

Merry Christmas, 2011

To our dear family members and friends,

We hope you have had yet another wonderful year. We are blessed to have had one of those ourselves. Maurie started her second year at Cal State Univ. Northridge (CSUN). She's looking at childhood-development as a major and has a job working the childcare at a family-owned fitness place in North Hollywood.



Mother-Daughter sweatshirts.

One of the most difficult parts of going away to college, if you are a dog, is that you have to wait until visits to get hugs from Your Girl.

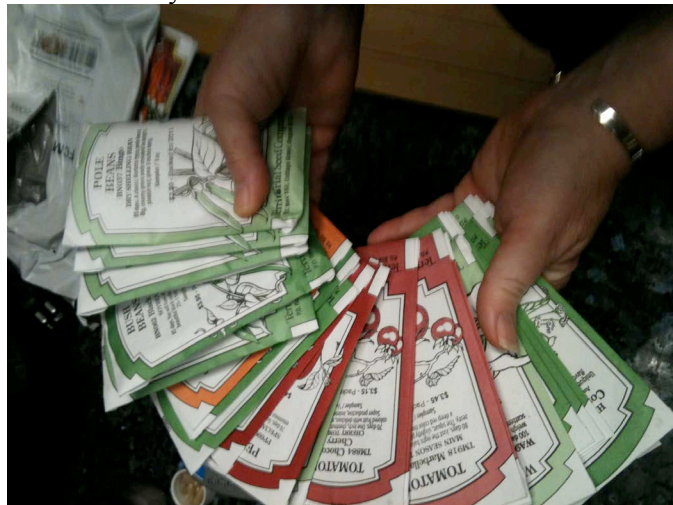


Jazz and Maurie.

I had that bout with prostate cancer last year that got most of it and a course of radiation this year cinched the deal. My PSA is back down to undetectable again now. Yay! We had this wild scheme where we thought we could sell my old house in Redwood City for a tidy profit and buy a condo for Maurie. Well, guess what? Did you notice what housing prices did early this year? Yup... down. So that didn't work. Back to the dorms and I'm still a landlord.

Long before the weather starts to turn good in the Spring, Deanna starts thinking about her garden. Hardly an evening meal goes by without something from the

garden being on the dinner table. So the seed catalogs show up in the mail and the planning begins. I pull the tomato cages out of storage and we hit the nursery shops for starter sets. I think we had a dozen different types of tomatoes last year.



Seed catalogs one week; seeds in the mail the next week.

In March, my friend Lori Nock invited to help her co-teach another Advanced Photography class with Mountain View High School. We took the kids to Yosemite with all of their gear. I got these teenagers up before dawn and hiked them through the snow to Swinging Bridge to get the first light at dawn. We had a traditional Ansel-Adams/Virginia Best critique where each student submitted one scene (from the entire day of image captures). It goes like this: (1) the student stated why they took the photograph, (2) "Ansel" (Lori) and "Virginia" (Mike) told what was good about the image, and (3) everybody gives an applause. See all of the student presentations at

http://www.diggles.com/photography/2011/110304-06_Critique/



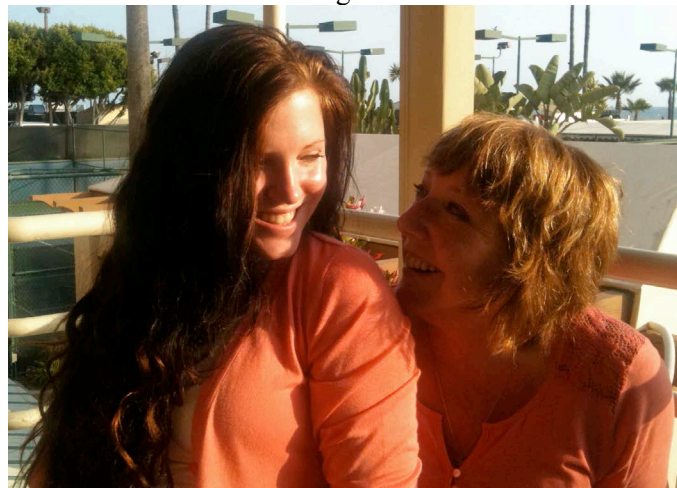
Student image.

The drama around the U.S. Geological Survey ramps up every time there is an earthquake, an eruption, or a tsunami. We got four news trucks after Tohoku (think Fukushima) event ($M=9.0$) and five news trucks after the earthquake near Washington D.C. ($M=5.8$)



