

Dear Friends and Family

Enclosed are a few of my over 30,000 photos and videos from this past year! Starting with me unicycling again in Solstice (not on index sheet). (Photo by my friend Virginia). Then a family photo at my brother Larry's birthday last December. With our mother and Larry's wife Krisztina.

I am honored still to be a physics research specialist for Jonathan Schooler's amazingly creative research lab at UC Santa Barbara. He has connections with some of the top researchers in the world. Including famed neuroscientist Christoph Koch.

We were fortunate to spend most of April in Japan with Overseas Adventure Travel (OAT) and superb native guide Katy. OAT is good at arranging unique experiences. Including meeting sumo wrestlers and a survivor of the Hiroshima atomic bombing. And home visits.

We visited cultural sites in Tokyo, Hakone, Kanazawa, Kyoto, Osaka and Hiroshima. We got out to rural areas and small islands. We mostly used the superb Japanese public transit, but at times used buses and vans.

We were very fortunate to catch the cherry blossoms in multiple cities. And fortunate to see Mount Fuji at its best. It is often shrouded in fog. In Osaka we met up with Merlie's cousin Shalane, who has lived in Japan for most of her life.

Upon our return we attended the annual I Madonnari Chalk Painting festival at the Santa Barbara Mission. Many friends are artists there, including Sharyn. Soon after, my childhood friend Mike Ballard came to visit from back East. The chalk art was still fresh!

Butterflies Alive is an annual exhibit at the Museum of Natural History. One butterfly seemed especially fond of me!

For decades we have struggled to get bicycle lanes and safe pedestrian crossings in Old Town Goleta. I never thought I would live to see it, but our courageous City Council finally made it happen. The result was a torrent of whining from pro-car people that they had to slow down a bit. They tried to throw out the City Council members in the election, but all were resoundingly re-elected!

Fiesta is an annual celebration of Spanish heritage in Santa Barbara. My favorite bit of the Fiesta Parade? The last bit where the fire fighters ride on the wheels of an 1800s era fire pumper. Upside down!

I am still performing with our Early Music Ensemble, directed by Katie Saxon. I continue to serve on the Board of the Humanist Society and lead hikes for them. Merlie continues to paint and do shows and get awards.

My mother Eleanor Bernstein died peacefully in July at the age of 93. My brother Larry had a small memorial for her in October and Larry's son Aaron came all the way from New York for the occasion.

Happy Holidays and best wishes for a 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! And more photos!

Best wishes,
Robert