

Merry Christmas, 2002

My dear friends and family members,

It seems I couldn't sit down and put pen (toner?) to paper to write this while the sun was still shining. This morning, it finally rained. My house is tidy (finally) and I at least pulled the Christmas lights down out of the garage to put on the house. I'll get up on the



Deanna and Michael, Marin Headlands

ladder and string them some dryer day. Meanwhile, I sit here with music playing and wine glass filled to look back on another fine year of adventures and closeness. Closeness, huh? Well, I'll just be unabashed about it: how about being in love? Truth be known, I'm smitten - head over heels (is there any other way?). So, once upon a time in a land far, far, away (well, this fall and only in Berkeley), I was sitting in a coffee shop on College Avenue when she entered my life. By December, Deanna and I were peddling around Yosemite Valley with her ten-year-old daughter, Maurie, and hiking to the top of Vernal Falls on the Mist Trail.



Field-trip leader; don't try this at home; we're professionals

It is nice to take a break from writing about geology and write to you. After some two or three years' of work, and unrelated to my job at USGS, we finally got Part A of the *International Handbook of Earthquake and Engineering Seismology* published through Academic Press; I'm one of tens of authors and one of the associate editors. Oh yeah, I also got a free copy of the \$130 book. Back at work, I got to be a

co-author on the publication *Volcanoes of the Alaska Peninsula and Aleutian Islands, Alaska* <http://geopubs.wr.usgs.gov/dds/dds-40/>. Next year another group of us expects to produce a similar publication on the Kilauea East Rift Zone; both of these include photo essays.

My friend Mary Jane and I got her USGS Professional Paper on the stones that comprise Philadelphia City Hall published just about the time she went to sea and I headed for the field in June. She's now working on her Ph.D. in Chemical Oceanography at U.C. Santa Barbara; yup; she and I decided that being best friends works well despite being far apart in age. To test that theory, and since Barby had invited Mary Jane to visit in France, we headed for Europe in March for a few weeks with Barby, Harold, Bobby, and Peggy. It was a joy to eat our way through one story-telling session after another whilst sipping Jurassic chardonnay. It was another charming French holiday that included walks along the river (ducking under barbed-wire fences and skirting sloughs) and doing bricks and mortar in the back yard. <http://www.diggles.com/europe2002/>

The years' outings were right up there with the best of them. I was invited to co-lead a field trip on the geology of the White-Inyo Range in June. It was a joint trip for Peninsula Geological Society and a Stanford geology class. <http://www.diggles.com/pgs/2002/PGS02-06a.html> We got up to about 13,300' among the Bighorn Sheep and I got to see where they moved the Cambrian-Proterozoic boundary since I did my thesis there 20 years ago (it's lower in the section by a couple of formations; the rocks themselves didn't change). My friend Larry emailed what I thought was a group of friends about hiking to Cherry Canyon north of Yosemite and I emailed back that it sounded wonderful. <http://www.diggles.com/cherrycanyon/>

When I got there, it turned out that, unbeknownst to me, Larry was a Sierra Club trip leader and this was a Sierra Club hike. I had only been on one Sierra Club hike in my life before; it was in the '60s and I was the trip leader. This one was different: About an hour out, we turned off the trail and took off down the side of the canyon cross-country and were off trail for all but the last hour a day later. We saw only one other group the whole weekend and one of them used to work down the hall from me at USGS (as she pointed out to me when I finished skinny dipping). The Northern California Geological Society planned a field trip in the Northern Sierra that included going underground in the Sixteen-To-One gold mine in Alleghany. <http://www.diggles.com/sixteen/> That's the mine where Dad and Uncle Fred worked their way through the Depression. I was going to skip it since I had another trip planned three days later but Aunt Sue emailed me that she and Fred expected a full report. So I own enough clothes to let the laundry pile up; I printed some old photos of Dad in the mine, loaded



Dad in 1938



Peggy, Bobby, Harold, Barby, and Mary Jane eating goat cheese in the Jura of France

my 4Runner with rock hammers and beer, and took off for the mountains. One of the photos is now the opening shot on the mine's web site and they'll make a post card of it. Go Daddy! I actually stayed at sea level part of the year. My friend Joan and I traded canoe outings. I took her out in the sloughs of San Francisco Bay in my fat 70-pound Tupperware canoe and a month later she took me out in the open ocean of east Oahu in her sleek 35-pound Kevlar-and-graphite outrigger. I came home with a classic Koa-wood paddle and a feather-light carbon-fiber racing paddle. Boot 'n Blister, the Humboldt State University hiking club, went to the South Warner Wilderness for its annual gathering. My Humboldt-era bike-shop partner Ron is now the Wilderness Ranger there so we had an easy time of it. One of our faculty advisors, Ralph, comes on these things fairly regularly. He planned the 2003 trip to Pear Lake out of Lodgepole in Sequoia



Jim Moore nearing the summit of Shastina

National Park next year; he'll be 78 by then. It will be on Columbus Day weekend since it is far enough south that we'll have plenty of daylight in the afternoon. Visit the B'nB web site at <http://www.diggles.com/bnb/> for past photos and future plans.

