



Nothing says Valentine's Day like a candlelit dinner at Google



Y didn't this soup have a "Y"?



Who knew I'd have another occasion to wear my 1991 Homecoming dress?

Here's 2008 (and December 2007) in Mark & Kathy land...

December

Mark starts a new job as a software engineer at Google. It's a web company. You can look them up on Yahoo. This is also the last month that Google offers all employees a big credit towards the purchase of a Toyota Prius. Impulsively, we buy one the night before we drive down to San Diego to see Kathy's family. Our impulsiveness is tempered by the dealer's 300 mile, no questions asked, full refund return policy. Sixteen hours later the policy expires as we cruise past Bakersfield on I-5 at 90 mph. (Note to self: replace 90 with 65 in version of letter for parents.)

January

Nothing happens. No joke. Consequently we make plans to hibernate throughout January 2009.

February

We sign up for Netflix and watch *The Karate Kid III*. It's horrible. Imagine January 2008 plus karate. Squared. In a sign of the pre-the-economy-is-imploding-around-us-times, Google rents out Disneyland and flies the entire company down for a 2 night vacation. Mark has a great time. Kathy stays home and contemplates the deeper meaning of *The Karate Kid, Part III*. It turns out that the film is actually a subtle yet incisive condemnation of the patriarchal oppression of East African colonies at the turn of the century. We have our Valentines Day dinner at Google, complete with a tablecloth and candle brought by Kathy.

March

We visit Toronto. In Toronto Kathy meets Mark's grandmother (Bube) for the first time and we see a lot of other family members too. At night, Kathy accidentally steps into a nearly frozen puddle and one of us finds it pretty funny. We go downtown, see Kensington market where Mark's grandparents used to have a store, and also watch the Ontario Parliament in action. It's obvious even then that this is a government teetering on the brink of collapse. (Seriously, Canadian government is going bonkers right now. Look it up.)

April

From Toronto we continue to New York City. Excitement ensues as we take turns spotting members of the liberal elite. We visit the Google office on 9th Avenue for a free lunch and attend a taping of *Late Night With Conan O'Brien*. We receive a long-planned wedding gift from our friends Jason and Jennifer, *Famous Fat Dave's Food Tour*, in which the eponymous former cab driver takes us on a 6 hour tour of his favorite eateries around the city. High points include incredible deep dish pizza from Spumoni Gardens (literally at the end of the subway line, but that doesn't stop us from going back the following day on our own). Low points include Belorussian pickled watermelon. Terrible. Imagine *The Karate Kid, Part III* with seeds.

May

Continuing her bizarre but no longer unexpected streak of winning odd prizes in equally odd contests, Kathy wins five 4GB USB thumb drives with faux alligator-skin exterior from a wedding website ("Something old, something new, something borrowed, something reptilian"). Each drive has enough space to store 20,000 copies of the United States Constitution or one copy of *The Karate Kid, Part III* DVD. Kathy opts for the latter. In other non-karate related news, Kathy's brother Michael and Kathy's father come to visit for one night.

June

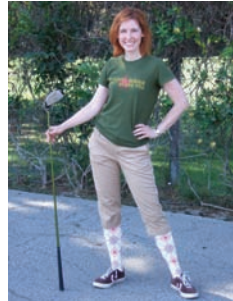
Kathy's mom comes to visit and we circle the entire bay including stops at Union Square, Chinatown, and Larkspur in Marin County. Mark volunteers along with Google coworkers to help remove non-native plant species from San Bruno Mountain. Engineers, poison oak, and hand axes combine to make an exciting day. We flashback to old times as we attend the openings of 2 new Chevys Fresh Mex locations. Nothing funny happens all month.

July

Kathy is interviewed by the local CBS affiliate for the show *Eye on the Bay*. Her segment features her talking about, and eating at, her favorite "cheap eat" in the Bay Area, *Gourmet Express*. Sadly her segment never airs, possibly because at one point she chews with her mouth open. We celebrate Independence Day by playing a new board game called *Pandemic* (and renaming the occasion Inde-



There's one gift you don't want to find under your tree



When you don't own a polo shirt, your golf attire revolves around knee-high argyle socks



"I was right, Mark. This piece of gum still has its flavor."



