

# 1996 Holiday Greetings from the Helgren's

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December 29th, 1996

**H**aving passed through Christmas Day (already!) I chronicle 1996 for the benefit of those whose lives far or near and have not shared in the Helgren Story © 1996.

**A**nniversary is how it starts and ends. Began last year with a 14<sup>th</sup> that failed to be celebrated in San Francisco ( sick child and mix-up on Phantom Tickets) and ends this year's 15th among the debris of remodeling (just before Christmas - more later)

**P**ete keeps traveling much to the dismay of all. Passed up an opportunity that could have moved us back with family in the midwest and put a bit more green in the ne\$. Fun, too! But decided to stay put in the west, continuing on our "independent" path with flexible lifestyle, albeit more austere. Took a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary "hike" with friend Lyman into the 8000+ ft Sawtooth mountains. Spent most of August and September (and the kids education fund) becoming a Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer.

**P**hysical therapy figures more heavily into Debbie's schedule these days. She working more, traveled to a conference in Montana this fall and works per diem as usual. She has plunged back into Sunday school (Jonas' class), occasionally works the Homeless Clinic, and spends her "spare" time cleaning up the debris and painting during the "season" of remodeling (also known as Advent).

**Y**ippie! It was off to Disney World this fall (more on the word "Fall" later). We also spent time in Minnesota (The Lake), Idaho and traveled to our favorite southern Utah sites with Debbie's folks in the spring.

**N**obody took a better "beating" than Jonas this year. He fell and broke his arm in May (an altercation of bike, root, friend and sidewalk). He was a real trooper (continued to play soccer!). In fact, he liked it so much, he broke it again at the WDW Epcot Center in October. The break was so severe he ended up with some temporary "heavy" metal as a souvenir.

**E**ven Sam got into that act as he provided the foot that provided the "trip" that ended in Jonas' fall. We hopefully learned a valuable lesson about unanticipated consequences. When Sam isn't "tripping", he is busy with 1<sup>st</sup> grade, soccer, and learning everything there is know about nature.

**W**ow! How can you top that! We don't even want to know. We pray for Peace and Health in 1997.

**Y**ears seem to come and go so quickly: Jonas now 9 and Sam 7. We were blessed by visits from Mindy and Holly and their entourages over Christmas 1996 and we marveled at the size of the "little" cousins.

**E**very year brings surprises ( and more "sizes" - and I'm trying to keep my waistline below my age). We also had our share of sorrow with the passing of a dear uncle of Debbie's - last Christmas. But we

have been blessed, more than we deserve, for all of 1996. We saw the year end as it began - with health, home, peace, and joy. We pray the same for you.

**A**lthough it is Christmas we celebrate now, we see Easter in God's Gift to us - Now made flesh for us, soon to die for us. And we are thankful that He so gently teaches us at remarkable times....Jonas was writhing in pain on the sidewalk at the Epcot Center and still offering Sam words of forgiveness when Sam confessed to purposely tripping him. And later in the day, back from the hospital and in our hotel room, I remember so clearly Jonas in his temporary cast with Sam zonked out on Jonas' lap. Jonas sat, gently twirling Sam's hair in his fingers (Sam's way of consoling himself since birth), letting Sam know he was forgiven. I hope that gift of forgiveness is one I can pass along as completely..

**R**emembering His love and blessings. Learning from His grace. Being open to how His story is told over and over through the lives of others. That is the Gift. That is the Miracle. We wish you a blessed year!