

Merry Christmas, 2007

To our dear friends and family members,

Deanna started this letter Thanksgiving weekend: As Michael and I were talking this morning, I said I was thinking it was about the time he usually started the Christmas letter. I told him that if I were writing it, it being Thanksgiving weekend and all that I would focus on the many blessings we had received this year. Me and my big mouth! Seriously, we really have been blessed. It started right away in January. I began a new job as Clinical Liaison at Critical Care Systems January 2, and I couldn't ask for a better job or a better group of people to work with. Every day has been a new and different experience (exactly the kind of job I need!), and I'm delighted to be there. Everyone deserves the kind of care we give. Then Maurie returned to us safely from her trip to Kansas City where she spent most of her winter break from school with family and friends after a real scramble to try to get a flight out after the huge snowstorm that closed the Denver airport for days. Big sister Linda pitched in to make sure it happened (she is a blessing even without even going above and beyond as she did in that situation). We hosted a girl from Colombia again this year (Catalina; the same name as the student last year) and we will host Erika next month.



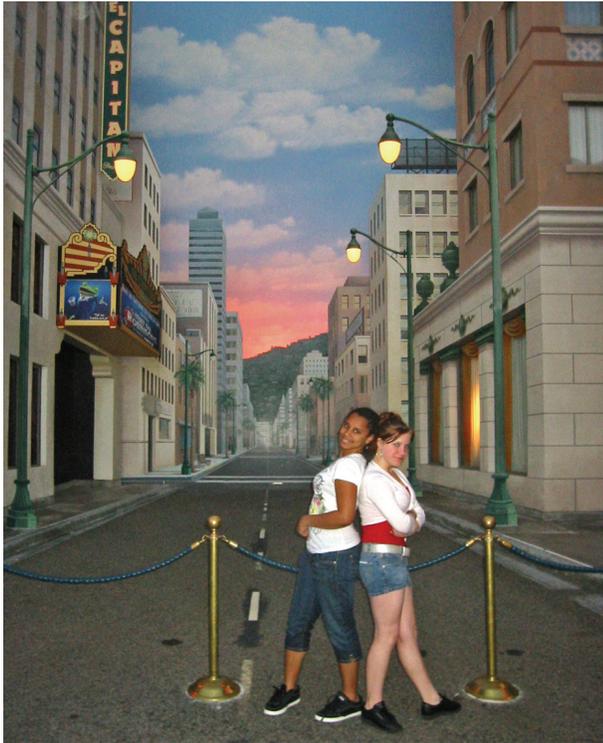
Tina, Meli, Maurie, and Catalina

Michael and I both turned a year older and then we got to see cousins Kathy and Howie when they visited the Bay area for a paper-making convention. Before we knew it, it was time to go to Spring Forum in Yosemite and we hauled along friends Dave, Morgen, and Christina. We had a blast, in spite of a small room -it was meant to sleep 4 and we had 6, so the girls took the closet. They really did, and it was even their idea! The Spring Runoff was in full splendor and the waterfalls were gushing.



Under the pounding of Yosemite Falls

We hardly caught our breath and it was spring break. The car was again packed up tightly with girls and stuff and away we went Linda's in Santa Monica where she is always a most wonderful hostess. We got to do lots of beach and family and Disneyland and even got to squeeze in a really nice dinner with friend Paul after a day filled with the Getty Museum, getting a good view of the Hollywood sign and making a fast trip to an American-Girl store (who knew 14-year-old girls would still have such a great time in a doll store? [so did Mom -*ed.*]). We had a lovely Easter that included a very special egg hunt in Linda's back yard lead by Joy (I wonder if all the eggs have turned up yet?) and a great time with the family, and after a few short days it was time to go home, by way of Aunt Sue's. As always, we were welcomed and made most comfortable and welcome by the whole family. But I think we all shared the experience of feeling like Uncle Fred was come around the corner any second. There is never a dull moment around the U.S. Geological Survey. Michael worked on two symposia: one on [Antarctica](#) and one on [Rotational Tectonics](#) (earthquakes where the ground twists under you). Each resulted in another co-authorship and with being part of a report on [Metallogenesis in northeast Asia](#) brings his publications count up to 103 (since 1978).



