

How do you fit a year of your life onto a few pieces of paper? Even if a picture is worth a thousand words, there isn't enough room and so much will fade away. At least with digital media there is a way to keep some memories from fading away. On to the recap of 2011:

We still have three dogs. However at times each dog does something boneheaded enough as to say, "Maybe two dogs would be better and I want to take one for the team."

Snoopy the beagle, most senior dog, is still with us. At 16 he no longer has what it takes to hike for miles and he was not with us for this year's official picture. Last year I wrote how he had no major medical problems. As the cards were going in the mail his kidneys failed. We were taught how to give him 200 milliliters of fluid from an IV bag at night and how we might be able to get a couple of more weeks out of him. We now buy liter IV bags by the case. This will be Snoopy's fourth last Christmas.

Lacey turns thirteen in February and she is as feisty as ever. Kim made the very hard decision to stop going on runs with Lacey. Lacey's legs are still up for running, but her stomach just couldn't handle it anymore. Not that a dog can smile, but Lacey would smile after running, but then her stomach would start to gurgle and she would eventually throw up.



Bentley has mellowed, but just a little. Hard to believe he's been with us for five years. He still likes to try to sneak out of the yard for the occasional adventure. We bought him a red and blue flashing LED for his collar that makes him easy to track in the dark. If you are on Facebook Bentley can be found as Birchhurst Bentley.

Even though he's been gone five years I have to mention Asta. In life he was a member of the Highpointers club and had stood on the highest ground in 29 states. When he died I promised him that his ashes would do all 50 states. This summer his ashes tied and passed the mark he set in life and his current state count stands at 32.

It was a pretty quiet winter for us. Except for the snowfall itself, a typical winter in central Connecticut involves a weekly snow, but most of the snow will melt away before the next storm. Not true for the winter of 2010-11. It never melted. There was no place to pile all the snow from shoveling the driveway. I could not see over the drifts. The plows could not keep the shoulders clear, so there was no way to run outside all winter long. In early March the snow stopped falling and within three weeks it had all melted.

That lack of running outside led to my not running the 20 miler on Martha's Vineyard in February, dropping out of our own race, the 19.6 mile Asta Challenge in March and a very slow time at the Boston Marathon. It didn't help that I sprained my ankle the Thursday before Boston and wore a brace in the race. My ankle held together for nine good miles and then I willed myself through 17 bad miles, but that adds up to 26 miles and I finished the race.

Stuck inside for the winter months my thoughts turned to cars. I bought what could be my last 1987 Merkur XR4Ti. This one has no rust, a heavily modified engine and has the bodywork of the Ford Sierra RS500, including a whale tail bigger than a Manhattan apartment. My deal with Kim was to buy this car and clear the stable of the other two Merkurs. I took the train out to Red Wing Minnesota and drove the car home. Brakes and suspension needed upgrading, but the engine is a blast.





Kim's car also got upgraded, her 2002 Saturn L300 had served her well, but with 180,000 miles and the gas mileage associated with a 3.0 liter V6, it was time to go. Three years ago we almost bought a Mini Cooper Clubman, but we were only offered \$800 for a trade in. This time we donated the Saturn to charity and they sold it for \$1400. Kim got one of the first of the 2012 Ford Focuses, Foci (?). It has all the features she wanted, moonroof, heated leather seats which are important with beagles that shed and Synch with MyTouch that pairs with her Bluetooth phone and has iPod controls. She drove the Saturn for nine years and we hope to get ten years from the Focus.



Kim had the first great adventure of the year. She took a business trip to Chennai, India. With outsourcing half of Kim's team works in India. She travelled with a group from The Hartford. They were able to take a one day layover in Brussels and get in some sightseeing on the way over to Chennai. The people were very nice to her, and her hosts were always cautious and made sure that their guest stayed in the shade and always had bottled water available. I learned a new term while Kim was away, Thermal Equator, go around the earth and draw a line through all the average hottest spots. Chennai is on the thermal equator. I would look at its weather and it would be 88° with a dew point of 81° and feel like 117° and that would be hours after sunset. Kim got to do some touristy sightseeing while on the trip.

Kim also had the second great adventure of the year. She went to Illinois to go pick up the highest point in the state. Charles Mound is on private property, actually in a family's side yard, and because of troubles there is only public access four weekends a year. Kim flew to Chicago, rented a car and drove to the northwest corner of the state in early June. She also took Asta's ashes for me. Unfortunately he got flagged going through security and Kim had to explain why she was flying with my dead dog's ashes. The TSA screener was not fazed at all and let the two of them continue. While out in Illinois Kim got to visit relatives and attend a Christening.