One day in mid June, my friend Jim, a younger mountaineer at 72, came into my office and said "we're climbing Shastina; we leave in the morning. Do you want to come? And do you have a spare ice ax my wife, Karen, could borrow?" So I said "Yes" and "yes." I told

Jane, my boss, that I was outta here, I dug through the garage for my Kely, crampons, ice ax, Dad's ax, and loaded my digital camera with a fresh memory card. Shastina is a little thing on the side of Mt. Shasta. It is 12,300' tall which means that if it were in Oregon, it would be famous, being 1,000' taller than Mt. Hood. We spent three days and two nights there to work up to it. On the last day, we got up about 4:30 AM and were on the summit about lunchtime. The summit outcrops get struck by lightning regularly and the hits melt the rhyolite and form dribbles of glassy reduced-iron-bearing glass called fulgurtes. I felt fine collecting some since they are a renewable resource; there will be more after the next storm. <http://www.diggles.com/shastina/>

My friend Carol has wanted to climb Mt. Whitney (14,496') for 35 years now. Her husband Chris has been up it three times, so they organized a group of five of us for a trip in July. It turns out that Carol couldn't get a Wilderness Permit for the normal trailhead at Whitney Portal so she got one for Cottonwood, several passes to the south; we just entered there and spent a few days walking north. We were out for eight days and seven nights altogether. We left the trail on the second day and didn't see a trail again until the seventh day. We had this wild scheme that we could get from Crabtree Pass to Whitney but there was this big cliff in the way. The next scheme was to go over Arc Pass which was only difficult instead of impossible. The day we did Whitney was a piece of cake. I climbed Mt. Muir (14,012') on my way since I had never been there and I had done Whitney with Dad in 1971 and with my friend Karen in 1968. As it turns out, after my solo ascent of Muir, I was able to jog up the trail to Whitney to get there only ten minutes behind the others so I got both peaks. <http://www.diggles.com/whitney/> That made three of the four summits for the year.

Mary Jane was going to lead a trip up Mt. Silliman (11,188') this year since she hadn't been to that summit in 11 years. She had to stay in Santa Barbara so I led it with my cousins Wayne (65) and



On the summit of Whitney. Williamson, where Anna and I were two years ago, in the background

Justin (23) and had a great time. We took off cross-country the second day and didn't see another person once we left the trail. We climbed the peak and were back in a couple days and got to re-live the exploration of William Brewer and Clarence King from 1864. They climbed Silliman (naming it after the son of their major professor at Yale) in order to get a good view of the high country to the east. They were able to scout the highest point visible from Silliman, a peak later named Mt. Brewer. It turns out that from the summit of Brewer, they saw even higher peaks, the highest of which they named after their boss, Josiah Whitney. So in 2003, Wayne, Justin, Nate, Deanna, Maurie, and I are planning a Brewer trip. To top off the history tour



Mt. Whitney from the summit of Mt. Muir

Jane and I buy her some trekking poles for Christmas, she can dust off the Kelty pack she bought from Dick Kelty in the 1950's and we'll be on our way next year.

November was my fourth year teaching geology to my sixty 12-year-olds in Yosemite during a week-long trip. <http://www.diggles.com/>

