

Greetings Everyone!

Well, there goes another year. Sure has been quiet here without Rachel, an au pair, and a band of caregivers we were so used to having around in the past. But it hasn't been quiet everywhere.

This will probably go down in the history books as "The Year of the Hurricanes." Our family was affected in several ways by these devastating storms. Of course, most of Eileen's relatives live in Florida now. The homes of both her brother and mother were damaged by high winds from Rita. My ex-half sister-in-law, Theresa Vogel, used to live in New Orleans. The back wall of the house she was renting is now gone, thanks to Katrina, and much of their personal belongings were ruined. Now she lives in Cincinnati, but her boys long to finish their education in the Big Easy.



We are all thankful that none of our loved ones were injured.

Trips and Outings

As a family we didn't get out much this year other than to visit college campuses with David. In all, seven schools were visited and David will be submitting applications to five of them. The schools visited were Rose Hulman (Terre Haute, IN), Johns Hopkins (Baltimore), VA Tech (Blacksburg), UVA (Charlottesville), Case Western Reserve (Cleveland), Carnegie Mellon (Pittsburgh), and Georgia Tech (Atlanta). Applications will go to all but the first two schools listed above.

We're still in the application process. Nov, Dec, and Jan are all really busy months for that and Eileen has been right on top of it (even if David hasn't). News flash... David has been accepted by Georgia Tech!

While Eileen and David were in Atlanta, Bruce and Andrew went to Connersville to celebrate Gary Kunkel's parents' 50th anniversary. That was a surreal trip back in time, but the town is actually looking okay. There are signs of progress there, even though there always seems to be a threat of one or another of the big three businesses in town going under or leaving town. It was great seeing everyone.

While on the way, they stopped off in Dayton to visit with Bruce's dad, Earl for a brief stop. It was good to see him. On the way back they stopped at Bruce's mom's house. Bruce made a feeble attempt at getting the Windows 98 computer Keith gave her online, but it was just not meant to be. Norton Antivirus rendered the thing unusably slow.

We were again very fortunate to receive tickets to the Legg Mason tennis classic from Eileen's employer. As



usual, the seats were excellent and the play was captivating. This year we got to see Andy Roddick win the tournament.

Visits from Afar

As visits go, this year was not busy at all. We had the pleasure of company from Bruce's brother Steve (Keith), who was headed to Kirkush, Iraq, as a

civilian contractor in July. Keith's job is to setup vehicle maintenance facilities, plan their operation, and train the Iraqis how to manage them. He says the Iraqis are very polite and appreciative of our assistance and are also fast learners. His initial contract was for one year. He's thinking of extending another year. We're sure Chi Chu is thrilled about that idea.

Bruce is still at Orbital and is still working on his master's degree in systems engineering through GWU. Work has been grueling over the past year, sometimes requiring 60-70 hour work weeks. There hasn't been much time for

anything but work and school, but Bruce is somehow managing a 3.9 GPA so far.

In addition, Bruce has become an activist of sorts within the Hunter Mill district. Through his managing of the neighborhood website and email lists, he has helped make Hunter Mill Estates the most highly informed and represented neighborhood at Special Task Force meetings with Fairfax County supervisors. The task force's charter is to proactively protect the integrity of the



district against high-density developers looking to make huge profits off the remaining developable land, as well as addressing other issues of concern to the residents here. Bruce authored yet another website along these lines. Check it out at <http://notollincrease.com> when you get a moment.

Eileen was promoted again, this time to Manager of Technical Programs at NCA. She's finally moving from cubicle to private office and getting all new furniture. She traveled twice to Madison, WI, this year, and once to Chicago for candy related programs. She continues to



skillfully increase NCA's membership, which keeps her management happy.

Eileen is still involved with the PTSA Board at Thomas Jefferson High School, still helping in the front office twice a month and now acting as the senior class liaison. She's also involved in the disabilities awareness committee at the synagogue, something Andrew has been helping with since last year.

Rachel is now living at St. Mary's Home for Disabled Children's new facility, which is actually right on the border of Norfolk and Virginia Beach. The move occurred in February. The new facility is more than twice the size of the old one and has many modern conveniences. We took advantage of their enterprise network and high-speed internet connection by donating a webcam that we can control from home. The camera lets us see Rachel when we call every Sunday. This is very nice since we are only able to visit once every five weeks on average.



She's outgrown her wheelchair again and should be getting a new one in 2006. We will be selling the van this year since there's a place that rents wheelchair-friendly minivans one mile from St. Mary's.

David is finally in his senior year at TJ and is a National Merit Scholarship semi-finalist. He was elected to be president of the DDR (Dance Dance Revolution) club last spring, which carried over to this year. As anticipated, he's playing the violin again and loving it, to which his position as concertmaster can attest. He's also learning to play the guitar on his own and is getting good very quickly.



David worked as an intern at Orbital this summer. His assignment was to complete a program for the mechanical

engineering department that computes mass properties for a satellite over its mission life. The project also required him to master VRML and Visual Basic. He proved himself a viable analyst of complex mathematical software applications and also had to interface with a group of engineers for the first time. He enjoyed the experience and his managers look forward to having him back next summer. David keeps busy now (as if homework isn't enough) tutoring high school and college students in math and science.

David now has his permanent VA driver's license and we have a bigger insurance payment. It's weird letting our kid take the car out on his own, especially since his friends live all over Northern Virginia!

Andrew is now attending Langston Hughes Middle School in Reston. He's discovered that 7th grade is quite a challenge compared to elementary school. First of all, many of his friends are going to other schools now. But he's still in the gifted/talented program and made the A/B honor roll in the first quarter. Andrew is still playing saxophone but is no longer taking private lessons (his tutor moved). He continues to help with special needs kids through our synagogue. Andrew started in drama club this year and wants to theater tech (lights, sound, etc.). This should be interesting.



In 2006, our first born will be off to college and starting to see what life on his own is like. It's an even stranger feeling than that first time we let him take the car out on his own. Don't forget, Andrew will become a bar mitzvah on **May 13, 2006**. You should expect to see invitations soon. Please save the date!

We hope this past year has been a truly great one and that next year will be even better. I've tried my hand at creating a website using FrontPage. You can find it at <http://scherzinger.org> if you care to visit.

Happy New Year!

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