Kim has joined me in my high pointing quest. Our first great adventure of the year was a trip out west to pick up Utah, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. The plan started with us packing the car on a Tuesday night and me working until 3:00 on Wednesday and then driving out to meet Kim in Omaha Thursday at 5:00. We had dinner with our friend Jennifer in Omaha and then drove out to Kim's hometown of Kearney Nebraska for the night. Kim now has a Droid and I can't say enough good things about the Hotels.com app. I can figure out how much further I want to/can drive, figure out what city we will be near and then Kim looks for a hotel. We were only in Kearney for eight hours. We had a timeline to reach the Henrys Fork Trailhead in Utah in time to hike in to our campsite. I love the landscape of western Nebraska and we both enjoyed eastern Wyoming on Interstate 80. But after Laramie the state becomes very desolate.

We made our timeline and everything was good for the first couple of hours of hiking until we got to the Elkhorn Crossing. With the record snowpack there was a lot of snowmelt and the bridge was washed out. Kim had a minor meltdown, but I knew there was no problem, my first time to Kings Peak I took the Highline Trail by mistake. So we headed in on the alternate route and set camp just before crossing a rock slide. Between the bright moon and the wind we didn't sleep well that night.



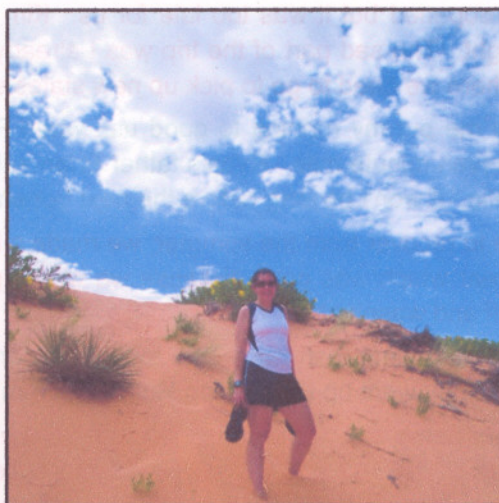
The next morning we left most of our gear at the campsite and headed in. Within a couple of minutes Kim was heading down a trail that ended at a lake and I said, no that's a trail to a lake this is the trail to the peak. Rookie mistake #1 I overlooked the stump blocking the trail in the direction I was heading. We went on for a while, there were other footprints, but the trail eventually disappeared. Rookie Mistake #2 if you lose the trail go back to where you last saw it. We pressed on. We could see the summit. However there were steeply sloping snowfields, fast running swollen streams with waterfalls and large marshy areas. We could see the summit, but we kept

having to skirt around obstacles. My GPS trace shows we followed a fairly straight route, but late in the day, maybe 10:30 am, we had to admit it was too late to summit and then hike out. At that point I let Kim know I was not in complete control of my senses. Rookie mistakes #3 and #4, not enough sleep for several days in a row preparing for the trip and then driving, and not taking time to acclimate to elevation. Even though we could see the summit, we turned back. We went straight back jumping streams and crossing marshes and bogs.



Near the rockslide that was our point of reference we came onto the trail and it lead right under the lake Kim had wanted to go across. The snow had made the lake overflow it shore and flooded the trail. So we have to go back to Utah again, at least it is very pretty. We spent the night in Evanston Wyoming. The next day was a driving day through the Dixie National Forest and Coral Pink Sand Dunes State Park in Utah. Then we drove by the Vermillion Cliffs in Arizona before reaching Flagstaff.

The next morning we were out early to the Arizona Snowbowl on our way up Humphreys Peak. The forest started with the largest Aspen trees I have ever seen before becoming a fir forest. The trail was slightly exposed, a few years ago Kim would not have been able to do it, and now the openness does not bother her. The upper part of the trail is above tree line on volcanic



rock. We got to the summit before noon and took our pictures when Kim first heard thunder, so much for the 40% chance of late afternoon showers. We quickly left the summit as a huge electrical storm was approaching. On the way down I tried to persuade four hikers not to continue but all of them went on up. It started to rain as we approached tree line. Shortly thereafter it started to hail, pea sized hail stings, but

nothing like how much it hurts when it becomes  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch hail. The lightning got so bad I threw our walking sticks away from us underhand because I didn't dare raise my hands above my head. We were soaked to the skin and numb from the cold. We agreed we never need to go to Arizona again.

