

Merry Christmas, 1998

Warm greetings during yet another nice, nippy Christmas season. I had grand thoughts of getting up this morning and putting the Christmas lights on my house but there was too much ice out there and I thought coffee sounded better. It was actually warmer this evening when I got home so I put the lights up in the dark (which is kinda fun).

I started this year in my forties but that only lasted seven weeks. I began my second half-century in February and enjoyed a wonderful gathering of more people than I have years. Martha and I were thankful that one of the only dry days last winter let folks overflow from my little house into the yards. We had "toast and roast" out on the lawn and oldies-but-goodies slides running in the garage. Katherine and the other children all teamed up to light the 50 (I demanded no tokenism here) candles on my cake. She got a corner piece (more frosting).



The year's feature attraction for Martha, Katherine, and me was a trip to Alaska. We pulled out our REI catalog and signed up for a sea-kayak tour (based off of a tour boat) around Glacier Bay, Admiralty and Chichigof Islands, and Tracy and Endicot Arms. We got in some hikes slipping on the Killer Kelp, sloggng through the muskeg, and ducking the Devils Club to see some of the nicest temperate rain forest in the world. The bird life there

to greet us included puffins, murre, guillemonts, auklets, and eagles. The seals had pups, the bears had cubs, the glaciers had calves, and the otters had, uh, baby otters (yeah, *that's* it). We crossed a fault zone and the rocks were 300 million years older on the other side. I got to give a couple of lectures on the tectonics of western North America while Katherine tried to ignore me (see page 2). We topped off the trip by stopping in Ketchikan on the way home for a couple days. That's my old stomping (slogging) ground from when I started geology. We chartered a little float plane and flew into the Misty Fjords National Monument. The pilot set down a couple times, taxied to shore, and let us get out to wander around.

Christopher and I managed to try to break our bodies only about three times this year. We have to get in our adventures while we can because he is scheduled to get his Masters from SF State (Poli Sci) next June and may be working after that instead of playing with me. We started our escapades in the winter by becoming snowboarders. You get a close look at the snow and an appreciation for waterproof jackets made of Gore Tex doing this sport. In short, you fall down a lot. I counted as improvement the skill of getting back on my board before I came to a complete stop. Finally, I tuckered Chris out enough that he went into the lodge for more hot chocolate and I went back up on the slopes without him. That's in contrast to the Spring attempt at wrecking our bodies when we ran the Bay To Breakers foot race for about the sixth or seventh time in about 12 years. Chris dropped me somewhere before Hayes Street Hill and we got together again after the finish line. I haven't kept up with him once in all these races but I'll get my chance when he gets old. Our final bodily risk was when Chris asked for a whitewater-rafting trip for his birthday. We signed on with a U.C. Davis group and actually had a grand time. We did the South Fork of the American River and only filled the boat with water once. The spring melt was not yet at its highest (two weeks later we wouldn't have gone) and we had wetsuits so it was a good way to get be on the water before canoe season began.

Several of us family members gathered this summer in southern California and had a sojourn over to Catalina Island followed by a visit to the new Getty Museum. We enjoyed having Cousin Ben on that trip and we'll miss him now. We lost Ben this Fall and Uncle Bill last Winter. We'll have yet more toasts to them both this holiday season. I loved them dearly.



If I run out of things to keep me off the street, I still have my diversions. With Primaries and Gubernatorials, my Election Board position kept me busy. I did two or three gigs as a photographer up at the Stanford geology department including getting to play with some historical prints and maps. I am still the VP of the Peninsula Geological Society (<http://caldera.wr.usgs.gov/mdiggles/PGS.html>) and the Webmaster of the Northern California Chapter of The Explorers Club (<http://caldera.wr.usgs.gov/mdiggles/EC.html>). The Chapter has "adopted" the Earl Explorers; the students at Earl Elementary School in Turlock. I got to attend their opening ceremony and the children write a column in my newsletter each month.

On that topic, I've clearly been having too much fun and getting paid for it. I got to be the co-author on a set of lessons on CD-ROM called Teaching Earth Sciences. Tau, the senior author, also presented on it at the Geological Society of America meeting in Toronto. I took one of the lessons and went to Katherine's forth-grade class and taught geology for a morning. We made tectonic globes around tennis balls and I got to "drone on" (as Katherine so lovingly calls it) about, (...*well okay perhaps she's right*), ...the driving forces behind plate motion (see Alaska, above).



My other two adventures with publishing this year consist being in the author list of another Russia/Alaska/Canada report and being interviewed by Noel Grove for a *National Geographic* book on the Sierra Nevada. My favorite line from the review copy I proofed started out "Bearded, burly Mike Diggles of the U.S. Geological Survey...".

Speaking of the Sierra Nevada, we got up there several times this year, besides by raft, we went by canoe, bicycle, and <gasp> on foot. Martha and I rode the Sierra Century bike ride out of Jackson and got back down to Plymouth just before the hail storm hit. My canoe got into some of the freshest water and some of the saltiest water in one summer. We did another trip to Lake Tahoe with Katherine's daycare

center. I had to run past REI and get some longer paddles because the girls are getting bigger every year. They tend to do that, you know. We also had the canoe on Mono Lake and paddled among the tufa towers. The lake was calm and reflective as we drifted around photographic birds with telephoto lenses. Then the wind picked up and we got to see how skilled we were at power paddling. We'd have been blown to Bodie if we were very far from shore. The salt crystals were thick on the hull after we got the boat back on the roofrack. The Mono Lake trip was the icing on the cake after a three-day backpack into the Lamarck and Wonder Lakes basins out of Bishop. The trip took us back to places where we had hiked in our early days in Scouts and with other groups. The geology was easy: it was all in the Lamarck Granodiorite, one of the larger plutons in the Sierra.

Yet another large pluton is the Mt. Givens Granodiorite where we went with the Boot 'n Blister Club in October. Happily, both trips crossed contact zones so I got to see some variety. I got to give a talk ("drone on") about contact metamorphism and point out garnet and epidote (red and green; nice at Christmas). We went to the Kaiser Wilderness out of Huntington Lake, north of Fresno. About a dozen of us (more, if you count the dogs) had a nice reunion and told our usual old stories. We tried to put the little dog in the big dog's saddlebags but that didn't work. We also tried to put the little girl on the Bearded, Burly guy's shoulders and that didn't work much better. For all you Humboldt BnB folks out there, mark your calendars. We're moving the date up a bit to get more daylight; it'll be September 25 and 26, 1999. We haven't been to the Trinity Alps for a few years so we'll go to Granite Lake up Swift Creek out of Trinity Center (*I wonder what kind of rocks are there; I wonder if the stream is moving very fast...*) You can see a photo collection of the Kaiser Wilderness hike at <http://caldera.wr.usgs.gov/bnb/BnB.html>

Christmas still includes Katherine dancing in the Nutcracker where she's worked her way up (in height and skill) over the years from one of the Tiny Mice to a Sweet Marshmallow, to a Party Boy. Both mom and kid have their respective church choirs where they add to our celebration. I wish you joy and love and the fellowship of friends and family this Christmas. We'll gather at Martha's again this year for our share of caroling and caring.

Love,

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