

Season's Greetings to all our family and friends!

Wow, it seems like I just wrote the last one of these things yesterday. Well, cicadas aside, 2004 was nothing compared to 2003. It was tamer by a long shot. I guess we're just not used to quiet, uneventful years around here.

Trips and Outings

After our first, mostly failed, visit to Cancun in Dec 2003, we tried again at spring break. This time we did it right (no trips to the infirmary) and did a little snorkeling, parasailing, and of course more touring of the Yucatan. This time we visited the ruins of Tulum, where we discovered an incredible beach (too bad we didn't have our swimming gear). Even the most capitalist areas of Mexico are still pretty rough terrain, but still a unique experience that we all enjoyed and hope to again.

Now that we make about 10 trips to the Hampton Roads area per year to visit Rachel, we worked some enjoyment into it for the boys. We used our annual passes to play at Busch Gardens a few times and spent a couple days at VA Beach. We also spent Christmas day in Williamsburg, which was very educational (and c-c-c-cold).

In May we journeyed to Long Island, NY, for Eileen's Aunt Ruthie's 80th birthday celebration. It was great to see her family again, something we don't do often enough anymore. In August we went to a Legg Mason tennis match again (box seats courtesy of NCA), this time to watch Gilles Mueller beat Andre Agassi. The car didn't overheat this time.

Visitors

Our very first au pair, Bodil Groop, who lived with us in 1993-94, paid us a long-anticipated visit in July. She hadn't seen the boys since Andrew was age 1. We've

kept in contact with her and several other au pairs over the years, so seeing everyone was not too much a shock.

We also were graced by the presence of Gary Kunkel, Bruce's long-time friend and best man, Bruce's father, Earl, and Eileen's father, Al.

Bruce has now been an Orbital employee for over a year and so far does not regret giving up his so-called career as a contract engineer. Orbital dedicated a replica Pegasus rocket to the Smithsonian Udvar-Hazy Center at Dulles airport. Bruce worked only briefly on the modified Pegasus used for launching the X-43 Scramjet, but felt very much a part of the historical event anyway. Bruce has been on his low-carb diet for over a year now and at one point had lost 40 lbs. He has regained 10 lbs, but vows to reach his original goal of 50 lbs by the end of 2005. Bruce started pursuing his master's degree through George Washington University in systems engineering, which he will complete in 2008. The courses are taught weekly right on the Orbital campus. How convveeeenient.

Eileen was promoted to Technical Program Specialist at NCA, now taking on full responsibility for overseeing several workshops during the year. She's traveling more for work, visiting Madison, WI, and Chicago annually. This year she also visited her sister Sue in Balboa Is, CA. 2003 was Eileen's final year as SVES PTA co-president, but she is now on the PTSA Board at Thomas Jefferson High School of Science and Technology (TJHSST) and volunteers there regularly.



Rachel is doing much better at St. Mary's Home for Disabled Children in Norfolk, where she's lived since April 2003. She's definitely still growing as Bruce can attest by having lifted all 90 lbs of her from her wheelchair to her bed. She finally seems to be settling in and accepting the situation, an indication of which is her increased willingness to eat. We cannot thank her primary caregiver and new best friend, Ashley, enough for giving Rachel the nurturing she needs to feel truly loved. St. Mary's will finally move into the new building in February 2005, a move we have anticipated several times since May.

David is now a junior at TJHSST, one of the toughest high schools in the country. He's currently taking 5 AP courses and frequently is up until midnight for days at a time doing homework. He scored a perfect 80 on his PSAT math and his combined scores put him in the 99th percentile nationally. After six long years, he got his braces off and has begun to enjoy chewing gum again. Some of the year was spent preparing for college shopping, which will consume all our vacation time in 2005. David has had his VA learner's permit since March and his driving has improved quickly. He's not particularly anxious to get his license, but he should sometime within the year. Next year, David hopes to resume playing the violin and wants to rejoin the TJ orchestra. We do miss hearing him play.



Andrew has had a busy year; at least busier than past years. He played organized basketball and his team actually made the playoffs. Barbara Hinkle has now had both our boys for cotillion, and Andrew actually seemed to like it. His saxophone playing is improving and he enjoys it so much that he's now taking private lessons. He was also selected to play in Area Band (Fairfax County) and meets with them once a week. Once each week, he helps with special needs kids at SVES. Like his older brother, Andrew continues to be an avid reader and has become a real Isaac Asimov fan. In fact, it may be due to Asimov that Andrew forgot to get off the school bus home one day. Oh yes, please mark your calendars for **May 13, 2006**, when Andrew will become a bar mitzvah.



2005 promises to be a busy, but different year for us. Our primary focus will be taking David on as many college visits as we can all manage. Of course, we'll only be visiting the top contenders, such as Carnegie Mellon, MIT, Case Western, Cornell, and UVA to name a few. So much for vacation! We'll also be looking for donations, so if you know anyone who would like to give to a good cause...

We hope your 2004 was memorable (in a good way) and your 2005 will be even better. There are always photos online at <http://photos.scherzinger.org> if you care to visit.

Happy New Year!

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