



*Blue footed booby, Chinese Hat, Galapagos;
photo by Sarah*

Library of Congress (in the legislative branch). FRD helps other agencies with research and evaluation needs.

The results of the election and the post election gutting of executive branch agencies left our spirits down.

But that's jumping ahead. Over the last year we spent plenty of time on the Potomac: David enjoying the freedom to go when the weather is nice, no weekend required. Often joined by Sarah; we even made a trio on a trip with Pocket and foursome with Steve and Helen joining us for an afternoon. Robert, now a junior at the University of Washington studying geography (his two jobs are side gigs) has not been able to join us on the river—and he just realized he has spent more in-person class time at UW than he did in high school, sadly.



*Sarah, David and two Galapagos tortoises;
photo by Jonathan*

As fans of John Oliver's *Last Week Tonight*, lets paraphrase: "It has been a busy year!"

Lots of firsts and new things going on this year:

David retired from the US Patent and Trademark Office in July after 16 years as a federal government (executive branch—that becomes important later) employee (<https://kayakero.net/link160>).

In September, Robert joined the staff at Lumen Field in Seattle; he's an NFL team employee helping folks find their seats and ensuring they understand and follow the rules of good fandom. And he continues working in production, operations, and youth programming for the Seattle professional Frisbee teams—the Tempest and Cascades.

And in December, Sarah was rehired by the Feds to work in the Federal Research Division of the



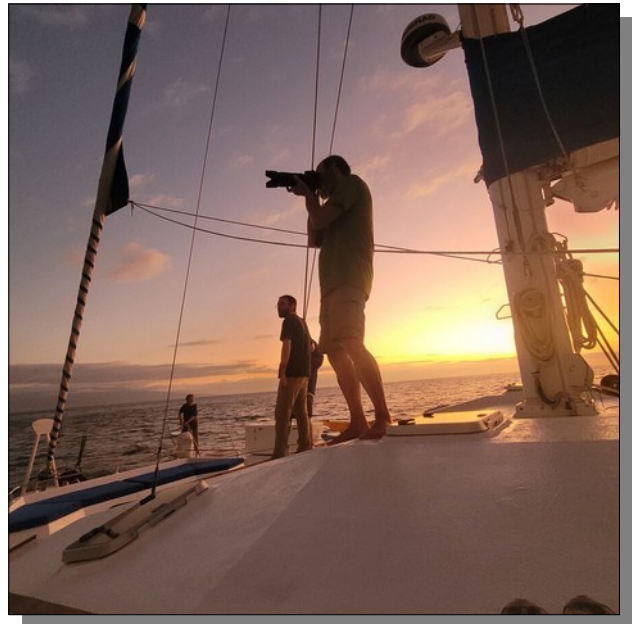
David, Sarah and Robert at Lumen Field

In June, David Z. joined us, not on the river but hiking along it on the Billy Goat trail (<https://kayakero.net/link158>). That was a chance to return the favor of the hike he took us on late last tax year (March 2024) in central Washington. Robert missed the Billy Goat trail but returned back home for a too-short week in June; we enjoyed a *Catan* rematch with Pocket and just being able to hang out together (<https://kayakero.net/link159>).

We attended a couple good shows this year, Mark Cohn at the Birchmere in June and Tems at the Anthem in September. We hope for more in the coming year.

After David's retirement, we loaded up the car to test our camping supplies in anticipation of doing more of that in the future. Rocky Gap State Park served the need but is not a destination we'll seek out again. David visited there decades before and the memory outshone the reality. Our gear worked pretty well. We picked up a couple small items, fixed a backpacking stove and recently added a car camping, two burner stove to our stash (<https://kayakero.net/link161>).

In late September, we had a great time at Lake Murry in SC with David's extended family. Carolee and Doug hosted the weekend and we really enjoyed our time with the family and especially appreciated staying in Alex, Kaitlynn and Gunter's house. We ended up with all 12 or so of us on the lake in watercraft from tubes, to paddle boards, to canoes. Family stories filled great mealtimes and we (all) had a blast (<https://kayakero.net/link162>).



David hoping for orca photos on Nemo II, Galapagos; photo by Sarah



David, Robert, Sarah and Christmas tree

Richmond (<https://kayakero.net/link164>). And in November we drove down to Jamestown because its history has been a curiosity of Sarah's for a while. That got us out of the DC metro area and gave us a mental break after the disappointment of the election in November (<https://kayakero.net/link165>).

Still later in November, we joined the Zapolsky-Hubbard crew for Thanksgiving in Seattle. It's always great to catch up with them. We harassed Robert at his new job (actually, we can't afford Seahawks seats in his section of Lumen Field). And David Z. and Lynn arranged a visit to the Amazon Spheres, a behind the scenes tour of the new Seattle

Robert's interest in the UW football team spiked our interest as well. One (perhaps bad for UW) change last fall was joining the Big Ten, which led to a UW game at Rutgers, Sarah's old NJ stomping grounds. While Robert couldn't join us, David Z. did. We enjoyed the surprisingly close game, but Rutgers won. That also happened to be Sarah's high school reunion weekend. And we popped up to NYC to visit Ian and Sophie and then join an engagement party for one of Sarah's friend's kids; a busy, fun, three-day weekend (<https://kayakero.net/link163>).

