

Dear Friends and Family

Enclosed are a very few of the over 25,000 photos and videos I made this past year!

Starting with a family photo at my brother Larry's birthday last December. With our mother and Larry's wife Krisztina and his son Aaron. His daughter Hannah is having medical problems and was not able to visit from Austin, where she had been in medical residency in psychiatry.

Zoos are now entertainment centers as much as they are for breeding rare and endangered animals. Zoo Lights was a colorful example.

Summer Solstice was fully back after COVID. The theme was "Roots" and creative genius Pali had us as cosmic psychedelic mushrooms. Of course, I was on my unicycle!

The big adventure this year: Iceland and Greenland! With Overseas Adventure Travel (OAT). Not cheap, but worth it. The group was small and our native Icelandic guide "Siggy" was very attentive. When we arrived, there were 2,000 earthquakes the first day. This repeated each day. She warned that a volcanic eruption was likely near the airport. I was concerned (from experience) that we might get stranded. Siggy assured us that we might get stranded, but not due to the volcano!

Sure enough, it erupted! And Merlie and I had the experience of a lifetime: Siggy arranged for Merlie and me to go up in a tiny plane and fly right over it! Very intimate: The plane actually got hot inside!

We also experienced endless spectacular waterfalls, glaciers, geysers and even a chance to ride the unique Icelandic horses. But OAT goes beyond all that to provide personal experiences. She arranged for us to stay on a horse farm. And a home meal with a local family in her home town of Akureyri. The man of the house is a fisherman and we got to eat his fresh caught fish. Plenty of fascinating cross-cultural conversation.

Greenland was an entirely different adventure. A bit like being on a vast Native American reservation. Spectacular beauty as well as hardship for many natives.

I am still performing with our Early Music Ensemble, directed by Katie Saxon.

A learning moment that Elton John song writer Bernie Taupin lives here. I got to meet him at a book signing. But he won't talk about his mysterious lyrics! For us to decide!

Merlie continues to paint and do shows and get awards!

I am honored to still be a physics research specialist for Jonathan Schooler's amazingly creative research lab at UC Santa Barbara.

After leading hikes for the Sierra Club for decades, I have been banned even from attending hikes. Just kidding. No. Really. Because a man with a grudge claimed I violated their "inclusivity" policies. Cancel culture really is out of control and utterly insane. I will now lead hikes for the Humanist Society.

Happy Holidays and best wishes for a much better year ahead!

Please go to <https://swt.org/hot/> for my print newspaper column "Robert's Big Questions" and also for my online regional news column!

Best wishes,
Robert