

January 1, 2008

Happy New Year everyone,

I just went back and read our letter from last year. It had that tone of a breather year, between the moves. (Yes, we've moved again, still in Saint Peter; we've just found our permanent landing spot.) Waiting for the housing market to cooperate in 2006, which it never did, gave us time to play, look around, and get to know MN again.

2007 was a very different kind of year. It was time to get serious about finishing up the moving process. Our two-year arrangement in our temporary house was coming to a close and the deadline was a helpful motivator. Our realtor and now friend, Shari, even offered to extend things but we knew it was time. And so, not since Laurie's original house hunting trip, we offered. And one big change; they, the owners, accepted. Shizzam, we had a new home. Just one minor detail; we, and our professional movers, had miscalculated by about a half mile as to where our stuff, in the end, would really need to be. And even worse, our old friends, and enthusiastic moving buddies from Richland, were somewhat out of reach back in Washington. And so, we were left with the job of nudging all our possessions 2,973 feet to the Southwest. I just love moving.

The question is how much do you move yourself and how much do you hire out? Let's see now, both my brothers had a couple recent dings in the armor that needed to be pounded out. Dave had a hip replaced, and Tom had hernia surgery. I've lost count how many hernia surgeries my brother Dave and my dad have had. And so, you might think all this medical history might work to my advantage. But in a way that only a supportive wife can do, Laurie convinced me that I probably had been cut from a different cloth and certainly would be shielded by youth. In other words, only the piano and the couch... The rest, an assortment of appliances and other incredibly large objects, were moved by Laurie's brother Doug, Joe, and me. Doug told me if I'd keep my use of the word "heavy" to a minimum I should be ok. Laurie's brother Mike, Laurie, David, and Carl were all first-rate helpers.

We finally ended our efforts to find a church out of town. Any advantages that we found in churches in Mankato or Le Sueur

seemed to be offset by the potential frustrations for our boys. It just seemed too much to ask them to make a new set of friends, and the activities-related commutes between home and church left us wondering about the already heavily scheduled after-school and evening hours. We're back at the original ELCA church that we attended our first year here; I'm back in the choir; Carl's in confirmation there.

My Dad has been fighting the good fight. Osteoporosis and other challenges will for the first time in many years keep my folks in MN for the whole winter. No Orange Beach break. Jack, Laurie's dad, had another round of heart surgery, and is enjoying his improved health. Laurie's Aunt Millie passed away in November and the funeral brought together folks from all over the country. It was good for my boys and me to see, for the first time, many of the Sanders. Our 13 years in Washington have left us somewhat of a mystery to Laurie's side of the family. There are now faces to go with these newsletters.

Boys are happy, healthy, and doing just fine. One of the things that drew us to this house was its closeness to the middle/high school. Our backyard is just across the street. Our hope that **Carl's** friends would just drop over after school, has come to be. I'm pleased to walk in the door and see various large teenagers rifling through our refrigerator in search of snacks. Our outdoor (aluminum) ping pong table has found a good spot in the back and is getting more use than ever. **David** is in his last year at North Intermediate and will get the shorter walk next year. David has some neighborhood friends that he often walks with to North. David's soccer team won the state's sportsmanship award. Wow! **Joe** is enjoying his new vacation home in Saint Peter. Viterbo's Nursing program is still pitching him plenty of challenges in La Crosse... The boys got a larger than usual dose of tennis and windsurfing with me this summer. Free overhead lights and a new tilted backboard (for practice) make our neighborhood tennis courts some of the best I've seen. It's just fun to play in the cool of the evening under the lights. We took several trips to our nearby Eagle Lake. The house-less/dock-less north end of the lake has a nice sandy bottom that's perfect for walking back if you haven't quite figured out how to turn your board around. Carl and David caught their limits fishing with Grandpa Jack at one of his favorite fishing

holes on the Rum River in Kathio State Park.

The closing of the house hunting chapter and retirement from her (volunteer) soccer board secretary duties has opened some more time for Laurie. And she's focusing on bringing order to our new home of course. You can tell by her New Year's resolution which has already come to be. Laurie baked fresh whole wheat bread on New Year's Day. It had been nearly three years since the last time and no written recipe. Kind of like an old phone number you've forgotten, and you need a little help from your fingers. It turned out great and made for a fabulous egg salad sandwich. There's more room to work and be creative in this kitchen. I like that and the eating part afterward. Laurie and I are enjoying the added living space and views of the Minnesota River valley. Winter mornings often yield beautiful sunrises out of the Southeast side of the house.

I had a surprisingly busy summer at work (especially considering my contract doesn't include June and July). Our department's server died. Just let your imagination run wild now... But the summer wasn't all moving chores and work for the Physics department. I also had several chances to gain some first-hand experience with Archimedes principle (on buoyancy forces). The unusually strong early-summer winds on Mille Lacs and German Lake gave the needed pulling force to lift me and an 80 liter "sinker" windsurfing board out of the water. 2.2 pounds of buoyancy per liter of board volume tells you that if the wind isn't blowing, you're sinking! That's how the nickname for these small boards got coined. Kind of like a water ski without a tow rope.

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

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