

# 2013 Christmas 'Howdy y'all!' from the Helgrens (www.helgren.com)

**December 21, 2013**

T'was four nights before Christmas and through all the airports there was hustle and bustle, with all being good sports. The security lines, filled with amateurs galore, failed to dampen my spirits, they actually soared! I was heading for Texas for a few days of rest to spend time with my family in a well-feathered nest....OK, enough of the poetry (someday I may finish....)

Three weddings and a funeral is the theme this year. Not quite the "Four weddings and a funeral" romantic comedy of 1994. The weddings brought life and love to the year, even though we experienced the loss of Debbie's dad, Gus. The weddings included Debbie's niece, Angelina (wed to Tim) early in the summer and Debbie's nephew Adam (wed to Tana) early in the fall. Our Jonas married mid-way between the two, with he and Heather tying the knot over the Labor Day weekend. Each of those wonderful events was tinged by the knowledge of Gus' cancer diagnosis and his and Stella's absence from the gathered guests. Gus died on November 1<sup>st</sup>, just 29 days before his 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday. We miss him dearly.

With the testosterone – estrogen balance shifting a bit with the addition of Heather to the family, it's time to do some "manly" work, so I plan to resume "Dear 'ol dad construction company" helping Jonas and Heather put some finishing touches on the homestead they have in Salt Lake (or Cottonwood Heights, more accurately). As you receive this I will be once again slaving away on home remodeling, spending the 27th-1<sup>st</sup> in SLC helping Jonas with a couple of bathrooms. Traveling and remodeling seem to be the "constants" in my life.

Jonas is still with Red Touch Media, still traveling internationally from time to time (strange, though, he is more interested in staying home lately....). Heather works for Cementation USA (mining services company) as a staff accountant.

Sam is still in SLC after a study abroad stint in Morocco (Meknes) and an unforgettable (and expensive) weekend in Barcelona (believe what they say about pickpockets...). Rumor has it (proven wrong before) that he will finish his graduation requirements this month. He is currently sharing apartment space with a friend and hopes to find larger and perhaps more permanent digs early in 2014. He currently is looking for permanent work and has what could be a temporary job with Vivint in the 'happy valley' of Utah county which makes for a long commute and a

large chunk of change allocated to fuel (which we Texans appreciate).

Through the year, Debbie has spent more time out of Texas than in. Her father's illness required some hands on help up in Idaho so Deb and her siblings shared the care-taking load from May though early December. Deb's mom (Stella) had a stroke 4 years ago and caring for her, solo, became increasingly difficult for Gus, hence the Idaho travel, relieving Gus' care-taking load. Gus himself stayed remarkably strong and able, almost until his death. Although we view death as something to dread, Gus waited on his Savior's call, peacefully joining Him with little pain or suffering. For that, we are most thankful. Debbie continues her involvement with BSF, now serving as a children school program leader. She continues to exercise her physical therapy skills (and patience) caring for her mom who now lives with us!

Yes, Stella has come to live with us in S.A. and for the past two weeks has settled right in. Debbie's brother August drove the household goods from Idaho to Texas with his daughter Elena learning to drive pulling an trailer! Stella is now a permanent Texas family member. The estrogen-testosterone balance shift, especially now that Debbie is home, requires some getting used to and forced me to clean out the accumulation of beer cans and pizza boxes that accompanied bachelor living.

Pete is still lead programmer/team leader at BSF International (I LOVE!!! my job), and has raised his geek cred a bit with the installation of a solar array (8kw). He is hoping for a new weather station, has been hacking his way through a home (in)security system, and plans to have a full home automation dashboard in place by this time next year. There is ALWAYS more coding that can be done (I love to write code....). And, after a 42 year hiatus, he is playing drums in a band(!)

The good, the bad, the ugly, it's all a part of what living in this world is all about. Thankfully, we are guided by a God who loves us enough to be with us. Immanuel. So I pray that regardless of love and loss, you come to know and love the God who saves us. Jesus may be the reason for the season, but He is also the expression of true love in the world. May that love cover you and may your lives, and the lives of those you love, flourish.

Peace, joy and love to you in 2014.