We drove on again and made it as far as Albuquerque before we called it a night. After driving through desert, the lights of the city were huge. We had no idea the city was so large. The next day we reached Taos to do Wheeler Peak and found the entire Carson National Forest closed due to draught. We could not get permission from the ranger to access the land but we were told to check back the next day. That was Tuesday and with our tight schedule we instead pressed on towards Texas and spent a wonderful night in Roswell, NM, UFO capital of the world. Even the Wal-Mart has a little green man in front of it. Wednesday saw us reach the Guadalupe Mountains National Park and Guadalupe Peak the highest point in Texas. We got a late start and between the strong sun and high temperature Kim wilted on the trail. We had to stop every half mile to drink, there really isn't any shade. Kim wanted to turn back, but then we would have had to return on another trip. That kept Kim going. On the summit there was some thunder and lightning so we headed back. It did rain, but it was so hot and dry it evaporated on contact.





Thursday morning we checked and the Carson National forest was closed and after baking in Texas we decided not to repeat Oklahoma and instead drove to Kansas City to spend an extra day with Kim's dad. Friday afternoon Carson National Forest reopened but it was too late for us. Kim flew home on Saturday and I got the car and our entire gear home Sunday night. The sad part of the trip was I already had New Mexico and Utah and Kim still doesn't and both are not really near where we need to go to pick up new states so we will have to add a special trip to get them.

Late August saw me put my running to good use when Ryan Mulcahey, gosh is he nine or ten now, was bet \$100 he could not run a seven minute mile. Ryan's father Brian enlisted me to pace the boy and with my GPS watch I guided him through a 6:45 mile. It won't be long before the next generation is faster than I am.

We took our time to recover from the summer; we made a long weekend of our annual pilgrimage to Katahdin in Maine. It was foggy this year which was good because we went up the exposed Cathedral Trail at one point Kim was next to a 1000 foot drop-off and wasn't able to see it.

Kim has more vacation time than I do. She took Lacey on a girls' adventure to the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Among their hikes they went up to Madison Hut where Kim and I stayed last year.

Eventually October came and we made a trip south to hike the Smokies and for Kim to pick up NC, KY and SC. We brought Bentley and Lacey along. To make everything fit we added a hike up Mount Rogers in Virginia. In two weeks Lacey did her hardest hike, her longest hike and her highest hike. After leaving Mt Rogers we picked up Black Mountain in Kentucky and Mount Mitchell in NC. Mitchell was the highest point in the US until Texas was admitted to the union and Guadalupe was briefly America's highest point. In the Smokies Kim and I hiked Mount Cammerer and the next day went up the Trillium Gap Trail to Kim's favorite mountain Mount LeConte. Trillium is the back way to LeConte and we got to see the llamas used to pack in provisions for the lodge.



Meanwhile Bentley and Lacey spent two days in doggie daycare. As a special treat we went through Durham, NC on the way home so that Bentley could stop off and visit Ch. Birchhurst Never Say Die, aka Rocky but Dad to Bentley. I was happy to get pictures of Bentley and his father.

If anything Kim may be more obsessed about high pointing than I am. She finally passed Asta's count in life, but she is one behind the count of his ashes, 32 states to 31. Asta's ashes have been up Wheeler in New Mexico and King's Peak in Utah and Kim has not, Kim has been to Hawkeye Point in Iowa and his ashes have not.

That is pretty much it for the year. Work is work, we do it to earn the money for adventures and do our adventures to make work tolerable. We did a lot of the same stuff we do year after year. 17 years in a row at the Boston Marathon, 14 years of Mount Washington and the Western Mass Athletic Club trilogy, 29 years of the Connecticut River Raft Race and my longest streak is now 35 years at the Manchester Road Race on Thanksgiving morning. Kim let her longest streak end this year when she did not make her annual trip out Urbandale Iowa for the Living History Farms Race.

Thinking about it I may be 15 years from retirement, hopefully closer to 15 than 20 years. I look forward to having more free time and being able to spend my time reconnecting with all my friends. Hopefully this letter keeps everyone up to date on our doings.

Until we meet again,

Todd and Kim

Bentley, Lacey the Beagle and Snoopy

PS Kim's adventures are on her website [www.KimBrown.net](http://www.KimBrown.net)



New York City has the Empire State Building and the Statue of Liberty, Paris has the Eiffel Tower, London has Big Ben and Brussels has Manneken Pis, literally Little Man Pee. Kim had to see the statue while in Brussels.