

Happy New Year to all our family and friends! The past year seemed to just fly by. It was a busy year for us, one filled with an unusual number of trips and outings.

In March, Eileen and I took a weekend get-away trip to Lexington, VA. We stayed at a lovely bed and breakfast inn. Even though it rained all weekend, we enjoyed visiting historic sites, Cocoa Mill Chocolates, VMCU, and attending an evening woodwind concert at the local arts center.



In May we got a bit daring and took the boys on a canoe trip on the Shenandoah River.

Because of the drought, the water was pretty low and because there were four of us we had to use a raft instead of a canoe. Despite an occasional snag, the trip was refreshing and fun.

In June, cousin Chase from Texas visited for a memorable week with the boys. We played a little mini golf, attended Orbital's annual family picnic, and generally had a pretty good time. At the end of the month, Bruce and Andrew drove to Marietta, OH, to spend a weekend celebrating Dave Vogel's 50th birthday. Dave is Bruce's half brother, now a retired U.S. Navy captain.

During the summer, we took-in a few concerts at Wolf Trap, including Yo Yo Ma, Natalie Cole, and the Cranberries.

In July, we all headed to northwestern Virginia to visit the Route 11 potato chip factory. It was quite an experience, and we got to taste fresh homemade-style potato chips. They were so good, we brought home a few pounds. We spent the day roaming around the countryside via Route 11 and stopped at a popular creamery for lunch. The kids also saw their first covered bridge.

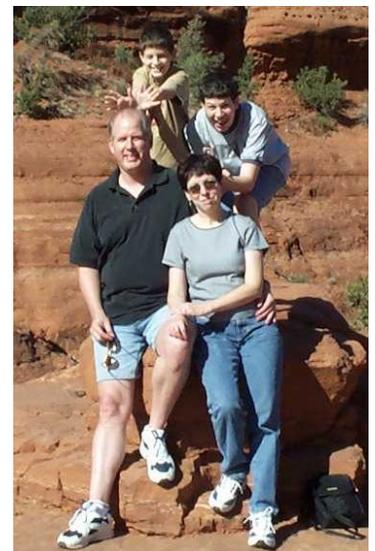
In August, we took the David to New York to attend the wedding of Kathy Kane and Ralph Pesant. The ceremony took place at C.W. Post Chapel in Jericho, NY, which is where Eileen and I were married in 1983. Our first priority upon arrival was to take the Staten Island Ferry to

Manhattan to see Ground Zero. It was an awesome sight that brought tears to our eyes. On our way back to Staten Island on the Ferry, we got an emergency call from home; Rachel's feeding tube had popped out. We were never so glad to have cell phones and were able to manage the situation remotely. That same day, we visited Eileen's aunt Leila and spent an evening "on the town" in Manhattan with her cousin Andrew. New York is a nice place to visit, but...



In early August, I received notice that my contract at Orbital would be coming to an end by the end of the month. As that day approached, the contract was extended until the end of September. I frantically searched for work for two solid months, but found nothing in the DC area. Orbital's Launch Systems Group had won a big contract and had plenty of work in the Phoenix area (Chandler, AZ). We had just learned that Rachel urgently needed back surgery, and had already scheduled it for October. With this pending, I didn't think going to work for three months in AZ was possible. But we soon learned we might be able to stop the progression of Rachel's scoliosis by having her fitted for an abdominal brace. We were interested in this anyway since we don't like to subject her to surgery hastily or unnecessarily. On the assumption this was a viable option, I started work at Orbital in Chandler on October 6. I watched in horror from my hotel room as a sniper targeted innocent people and my family and friends were put in harm's way. I remained in Arizona until December 20, returning home only once during that time (for Thanksgiving).

Since the kids had a 4-day weekend in November, Eileen and



the boys decided to take a mini vacation to see Arizona (oh yeah, and Dad too). It was a big shock for them to leave freezing Virginia and only hours later arrive in Phoenix where the temperature was still in the 80's during the day. Because the Grand Canyon was over 4 hours away, we decided to take a day trip to Sedona and booked the Broken Arrow Pink Jeep Tour. This is a 4-wheel drive guided tour of some of the more rugged terrain around Sedona, a town known for its interesting and beautiful red rock formations. We also visited the Phoenix botanical gardens and South Mountain Park, which offers a nice view of the entire Greater Phoenix area. Since I had to work that Monday, Eileen took the boys to the Ceretta candy factory in Glendale (did you notice yet how Eileen is attracted to candy?).

Eileen is in her second year as PTA co-president at Sunrise Valley Elementary School. She's still working for NCA coordinating workshops, etc. and is in her 9th year as a counselor with EurAuPair. Shortly after we got a new sofa in our family room and rearranged the furniture, she caught her toe on a chair, broke and dislocated it (her toe, not the chair). After yanking and bending the toe for nearly three hours, the orthopedist decided she would need surgery (gee thanks for that expert prognosis!). Of course, this didn't stop Supermom... but it did slow her down a bit for a few months.

David is now a freshman at Thomas Jefferson High



School and loving it. His grades are excellent and he continues to pursue his math interest. He is trying to fit a position on the crew team into his schedule, but it's tight. David continues to play violin in the advanced orchestra, apparently purely out of love for it. While still in middle school, he

received several achievement awards for his solo performances and musicianship. His favorite form of exercise is Dance-Dance Revolution... hey, it's all technique.

Andrew is now in 4th grade, still at SVES. He started playing violin this year, following in his brother's footsteps.

He seems to have become obsessed with the latest online fad, "neopets" (fads seem to be a trend with him). Andrew continues to attend Hebrew school at Beth Emeth and is doing very well with his reading.



With the two exceptions noted earlier, Rachel had a good year in the health department. I mentioned the vagabond G-tube and back brace earlier. She's been wearing the brace during the day since just before Thanksgiving. She's now up to about 11 hours a day, the goal being 16 hours. She'll eventually

have to wear it to bed to achieve this. Ultimately, she'll need surgery to fuse nearly her entire spine. We are not anxious to subject her to this, and the orthopedist is "comfortable" with waiting a while since the brace seems to have put a halt to the progression of the scoliosis.

Of course, much of what we did this year was made possible by our wonderful au pair, Wilhemina Mosupye, from South Africa. Willy has been extremely helpful and understanding whenever we had plans or sudden changes in them. We will miss her dearly when she leaves us in late January.



We hope this message finds you all healthy and happy, both now and into the coming year. As we all wait powerless but with a hope for peace in the Middle East, let's keep in mind our American spirit and never abandon our dreams.

Happy New Year!

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