Mark tries to ride the world's tiniest bike



Mark tests his waterproof jacket, oblivious to the glacier creeping up behind him



There's nothing like jumping around in a speedo in Glacier Bay



Where in the world is cardboard Matt Lauer?

While having tea at the Empress Hotel in Victoria, BC, Mark remembers pinky out



What's whiter - Kathy or the glacier?





We're 150 feet up and ready to zip line. This is so The Amazing Race!

We watch election returns with Kelsi, Lila, Brendan and Rachel (live on laptop from Tokyo)



With the sun about to set, Mark wonders if he'll ever make it out of the corn maze alive



Pandemic Day). The object of the game is to save the world from a global pandemic. Ironically the United Kingdom succumbs but the United States survives. USA! USA! USA! Unrelated to this, Kathy sprains her finger in her sleep and her "doctor" has her make a splint with masking tape and a broken popsicle stick. Speculation abounds that the doctor may in fact have been a homeless person. Kathy later wonders why the Kaiser Permanente check-in counter was made of plywood and shopping carts.

August

We visit Seattle and Alaska with Mark's siblings and parents to celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. In Seattle we visit Pike's Place where the excitement of fish throwing is overshadowed by the awesomeness of witnessing some random kid jump onto a famous statue of a pig and audibly split his shorts. We watch *Titanic* on hotel cable the night before the cruise departs. On the cruise our time is divided between on-board trivia contests, great meals, and spectacular ports of call. Highlights include dry land dog sledding in a wheeled sled pulled by a team of huskies, riding zip lines through the rain forests of Juneau, and snorkeling off the coast of Ketchikan. Mark sets and achieves a personal goal of eating Baked Alaska for dessert every night.

September

Mark strains his neck and consequently misses out on a charity swimming relay race. The doctor prescribes muscle relaxants which Mark affectionately calls "horse tranqs". The neck strain eventually heals although the horse tranqs have no noticeable effect on this process. Mark insists on eating all of his meals out of an oat bag.

October

We drive to the famed Pumpkin Coast on the San Mateo County shore to visit pumpkin farms and corn mazes. We enter a particularly sketchy looking corn maze, but not before handing \$5 each to a guy in a pickup truck who gives us zero indication that he is in any way affiliated with the corn maze. It takes us 45 minutes to escape from the corn maze. Before leaving we try to warn others not to enter.

November

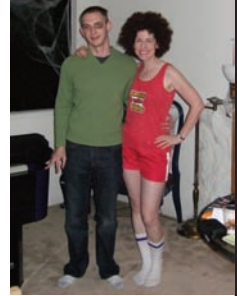
We watch the election results with some friends, including a Skype video appearance from our friend Rachel who is visiting Tokyo. After the election, Kathy and our friend Brendan go to an anti-Prop 8 rally where Brendan carries a sign reading, "If God didn't want gays to marry he wouldn't have made my boyfriend so dreamy." Brendan gets mad at Kathy when she blows his cover and reveals to a stranger that Brendan isn't even gay. We visit Mark's parents in Longmont, CO for Thanksgiving. Mark buys a waterproof coat for the occasion and derides Kathy's non-waterproof coat, also challenging her to traditional pilgrim games like Arm Under the Faucet and Dunk Your Arm in the Lake. Mark wins all the games by default. We play a new racket sport called Pickleball with Mark's dad at the Greeley Senior Center. It's our first time playing and we get destroyed by the seniors. Then as we leave one of them throws a cane at us. We get 1/2" of snow one night and go outside at midnight to make a snowman. By noon the following day all of the snow is melted.

We'll be spending the holiday season in Gold Country with Kathy's family. We wish you all happy holidays and a karate-free new year!

Mark & Kathy



For Halloween Mark is the woman who claimed she was beaten up by a Barack Obama supporter



Kathy is Richard Simmons for Halloween and made the "Sweatin' to the Oldies" iron-on herself



Mark's mom makes us eight different kinds of cookies for our Thanksgiving visit



What has two thumbs and voted for Obama?



We discovered some old Yearbook photos of ourselves. Wasn't that first picture of Mark taken this morning? And who could forget 1986 when Kathy went through her black phase?

