

CALIFORNIA LLORENTES' 2014 CHRISTMAS BLOG

Dear Friends and Family:

Our fondest wishes for a wonderful holiday. I'm late this year because Ariel didn't get in until pre-dawn Christmas Eve, and we didn't get around to family pictures by the Christmas tree until Christmas Day shortly before Adrian left for NYC.

Once again, issues involving my mom have been at the forefront of my attention in the past year. While physically my mom is doing well, and seems to actually have improved a bit in the last year, her short term memory is progressively getting worse. We had moved my mom into a retirement community located in Aventura, Florida in October, 2013 so she was closer to Oscar and Gerard, but it increasingly became apparent that she requires an inordinate amount of attention, and that although she is still able to physically meet many of her personal needs by herself, she requires constant minor assistance and attention as a result of the fact that she has practically no short-term memory.

With some trepidation, I moved my Mom to my home in California, and I have hired a caregiver

to come in while I'm at work to help out. Unfortunately, this is not proving as simple of a solution as I had hoped. My mom has been staying with me in California for a few months out of the year for the last two decades, with the amount of time increasing significantly in the most recent years. Frankly, it has always been somewhat difficult, since as a typical Cuban mother, the concepts of personal space and boundaries are completely foreign to her, and thus this has always been a cause of strife. However, I've always been able to grin and bear it in the past because I knew that in a few more weeks she would return to Florida and my life would return to normal. Now, knowing that she isn't going back to Florida has made me feel somewhat depressed.

My mom's short term memory seems to be completely gone. The weekend before Thanksgiving we drove up to San Francisco to see Ariel, and during the seven hour drive she asked four times where we were going. During that weekend she repeatedly asked what city we were in (She's been to San Francisco about a dozen times before.) A couple days after our return, she asked me when we were going to see Ariel, and when I informed her we had just returned from San Francisco, she claimed she hadn't gone. I showed her pictures, but she had no

memory of any of the events, except that when she saw herself dressed in a pajama at a party one of Ariel's friends had hosted there, she did remember that she had gone to party in a pajama but couldn't remember when or where that was.

Taken in isolation, some of the weird stuff my mom does is kind of funny. She'll anxiously run to my bedroom at 1:00am or when I'm in the shower to tell me we need to go to Costco because we're out of Glucerna (*a nutrition shake for diabetics, she drinks like an addictive drug*) even though we've never had less than a couple of dozen bottles of the stuff in the kitchen. She cannot remember how to turn on the TV, close the garage door or operate many other appliances requiring repeated lessons throughout the day. During shopping trips I feel like I'm out with a three year old constantly having to say "no" or to put things back, as she's constantly filling the cart with stuff we already have. I can go on for volumes, and I realize that I'm griping about petty annoyances, but the cumulative effect, after just a month and a half, has been wearing me down.

I'm sure I'll adjust and things will get better, even if my Mom's mental condition doesn't. The loss of short-term memory has gotten

dramatically worse in the last year, and I'm going to have her medications reviewed by new doctors here, just to ease my mind that these aren't a contributing factor. You can have a conversation with my Mom, if you've known her for many years, and not even realize that there is any mental deficit. In the "now" she can process information perfectly; however, in less than a day, she'll forget you ever had that conversation. Unfortunately, it seems that her deficit is expanding since she can't recall many events that occurred in the last decade. At this time last year, I tested her memory by questioning her about international trips we had taken and she seemed to have forgotten events going back to 2010; this year she doesn't appear to remember events from 2001 forward.

Other than my Mom, little else has changed in my life. This past August, I celebrated my 30 year anniversary of moving to California and teaching at Saddleback. I probably could do without the milestone reminders that I'm getting old though. In April, I took a three day cruise with the kids fro Long Beach to Ensenada. First time I had taken one of the short local cruises since I moved to California. During the summer, since Ariel was unemployed, we took another family vacation and visited Panama, Bogata, Lima, Cuzco, and Machu Picchu.

I'm taking banked leave this coming semester, so I won't be teaching until June. My original plan was to take advantage of last minute travel deals during the Spring and thus travel at a time of year I otherwise never have the opportunity because of teaching commitments. My decision to move my mother has thrown a kink into my plans, but I still expect to do some travelling during the next five months.

Ariel has had an eventful year; she was on temporary assignment with JB Hunt at the beginning of the year, but got transferred to Tracy and moved to Livermore in January. She still didn't like her job, and despite my well-reasoned counsel that she should procure another position before resigning, she broke down crying and quit her job in late-February when she was offered a promotion. She then spent over 7 months in part-time temp jobs, until she secured her present position with Yelp! at their headquarters in San Francisco.

She moved into the city, which she had always wanted to do, and now lives with three other roommates. Even though her workplace is more like a kid's playroom than an office, and the location is a dream for her (*just a few blocks, from Union Square,*) she is finding the job, which

involves cold calling, challenging.

She made the best of her unemployment / underemployment time by coming to Panama and Peru with Adrian and I, and then just two weeks after our return, she flew to Iceland for my brother's wedding, and from there to Norway, the Netherlands and Spain with a friend. Ariel also has a boyfriend now, Bill. I met him briefly in San Francisco; he seems like a real nice guy. Ariel spent Thanksgiving in Boston with his family, and he'll be down in Orange County for a few days on December 30th.

Adrian graduated from high school and also turned 18 this year. So technically, I don't have any children (*for hotel pricing purposes*) anymore, just young adult offspring. He's attending Saddleback College and planning to major in business. He too has a girlfriend now, and spends as much time with her, as he used to spend on video games. Her name is Megan and she's a very attractive and bright young lady. They recently adopted rats together, which are kept in his room; something, I'm not thrilled about. He left with Megan on Christmas Day to spend 10 days in New York City where Megan has relatives.

My sincere desire that you have had a fantastic

Christmas holiday so far, and best wishes for the
New Year.

***ALEX J.
LLORENTE***

12/29/2014