

Hello!

This year, we are down to the wire getting our Christmas letter done as well as other Christmas chores. We just got home after spending six hours at the mall shopping, eating dinner, and seeing Santa. Even Santa has gone high tech. There's no more waiting in line--you just check in, give his elves your cell phone number, and they text you when he's ready for you. The wait time for Santa was 2.5 hours so we gladly embraced this new process. We went to the Apple store and got me (Marilyn) a new phone for Xmas! After many years of being with Jerry, I don't get any surprise presents but as Jerry points out, this way I get exactly what I want!

With another year almost behind us, we think about all that has transpired and how quickly the time goes. We are so grateful for the experiences, learning opportunities, and all the wonderful people in our lives. Plus the world didn't end so we get to do it all again next year!

For spring break this year, the Katopodes family went south. We rented a house in Cape Coral, FL and spent time on the beaches of Sanibel, Captiva, Fort Meyers, and Cape Coral. Sanibel Island is one of the best shelling beaches in the U.S. and we enjoyed searching for unique shells. We rented a convertible Mustang (of course) and enjoyed cruising with the top down.

We did a day trip to the Everglades National Park and Big Cypress National Preserve. While there, we did an air boat tour through the mangrove swamps. Jerry and I both grew up watching "Gentle Ben" so this was a must. Everyone had a blast! Our captain couldn't drive fast enough for Delaney and we had to physically hold her in while she put her arm over the side to feel the waves the boat created. She also put her face a little too close to a crocodile that we stopped to look at and we had to pull her back from that too. Our girl is quite fearless! We got a good tip from a local and did a back roads drive through Big Cypress and saw crocodiles galore.

Delaney finished up first grade in May. She absolutely loves school and everything about it. Her teacher was great and Delaney made great progress academically and behaviorally. Delaney is headstrong, which will serve her well at various times in her life, but in first grade that resulted in a lot of frustration! Delaney worked really hard to find positive outlets and ways to deal with her frustration.

At the end of May, I took a new position at The Action Center. I am now the Finance Manager and am quite happy to be back in the field of finance. It has been a tough transition as I walked into a position that had been vacant for nine months, our annual audit, and increased scrutiny from our Finance Committee and Board of Directors. Oh, did I mention that the accountant who works for me applied for the job I got? I've spent a ton of time trying to right the ship. I love a good challenge but this has been one of the toughest of my career for so many reasons.

This summer we did our annual trip to Steamboat for the Rocky Mountain Mustang Roundup. However, this was not the same old trip. I was driving the fastback and as I turned the corner to get on the on ramp, I heard a clunking noise. Hmmm... As I accelerated up the on ramp, I hear a loud clunk and then there were sparks and smoke. I had no brakes, as the pedal just went all the way to the floor, and the steering was almost non-existent. I used what little steering there was to keep the car going straight so that I wouldn't hit the cement barriers on the right or the

cars in the lane of traffic on the left. The car basically skidded to a stop. There I am sitting in a lane of traffic that was the end of one on ramp and the start of an exit ramp wondering what the heck happened. Cars were whizzing by so fast that I couldn't even get out to investigate the damage. I was supposed to meet Jerry and my Mom and Dad at the Buffalo overlook and I knew they were ahead of me so I called Jerry but he didn't answer. I then called my Mom and frantically told her that something terrible happened to the car and to turn around and come get me. While I was doing that, a tow truck pulled up in front of me and a flat bed tow truck pulled in behind me. My initial thought was great, what do I do with these sharks? Turned out it was the Courtesy Patrol, which is funded by the Colorado Dept of Transportation. I asked them to take a look at the car and let me know what happened. Turns out the entire back left wheel was gone. Yes, the entire rim and tire were gone. The lug nuts were sheared completely off.

The courtesy patrol loaded the car onto the flatbed and took me to a local Wal-Mart. They either tow you out of traffic or to one of their "safe spots", hence the local Wal-Mart. Jerry, Mom and Dad arrived to rescue me and assess the carnage. The damage was too extensive to fix with the round up starting the next day so the fastback was towed home. I got in the car with Mom and Dad and we all drove up to Steamboat.

With the fastback out of commission, there weren't any driving trophies for us. Jerry's Shelby won another award of excellence for the car show and the Shelby also won the People's Choice award. Not bad considering that his car was chosen over 450 other cars. I'm pleased to report that the drive home was uneventful.

We only did one camping trip this summer, at Hahn's Peak outside of Steamboat. We borrowed our neighbors pop up camper and that made it a little more comfortable, especially on the night where there was a severe thunderstorm and torrential downpour. Delaney loved the camper because it was a new, big toy. Jerry and Delaney did quite a bit of fishing and caught a few rainbow trout, and we all enjoyed some hiking.

Delaney started second grade at the end of August. Her second grade teacher is very different from her first grade teacher. This one is boisterous and over the top. With the program DK is in, she will have the same group of kids in her class every year. They are a great group of kids and so are the parents. We have no regrets about not sending Delaney to our home school.

Miss D is still in choir and has moved to intermediate orchestra, still playing violin. DK is still taking piano lessons. For her age, she really has been dedicated to practicing, especially the piano. Hearing her play "Ode to Joy" on the piano brought a tear to my eye. There are so many times when we are so proud of our girl and what she is able to accomplish.

Delaney played soccer in the spring and fall. This fall she started playing goalie and would play that position half of each game. She played baseball in the spring and started basketball in October. For the first time in her life, she's was told to get right in a player's face when she's playing defense. This makes her light up because it she is more naturally inclined that way and at school all she hears is to stay out of people's personal space. Miss D is the tallest person on her team and there are just a handful of kids that are taller than her in the whole league. She's playing co-ed basketball but in third grade she will switch to girls basketball.

Other than that, it was a pretty uneventful year for Jerry and me. Jerry is still working in Boulder but has a new supervisor who is flexible and understands and accommodates the sometimes-erratic schedule of a working parent. I am still selling on eBay and have maintained my top rated and power seller status. As you can tell, our lives mostly revolve around our little girl.

We hope this letter finds you in good health and that you are enjoying the holiday season, spending time with family and friends. Have a wonderful Christmas and may the New Year be everything that you want it to be!

Love,

Marilyn, Jerry & Delaney
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