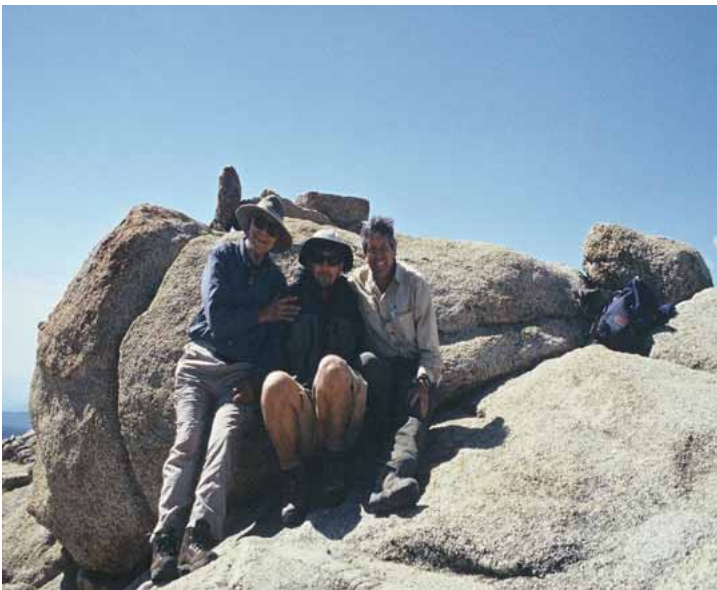


From the summit of Mt. Silliman. Mt. Brewer is somewhere in the background (Photo by Justin Rolfe)

yi/ I lectured in the classroom the Friday before the trip and off we went the next Sunday morning. I got in a hiking group that went through Spider Cave the next day; I had missed that activity the last two years. We take the kids into this dark set of caverns (shaped on a map like a spider). We use no flashlights; each person is guided by the person in front and guides the person in back. We use a single candle once inside to show how little light is needed to see. We went up Sentinel Dome one of the days; I had never been there but I found a place with three overlapping igneous intrusions and got the kids to work out the relative ages of the events based on cross-cutting relationships. Sixth-graders rock! One of the Yosemite-Institute naturalists wants me to give a workshop to the staff next year. A bunch of college-educated natural-history instructors will be a bit more of a challenge for me.

of the Sierra, we need to visit Whitney again. My friend Elsa has never been to Whitney and asked that we take her. She'll only be 82 and talks about how nice the view is from the Khyber Pass so, after Mary

Well, having only been to Yosemite twice this year, it was clearly time to go back but we had turkey to eat first. We had nine CousinNet households swarm over to Neva's house in Oakland for Thanksgiving. By the way, Neva said she's having a birthday bash when she turns 95 next September 19. The week before Thanksgiving, Deanna and Maurie had already met Sarah Rolfe at a Sarah-Cahill piano concert at



Wayne, Justin, and Mikie on the summit of Mt. Silliman (self-timer shot)



Boot 'n Blister gang at Patterson Lake; base of Warren Peak in the background



Michael and Maurie at the Oakland Zoo. Can you perhaps tell that Maurie has Michael wrapped around her little finger right where he wants to be?

Mills College. Maurie was making sure Sarah R would be at Thanksgiving because she was adopting her. We also went to a concert by Wayne's chorus in Walnut Creek and took one of the other little girls from down the street for a playmate; that always works better. The day



Some of my sixty kids in Yosemite

after Thanksgiving, Deanna, Maurie, and I loaded our bicycles on the roof rack and headed for Yosemite Lodge. We got all dressed up and went to the Ahwanee dining room for dinner. The next day we rode our bikes to Mirror Lake (filled with river sands as lakes are want to do and now is affectionately known as Mirror Meadow) and thence to Happy Isles. From there, we struck off on foot for the Vernal Falls bridge, some cute photos, and what I thought was going to be a trip back. But nooooo...: Deanna announced that we were going to the top of the falls. Don't argue with a nurse; I had grabbed a flashlight out of my car out of habit (one of those police-looking black clubs that runs for three days) so I was easy. We went up the Mist Trail and got to the top of Vernal Falls just before nightfall; it was lovely with the steep late-afternoon shadows. We got down the steep stone steps just as night fell and got a magic view of the white falls amongst the black cliffs and forest. The next day, I managed to find the opening to Spider Cave again and took Deanna and Maurie through, as tradition dictates, without lights. It is



Deanna in Yosemite after Thanksgiving

fun to close your eyes inside and notice that there is no difference between that and having them open. Once back outside, I said something to the effect of "...Cool! I've never led Spider Cave before." That announcement was met with cold stares. All was forgiven by the time we had soaked up the sunset and the alpenglow on El Cap. Maurie went from hiker to ballerina on December 6, with the gala opening of Berkeley Ballet Theater's Nutcracker where she is a cartwheeling lollypop. She does six cartwheels: three to the right and three to the left. Go ahead, try to do a left cartwheel; I dare you!

I wish you all a grand year filled with love and I wish us all peace; I wish everybody peace in the year to come. Have a great Christmas and a grand and safe new year.

Love,

Mike

