

# 2019 Christmas 'Howdy y'all' from the Helgrens (www.helgren.com)

December 6, 2019

An amazing journey with Jesus! I love that button! This year, like those past, has been an amazing journey and I'll try to spin it all out for you in a single page...

A trip to New Orleans in January, started out our journey. It was all business, but Deb actually decided to accompany me..we didn't know that the Saints were in the playoff's with Rams that weekend. Whoa Nellie!

The "great yard project – part Deux" consumed a few weekends in 2019 and I launched into it during our brief "spring" which is usually a random week in February just after the leaves fall, and return. There is nothing better in South Texas than a 60 degree day: When you are removing grass and 4 inches of dirt...it's a gift! I managed to finish up in May by throwing 3 pallets of sod and a few tons of decorative rock. Boy! Am I glad that project is done (if a home project can ever be called "done")

The "lull" of March was followed by the "trip of a lifetime" in April. We headed to Australia with Jonas and Heather. We loved Sydney, staying in Manly, drove up the coast to Brisbane. Hiked the Blue Mountains, saw fall colors (!) and stayed in amazing accommodations that Heather had reserved for us. Really, quite an amazing place and one that I would LOVE to return to someday. So glad that Jonas and Heather invited us along. I have always wanted to visit...and there is still MUCH more to see.

We returned to a revolving door of visits and activities. Debbie's nieces, Josie and Vivianna had already arrived before we returned from Sydney. Barely a day went by when Debbie's aunt and uncle and a cousin arrived. Josie and Viv barely departed before Debbie's brother Jerry and his wife Holly arrived. That all jammed into the week between our return and Easter Sunday. Lemme tell ya, it's a GREAT way to get over jet-lag..

I'll take a brief interlude here to fill you in on Jonas and Heather. They are still in the same jobs; IT for Jonas and payroll/HR for Heather. They have had their own journeys, having enjoyed (I hope) Australia with us but then spent 6 weeks this fall in Liverpool where Jonas' company is headquartered. Both Heather and Jonas take advantage of their relative freedom to travel (only two dogs to worry about) and we get to live vicariously through Heather's posts to Facebook.

We headed to Utah for a "Utah-fix" in June. I love the drive up from San Antonio. The red rocks of Southern Utah are a sight for sore Texas eyes. Debbie camped out with my sisters at a girls weekend in Park City and Jonas and I took on a garage project that involved filling a trailer with the accumulated cruft that any IT professional will hoard over time. We didn't empty the garage, but it is a little more roomy....

What about Sam? Well, he is hot on the heels of his travel-worn Dad when it comes to Delta status. He travels, constantly it seems, for his work as National Sales manager. There is a certain irony as well as synchrony to his business being "logistics": Knowing when and how to get stuff, including himself, from point A to B. Fortunately he used his quest for miles as a reason to visit over Thanksgiving. Quite a gift that was. We are scheming our next fishing expedition: Alaska or Gulf of Mexico? We shall see.

The stunner for me this year was Debbie heading back to work. Not sure if was the desire to exercise those unused PT "muscles" or that she just needed one more scheduling challenge in her busy life. But, she made the jump back to part time employment. She also had one of those "milestone" birthdays that always seem to lead to a need for change. Whatever it was, she is being paid to PT again (and seems to enjoy it!) She is also still teaching a BSF class here in San Antonio...like I said: She is busy.

After the June trip to Utah, it's just been a few trips up to Austin for User Group related meetings. I am on the Common board again this year which is about my only source of travel. I still work for Bible Study Fellowship, trying to keep up with all the IT changes we are implementing but I just love my job! Can't think of anything else I'd rather do.

We have another round of visitors coming in through December. Debbie's other niece (she has 12 of them) and husband and two little ones and then the siblings and associated families. We are blessed with family all month! The reason for most of these family visits? Not to see us, but to see Debbie's mom Stella. Stella is in a care facility near Debbie's sister Karen's home and she is watched over in love by Karen and Debbie.

We pray that your journeys with Jesus bring joy, comfort, peace and ultimately lead you closer to Him this season.