Disneyland

In July, the Church Youth Group, led by Pastor Craig, went to El Salvador to be part of the effort to walk with the people and keep their plight visible. They hope to get an audience with Congresswoman Barbara Lee to discuss issues of privatizing water, disappearing of dissenters, and toxic chemicals, land rights.



Got this the same day she flew out

They prayed where Bishop Oscar Romero was assassinated in 1980. Oh, passports take longer to get these days; After waiting a month and a half, we started over the morning of the plane flight. We left for the State Department at 3:00 AM and walked out with a passport 13 hours later.

The annual Family Backpack Trip became the Family Motel Trip. That was a heroic effort in light of Deanna having had rotator-cuff surgery two days before we went. We took the canoe for Mono Lake and Reds Lake and were joined by Paul, David, Sondra, and Rebecca. A quick trip around the lake from Lee Vining put the girls in Nevada and photo ops for the girls. The youngsters spent parts of two days on horseback and went way up into the high country where Maurie said "the water was the best I've tasted ever." We hit Panam Crater, Devils Postpile, Hot Creek (closed to swimming due to excessive magmatic heat these days), and ate at the Whoa Nellie Deli (at the Mobil Station; *really!*) as much as we could.



Mono Lake group



Out of state



Mother-Daughter iPod sing-along

In August, Deanna took Michael to look at new Airstream trailers one weekend. Well, those things run nearly \$50K for little ones; so we went home, got into eBay, and bought a used one. Yup, it is cute as a button. That's right: we named her Button. She's 37 years old and like most of us, needs a little work but we took her to Tuolumne Meadows with friends Amanda, Elsa, Lisa Helen Cara and Kyle after our annual vacation in Inverness with Sarah, John, and Miranda.



Inverness/Abbot's Lagoon

Only three of us slept in Button (and since the door-latch stuck, we climbed in through the window). A major benefit of Button is we can take our dog Jazz places now. We'll be taking a trip to Big Sur at New Years.



Button in Yosemite

In October, Maurie and Amanda finished their afternoon-each-Wednesday classes at Church. It was time for Confirmation. Both families are quite proud of our girls. Sandy and Karen hosted a grand gathering after church. David and Judy flew out from Minnesota (be sure to put that accent in when you say the name of the state: "MinnesOOta."). We gave Maurie an 8-gig iPod Nano in (PRODUCT)^{RED} engraved to her on the event of her Confirmation.



Maurie's and Amanda's Confirmation



D'ya think she likes her new iPod?

Michael went off to Yosemite again in November for his ninth consecutive year teaching geology to a bunch of sixth-graders. My first kids are sophomores in college now. Ah, but I'm still the same as always; I can get to the top of the Mist Trail with the best of them still. See <http://www.diggles.com/yi/> for lots of photos.



Mike and his 60 kids in Yosemite

Button-renovation keeps us off the streets during spare weekend days. Just as an example, the old propane tanks were pretty awful; we got new ones and buffed 'em up to a proper Airstream gloss. Deanna put in new tiles on the floor and picked out fabric for curtains and cushions while Michael rebuilt the fume-hood motor bushings and got a better water pump.



Old tanks



New tanks

Thanksgiving, we stuffed two turkeys. Then we stuffed the two turkeys in the oven. We had a grand gathering with Deanna's magic in the kitchen joined by dishes from many others. Neva sat at the head of the table and being 99 years old, she gets to do that. The youngest family member is Lola, Maurie's new kitten.



Thanksgiving turkey



Our newest family member; Lola



Here's looking at you, Kid

Neva held her annual Christmas tree-trimming party as always. Maurie put the angel on top also as always (she's graduated to a stepladder from being the other Angel On Top on somebody's shoulders). In the next two months, Deanna and Michael both have those birthdays with 0 on the end. Deanna's is seven weeks before Michael's so for those seven weeks, they will both be in their 50s together. So late in January, about halfway through that one-a-decade window, they hope to host a Decade Party. Stay tuned...



Merry Christmas from all of us including the Furry People (Malie turns 20 in February)

Have a grand and peaceful Christmas and New Year,
 -Michael, Deanna, and Maurie,
 -Malie, Lilly, Luv Dove, Yo Yo, Lola, and Jazz