

Behold, a virgin
shall conceive
and bear a Son,
and shall call his name
Emmanuel,
GOD WITH US.

*(1 saiah 7 : 14;
Matthew 1 : 23)*

The people
that walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
and they
that dwell in the land
of the shadow of death,
upon them
hath the light shined.

(1 saiah 9 : 2)



For unto us a Child is born,
unto us a Son is given,
and the government shall be upon His shoulder;
and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,
the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father,
the Prince of Peace.

(1 saiah 9 : 6)



HOWEY CHRISTMAS NEWS 1999

We're back!! Just when you thought it was safe to go to your mailbox at Christmas...

High Rollers Return From Vegas

Well, you may have noticed that the 1998 edition of our Christmas update was among the missing. I fell into a wormhole o' bad luck (read all the distressing news on page 4), but not bad enough to prevent me from crawling back, and there you have it—the annual missive has returned!

The highlight of 1999 was our "Vegas Vacation" (albeit without Wayne Newton). We went for 3 days in September to celebrate Rob's 21st birthday (this is, of course, another Robert Howey, to whom I could not have given birth, because I am too young to have a 21-year-old).

We had a great time! Stephen and I noticed that Rob and Ed came back to the hotel room later every night from the casinos. I didn't gamble (well, except I did win \$5.50 in the nickel slots), but I spent a fortune in cabs to go to Jazzercise in Vegas! Stephen couldn't gamble, but he threw away his money just as shamelessly at the arcades. He became convinced that he saw everyone from Cindy Crawford to Mo Vaughn at our hotel. Rob discovered that beef and booze could be had—cheap!—at every meal. Stephen decided to purchase logo boxer shorts at each hotel we visited (now there's a collection for you!)

We rode the "Star Trek Experience" three times! I went on the New York, New York roller coaster with the kids. I did NOT go on the "Big Shot" at the top of the Stratosphere. Rob and Stephen did, however, and were the victims of the best sales pitch I've seen in a long time. When they got off and were paying for their picture (snapped at the moment of maximum G-force, of course), the guy at the picture stand said, "You didn't throw your arms up in the air! Go back and ride it again, like a man this time!"



We pose with the chicken at Tournament of Kings (à la Medieval Times).

The Testosterone Twins took this as a personal challenge, so back they went for a second ride, and yes, they did throw their arms up in the air. How do I know this? Because I can see it in the SECOND picture they purchased from the guy!

Stephen was NOT hallucinating when he thought he saw Felix Trinidad at our hotel.

Unknowingly, we arrived in Vegas the day before the Trinidad-de la Hoya fight, and Trinidad was at our hotel... we did know something was up when we saw the giant flag of Puerto Rico draped over the hotel's front entrance sign. You sure could buy those de la Hoya t-shirts cheap the next day!



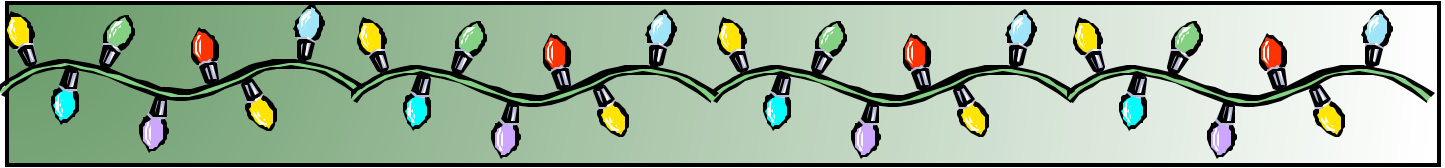
Rob and Stephen chat with Quark at lunch on our first day at the Las Vegas Hilton

Robert actually left with some winnings (and a case of Romulan ale from Quark's Bar and Grill). He became quite opinionated about which casinos he preferred (i.e., those where he won). I was complaining that when I went down to the hotel lobby one morning at 8:30 to go to a Jazzercise class, I couldn't believe people were drinking in the casino. Rob said, "Oh, that's nothing. I saw a guy sleeping at the slot machine with his hand still around his drink."

Robert has concluded that when he graduates with his Hotel/Restaurant degree (see page 2 for the details!), he should work in Vegas. We certainly think that would be fun for us... although I heard slot machine bells ringing in my head for two weeks after we came back.



Rob parts with some of his winnings for our last dinner... Hmm, that's the same shirt he was wearing the first day. You'd think someone who won all that money could afford a different shirt, wouldn't you?



