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Summary:

Inga and Styopa (Leon and Genya's children) and Caleb (Aaron and Alex's child) are a year older and have all kinds of things to say. Styopa's kidneys are working better; he's weaned from Eculizumab. Aaron and Alex are expecting a little boy in March.

Life at Kendal, me

Life at Kendal continues in pretty much the same groove as before: gun violence prevention with Way Forward, week-long stints as website editor (the residents' website marks its 10th anniversary next week), monthly book club, sessions with my personal trainer. The main new activity was volunteering for Harris at the local Dems' office, helping the Dem precinct chair with a newsletter for Kendal Dems, weekly gatherings to write [VoteForward](#) letters (Kendal turned out almost 6,000), postcards, post-its for canvassers – all handwritten, on the theory that recipients will look at a handwritten letter. It wasn't, of course, a good year for Dems – we'd hoped to at least flip a PA legislative seat – the candidate worked so hard—only to fail even at that.

How I used to tease Mom for donating through ActBlue, and I'm far, far worse. DSCC, DCCC, DLCC, endangered Dem senators. ActBlue is like a drug.

Random scenes from Kendal: At supper, a friend held forth about how the new café's salad bar was inefficiently set up. You need to walk back and forth (it's maybe 15' long) and you have to go to both sides to see all the offerings (the DR salad bar, being larger, has the same offerings on each side). I was thinking, in the scheme of things, is this a grave disadvantage? Another friend pointed out (later) that this is Kendal, we don't think about seriousness in the scheme of things.

Another random scene: a retired Latin teacher writing to the Website Committee to correct a Community Center notice that 4/15/2024 was the Ides of April. She reviewed the Roman calendar: Kalends, Nones, and Ides, and noted the correct Roman equivalent for 4/15/2024 was *a.d. XVI Kal. Mai.*: 16 days before the first of May.

Another scene: In the course of dinner, a friend started talking about the cremains of her husband, who died maybe 1.5 yrs ago. She received 4 quarts of cremains, and has been spreading them along places he hiked e.g. the Dolomites. She's training for backpacking w/ her son in the eastern Sierras (where she will spread more ashes). She's 83. I'm so impressed she's still backpacking.

In other news, Perry, my study partner, and I are working through Samuel in Hebrew, a chapter a week. Some reads like Game of Thrones.

9/13/2024: Perry and I are in Samuel II. Kind of gory – e.g. after Saul and his sons were killed by the Philistines, Saul was beheaded, and his body was

fastened to a wall. The Israelites burned what was left of his body and buried the bones. Fighting broke out between David's faction of Israel and that of Saul's descendants, and Abner (of Saul's descendants) killed the brother of Joab (of David's faction).

Abner slept with one of Saul's concubines, and Saul's son Ishbosheth reproached him. Abner got angry and said he was being treated like a dog's head. Abner then convinced men of Saul's faction to go over to David's side...Joab reproaches David with taking Abner into his camp, and Joab kills Abner the way his brother had been killed, with a spear through the groin.

Some is poignant, e.g. the prophet Nathan's rebuke to David for taking Bathsheba from Uriah the Hittite and having Uriah killed. And the death of David and Bathsheba's first son.

In other news, my executor days are over. Mom's estate proceeds are distributed. There was back-and-forth with Bank of America over \$1,400 charges on her credit card for New Yorker subscriptions she never received (see 2022 Annual). The estate lawyer wrote stern letters, and BoA backed down.

Chester Community Coalition

I'm still secretary/treasurer. There aren't other organizations that offer the services we do. I'm proud we can continue to offer them.

5/5/2024: CCC is getting a Share the Plate donations from the local Unitarian Universalist church & they want us to come & talk about ourselves. I talked with our caseworker, who told me about an older man with a gunshot wound to the abdomen who had to have a colostomy bag for about a year – he was struggling to stay employed. The caseworker helped him get on Soc Sec Disability, helped him get health insurance & food stamps. Now he's doing much better.

I found an article on line about the sense of disfigurement & shame from colostomies after gun injuries. – I'm so glad CCC can help a little.

Leon, Genya, Inga, and Styopa:

Leon quit Google, and is now self-employed, experimenting with drones and able to spend more time with kids. Genya continues with [Wildlife Conservation Society](#), now full time, giving classes remotely to Russian conservationists and overseeing fieldwork. Meetings are in e.g. Tajikistan, accessible to Russian staff and safe for her to visit.

Styopa's kidneys are working better – he's off Eculizumab and the drugs for its side-effects, still taking blood pressure medicine.

2/26/2024: (After a performance of Peter and the Wolf): Inga said she wasn't scared of a wolf. "If a wolf comes, you just need to cut away his tummy and put it in the garbage "

3/17/2024: Leon got out his iPad for our weekly Zoom, and Styopa, watching him, said “bubbie” (Yiddish for grandmother – that’s what they call me). Styopa has 8 teeth, including 4 first molars, and is prone to bite Leon & Genya. He shakes his head at every proposal and says “No”, even when he means Yes.

