

Merry Christmas 2006



This Christmas letter to our friends almost became a New Year's letter, but I think that I can type fast enough to get this piece of paper out today. We are well and hope that you are, too. Here are a few pictures and notes from our year:



The crazy man coming at you in red and black is Val, who's getting close to 16 and very much interested in wrestling. This is his second year. This is also the beginning of Val's adult life in an important and inescapable respect: dieting. I only recently found out that the weight classes in wrestling are narrow, so that there's a different weight class about every 5 or 10 pounds. Val says he has to stay below 140 lbs.

All his young life I've been repeating the things my own mother told me: eat a balanced diet, etc., you'll live a long time and still be enjoying yourself when you're 60. Val would just stare at me. Maybe he was wondering why people still care when they're 60.

Nowadays Val pulls a slice from a loaf of bread and says, "How many calories does this have per slice?" He turns the package over, reads, smiles and says, "Dude, there are only 90 calories for every slice. I can have my sandwich AND eat some ice cream!"

The crazy man who appears to be examining the floor is Gabriel, now 22, who is demonstrating one-armed, finger-tipped pushups. It is part of his conditioning for martial arts. The kind that he is studying is "Jeet-Keun Wing Chun". He practices form and moves, is always exercising. Of the many exercises he does with other students, one is called "Sticky Hands". It's supposed to be a method of getting inside your opponent's defensive perimeter. That's my favorite, the name is so fun.



Gabriel has a job at a nice, outrageously expensive penthouse restaurant in downtown Bellevue, 6 hours a day, Mon → Fri. He lives with us, does most of the family shopping and most of the family cooking. It surprised me that Val watches calories, but it doesn't surprise me that Gabriel is a good cook. Still, it's novel to hear Gabriel describe with intensity and appreciation the difference in texture to be gained by adding cream cheese to the Vodka Marinara sauce he is making.

The picture w/Dominic and 2 of the 7 animals that worship him is indicative of his life when he's not working on "Honeydew" lists or chauffeuring students. Wherever Dominic is, the dogs want to be. The bookcases to the right of Dominic's head are ones he built over a year ago, and I liked them so much I asked him to build similar "shelves" in the kitchen. He started to worry about scope creep, and he was so right. He is now doing a magnificent job of completely remodeling the kitchen, and is in the middle of building a kitchen island, with all of its plumbing. He makes jokes about being "retired".

My life is very good. Boeing is going great guns right now; I have a challenging and interesting job, lots of stress and no boredom. Isn't that supposed to a recipe for a short life and a happy one? Maybe that why some wags say that happiness isn't everything.

I was taking migraine medication for a while, and it turns out this medication has a side affect of diminishing people's appetites. So, I lost about 20 pounds this year, without too much effort. The medication is called Topomax and it also appears to reduce cravings for cocaine, cigarettes and alcohol. I seriously started to LIKE cottage cheese and vegetables, and I was indifferent to chocolate!

Fiona is 23 now, lives w/some roommates about ½ mile from us. Everything is so organized at her place. Dishes get washed right away. You can find what you're looking for. She was working at Cost Plus Imports and had gotten to be the head of the Gourmet Food Section, but new management and a lot of time doing nothing at the cash register made her look for something that was intrinsically enjoyable.



So she has started working at a daycare, and loves working with the babies. She tells me all about her adventures at the daycare for a particular day, and they are all good adventures! Sometimes it's just about how she got a little guy to sleep by rubbing his back, and even though he THOUGHT it wasn't naptime, pretty soon his eyelids opened and closed VERY SLOWLY, and he was out. Fiona sometimes says that the older babies make little noises when they start to drift off to sleep.



Does that seem like an experience of contentment? May you have many such experiences this holiday, where you find yourself warm and happy, and drift off to sleep. Maybe you'll make noises and maybe you won't!

Sweet dreams, and a Happy New Year.

The Vautier/Cofield Family

