

Merry Christmas, 2004

To our dear friends and family members,

Season's Greetings from the long-time married couple. Hey, it's been over a year now, so... Oh, OK; we're still newlyweds and loving every minute of it (but you knew that). What you may expect to hear in this letter is the story of the remodeling project. To make a long story short; we may start in January 2005. Our first builder developed a bad back and the next folks have been busy doing good work for the clients that came before us. Soon it is supposed to be our turn to eat up their time, right?

Last winter we did good, tried-and-true outdoor adventures. We got some skiing in and made it out to Año Nuevo to see Elephant Seals for the 28th consecutive year. Maurie went cross-country skiing with us twice and went alpine skiing with the church once.



If that wasn't enough snow, we got more in when we went to the Yosemite Association meeting in the Spring and got frozen off of Glacier Point. We went from there to Disneyland for a quick change. We got to hang out at the beach and play with little Joy at Linda's.



On the way home, we stopped at Sue and Fred Diggles' house for another visit. We rented some

sea kayaks and took them out in the surf near their home for some good tumbles that made us glad we had wet suits. Sue and Fred had their 60th wedding anniversary this year. For many of those years, Sue has been doing paintings and as part of the celebration, we built a Web page of digital versions of them. Here is one, and they are all online where you can see them at <http://www.diggles.com/sdiggles/>



Maurie was graduated from 6th grade in June and started Middle School in the fall. The last year at East Bay Conservation Corps Charter School was filled with all the last-thing events like Wacky Tacky Backwards Day (dress-up), canoe trips out in the marshes of San Francisco Bay, and a school dance. Michael got involved in the school yearbook project and I took a copy in to my boss to show off my skills to her. Here is a photo of Maurie on Graduation Day standing in front of the grand new mural at the school. There are parts of the two-story-high painting by many students including Maurie.



On the domestic scene, back-yard grilling is good on a Weber and better on a stainless-steel gas-fired Weber. Just ask Deanna. We may not have a construction project started yet, but we have been doing a lot of gettin' ready. We picked out the range, fridge, floor, fireplace, cabinets, sinks, and some tiles. We bought a lot of this already and have it stashed here

and there. Meanwhile, we have to get the little cottage in the back yard ready to house us for a half year. The “Little House” now has a completed bathroom, one of two finished bedrooms, a mini kitchen in the living area, and a garage next to the building.



I got to play with my chainsaw to remove an ugly old loft so I could turn that fourth of the Little House into one of the two bedrooms we need. Maurie sweet-talked us into going to Ikea to get her a Captain's bed. Now she wants Internet access in there so I guess I have to string some CAT-6 Ethernet cable. What was that about “wrapped around her little finger”?



I finally just broke down and bought a garage. I went to <http://www.californiasheds.com/> where all you have to do is click here, add to shopping cart, and check out. Next thing you know these guys show up with a truck full of lumber. Eight hours later, they were done, jumped back in their truck, and left. Maurie and her friends had a sleep-over in it the first night before I cluttered it all up with tools, a Jaguar, and boxes.

Deanna's garden is doing wonderfully as it always does. She can disappear out there among her vines and next thing you know, what she puts on the dinner table has six things from her garden included. I'll have to put some weatherproof speakers out there so she can play her iTunes downloads in the yard.



This is the 125th anniversary of the founding of the U.S. Geological Survey and the 50th birthday of the Menlo Park campus where I work. My publications shop has been busy with celebrations, the Parkfield earthquakes, and the new eruptions of Mt. St. Helens. We had several news trucks parked in front of my office as all this was happening but there were twenty or so up on the mountain.



In the middle of it, I also was umpteenth author on *Digital Files for Northeast Asia Geodynamics, Mineral Deposit Location, and Metallogenic Belt Maps, Stratigraphic Columns, Descriptions of Map Units, and Descriptions of Metallogenic Belts* (<http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2004/1252>). A few months

after USGS came to Menlo Park, the Peninsula Geological Society was founded. The first lecture was in December of 1954 and the 368th meeting is this month. Jim Moore is giving a talk on Mount Shasta and Clarence King, USGS's first Director; I am giving a short presentation on the development of geologic thought as seen through the 367 previous talks. See <http://www.diggles.com/pgs/> for details. I only commute to the office four days a week and stay at home on Wednesdays working on publications with the help of our cats.



This year, we finally made another summit. Last year, we got driven off Mt. Brewer by a lightning storm when we still had a kilometer to go so we really wanted to summit a mountain this year. We improved the odds of making it by picking a trip that had a high roadhead and a good trail to a basecamp quite near the base. We took two days to hike in from Tuolumne Meadows, go up Lyell Fork, then up Ireland Creek to Ireland Lake. On the third day, Wayne, Jon, Mary Jane, Deanna, Maurie, and I climbed to the top of Amelia Earhart Peak (<http://www.diggles.com/earhart>). On the way back. Deanna took a tumble on the way back down off the ridge and got a hairline fracture in her leg. Mary Jane went out to Vogelsang the next door and got Deanna a ranger with horses. Maurie and I hiked out to meet them and got out after dark.



Shortly after we got Deanna back to Oakland and her foot in an AirCast, we took off for Inverness for a week of sitting at the beach, lots of little kids, paddling the canoe in Tomalas Bay, and eating lots and lots of oysters.



By October, Deanna's foot was doing well enough that, as long as she got plenty of beach sand under it, she was ready for another hike. The Humboldt State Univ. reunion backpack for the Boot 'n Blister Club was along Humboldt County's Lost Coast from the mouth of the Mattole River to south of Punta Gorda. Among the group were the three of us and a couple more little girls we snagged for good measure to keep Maurie company; we put on about ten miles in the two-and-a-half days. Next year Boot 'n Blister plans to go somewhere in the Marble Mountains.



In November, I took another 60 eleven-year-olds to Yosemite for a week. This is about the sixth year in a row I have done this with my friends who teach at the school in Sacramento. This year, the six naturalists from Yosemite Institute had a Staff day going on when we got there so that left me. I marched them all off to wait for a bus that wasn't running any more, then hoofed them through the forest ("What are the four kinds of trees in a mixed-conifer forest?") to Happy Isles. By this time, the drizzle had soaked into most of them. I think I still managed to keep there attention when I gave a lecture on the Flood of 1997 and on the Glacier Point Rockfall that took place a

couple years later. I waited until I had my naturalist, Ceci, a few days later before I gave my geology lecture ("Tectonic Development of the Western Cordillera" ..JK). I took a 17" PowerBook G4 along and built slideshows each evening of the day's field trip and showed them at breakfast the next morning.



Poke around <http://www.diggles.com/> for more stories and lots of photos of the year. Visit <http://www.diggles.com/yi/> for the Yosemite Institute stories from all six years.



Here is a photo Susan Penn took of two angels on top, Nate holding one whilst she holds the other. We helped Neva trim her tree last week. A bunch of us will get together for opening night of The Nutcracker in Berkeley; Maurie dances in nine performances this year.

We wish you all peace and joy in the New Year. Have a wonderful Christmas and a safe holiday season.

--Michael, Deanna, and Maurie,
Malie, Twig, Lilly, Luv Dove, and Yo Yo