

Sixteen candles

Sixteen years ago today our niece was born! She was my very first niece (or nephew), and becoming an aunt brought tremendous joy.

I remember taking the call to hear the news when I was at work and marveling at how the whole world had changed. We hadn't known whether she was a boy or a girl, and we hadn't heard her name ahead of time. I repeated it again and again, wondering at its beauty, imagining how her name would fit her at every moment along the way. And it has.

Watching my sister Maureen and her husband, Eric, become parents was extraordinary. As their baby girl started to grow, I marveled at her. Every milestone was worth noticing. Every giggle or nom-nom-nom as she inhaled her grandmother's spaghetti sauce amazed me.

Then, just when I thought life couldn't get any better, her little brother arrived 18 months later. And the excitement started all over again.

Aunthood is truly special. Since then, we've welcomed more nieces and nephews, each one a blessing, each one bringing a new excitement as we get to know this new little child and watch him or her grow. Our children love and are loved by their cousins—and we count down and then rejoice at the arrival of each one.

But perhaps the greatest joy of all comes in watching each one grow. So today, though I certainly remember snuggling her as a a sweet little baby, I'm so happy to know my niece as an elegant young lady. She's talented and loving and fun and an amazing poet. And she's 16. Wow.

I can't wait to see what the future holds.