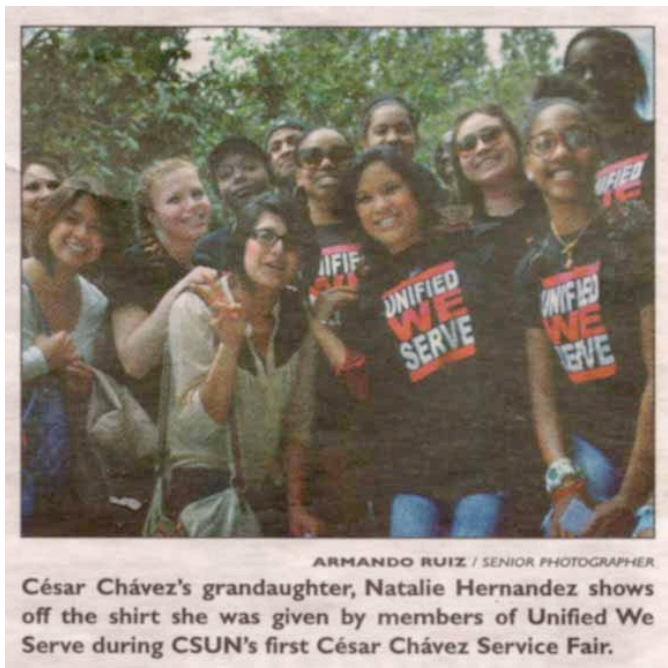
News trucks in front of my office.

We run down to visit Maurie every Spring Break. We haul the little Airstream down to Malibu, park it near the beach, hang out with my sister Linda, and what takes place is lots of mother-daughter time. We make a lot of trips out to *Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf*, got Maurie's bicycle prettied up at *REI*, and spoiled her with stuff from *Target*. The visits are wonderful. We'll do it again in 2012.



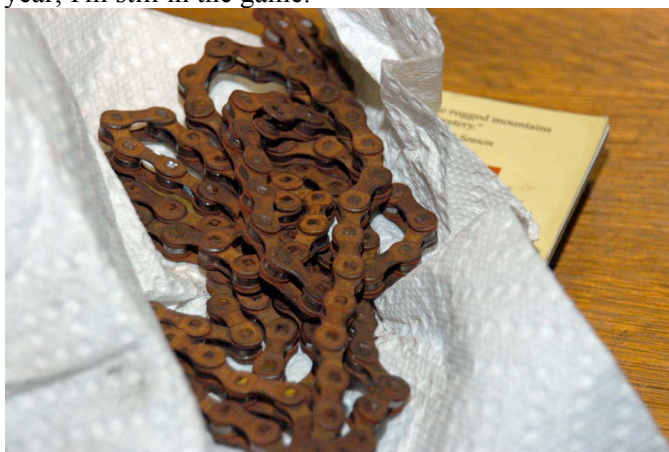
Maurie and Deanna at the Jonathan Club in Santa Monica.

Cal State Northridge, perhaps because it is quite large, and also it is quite good, is a place where noteworthy events take place. This is a news clipping of when César Chavez's granddaughter Natalie came to town.



Natalie Hernandez and friends (Maurie 3rd from left).

Deanna is pushing perhaps 10,000 miles on her bicycle; after 6,000 miles, I had to buy her a new Terry saddle. It was time for some maintenance; I got her a SRAM chain. As Paul Sumi wrote me: "Nothing says 'I love you' like one of these." These chains are very cool; they have a master link like we used on our old Schwinn three-speeds. But the link feeds through the derailleur somehow magically. I didn't have to drag out my Var chain-rivet extractor and try to remember how to use it or anything. Oh, I did build my first wheel on a disk-brake hub this year; I'm still in the game.



<http://www.sram.com/sram/road/products/pc-991-chain>.

Deanna and Cousin Susan swap back and forth hosting dinners at the two respective houses. Cousin Katie visited during one of these grand events also. It was quite nice.



The Cousins at Susan's.

In July, our OpenSeismo work about digitizing information about older earthquakes made the professional circuit. My friends and I published this and Rick went to Australia to present it:

Benson, Rick, Lee, W.H.K., Hutt, C.R., Knight, Tim, Ahern, Tim, Diggles, M.F., and Walter, S.R., 2011, SeismoArchives online at the IRIS DMC; preserving pre-digital seismograms (1882-1990) for research & information [abs.]: 2011 International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG) General Assembly, Melbourne, Australia.



Part of our server; I also put in a pair of 12-terabyte RAID arrays. Read the paper at <http://www.iugg2011.com/>.

Maurie created a set of big 3-ring binders for Mama for all of her recipes. Next: get them all in some order and put them where they belong. Yeah, easier said than done. Notice that the cat in the upper left is perfectly happy with the way things are.



"That recipe has to be around here someplace."

Deanna decided that my old Toyota 4Runner was too rough and too difficult to drive for our vacations with Button, the Airstream. Also, Maurie had her learners permit and was getting pretty good; she had her eye on Deanna's Honda. So Deanna got herself a new (to us) car. She named it *Kahlua*. It has a longer wheelbase and is lower to the ground. It has an automatic transmission, more power, and the seats have heaters in them. She's very cute.



Deanna driving off the lot; my old car in the background

We had the little kids from the neighborhood all grown up and over for a visit. Here is the Irwin Court gang ten years later:



How come the adults don't look older?

Maurie turned 19 after the end of her Freshman year at CSUN. We couldn't let that go by without a party and some photos.



How come the kids look older?