Sarah and David took another couple local trips: In October we returned to David's old stomping grounds and paddled the upper James River in



Sea turtle, Tagus Cove, Galapagos



Sarah snorkeling, Egas Port, Galapagos

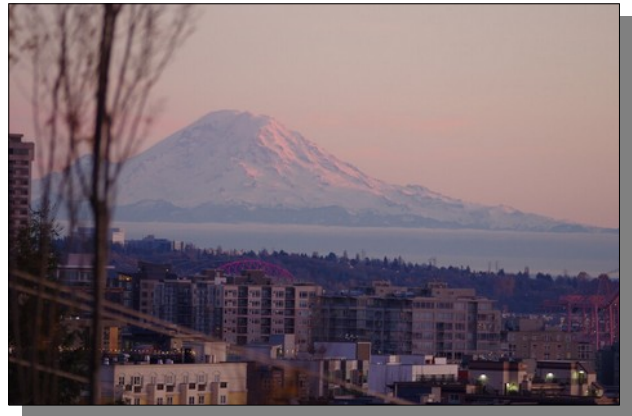
Aquarium building, a Kraken hockey game and another fantastic hike. All that in addition to hosting a fabulous Thanksgiving gathering and arranging for splendid Seattle fall weather (<https://kayakero.net/link166>).

Robert came home again (there is some discussion / confusion over home for him: Alexandria or Seattle) for Christmas; a visit filled with very nice treats including the traditional Christmas tree pick-up-and-carry-home and another aquarium visit (Baltimore). To celebrate Sarah starting her job at Library of Congress in December, Robert made us all a great shepherd's pie with a carefully laid out LOC building outline on top

(made of corn). Further leveraging his culinary skills, Robert gifted Sarah homemade chocolate mousse (her favorite dessert) and David key lime pie (his favorite dessert). That made for a sweet start to Christmas day! (<https://kayakero.net/link167>)

In January, we took our first big trip as a couple since Robert was born. Hank and Sally (friends from David's raft guiding days) invited us to join a Galapagos Island trip they organized.

The trip was FANTASTIC (note the pictures throughout this letter). Hank and Sally managed to almost fill the boat with friends including David's brother Steve, sister-in-law Helen and nephew Aaron. Jerry, another former raft guide, his wife Nancy (both geographers like Sarah), and Neal, Penny and JD all Arlington, VA friends rounded out our crew. We adopted the the two folks outside that friends circle who filled out the boat: Jennifer and Cedric.



Mt. Rainier behind Seattle

Yes, we saw blue footed boobies! And Galapagos penguins, flightless cormorants, sea turtles,

tortoises, iguanas, sea lions, sharks, rays, octopuses and more fish than you can flick a fin at. Flying through a snow and ice impacted Atlanta airport was stressful, and having Delta decide not to load the checked bags on the plane created problems. But the trip, the friends, the catching up after years and meeting new folks, the sights, the naturalist (Jonathan) and the boat crew all made up for it. Highly recommended if you ever have the opportunity (<https://kayakero.net/link168>).



David and Sarah on Nemo II, Isabella Island, Galapagos

In February, we partially returned the favor to Carolee and Doug. She was coming up for a conference and he joined her the weekend before so we were able to host them and show off our neck of the woods. Sarah has become an excellent guide for

LOC tours and tacked on a Capitol visit as well. Carolee and Doug also took David to the National Museum of African American History and Culture, which he had not been to before.

In March we thought Robert might come back home, Alexandria home, but he had plans with friends around Seattle (and had to work the weekends book-ending his spring break). That was the final first for the year—we've spent spring breaks (from junior kindergarten on) doing something with him. This seems like an appropriate part of his growing into adulthood—which he's doing a great job of.

We have to acknowledge how sad and angry the new administration has made us. David spent 16 years as a federal employee; Sarah was close to matching that before she stepped down from Housing and Urban Development last year. We have many friends and lots of colleagues in the ranks of federal service or serving as contractors. They all deserve better, and we know the country will be worse off for the mess we're going through now.

Sarah's new job with the Library of Congress is somewhat shielded from the chaos—the advantage of working in a legislative vs. executive agency. However her group, Federal Research Division, has clients in the executive branch. And one of the first projects she started working on was summarily canceled when that organization effectively shut down late last month.

Of course, we can't leave on that down note. In very good news late this tax year, Ian and Sophie welcomed their first! We have a new Grand Niece Zapolsky!!! News can't get any better than that.



Sea lion, Rabida Island, Galapagos

You can keep up with Robert on Bluesky (<https://kayakero.net/link169>) and Instagram (<https://kayakero.net/link170>), Sarah on Facebook (<https://kayakero.net/link76>) or David on his blog (<https://kayakero.net/link44>).

And if you're coming through, please reach out, we love visitors; David is reveling in having time to be a tourist and Sarah truly is a great tour guide at LOC—which is a very cool place.



Sarah and David on the trail to Teneriffe Falls outside Seattle



David, Sarah and Robert on a Metro platform