

January 8, 2005

Happy New Year everyone,



It's a good day to write. We had the Columbia Basin desert variety of a snowstorm last night. Not much by MN standards but enough to slow down the pace here. And in a region of saltless road maintenance, icy roads (underneath) tend to stay icy for a while. Laurie tells me we're on our last gallon of milk; that won't last long. I'm sure we'll be venturing out to Safeway later in the day.

Less news is good news. It seems that way for us this last year; no big medical-related events or travel. After our extended MN adventure, the previous summer, we decided to break tradition and stay closer to home.

We had two nice family trips: Oregon coast and Washington's North Cascades. Laurie scored a deal on eBay, and so we lived like kings for seven nights at the WorldMark time-share at Depoe Bay. And later in the summer, as an antidote for the kids (and me), we stayed in one of the KOA huts in Winthrop.

The boys had fun with the cold little mountain river that ran along the edge of the KOA campground. In the channel, water was deep enough to swim in place, then turn and float en masse downstream. We'd walk up along the shore to start a new run. Kind of like going round and round on one of those people movers at an airport, but with enough boulders to keep it interesting.

David (8) has done well following the UVA-1 light therapy at the Mayo Clinic. He's very busy being a boy, and with leftover time there's soccer and chess. A summer highlight for David was our boogie boarding with wetsuits in the invigorating Oregon surf.

Carl (11) has a new role model in his life: Mr. Crowley, our famous, loved, and one and only male teacher at our Sacajawea grade school. The first two months are just like boot camp (some kids get a little more boot than others). The year is punctuated with an outward-bound style retreat for six

days in the Cascades. The kids can't get enough of him, and the bonus is he's an excellent teacher. Carl, too, reports his summer highlight was wrestling with the Oregon surf.

Joe (16) played goalie for the junior varsity soccer team and had another dedicated year with the Hanford marching band. We'll all be swimming a little easier now that Joe has passed his life guarding training class. Could there be a second income heading our way?

Laurie tells me she made 540 bag lunches and washed 27,000 socks and 12,750 pairs of underwear. She is also secretary for a regional chess organization and continues to be in-demand as a volunteer at school and church. A close friend of Laurie's, Diane Olsen, is moving with family to the D.C. area. We ask God to bless Courtney, Caroline, Christy, Diane, and Rich in their new home. Thank you Olsens for the fun and friendship over the years.

I (48) have been working as a field soldier in the battle against Nintendo and its assorted toxic side effects. Hoping to foster some interest in things I enjoyed as a boy, I've invested in an event-quality water rocket launcher and a large assortment of home chemistry stuff (almost as good as my old W. St. Paul collection). My hydrogen ping-pong ball cannon is a good attention getter. Ear protection is recommended for anyone in the same section of the house; completely and totally way, way, way too loud to shoot outside (without a permit). May have to use it to rally the troops for dinner some time... The look on Laurie's face said it all the first time I shot it off, with hydrogen, in the kitchen (prototype was developed with much milder propane as fuel). My mother is quick to point out there is much uncertainty about which (vintage of) boy is actually having more fun with this stuff.



...It's February now and we have finally settled on a photo. The background shows the original idea: a nice outdoor boy-picture spot with local flavor (Rattlesnake Mountain is about

15 miles northwest of Richland and part of our daily landscape). But the weather and boys never seemed to be photo-ready at the same time, so I just pasted them in. The boys are actually sitting on a bench in our park along the Columbia River. You might notice a side effect: the mountain is lit from the left; boys' faces are lit from the right. And you'd be hunting a long time in the desert for that green metal bench.

An update on the mad cow situation: Joe and I have jumped ship and are actually eating fast food hamburgers again. Laurie has found a source of organically grown beef, and so the rest of the family has stuck with the boycott. When we go to Burger King, David and Carl watch Joe and me as we take our beef bites (chicken or veggie sandwiches for everyone else), expecting to see some twitching or other immediate manifestation of the "madness." As we chew, there is usually plenty of discussion on the consequences of succumbing to the disease... We don't go out for burgers very often.

Thanks for your Christmas cards, your e-mail, and your visits to WA; we really enjoy them! Take good care, and may you be blessed this new year.

Jim, with warm wishes from Laurie, Joe, Carl, and David.

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"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1