension bridge, not realizing just how many steps it would be. She almost didn't make it back.

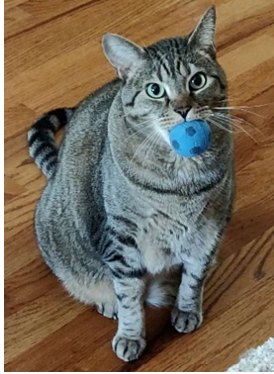


Suzie has invited the family to the beach on the Florida panhandle for the past several years, and Catherine and the boys were finally about to take her up on the invitation for a weekend trip in June 2019 and a slightly longer weekend trip in July 2020. It was especially nice to have the change of scenery this past summer.

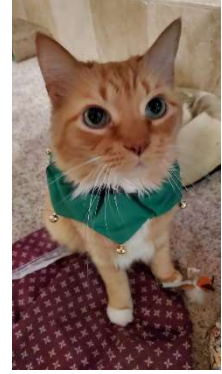


Summer 2020 has (of course) been quieter, without the usual visits to Six Flags, birthday parties, and getting together with friends. We have watched all 10 seasons of Stargate SG-1, and are about to wrap up Stargate Atlantis. Debating on which show we should go through next with the boys- Farscape? Babylon 5? Battlestar Galactica?

All four cats are doing well, and mostly getting along. Emmett still doesn't understand that Lego doesn't want to play with him, though. Odin was put on a diet and has lost 4 pounds. He plays chase with Emmett, which is further slimming him down. Calli is now our snaggle-toothed cat, having had a fang pulled last year. She's now the oldest cat we've ever had, at almost 14.



Odin wishes you a Merry Christmas! Now play with him!



So that's our 2-years-in-review. We hope everyone is doing well and has not been too severely impacted by Covid. Come for a visit once things settle down with the pandemic- we'd love to see you! In the meantime, email us at:

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dmmatos@gmail.com

We hope everyone had a good Christmas and will have a Happy New Year!