Robert Transformed From Dawg to Coug



Robert's apartment in Pullman—decorated in early Parental Castoffs and Area Garage Sale

On a soggy August Saturday, we packed most of Robert's earthly belongings into a rental moving van, loaded his car onto a dolly, and set off caravan-style for Pullman, Washington (during the time that Ed was driving the truck and Robert was riding with me in the Explorer, he became quite concerned about the amount of bobbing up and down his car was doing....

"Dad! My car!!" seemed to erupt from his mouth about every 2-3 minutes). I can reliably report that, were the world flat, Pullman would be very close to the edge. I thought we would never arrive! I also was a bit premature in congratulating myself on being well prepared to launch my firstborn out into the world, moving van and all. Mom had some very difficult days!

Anyway, we all survived. Robert has now completed his first semester as an official Washington State University student and Hotel/Restaurant Administration major, and is more or less adjusting to small-town college life. Now that he's paying his own rent (well, more or less), he's become Mr. Frugal—cases of Top Ramen and macaroni & cheese, plus regular visits to Walmart. He should be finished with his degree either in May or August 2001. After 4 1/2 years, he had to leave his job at Taco Time Northwest because they do not have any restaurants in or near Pullman. Of course, he is now working at none other than Taco Time International, which is the eastern Washington offshoot from the original company.

It's a good thing he had that year in community college to help him make the transition from University of Washington Husky to archrival WSU Cougar. Although he swears he is still a Husky, we suspect he was secretly rooting for the Cougs during the Apple Cup football game!



There's that shirt again... Robert enjoys a Romulan Ale

Whitman Middle School Survives Stephen



Stephen's do (courtesy of one of his creative female friends) was the talk of 8th grade Promotion Night

Stephen finished middle school in June and is now a freshman at Ballard High School. He had a wonderful job opportunity in August. The University of Washington had a grant to bring over a group of Japanese middle school students for 2 weeks of intensive English instruction, and the grant provided for them to hire a group of American peer students to buddy up with the Japanese students. They accompanied the Japanese students on field trip activities, including the state capitol, a weekend camp, Mount Rainier, and a Mariners game. We couldn't believe it—he gets paid to go to summer camp! Of course, the first thing that the Japanese and American students did on the initial weekend campout was to teach each other the words for all adolescent-revered bodily functions.

Stephen is still playing piano, but switched piano teachers. His teacher is an old friend and the bass soloist for Seattle Sings Messiah. In fact, Stephen pretty much discharged his high school community service obligation for freshman year by working on Messiah this year. He got to dress up in a tux and come up on the stage with the conductor. That big moment was brought to you by his willingness not to wear headphones and a baseball cap with the tux...

Most recently, he has been working at a Christmas tree lot. The owner offered him a job when he overheard Stephen conning us into spending more on a tree than we had originally intended!



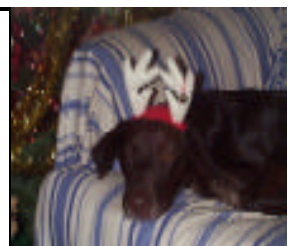
You CAN dress him up!! Stephen poses with producer Mom and bass soloist and piano teacher Ren at the Seattle Siugs Messiah wrap party

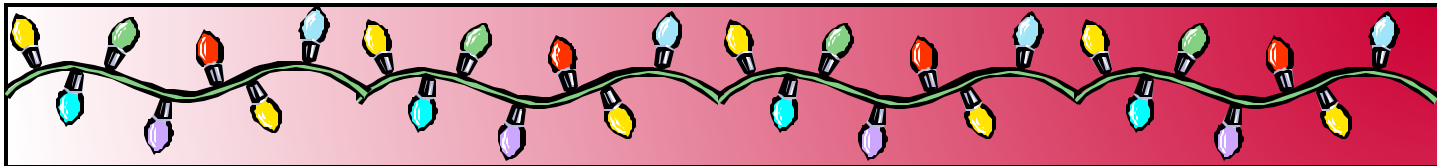
Continuing Adventures of the Evil Canine Twins and the Wide Feline Load

Tasha and Gwen (or, as we call them, The Brick and The Wacko) are almost three years old, and have nearly completed removing the buttons from every garment in the house. Doggie wrestling is still their favorite sport. It's especially exciting when they are wrestling out on the porch and body slam each other into the back door. Despite their impressive size, they remain totally cowed by Sophie, who likes to lie down right across the hallway and dare them to step over her.

