

January 3, 2006

Happy New Year everyone,



BOO!!!! The teasing sound of disapproval only a football team in chorus can deliver to one of its own... Our family happened to be at the Gustavus Adolphus College swimming pool when the football team was taking a pre-season post-workout swim. As some of the team members tried their skills on the diving board, the rest of the team worked as judge and jury. The better the dive the LOUDER the boo. One king-sized player, probably a lineman or center, figured out how to please the crowd and did a very intentional spread-eagle belly flop, nearly breaking the diving board in the process. The jeers were silenced and replaced with groans of respect. I was amazed when he, red-skinned from the impact, repeated the "dive." Our David, undaunted by the discerning eyes (I wouldn't have gotten in that line for anything), gave them his legendary spinning and flailing pencil dive (jump). The team erupted in an enormous cheer of approval; when David came to the surface he smiled as he realized the praise was for him. And so it was that we were welcomed to Saint Peter, Minnesota.

Yes, the stories about us are true; we've completely lost our senses and moved back to Minnesota (thank goodness it's balmy southern MN). You could say we've finally implemented the 5-year learn-and-return plan (8 years tardy). But the truth is job, family, and medical care finally formed a **K**indly nudge to move back. And so, in the middle of July, we did.

Boy did we! Laurie excitedly woke me from a nap one January day to show me the job description on the Gustavus web site. The next thing I knew we were chasing the moving van across the country (kind of like in the '63 movie It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World). The movers were impressed that we planned to and succeeded in self-packing our 250,000 pounds of stuff. No small task as our very supportive and energetic Richland neighborhood friends will gladly testify. Our WA house sold through the powerful school-mom network (no ads; no realtor on our

end) and we were pleased to find a good temporary house in the tight and small Saint Peter housing market.

**Joe**, our senior (graduating June 2<sup>nd</sup>), proved everyone's concerns unfounded and made the transition look easy. Soccer, a Hamlet play, and a week-long marching band trip to Florida all helped Joe jump into the Saint Peter *pool* with both feet. **David's** in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and wants to say he's "having a nice time in Saint Peter." Soccer, a new friend, a high dive at the pool, and a good teacher helped make it work. **Carl**, in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, also has some good new friends and his teacher Mr. Drager has won Carl's respect (following a very tough act in Mr. Crowley's 5<sup>th</sup> grade). All three boys have helped each other; there's nothing like built-in friends, especially during that first month in town. **Laurie** and **I** have probably felt the move the most, but that stunned look is finally starting to fade. I think Laurie has weathered the most (yet to be regained) social loss. Her usual volunteer activities at school and church may pause as she prepares for the next move (to a better housing match) or the even more time-consuming alternative: finding land and building. I'm teaching physics labs at Gustavus; wow what a change! Another part of my job is managing equipment and computers used in support of the labs. The nature of the work is less competitive and more cooperative than the government research lab I'm coming from. All in all, there's an interesting mix of tasks that keep me thinking and get me up out of my chair and interacting with people. If Laurie's challenge is temporarily adjusting to fewer (people), mine is permanently adjusting to more. Mixed in with days ending in exhaustion are days of bliss where I feel **E**ncouraged and can see the potential of this work. After-hours, there are opportunities for events and performances (we've just scratched the surface). And I think my favorite part is the nourishment I get in chapel; Laurie sometimes joins me for this break in the day that contains beautiful music and heartening messages. Don't tell anyone, but I just installed our last set of MN license plates yesterday; that must mean we're here to stay (guess we stretched that 30-day grace period a bit).

We've been taking advantage of our no-need-to-fly zone, visiting my parents (George and Faye) and Laurie's brothers Mike and Doug and my brother Dave and his family Cathryn, Evan (U of W - Stout), and Chelsea; all in the West St. Paul / Mendota Heights area. A bit farther north in Isle is Laurie's Dad (Jack) and his wife Carol, and in western Wisconsin near Prairie Farm is Laurie's Grandmother Helen. My brother Tom and wife Cheri are out in California, but we feel closer to them in MN than in WA; we'll see them more often here. We've had heart-felt visits from two high school classmates: Dave Swanson (trumpet buddy from Sibley) and Georgiann Jensen Bohn (Laurie's dear friend from Saint Croix Lutheran) and her daughter Jenna (soon to be attending college a few miles from us at Bethany).

The photo of our boys is a composite of two shots: one (foreground) from our cozy Saint Peter living room and one (background) from New Year's Day of the ice-fishing community on Lake Mille Lacs. The lake view is from Grandpa Jack's home on Malone Island. Notice the ice houses on the horizon: big lake.

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

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"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see..." Hebrews 11:1-40