

CALIFORNIA LLORENTES' 2015 CHRISTMAS BLOG

Dear Friends and Family:

Another year...and as the Beatles' song goes...
"Ob-la-di, ob-la-da, life goes on, brah."

I hope that life is treating each of you well, and that the holiday and the new year bring you each good health and joy. To a large extent, I can summarize this year's blog with ditto marks, since little has changed from last year.

For the third year, issues involving my mom have commanded most of my time. She has now been living with me full-time for over a year; however, if you ask her how long she's been in California, she'll tell you she got here last Tuesday. She turned 80 this year and physically she is doing pretty well. We went to the Grand Canyon during Thanksgiving weekend and she walked a 1.2 mile segment and then a .7 mile segment shortly thereafter along the rim trail with little complaint.

Regrettably, her short-term memory is completely shot and she can't remember anything she does 10 to 15 minutes after the fact. Also, her entire life for the last 15 years is a complete blur; however, if she knew you 20 years ago or longer, she's able to recognize you and you can have a conversation with her for quite awhile without sensing that anything is wrong.

I have a caregiver come eight hours a day to help out, but I still have to deal with constantly repeating things and answering my mom's queries the rest of the day. I've discussed with Adrian the possibility of doing a video, like in the [Adam Sandler/Drew Barrymore](#) movie, "50 First Dates," that we can play everyday to catch her up on life, but haven't found the time or motivation to do something like that.

One thing that I really hate is what I refer to as the "litany of the dead." Every couple of days, my mom asks me to call my godmother or one of my aunts, who my mom used to converse with frequently a couple of decades ago. When I inform her that the relative is dead, she exclaims that she didn't know and asks why wasn't she told. My mom then immediately follows up rattling off names and inquiring about other relatives, all of whom have also passed away. At the end, she and I are both left with the realization that almost every relative from her generation in our rather large extended family is deceased. Ironically, that fact doesn't seem to affect her much, but it always instills in me a sense of sadness and gloom, as I am constantly reminded of people who played significant parts in my life that are no longer around.

Again, a lot of the weird stuff my mom does is kind of funny and I try to see the humor. Maybe after I retire from teaching and practicing law, I'll become a cruise ship stand-up comic laden with "nutty mother" material; however, as I mentioned last year, the cumulative effect of all her manias and annoying quirks does wear me down at times.

Several friends and family have suggested that it might be time to consider institutionalization, but I'm still not there yet:

First, there is the whole Cuban cultural thing. Cuban sons are instilled with considerable parental guilt growing up, and we simply don't put our moms in nursing homes when they get old and become super annoying. To be honest, my mom was super annoying when she was younger and didn't have Alzheimer's, so the transition isn't all that dramatic.

Secondly, it doesn't make economic sense. I have a huge house and can provide my mom with her own private room and bath, as well as a caregiver to look after her individually for far less than the cost of what I deem to be an acceptable facility. There are some nice facilities in Laguna Hills, but they range from \$3,950 to \$5,800 a month, and though pretty nice, would nevertheless present a far inferior arrangement than what my mom has right now.

Finally, I firmly believe she needs to be near someone she recognizes at all times. While I don't really know what goes on in her head, I've observed that she apparently goes through several "memory wipes" during the day. I get the impression her memory is wiped clean every few hours, then she looks around confused, sees the caregiver (who was one of our kid's nannies 15-20 years ago), my son or me, and she concludes that she's in California visiting for a few weeks. This is what she used to do several times a year prior to the onset of Alzheimer's. If she finds herself alone or with people she doesn't recognize, my mom quickly becomes paranoid and delusional.

Eventually, I might have to place her in a home, but again, I'm not there yet.

I took banked leave during the Spring semester (January-May 2015), so I didn't begin teaching until June. My plan had been to take advantage of last minute travel deals during that time, but like the "best laid plans of mice and men," they went awry. Three factors conspired against me: (1) my Mom's condition; (2) a court case that I had anticipated would settle in January, was not settled until June; and (3) a slab water leak, which ultimately promulgated the unexpected expense of repiping the whole house in April.

A planned trip to Cuba at the end of May had to be postponed until July because I had a difficult time getting the requisite visa to allow me to travel under a US Passport. While my kids got their visas in 24 hours, mine was a more complicated process because I was born there. We did finally get to go for a week at the end of July. We had a great time and it was a fabulous, unique destination. The facts that it is my birthplace, it had been 50 years since I had left, and that I had many interesting relatives there made it a very special and emotional trip. Ariel, Adrian and I were accompanied by Bill (Ariel's boyfriend), Oscar and Gerard.

I am currently planning to visit Cuba again in May 2016 and concentrate on locations further afield from Havana. Hopefully, I will get some scuba diving in, as well.

We took a few short road trips throughout the year: (1) Redwoods National Park in February, during which my mom locked herself in a bathroom at the Crescent City Lighthouse Park; (2) Las Vegas with my mom, Adrian and Megan in May; (3) Las Vegas and the Valley of Fire, again with my mom, Ariel, Bill, Adrian and Megan, in September; and (4) Las Vegas, yet again, en route to the Grand Canyon for Thanksgiving. Ariel flew me to San Francisco as a birthday gift in September and she and Bill took me to a concert by an Australian Pink Floyd cover band which was “awesome,” as Bill would say.

Keeping with the family heritage travel theme, we are going to Vietnam on New Year’s Day (my ex-wife was Vietnamese, so Ariel and Adrian are ½ Vietnamese). Megan and Bill will be traveling with us and we will be spending a couple of days in Cambodia and Taiwan, as well.

Ariel left Yelp! She took a job at a cosmetics distributor startup in San Francisco. She is also teaching swim on the weekends and dogsitting with the time she has left over. I think in her first two years out of school, she has had as many different jobs as I’ve had in my entire life, but to be fair, most of my changes were in the early years. On the other hand, she and Bill have been dating for over a year-and-a-half now.

Adrian and Megan have also been dating for the same amount of time. He’s attending Saddleback College and now planning to major in accounting. He’s doing very well. After a rocky start with Calculus, he pulled 100% on the final and got an “A” in the class and a 4.0 GPA for the semester. He’s planning to transfer to a local Cal State University to complete his undergraduate degree, since he’s planning to pursue a post-graduate degree and wants to stretch out his college fund.

Once again, it is sincere hope and desire that you have a fantastic holiday, and my best wishes for the coming New Year. Since I opened with song lyrics, I’ll close the same way, with words from one of my favorite Pink Floyd compositions:

*"Every year is getting shorter, never seem to find the time.
Plans that either come to naught or half a page of scribbled lines
Hanging on in quiet desperation is the English way
The time is gone, the song is over
Thought I'd something more to say."*