Speaking of Sophie, we tried to put the Wide Load on a diet, but despite several weeks of very small servings, she did not appear to have lost an ounce. We think she snuck out of the house and found other food sources.

Gwen snoozes while waiting for food to fall off the tree.





Cindy Gets Small Round Red Car; Becomes World Traveler



With my Seattle Jazzercise pals at our brief audience with the JazzerQueen, Judi Sheppard Missett

OK, as promised earlier, here's the capsule version of my tale of woe: In April of 1998, two of the three partners in my small law firm decided to retire, and dissolve the firm. Although another med mal defense firm took me on pretty quickly, I was in something of a tailspin all summer. This was largely because I had to commute 40 miles to the new firm's Tacoma office (the only

place that had room for me).

In November I was able to move up to the firm's new (and bigger) Seattle office, but I hadn't been back up in Seattle a week when I totaled my car (the boring but reliable tin can Subaru wagon). Stephen basically took the impact of a Mercedes urban assault vehicle that attempted to reconfigure our passenger door and seat. He had a hairline fracture of his pelvic ring. Fortunately, it was a stable fracture, so all we had to do (!) was keep him from weight-bearing while it healed (that and monitor the steady stream of weeping adolescent female visitors bearing balloons and teddy

bears). I was physically okay, but my brain went on strike for a while. Once I was able to resume thinking (although some might argue that point), I did the typical post-accident re-examination of life (corny but true). I decided that traditional private practice is just not for me. Although I had been happy in the small firm, the two retiring partners shared with me their conclusion that their non-traditional model probably would not have survived indefinitely in the med mal world in any event.

Anyway, this past August I got a job offer from one of my clients. I am now working as a legal/clinical risk consultant for MMI Companies, which insures hospitals and other health care providers. The providers I work with are primarily in Washington and Oregon. So far, it's been fun, and is pretty much the exact kind of work I have envisioned doing for a long time. I am racking up the frequent flyer miles, though!! My ears are having a difficult transition period.

Also, once I completed a period of denial about purchasing a new car ("No, I don't need a car... I'll just take the bus everywhere"), I ended up with a bright red new Beetle! After the accident, safety features became a much bigger priority for me, and it was by far the safest car anywhere close to my price range! But it's lots of fun too. In August, I made the pilgrimage to the Jazzercise 30th anniversary convention in San Diego with some friends, and we had a great time. By the third day, our feet hurt so much we could hardly walk. And yes, we PAID for that!!

Our sing-along Messiah was great this year—650 people! Check out our web site: www.seattlesingsmessiah.org

Ed Keeps Large Square Black SUV; Continues to Putter Around Seattle

Unlike me, Ed did NOT get a new car. He continues to cart the mobile office around Seattle in the Explorer. When he is in the actual office, he generally is carting computer components from the mobile office to the actual office and vice versa. 1998 was not the best year he ever had, either. He tore a meniscus in his knee playing on the church volleyball team and ended up having arthroscopic surgery a few months later. He should be able to ski this winter, so things are looking better.

Actually, skiing brings to mind one of the more memorable things that happened in 1998, shortly after Ed initially injured his knee. He was still hobbling around on crutches, and Robert had driven him to the orthopedist before going on to work. Stephen had gone snowboarding with a friend. The friend's father had dropped them



Ed putters around north of Seattle also—including a church bike group that "rode through the tulips" in the Skagit Valley

off at the ski area on his way to a business meeting east of the mountains, and the plan was for him to pick them up on his way back. Stephen, however, decided to "catch a little air" with his board on a jump, and instead had his own air severely knocked out of him when he landed. He was fine, but unfortunately, he failed the ski patrol's test for getting up quickly enough, and got

strapped to a backboard for an ambulance ride to the hospital (with friend in tow). I was out of communication in a deposition, so the ski patrol called Ed, who was in a cab on his way home from the orthopedist, crutches and all!

Of course, when I got out of the deposition, I had a message on my cell phone from the ski patrol telling me that Stephen was being taken to the hospital on a backboard. Eventually, we all showed up at the hospital... Injured dad, frantic mom, and friend's confused dad. Stephen was in better shape than any of us!

We Wish You a Merry Christmas!

Happy Holidays!

Please stay in touch!

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