3/19/2024: “papa, can you bring me upstairs (to bed) and Mama, can you go outside to deal with a wolf?” (wolves need to be dealt with, otherwise they eat people like in Little Red Riding Hood).

4/7/2024: I hadn’t been to Madison since Nov, since I was there for Inga’s BD, and of course Inga and Styopa are completely different children. Styopa has a whole collection of words in Spanish (e.g. pan [bread], agua), Russian (e.g. paka [goodbye], poupok [belly button]), English (up, done, mine, no). No sentences yet.

His hair is very short because Leon first cut his hair crooked in front, and then tried hard to straighten the bangs. Genya says he looks like a Benedictine monk.

Leon and Genya found a long blue princess dress at a yard sale – it became Inga’s favorite garb. Leon had to claim spiders would grow in it unless laundered, to get it off her.

In July, Inga got hold of Leon’s beard trimmer and shaved her head in places. (Alex suggested that Inga’s hair be styled into an undercut Mohawk – trending as worn by Korean boy bands.) A stylist evened out the cuts as best she could, and the bald places have grown in.

They traveled to Utah (Zion) and AZ (north rim of the Grand Canyon) in Aug. I was terrified Inga or Styopa would fall off a sheer cliff, which of course they didn’t. Genya asked me, what would I worry about now? I said I’d find something.

9/21/2024: Baking Styopa’s birthday cake w/ Inga went well – she was easy to work with. It’s a moderately complicated cake – you melt the choc in a custard in a double boiler, then whip egg whites, then put together the batter. I kept kissing her – it was such a pleasure having her w/ me.

Aaron, Alex, and Caleb

Aaron is now at [Figma](#) (software that designs software). Alex is happily engrossed in trade law, working long hours. They’re expecting a little boy at the end of March. VERY exciting!

3/20/2024: We (Alex, Caleb and I) made hamantaschen. First I made a cookie dough from Joan Nathan, which was way too hard & crumbly – I put in an extra egg which made it less crumbly, but still too hard. A butter-based recipe by Tori Avey worked better, but both doughs got very hard in the fridge. Alex, bless her, sprayed both doughs with water & coaxed them to roll.

Caleb discovered the joys of eating cookie dough. Then he refused to eat any lunch and woke up from his nap cross and hungry and had to be coaxed to eat – he finally consented to eat a banana.

Seders in McLean were lovely.

4/25/2024: Aaron & Alex working very hard to prepare. Turkey first night (and, let the record show, it was very moist because of the brining, and not too salty at all); roast beef second night. Aaron wanted to go back to the Silverman Haggadah – the one Dad (Leon) switched to around 1962 when he started leading after Grandpa (Fred) died. (I'd bought copies of the Shoshana Silberman Haggadah for Aaron & Alex a year or two ago, because the Silverman Haggadah was out of print – I thought Aaron would prefer it because it's shorter, but Aaron wanted to include the discussions of the Rabbis' discussions).

8/5/2024: I'm all agog over how many things Caleb learned since I was last in VA, but now that I look, I was last there over Mem day weekend, so no wonder. He points to all kinds of body parts when asked (from hair to belly button to toes). He fits the wooden sheep (and other animals) into their respective holes in his wooden barn. I asked him could he kiss me, and he did (!). He has new words – e.g. Echo (which is how A² address Alexa), hot, shoes.

Thanksgiving was lovely, too.

11/30/2024: Aaron shopped and cooked most of Wed (Alex worked from home): chopped liver, butternut squash & kale salad, blanching green beans. Alex made pie dough for pumpkin, apple, pecan pies. I'm awed watching her roll out dough – she gets it so thin, but coherent enough to be able to be picked up rolled around the rolling pin to transfer to the pie plate. She let Inga help make fillings & pie dough ornaments for top of the open-faced pies (but we mostly ate the ornaments before they ever made it to the pies). Very yummy.

I had this sentimental idea that Styopa and Caleb, both 2, would bond and play together. In fact, the main mode of interaction was that Styopa would pick up a toy Caleb would want it, and they'd wrestle it back and forth, shouting "share! Share!", as nearby parents tried to intervene.

But it was wonderful being surrounded by family.

Ending:

There's a Rafi song that keeps looping in my head (Aaron plays Rafi when Caleb's upset – I used to play his songs for Leon & Aaron): Everything grows and grows/ babies do, animals too, everything grows. It's such a joy to watch Inga, Styopa, and Caleb grow under their parents' care.

I read the NYT and WP and dread the new administration and wring my hands over Israel and Gaza and climate change. I'm grateful to be in a sheltered corner of the world. So grateful to be alive to watch grandchildren grow.

Wishing you peace and health and safety from the craziness around us.