

December 2008

Let's see if I can get one out before the New Year smacks me upside the head. It's always a challenge to get into the spirit early enough to do this letter - the sunlight is dwindling and the winter rains have set in but somehow that old esprit de Santa has yet to kick open the doors and deck a few halls.

Let's see, what's happened since last I wrote y'all. Mark had to switch a trip at the last minute when a labour dispute prevented him going to Brazil. He ended up in Dominican Republic installing the first weather buoy in the country at a very exclusive resort. How exclusive was it, I hear you ask (altogether now...)? Well, we had to stay at another resort almost an hour down the road. Yes, I was forced to go along on this one, as quality control for future reference regarding the resort we did use. And on the beach coco-locos and the chocolate fondue at the resort's Swiss restaurant. I may need to go a few more times before giving a definitive answer on this one. Next time, however, I will remember to apply SPF 400 sunblock with a trowel (apparently you can still see the strap lines on my back after 8 months).

Rachael spent two weeks touring Germany, Austria and Hungary with the District 61 Strings orchestra. She had a wonderful time and it seems petty now to have pouted as much as I did. Just because my biggest field trip when I was in high school was to Missoula, Montana for a debating tournament which involved being on a bus for 20 hours with exactly the kind of teens you'd expect to find in the debating club--we lacked the glamour of the Audio-Visual gang....

It is hard to believe our little sugar lump is half-way through grade 12. Must admit there's something bittersweet about going to the concerts and assemblies now. I think we will miss those chances to bust a few buttons admiring her on the stage or receiving an award but can't say we'll miss dealing with bleacher numb bum: it gets longer and longer for the feeling to return to parts south afterwards. I was referring to my feet.

Nicole has returned to school after a year spent keeping a cash register between her and the more colourful citizens of Victoria. She's going to her dad's alma mater, Camosun College, in the Psychology degree program. After two years she'll be able to transfer to UVic for her final degree year. All she talks about right now, though, (besides meeting the man who designed the "Stanford Project") is a trip to Vietnam she's planning with her friend Linh for next summer.

She went on a road trip with her dad this summer to see Elvis Costello and The Police at the Gorge outdoor amphitheater in George, Washington...yes, that is the name, go ahead, I'll wait while you google it on a map of Washington state....They caused a spectacle as they were in the Smart car which is still something of a novelty in the green-belt redneck state to our immediate south. Nic got to do a little driving as they headed north again all the way to Edmonton where Mark dropped her off for a brief visit with her auntie Rowe. It's nice for her to have a week on her own with my sister: a little bonding time and a chance to flex her wings a wee bit.

Mark is saving the world one weather buoy at a time, bringing home rare and exotic forms of hooch. The downside of all this travel is if unpleasantness breaks out in the places he's visited, he looks for familiar faces in the news footage. It makes the world just that much smaller watching tanks rumble past a home he visited only a few months before.

There was a bit of a scare for the family early in the year when Clarence (Mark's dad) woke up feeling dizzy and 'not right'. It took a few hours to realize not only wasn't the feeling going away, it was actually starting to include numbness and difficulty walking. At the hospital they diagnosed a stroke and then watched in amazement as he managed to recover in record time. Well, that's a relative term, as it was a hard slog having to learn to walk, shave and climb stairs again. In less than a year, however, he's back to swimming daily, driving, generally bustling about with no signs of any lasting effects from the stroke. We're all breathing a lot easier now.

There's a new addition to the household: weighing in at 5.5 lbs soaking wet after a big meal, is our wee Yorkie, Saxon Fergus O'Hara. Yes, the name is bigger than the dog. Ask me how thrilled the cat is...go ahead, ask. Actually, when Squatch thinks they're alone, she'll play tag with him but makes sure to give him enough smacks to make it clear they are so not bff (best friends forever, like you didn't know...). Being a puppy, however, Fergus just keeps wagging his tail and yipping encouragement to the big grumpy dog--she'll figure out the rules soon, he's sure.

I'm still watching people juggle their junk at Hub Storage part-time and ignoring the dust bunnies at home the rest of the week. Actually, ignoring housework is a full-time occupation but the pay is the pits, although the benefits are wonderful (that's what I'm supposed to say, right dear?). I'm only curling once a week but somehow ended up on

the executive for the Esquimalt Curling club through a moment of inattention...'why is everyone else taking a step back?'

Well, that's just about it from the Blaseckie's on Wollaston. We're looking forward to spending New Years eve on a beach in Mexico with the entire clan courtesy of Granny and Grampa--yes, I am darn lucky, thanks for noticing.

There's just enough room left to wish you all a safe, happy Christmas and a new year filled with joy.