

We've received your cards and letters, unless you're running even later than us. Thank you! In return here's our version of what 2014 looks like in the rearview mirror. Objects are not closer than they appear.

The Kat Portion

We'll start with a short bit about myself here, and then the rest is (mostly) by Jim. His life is a lot more exciting than mine. (In some senses, yes, I mean he does publish actual books and gets to go to conferences where attendees get Oscar-style gift bags. It's fun being married to someone famous.¹)

I got promoted this year to Librarian, and Jim and I are now as far as we can go at U-M's Library. Since Jim is on the review committee he got to recuse himself from the discussion and the final decision.²

I continue screening films for the Ann Arbor Film Festival — 5 years at this point — and I'm both a pre-screener (so I watch the really awful movies) and on the screening committee (so I watch the pretty darn good movies that need to be slotted into the right places).³ ⁴

Singing, still, with the University Musical Society Choral Union (see I told you my life isn't as exciting — it's all about continuing to do the same things as always). Our group just got its second Grammy nomination(!). I'm doing a lot more swimming (lakes, pools, rivers, anything that has water in it that is more than 4 feet deep) and more biking with Jim⁵ which is great. I also joined Jim in the ridiculous obstacle race he's done the past few years — super hard and super fun.

I lost my Dad to an unexpected illness in 2014 (January 12). It was sudden and surprising, and I'm still taking it all in. I think about him often, and continue to recognize the vast influence he had on my life.

The Jim Portion

As Kat said, she chose to run a little, and I got to run a lot. Fewer injuries is nice, but it was still a year of second bests. I came in second (in my age group) in the aforementioned ridiculous obstacle race I'd won (in my age group) the past two years, and ran my second best half-marathon time even though I (thought I) ran

¹Jim: Famous? I'm sure that's not the right word, but I'm not a good enough writer to figure out what is.

²Jim: She did fine without me around.

³Jim: I really don't know what she's doing on Thursday nights — she says she's watching movies, but since she never talks about them for all I know she's really working covert ops for the CIA or something.

⁴Kat: Ach. Found me out.

⁵Jim: I got a new bike myself. It doesn't replace my ~25 year old commuter / mountain bike, but this cyclocross featherweight thing is much (much) nicer, and a real pleasure to ride long distances on. Which we did a number of times together, and with friends. It also afforded me the opportunity to agonize over various accessories, mainly the seat. I hated the one mine came with (a friend who's a serious cyclist said that the term of art for what I was experiencing was "sitting on a 'butt axe'") so I tested out a bunch. In case you wondered, I ended up with a Brooks Cambium, which ought to be horribly uncomfortable, since it feels rock hard to the touch. But it works for my, um, butt, and I'd recommend any cyclist at least give one a try. Bonus: it's vegan.

it harder and smarter than last year...which was my best time. This is what 51 feels like, I think. And our team's 10th appearance at Dances with Dirt was great fun, as always.

Three drafts of the Hawking graphic novel now exist as well as new scenes for (and the online publication of) the Turing story. It's a movie year, since both books I have in progress are about scientists who also have feature films out about them. I've seen *The Theory of Everything* and had quibbles with its accuracy. Of course. Not that I'll have made no concessions to accuracy in service of my narrative arc...I'll just have made the *right* concessions. Ahem. It's a good movie, though, and the performances are great.

So, comics: I have a couple of other pots on low simmer, but nothing has started to boil yet. I'm also doing a revision of a novella, or, if I add more words in the process, a short novel. That means a) no pictures, and b) making stuff up, therefore c) it's been a struggle. Fiction is hard; who knew?

Things are starting to settle in for the library's publishing division, which is where my day job is still to make U-M scholarship available to the world for free, and I still like doing that. I'm also finally working on a research project around this, that may (read: ought to) (read: better!) lead to the first publication in a long while that doesn't feature lots of drawings but will feature lots of graphs and statistics. It'll be so...academic. So...non-remunerative. I probably won't do a tour in support of its release. Nor will I do any touring or press junkets for the video I was part of for 826michigan.⁶ Just as well.

I read a lot of books this year. I have a crush on Teddy Roosevelt. That is all.⁷

Also, this was the year I discovered bourbon.⁸ So clichéd and...trendy, apparently. I didn't actually know this until hearing it was cool to drink this from hipper, younger friends. We just wanted to do something different and new in Detroit, so we took a tour of the Two James Distillery and, surprise surprise, liked their high rye "Grass Widow".⁹ This set me on my road to ruin. Not really, but I can see how this could be an expensive habit. It's a good thing librarianship and comic book writing are not the tickets to instant wealth and fame that everybody said they'd be or my liver might suffer.

The Both Portion

Because travel and vacation time were both constrained, we went to far more U-M sports this year than usual. Enjoyed them all, even when our team lost. We also did a lot of snowshoeing earlier this year, and that was also fun. (If it's going to be solid white for four months straight you might as well enjoy it.) We did go to Florida for a few days, but other than a too-short visit with my parents, it was mostly work for me (at least in part) as I was there to entertain what

⁶ Jim: <http://youtu.be/lcb2oddh9FI>. #WearTheShirt

⁷ Kat: All he read were books about TR. I swear that's what it sounded like.

⁸ Kat: I am pained that he has discovered bourbon and forgotten about scotch, his first love. Can't you hear it calling to you?!

⁹ Jim: I haven't abandoned scotch. I have enough room in my heart for both.

¹⁰ Jim: Said rye is grown here in Ann Arbor, so we're not only drinking responsibly, we're drinking local.

development professionals call “high capacity donors” with stories of making comic books about scientists. I think it went well, though I also proved that I am either too good at off-the-cuff responses to questions or not good at them at all.¹¹

We spent a lot of time hanging out with friends. Never enough, but we’re grateful for each minute.

We still like our not-so-new kitchen. I think I benefit from the remodel the most, since Kat cooks and I do the dishes...and fewer of them, now that we have a dishwasher that doesn’t sound like a gravel hauler and threaten to spew water like a fire hydrant.

We still have Pepper, or she still has us. Hard to tell sometimes. She enjoyed her first Christmas tree a great deal.¹²

Our porch roof still leaks as I write this. Water is sneaky.

So is time. Welcome to 2015. I hope you enjoy your stay, and we get to enjoy it with you.

¹¹Jim: The question: “How much money do you make doing this?” (Posed with an entirely appropriate tone of incredulity.) My answer, after a brief pause during which whatever mental/ vocal filters I should have in place by now failed to materialize: “I’ll show you my 1040 if you show me yours.” Fortunately, that broke up the room, and thus encouraged, I followed up with “Usually only middle-school kids ask me this.” Which also got a laugh. It really is a fair question, though, and the high capacity donor who asked it got the last laugh, when after I offered a much less sassy answer — one that gave few specifics but a decent sense of the riches involved — he said, loud enough for all to hear, “Yeah, well, don’t quit your day job.” Touché.

¹²The Both: We didn’t put one up for the past few years, convinced that she would bring it down every day while we were at work. She climbed it many times, but it’s only ornaments (read: toys!) that she brought down every day. Yes, every day for three weeks. It was a giving (and giving and giving) tree.