

2000 Millennial Greetings from the Helgrens

(www.helgren.com)

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Rather than at 35,000 feet I am at 4200 feet, which means home base to me. Although it is only days before Christmas, I am strangely calm. Heavenly Peace, I hope, and not the signs of early dementia. It has been a whale of a year. Here is the tale (quickly now, before you doze off).

When last I left you, we had brought mom in for a long winter's nap. She had broken her arm and taken up residence here during her convalescence. We were blessed with her presence until April when she gathered her wits about her and headed back to her house. We miss her (although she is only two miles away). It was nice to have her readily available (as moms *should* be).

Having mom move out was probably the worst thing we had to deal with. The rest of the year was pure blessing.

Highlights:

For Pete it was travel, as usual, but this will be the LAST year for it (and the Utah Jazz will be National NBA Champions...). Crossed the 2,000,000 total miles and the 101,000 annual mile mark in December. New Jersey and Alaska the "usual" destinations. Business rather than pleasure. Business going great guns. Yep, same 'ol, same 'ol.

Can you believe we have a teenager in the house? Jonas passed his thirteenth in March and escorted me to a user group meeting in Phoenix. Two geeks in a hotel suite of computer equipment (wireless networking!). We were in hog heaven! It was a great time for me. Imagine, a kid who is actually helpful to be around! We had a great time. He scares me with his quick grasp of technology. I am trying to get him up to speed in Visual Basic and other programming tasks. Nice to have your own slave labor. I just want to get the most out of him while he thinks its fun and will do it for free.... You wouldn't recognize him. He appears to be growing daily. Just keep him away from your refrigerator.

Sam and I went nautical this spring. With the slightest provocation, grampa Gus "donated" the Hein yacht to the Helgrens (for a six pack of Bud Light). A trailer hitch, battery, bimini top, fish finder and numerous other boating "essentials" quickly made this "free" gift a "gift that keeps on taking".... We applied our boating and fishing expertise to Lake Powell in April during the "Million Dollar Fishing Derby" and managed, I think, to get completely skunked. We fared better earlier in the year with ice fishing at Scofield and Pineview reservoirs. Late this fall we pulled a trout and Kokanee salmon from Strawberry but, come to think of it, we never caught anything in that boat....

Debbie has changed to a regular, part-time job at the U of U Health Clinics (Sports Medicine). I guess 9 years of "temporary" (per diem) work was enough. She's a keeper! Her schedule is early AM and gives her the chance to have afternoons for carpool tasks, occasional runs with hubby, and the myriad task of managing a household with "partner in abstentia". Deb made the jump into technology earlier in the year as she can now manage her overflowing e-mail box on her own (waited until all the Y2K bugs

were out). She continues to provide discussion leadership for Bible Study Fellowship faithfully giving up those Tuesday nights and Saturday mornings.

Speaking of BSF, I jumped into the leadership ring myself. I am a children's leader for level 3 (5-6 grades). Pretty amazing for a dedicated curmudgeon and someone who sees "early rising" as 11am (BSF leadership meetings start at 6am on Saturday morning!)

Yes, we traveled a bit in 2000! A few "quick" trips to Boise for various family gatherings. A longer trip to Denver for the ordination of Debbie's cousin in June (and a mini reunion). The boys did their "usual" camp trips to Idaho and I sandwiched in yet another Third annual "Tenth Annual" 'deny the realities of aging' backpack trip with friend Lyman up into the Sawtooth Mountains in Idaho. Deb and boys also did a day hike to meet us there. Jonas and Sam now "ready" to do the trip with Lyman and me in 2001. A "Camp Odyssey" I suppose. Of COURSE we went to Minnesota! We experienced the most amazing display of Northern Lights I have ever witnessed. The dancing and swirling lights mesmerized us while we stood on the shoulder of I-90 in "Middle of Nowhere" Montana. Did we remember to pull out the video camera to catch it for posterity? No! (Dohhhhh!). On the "way back" we stopped in Chicago to celebrate the 90 years young of my Grandmother. I hope I last as long.

The BIG trip was to the Cayman Islands. Its amazing what you can do with a few hundred thousand Delta miles and few hundred thousand Marriott Reward points. This 'freebie' was a gas! We could have never afforded to go otherwise, but the boys got to experience the slightest inkling of what Deb and I experienced in the Peace Corps. We snorkeled every day. Took a fishing charter and caught a few Barracuda. Took a daylong snorkeling trip including the famous "Sting Ray City". Jonas impressed the charter with his ability to spot and retrieve conch and Sam and the first mate were fast friends as Sam located a Spiny Lobster, which we ate for lunch. When I "recharge" my miles, we'll go back.

We drove to Debbie's brothers' house in Spokane, WA for Thanksgiving (and my birthday!) and suddenly, it was Advent and the letter wasn't yet done!

As the last days of the Christmas Season dwindle and we suddenly are facing Easter, I hope you see, taste, feel and are confronted by the wonder of this Holy Child and what has been done for us simply out of Love. Embrace it. Revel in it. Claim it as your own.

Blessed New Year!