

Dear Friends & Family,

1/10/2003

I know many of you haven't heard from me for a long time. That doesn't mean I haven't been thinking of you, just that the challenge of trying to summarize my life into a letter at the end of the year has gotten the better of me for the last few years. Until now: you hold my attempt at a New Year's letter. If it's been so long since you've heard from me that you just can't remember, the Reader's Digest version is that I was married, moved to Washington, DC (really Alexandria, VA) worked in the computer world for a few years, had a baby and then went back to a "science" job at the Naval Research Lab. Things happen and now I'm divorced, and have been for a few years. Jeff and I still have some lingering issues, but life goes on and I try to focus on the positive.



Matthew (who spends slightly over half his time with me) is now 7 years old (yikes!), and is a really great kid. He's in first grade; reading, writing, losing baby teeth, doing all the things a first-grader is supposed to do. He's been a quick learner at skiing, plays soccer (go Cheetahs!), loves his razor scooter and riding his trailer bike (the kind that hooks onto the seat post of an adult bike). He's been taking chess and sign language classes in his after-school program, which is fun because now we can argue about having more dessert from across the room without saying a word! He started piano lessons last week... I hope my grandmother's old piano survives the pounding he gives it.



It's been a busy year for me. I've been seeing someone wonderful I met at work (his name is Bob and he's also divorced) and motivated by his support and encouragement I've



continued to bust out and rediscover myself. We've managed to do things that a few years ago I never would have imagined I could or would do, like getting SCUBA certified and buying a motorcycle. I started riding Bob's 150cc motor scooter over 2 years ago, and when it was totaled by someone else's careless parking job we decided to get a real bike (Yamaha 535). I got a new touring bicycle this spring and have been enjoying riding more than ever before. There are quite a few major trails around here that should be lots of fun next year. I didn't use my kayak much this year, but I have big plans to remedy that next season - and I'm gearing up to be able to kayak even in cold weather (hey, the Potomac doesn't usually completely freeze over). I've never felt more active. Well, maybe when I was 18, but it's more fun when you've got a real income.



I still work at NRL (since they keep paying me), mostly on in-water optical modeling. That's how I met Bob: we work together and have published a few papers together in the last couple of years. Reprints or PDF's available upon request. © The image below is an example of another thing I do at work: process data that's been taken from a special camera our group built (flown in an aircraft) and turn it into pretty pictures (hyperspectral imagery, if that means anything to you). That data is then used to analyze shallow-ocean bottom features (like coral or seagrass bed health). Ta-Da.



As with most jobs, some days are better than others. Maybe by my New Year's letter next year I'll be telling you I'm a full-time kayak guide on the Potomac or a high-school science teacher. Or not; only time will tell.

We managed to travel quite a bit this year. Although none of it has been particularly exotic, we do try to squeeze in some entertainment with every business trip. All told, this year had business or pleasure trips to Hawaii (good snorkeling), New Orleans (good booze), Seattle (good coffee), Miami (good sailing), Utah (good scenery), North Carolina (good beaches), Providence (good friends), Santa Fe (good skiing), and Vermont (more good skiing). All those places (well, except New Orleans) had good fresh air.

Hawaii was a work meeting/pleasure trip in February to three islands: Oahu, Hawaii, and Kauai. While we were there I got to visit my sister Keetje and her husband Rick and their two kids, Ryan and Cody, who are all doing well. We got in a few good hikes to see some very spectacular scenery. The surf on the islands can be a bit cruel in the winter, but we managed a bit of snorkeling and boogie-boarding.



Waikoloa

New Orleans was actually a work trip to the NRL facility at Stennis Space Flight Center in Mississippi. That's where Bob worked before he came to DC, so it was sort of a return to home for him. Our first trip to Seattle of the year was to visit friends and recharge our western-starved souls. In between was a quick trip to visit a group at the University of Miami and a little catamaran sailing. The water was as warm as a bathtub and it was only May!



The Narrows

In late June we spent a week camping and hiking at Zion and Bryce Canyon national parks. Somehow hiking in 103-degree heat doesn't seem so bad when you're on vacation. At least the heat kept the crowds down. The drought of last summer meant that we were able to hike further up "The Narrows" (a river canyon where the trail is the river itself) than we otherwise could have. It was quite an experience.



Bryce Canyon

Next came another week of camping and backpacking in the Cascades. The season is short: we were there in early August, and we still had to deal with plenty of snow and cold (not to mention bears). It's a beautiful and wild place. It's been quite a few years since I've been able to really backpack in and stay for a few days somewhere, so it was a welcome change from the hustle and bustle of campgrounds. We even got whimsical and at the end of the trip we bolted out to the San Juan Islands for a day or two. Seattle certainly knows how to do ferry boats.



Cascade Pass, WA



Cascade Pass, WA



Shenandoah River

Matthew and my mom and I went on some weekend camping trips over the summer, but most of the places to camp around here suffer from hot, hot humid weather and too many bugs. ☹️ Camping near water (like a river) is a must. This photo is of Matthew and me in the Shenandoah river in August (yuck). I'm tugging him along on his Cataraft from my kayak. You'll notice he isn't exactly paddling very hard. He's going to have to master that skill before I get him a real boat.

on the outer banks of North Carolina. Matthew turned out to be quite a boogie-boarder and we spent a lot of time in the surf. Maybe it was a good thing that it rained almost all week - it kept the crowds down and although the surf came up a bit high at the end of our stay, it was a good week.



Corolla

All of us (including my mom) spent a week at the end of the summer resting up at the beach

Bob and I rounded out the travel year with a meeting in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where we managed to catch the opening days of not one but two ski areas... what a coup! Right before Christmas I took Matthew on a local ski trip so he could rediscover what he learned two years ago, and by the end of the day he was one of those little kids scooting down the bunny hill with no fear. His preferred method for stopping once he achieves a certain speed is the sit-and-tumble method. I must admit it looks fun when he does it. My knees would never take it. We couldn't resist the Christmas day storm that covered the east in snow, and so Bob and I snuck up to visit his brother in Vermont for one last ski trip of 2002.

My mom is doing well. She lives less than two miles from me in Old Town, Alexandria. She continues to work on her genealogical research and is a great grandma. She's keeping in touch with her friends from San Jose, and is keeping busy with those things and helping me be a single mom.

I dearly miss living in the west. I hope to move back as soon as I can, but custody issues are going to keep me here for a while. I hope those of you out there realize how lucky you are. Until then, in my typical fashion, I'm going to focus on things I **can** control and make my life as enjoyable as possible. I'm fortunate to be in good health (for a 40 year old chick, you know) and good spirits. I toy with the idea of starting to dance again, but the folk dance world has died down to almost nothing. Living the life of a working single mom means that almost anything I take on has to be do-able in 15-minute spurts, or has to wait for slightly longer spurts over the weekends. And for now, it's better if it is something that a 7 year-old likes to do, too.



Watch your back! He's armed!

My current address is 909 S. Columbus St., Alexandria, VA, 22314. (703) 837-8566. There's much more I want to say to each of you: I'd like to make sure I have everyone's email address. Please drop me a quick email (**very** short is completely ok) at trinkd@yahoo.com so I can make sure I know how to find you.