Maurie had a summer job teaching at Galileo science camp at three different campuses on the Peninsula. So she joined my ridepool and we'd drop her off in Palo Alto or someplace and all go to work. On the way home, when the traffic was lighter, she'd take the wheel, learners permit in her purse, and work on her driving skills. She hit some debris on the freeway one day on the way home and punctured a tire. She got off the road just fine but was quite sad that the car her Mama just gave her got an owie. As it turned out, after she got her license and was driving back to college after a visit home, she had another flat tire on The Grapevine going over The Tehachapis on Interstate 5 in the middle of the night. For this one, she used her cell phone and called AAA.



She pulled out the jack and changed the tire; I watched.

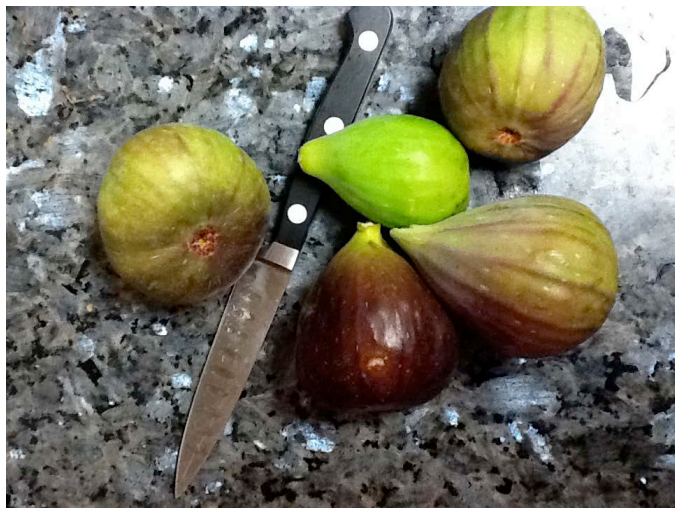
In September, a group of us went to Yosemite National Park and camped at Tuolumne Meadows. Deanna and I took the Airstream. We had four tents in the group as well. The first day, we had a day hike up Lyell Fork, across and up Puppy Dome, and down Dana Fork and back to camp. We made a pilgrimage over Tioga Pass, down to Lee Vining, and to dinner at Whoa Nellie Deli (the best food on the East Side of the Sierra). The next day, we got up at dawn and hit the trail for Elizabeth Lake and thence up onto Unicorn Peak. We got up into onto the arête and were about 70 feet from the summit among the gendarmes when we decided we needed a rope to go much farther. The thunderstorm in the distance was no longer so distant. So we headed back to camp, the rain caught us, and we all stuffed into Button and had a warm meal and got dry. A bunch of us went up on Lembert Dome the day after that. This is a textbook glacial feature commonly called a roche moutonnée which is steeper on the down-valley side (west). So different people picked different places where they could use their different skills. There is an extensive photo essay of this adventure at

http://www.diggles.com/photography/2011/110910-14_Tuolumne_Unicorn/



Near the summit of Unicorn Peak.

Besides the veggies and spices Deanna grows in the back yard, we have half a dozen of so trees that feed us. We have two different kinds of figs. Cut them into slices, put them on a board with some cheese, pour a couple glasses of wine, and sit up on the balcony and watch the sun go down over the Golden Gate.



Here is part of the harvest.

We missed the Spring trip to Yosemite this year (slides

knocked out the power) but we made it up there three other times this year. Each year the Yosemite Conservancy has its Fall Meeting at Wawona in the south end of the park. We haul Button up there early and go fishing for a day, then go into the park for the gathering, lectures, music & dancing, and wine & cheese with authors signing their books.



Button and Khalua outside of Yosemite.

In November each year for the last 13 years, I sign on to help my friends Kathy and Julie and we take some 50 eleven-year-olds to Yosemite and teach them about science and nature for a week. I'm the [captive geologist](#) (and the guy in the puffy jacket in the lower right). Over the years, some of my past students have college degrees, babies, and Friend me on Facebook. This year's new adventure was climbing not only up the Mist Trail to the top of Vernal Fall, but on beyond that up to Clark Point on the John Muir Trail where we could look across and see that we were at the same elevation as the top of Nevada Fall which is much higher. There is a photo essay at <http://www.diggles.com/yi/2011-11/>.



Yosemite with sixth-graders.

One of the bands we follow is *Pink Martini*. And they came to town last month! Deanna and I went on a Date.



This is a classic Art Deco theater in Oakland.

Deanna's baby sister Janet was in LA from Michigan on business and their niece Sam was able to join her. That meant Maurie got to visit her auntie and her cousin. So Deanna jumped on the commuter flight to join the fun.



Sam and Maurie at the beach in November

The ladies managed to get into mischief doing a bit of shopping and telling lots of stories.



Look-alike dress-up: Grinch shirts



Universal Studios. They got to see Wisteria Lane on the set of Desperate Housewives!

Have a wonderful and safe Christmas and New Year,
-Michael, Deanna, and Maurie
-Lilly, Luv Dove, Yo Yo, Lola, and Jazz

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