

destined to be a genius or will just need a lot of therapy, but for the time being we are content with our own little wonderful proprietary mix of Forest Gump, Rain Man, and the Incredible Hulk (hope you never get the opportunity to see him get angry - or hear him ramble on all day about his underwear). The grade school is going to have us on speed dial.

Jaclyn is in the 3rd grade his year, and shaping into a good kid. She's been involved heavily with her Girl Scout troop, and does well in school as long as we hit the homework hard at night. She loves to read and sets a timer to be sure she gets in every minute, so it looks like we have the good habits started early. It was her First Communion year for all of you Catholics out there, and she got first place in the science fair with her table top trebuchet model (a catapult, which we colorfully titled: History's Favorite Siege Engine). Yeah yeah yeah, it was my idea, but she really made it her own. I had her do all of the cuts, assembly, staining, and the launching of projectiles. She really enjoyed being able to create something from just a picture and rough sketch (and a wide assortment of power tools). We now take it camping and use it to either throw rocks in the surf or pine cones in the fire (making history come alive, one fling at a time).

Camping and the great outdoors. Now there's a beefy subject, even though it was a pretty iffy year for weather. We got in some good family outings. Well, if you call 'good' finding out that the drag chains on the trailer hitch really work if the two thousand pound load you are towing comes off. Metal on asphalt is a sound I won't soon forget. Jac and I did our usual off-season (winter/spring) father/daughter weekend trips to the coastal state parks. The firewood I take normally eclipses the pile of gear, so needless to say the weather is never a concern for us. Nothing like playing a mean game of **Sorry!** in the rain/sleet/snow next to a pyre that could throw ships off course. I was able to get her out on her first backpack with some of my backpacking buddies and their kids, as we try to pass the torch to the next generation. Of course, my regular crowd logged a few manly miles as well. Snow camp was along the shoulder of Mt. Rainier, but we really had to climb to find the white stuff earlier this year. The spring hike as a real hidden gem. A solid 50 miler along the spine of the Kettle Crest in Eastern Washington. Very seldom packed from end to end, hard logistics and some route finding challenges (Joe), with miles of forested 7000' undulating hills. We wrapped up the year with a fall trek deep into the Enchanted Valley along the Quinalt in Olympic National Park. Weather was on the verge of dismal, but unexpected fall colors and diverse trail helped balance the experience. And I learned the virtues of cooking in a freezer baggie. But Montana was the crown jewel by far. With the kids at the my parents, a group of child-free couples joined Nancy and I as I marked the 20th year since first working at Glacier Park (agreed by all who know me to be springboard for my hiking career). We hadn't been back to the park for several years waiting for the kids to get a little older, and couldn't have been there with a better group of people. I re-trod some familiar trail miles while spinning yarns from what seems like a lifetime ago, and was able to share them with both old friends and new acquaintances alike. My favorite areas were closed to bear activity the entire week of our visit, but I did get to knock out a nice twenty mile day over a stretch of trail that almost killed me in 1985. Funny, but it wasn't bad at all. Actually enjoyable. I don't think it's because I'm in better shape than I was at 19, but more from the fact I've experience so much pain/suffering/backpacking adversity the last twenty years (Jon), I can honestly say "I've seen worse." Must be time to turn those fifty mile trips into hundreds.

And I couldn't talk about pain with mentioning the newest member of the household, Cassie. She's the quintessential yellow Lab and pet icon of the Pacific Northwest, and is lovingly chewing us out of house and home while keeping Kintla (our chocolate Lab) company. It's interesting watching a 3 month old dog play with a twelve year old dog. Like watching an old lady with a cane fend off a purse snatcher. Mitch likes to jump into the fray and it quickly turns into a snarling knot of flying hair, teeth, and slobber. And the dogs get pretty worked up too.

Ah, I think that about covers it. I was going to make a 'directors cut' letter, but then I'd have to come up with a rating system and my postage costs would spike with the added pages. I'm going to need to run some numbers..... it might be better to just outsource/offshore this entire effort next year. But then I'd probably lose all of my cow jokes in the translation.

Hope the Christmas season finds everyone safe and sound. Take care.

The Wings

Dave, Nancy, Jaclyn, Mitchell

Special appearances by Kintla and Cassie