

Season's Greetings to Family and Friends Near and Far

Christmas 2014



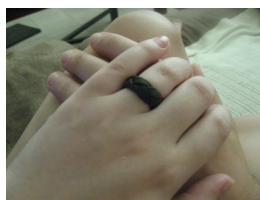
We have reached the holiday season of 2014 and the time to send and receive greetings from family and friends far and near. Well, I guess we've passed that time. Late again. Or can I get away with claiming this is the 2015 letter so we're actually very early? Nah.



Guess we'll start off with the important events of the year – the kids! Usually we go in seniority order, but this year I'm switching that, and starting with Carol.

Carol & Andrew got married in November! Things have gone pretty well for them on Guam, and one morning Andrew got up before Carol, and made her an engagement ring out of par-

acord, woke her up, saying "get up, get up, we've gotta go, come on!" So she got ready and they headed out to the truck. Still a little groggy, she asked "where are we going? To get donuts?" He replied "no, but not a bad idea". Then he drove up to a beautiful, scenic overlook, and proposed. Of course she said yes, then they drove back home – stopping to pick up donuts. The next logical step was to go down to the Justice of the Peace there on Guam – but anyone can do that. Carol & Andrew aren't just anyone. They had a vacation planned to New Zealand and Australia, so Carol went online, did all the research, and found a Celebrant to perform a Celtic Handfasting Ceremony in Australia. She got all the legal

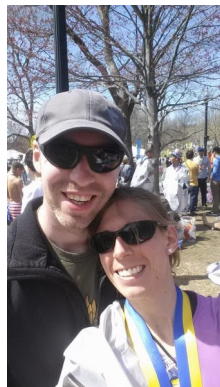


paperwork they needed to complete ahead of time. She even emailed some distant cousins of Anne's in the Sydney area (Patricia and Russell Smith and Ian and Ged Dear) and asked them if they'd be willing to be their wit-

nesses. They replied they'd be honored to, and told her they could stay with them while they were in Sydney. Then Patricia asked Carol if she could call Anne to do some planning and scheming. Carol told her to wait – because she & Andrew hadn't told us or Andrew's mom yet! Then they got us on Skype and gave us the news. The ceremony was in a park at Bangalley Headland in Avalon, which is just north of Sydney, in a beautiful setting overlooking the Pacific with the sound of the waves crashing on the shore. It was a short, simple, beautiful ceremony.



They'll be coming back stateside in January or February and Andrew will move on to his next assignment.



James & Crystal are still in Alaska. Probably their biggest event of the year was Crystal running in this year's Boston Marathon. She finished it in less than 3 ½ hours, which is faster than I could drive it. She's frequently posting beautiful pictures taken while she's been running the many wilderness trails around Juneau. Their dog Loki accompanies her often, even wearing his own saddle bags! He loves rolling in the snow (and other things I bet).

Sarah's doing well serving as the Medical Officer for a Marine Battalion at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. Anne and I drove there in February, starting off in a blizzard – Aurora to Indianapolis, usually 3 hours, took 7. But it was SO worth it. We got to meet – drum roll please – our new grandson, Matthew! Of course one of the two most adorable grandchildren the world has ever seen. Jack seems to be settling into his new role as a big brother rather well. And both of them have been growing quickly!



Jack started Montessori school in the fall, and doing well there. Jon has joined the Piney Green Volunteer Fire Department so has been using his talents and training serving the community. Sarah's had a few adventures, going to field training with the battalion, including live fire training. She threw the grenade like a girl, but it got to where it was supposed to go. She looks good in body armor. She rode out to the LST (Landing Ship, Tank) on one of the tracks (amphibious vehicle).



She was aboard and toured the medical spaces there, enjoyed some shop talk, then rode back to shore. Their big news at the end of the year is that they've learned her next assignment. She's been accepted for a residency in Emergency Medicine at Naval Medical Center San Diego. So they'll be moving west in June, and she'll be there for 3 years. Anne and I left on Christmas Day for North Carolina, spending a

couple of nights on the road and stopping in Knoxville to visit Phyllis Cragle, Sarah's Godmother and an old friend from Champaign American Red Cross Days. Then we



visited for a week, taking care of the boys while Sarah was working and Jon visited with his parents, friends, and family back in Yorkville, IL.

As for Anne and I, not a lot of change. Same house, same jobs. We've gotten out a little bit locally. One place we've enjoyed is the Arcada Theater in St. Charles, an old 1920s movie house that's been restored (still has the old



organ they used to play the score for silent movies), where we've seen the Liverpool Legends (a Beatles tribute group established by George Harrison's sister), 3 Dog Night (2 of the 3 original singers), the Bronx Wanderers

(mainly Jersey Boys and Grease type music, but they opened the second show we saw w/ Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody; we really enjoy this group, very energetic), and were going to see a McCartney tribute group but they had to cancel due to sickness but the fill-in group was quite good. Another place we've gone to is Hollywood Palms Cinema, one of those places that has real food (and a bar) and instead of regular rows of theater seating the chairs are like executive desk chairs that recline, with a table in front of you. Anne and I saw The Judge and then the Blues Brothers, with Dan Akroyd there to talk before the movie. I went back Thanksgiving weekend (while Anne was in Maine) to see It's a Wonderful Life, with the actress who played Zsu Zsu there. They showed A Christmas Story this past weekend with the actors who played some of the kids, but we didn't make it over for that.

The other highlights of the year for us were multiple trips to Maine for Anne to be with her mum, June trips by Jeff to Guam to visit Carol and Andrew and to Indianapolis for the National Athletic Trainers' Association annual meeting, Anne to monthly meetings of the Chicago Archeological Society in Evanston (Jeff went along to a couple), and a 2 hour massage for Jeff in November (a birthday present from all the kids).



The lowlights of the year were Jeff working summer camps in July (to pay for the Guam trip!), the horrendous winter 2013-14 Polar vortex that blasted Chicago and kept us frigid with snow on the ground

until well into March (while Alaska was unseasonably warm!), and Jeff's first present for this Christmas – a new water heater! I'm not going to say anything about this winter – don't want to jinx things!

We wish you and yours the best of this holiday season and the year ahead in this wonderful and complicated world. All best wishes to you and your family and friends.

Anne and Jeff

