

Merry Christmas, 2009

To our dear friends and family members,

Winter has set in here (such as it is in coastal California), the cats are happy in front of the fire, the kitchen is a glorious mess as we (we? ...Deanna) gets ready for yet more tasty good tidings, and Maurie has started her Christmas vacation. We got the tree up yesterday and Maurie began ranging around throughout the house hanging decorations on this doorknob, that drawer pull, the pot rack... I found a sleigh on my desk and the kitties love the mouse d'Artagnan she hung within their reach on the back of a chair. Our usual Angel-On-Top photo didn't happen this year ("no pictures; I'm wearing sweats...") but here's a shot of some of the results:



Ornaments old and new

Our foreign-exchange girl from Germany, Kim, finished her 11th-grade year with us. We hauled Kim to Big Sur, Linda's in LA, Yosemite, Sue's in Arroyo Grande... anywhere we went.



Getty with Kim, Maurie, Deanna, Michael, and Linda
She picked up an iPhone while she was here, took it back to Europe, and hacked it. From our end, we had another year on the contract so I just had to break down

and get one myself (I shot the ornaments with it). Kim ended up with a 3.3 GPA which is, I think, her personal best. She also ended up with a boyfriend from Mexico, Erik, so we had quite the houseful many evenings. The two of them are back in Germany now.



Deanna and her girl at the Getty

Dance has always been an important part of Maurie's life and she added another year at Destiny Arts Center as well as drama in 12th grade.



Before final presentations

Oh, that recently remodeled house? Done? Well not exactly. There is always something more to do. A couple of the fun projects were rebuilding the flowerbed in the back to take three new fruit trees, redoing the stonework in the back yard to provide nice walkways, and redoing the screen doors in the house to open all the way and still keep the kitties inside with us. While we were in redo mode, Deanna redid the blue beltline around Button, the Airstream, and I redid the rims and got new 8-ply tires. A bit more time is needed upstairs where I put some shelves above the headers for Deanna's yarn and need to add more shelves for Deanna's books. The cats don't like the yarn shelf; it's too high for them to

make trouble.



I can make trouble with these toys.



New planter, Trex wall, and water system



Two pair of French doors make it bright

Summer included a couple of outings. I took the first of two field trips into the northern Sierra with my friend Jim Moore in May; we paddled a few miles into the back country with a couple hundred pounds of field gear, slept on the ground, and mapped in the granites—more on that in a bit. Just before school started, we planned a family trip to the eastern Sierra. We had Button all packed up and out on the main street, we had Maurie's friend Dolce with us. We had all manner of fishing gear and the canoe on the roof.

Well, Maurie had been trying to bail out of Skyline High and transfer to Envision Academy for 12th grade; her good friend Rebecca had done that last year. The issue was that they were full but if a student were to not come back, Maurie could have that slot. We're in the car/trailer/canoe/girls/dog/ setup and my cell phone rings. It's Rick, the Principal of Envision. There has been a no-show and the slot is Maurie's. With an attempt at a straight face, I pass the phone to Maurie and watch her face light up; it was great. So she quickly texts Rebecca who didn't answer (she was in class; Envision started a week before Skyline). By the time Rebecca reads the message a little later, she had already heard from Rick. OK folks, now answer me this: Just how many high schools can you name that have a Principal who even knows who your good friends are much less will tell them your news faster than the speed of texting? This place is wonderful.



Dolce and Maurie rode into the Sierra

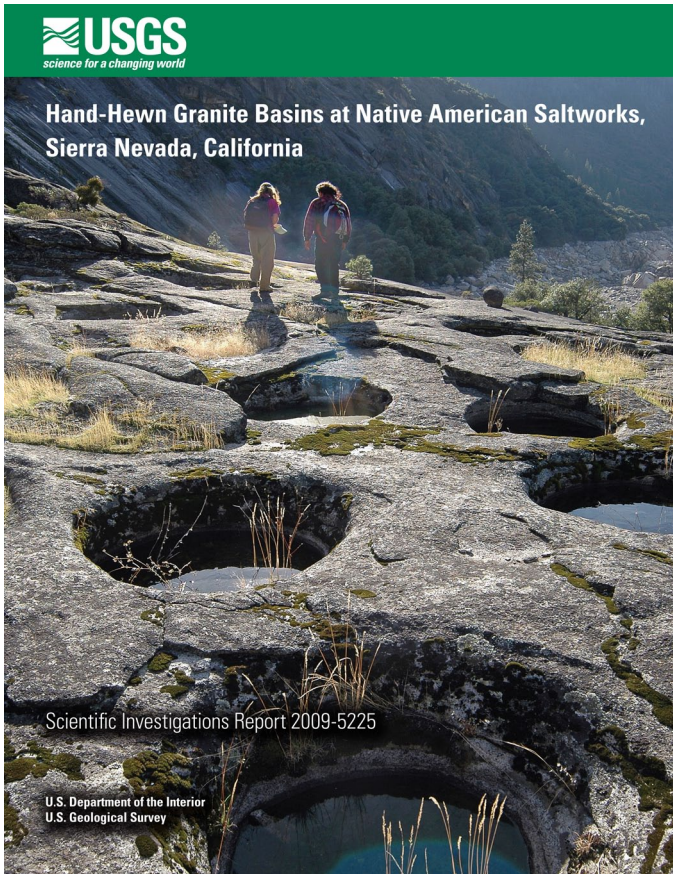
Once we got schoolwork going, I could sneak off with Jim and his son James plus others for another few days of field work. The study area is characterized by a salt spring. Native Americans have hewn meter-scale evaporation basins into the bedrock and used

these to produce tons of salt; it was a major trade operation and goes back perhaps thousands of years.



The Moore boys and me in the Sierra

Our book made the Press Release page at USGS and we think Dave Perlman at the *San Francisco Chronicle* may pick it up after the geophysics news last week settles down.

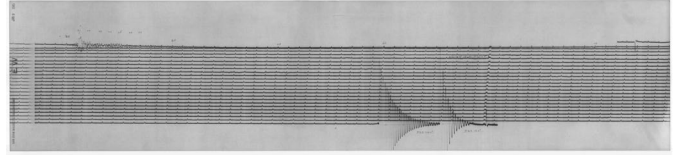


Read it at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/sir/2009/5225/>

I've been working on yet another project with Willie Lee on seismology. This time it is with a grant from IASEPI to build up the seismogram archive at the University of Washington's Iris site. In particular, we are interested in the Caribbean (I know, you are too...) and addressing the potential for a tsunami-generating

earthquake there. The last one was in 1947. So all of the seismograms that may help us look at recurrence intervals are the old mechanical/paper ones. I have a hundred gigs of images just from one year from one station in San Juan sitting on my Mac. Here's a draft of the new content for Iris

http://www.diggles.com/iris/seismo/stations/puerto_rico/



Nice pair of signals there at the bottom

Maurie's half sister Max and her toddler Xander were able to come out and visit for a week. The two sisters are twenty some-odd years apart in age and that used to be a lot when Maurie was ten; it means less now. We showed them around and had a grand time. One of Xander's favorite flicks is *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill* (Coit Tower area of San Francisco) so we took him there. We got just fleeting glimpses of the birds but the beach afterwards was wonderful.



Maurie with her sister and nephew

Yosemite seems to make it into each year at least three times. I think we made it four this year counting hauling Button over Tioga Pass and back. I spent yet another week this November with my dozens of eleven-year-olds from Sacramento County.



Group photo of sixth-graders

This was an unusual year in that we had an abundance

of parents. So I got to spend my whole time teaching instead of being a chaperone so much. See <http://www.diggles.com/yi/2009-11/> for 7 photos of the event. This is my eleventh year doing this with my schoolteacher friends Kathy and Julie. And the kids are all about eleven. So do the math; these kids were infants when I started. At the other end of the age spectrum; one of my kids is now a fourth-year geography student at UCLA; we stay in touch on Facebook. I had one kid this trip who had a pin in her leg so we didn't drag her up the Mist Trail. In fact, Julie and I decided she needed some adventures that you don't get with a large group. So I took them to the Wawona-Tunnel overlook and we walked (limped) back into the tunnel, through one of the vent tubes, and out onto the side of the mountain looking down at the Merced gorge. I got to go through Spider Cave (lights out; two-foot tight spots...) three times that week (bringing my lifetime score up to about 15). Guiding the kid with the pin was a neat trick; she's a hero.



Yosemite with sixth-graders

Just to round out the year with some more fun photos, here is Maurie and her boyfriend DJ at Halloween



bf and gf

They are a lot less frightening-looking than one of my field partners in the Sierra last Fall.



John wanted across the river

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