

**Dec 2008**

## **The Third Annual Milz Family Christmas Letter**

After our busy travel schedule in 2007, we began 2008 looking forward to being at home and sleeping in our own bed/crib. Peggy was the first to break the “resolution” with a business trip to Texas the first week of January. A week later, we went to visit Steve’s family for an extra-long weekend in Pennsylvania. Despite a very full agenda of family business, we took a break one night and got together with Steve’s Aunt Millie, Uncle John, his cousin Becky and her husband Joe, and his cousin Melissa, her husband Chuck and their twins Emily and Jacob. In March, we met Steve’s dad in Atlanta to celebrate his birthday. It was quite chilly so we spent our time indoors at the Georgia Aquarium and World of Coke. We went to dinner at The Clubhouse (a favorite of Peggy’s in Chicago) and made a stop at Trader Joe’s (a neighborhood grocery chain that Peggy really misses from Chicago) to stock up on some nuts and wine, but learned that you can’t buy alcohol in Georgia on Sundays (not even after 1 pm). Bummer.

Peggy continues to do a little consulting for a long-time client in Chicago, so in April we jetted off for a long weekend, which is never enough time to see everyone, and this trip seemed shorter than most. Jacob got his first haircut at a kids’ salon while we were there and Peggy got really sick and wound up in the urgent care clinic. We stayed with Peggy’s friend Mindy, her husband Mike, and their four boys. We made it to the beautiful lakeshore with Peggy’s friend Nancy, had dinner with Peggy’s former neighbors, Laura and Jamy and their two children, and had a brief visit with one of Peggy’s former clients, the Stacks, before heading to the airport.

We decided to take our first family vacation, trying to select a Jacob-friendly destination. In May we spent a fun-filled week in San Diego. We visited the San Diego Zoo, the Wild Animal Park (twice, due to Mother Nature), Old Town, Coronado, USS Midway, and the Model Railroad Museum and Natural History Museum in Balboa Park. Jacob loved seeing the animals and really enjoyed the animal encounters at both petting zoos and in the lorikeet cage. Peggy had never been to the Wild Animal Park and spent a lot of time at the lion exhibit watching the lions, including eight cubs. This was Steve’s first trip to San Diego and he enjoyed everything, especially the USS Midway.

In July we went our separate ways (temporarily). Peggy attended her annual Girls’ Trip at Lake Conroe outside of Houston one weekend and Steve attended the Brickyard 400 NASCAR race in Indy with his dad the following weekend. These trips gave Jacob some one-on-one quality time with both Dad and Mom.

We had a few trips planned for the fall including the weddings of Peggy’s former neighbor Michael in Chicago (including a couple of days at Purdue), and Steve’s friend Jamie in Charlotte, but unfortunately had to cancel them due to health complications for Peggy (more on this below). However Peggy’s health didn’t prevent Steve from going to Atlanta for a couple of days in late October with Peggy’s dad to attend a Great Big Sea concert. Peggy didn’t mind because the trip was mid-week and included a wine (“Two Buck Chuck”) run to Trader Joe’s.

We have been fortunate that Grandma and Grandpa are willing and able to come visit us. We did manage to make a few trips over to their house this year – Easter, Father’s Day (a couple of weeks after Peggy’s dad had hip replacement surgery) and Thanksgiving. As you can tell by now, the concept of staying home in 2008 didn’t pan out too well. Throw in a few business trips, mostly for Steve to DC, Fort Worth, and California, and you have another busy year of travel.

We love spending time with our friends and family, so not only do we love to travel, but we also love having visitors. Grandma, Grandpa, and Uncle Seth are not the only ones we’ve had this year. In January Peggy’s friend Bridget and her husband John came out from Dallas for a long, low-key weekend. Then in March Peggy’s cousin Vicki, her daughter Kaelyn, Peggy’s friend Mary Carol and her son Jared had a brief stopover here on their way home to Texas from Orlando. In April we celebrated Jacob’s first birthday, with what else but an animal-themed birthday party. In addition to most of Peggy’s family and several friends, Steve’s entire family – the Milz/Hoover/Krieg clan – came from Pennsylvania and our goddaughter Kate and her mom (Peggy’s friend) Liz came from Tampa. We had a house full, but it was fun! After a

torrential down pour the morning of the party we were able to put our new pool heater to use to swim that afternoon and evening. I guess our visitors must have enjoyed themselves because Vicki, Kaelyn, Mary Carol, her sons Jared and Jacob, and the girls' friend Maggi returned for July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend, including the annual Braxton July 4<sup>th</sup> party next to the awesome fireworks over Pensacola Bay. Kate and Liz came back for Labor Day weekend, and Steve's dad came for a week in September.

At the end of June we got some great news – Jacob is going to be a big brother! Baby Girl Milz (we still have no idea what her name will be) is due to make her arrival around March 9<sup>th</sup>. In early fall we learned that Peggy had placenta previa. Her OB put some serious restrictions on her, including no traveling which is why our fall trips were cancelled. This was very difficult for all of us (especially Peggy), but we did what we had to do. The placenta has moved and Peggy's doctor has removed some of the restrictions, which is good because we will have guests for nine days at Christmas so she needs to be able to be more active. In our spare time we need to pick out nursery furniture, bedding, pink clothes, etc. Steve is sure he'll need another job to pay for the clothes Peggy wants to buy.

Jacob is the light of our lives and a bundle of energy who is always on the go. If only we could bottle some of his excess energy and use it for ourselves! He continues to attend a family day care in the town where Peggy works. He loves his daycare provider, Ms. Brenda, and all of the boys and girls in her care. Jacob took swimming lessons at the YMCA in the spring with his friend Adeline and we all get together when everyone's busy schedules allow it. In addition to his daycare friends and Adeline, Jacob has made several new friends in the nursery at church. After crying every time we left him in the nursery for nearly nine months, this has truly been a blessing. In March, Jacob wound up in the ER where he was diagnosed with a common urological condition. He had surgery in June in Pensacola to repair the hernia and resulting hydrocele. Peggy and Steve were on pins and needles the entire time he was in surgery. He woke up very unhappy but was soon eager to walk (which he wasn't supposed to do) and by the next day you never would have guessed he had surgery. One shocking Saturday morning in September Jacob climbed out of his crib and came waltzing into the living room with his blankets. We quickly converted his crib into a toddler bed, but every night he finds it more fun to read books or play with his toys than to stay in bed. Jacob talks all of the time and he LOVES to read. His obsessions include the moon, garbage trucks, tools (go figure), and bubbles. He continues to amaze us every day as he grows and develops.

As if we didn't have enough on our plates, we decided to do more volunteer work this year. We continue to attend church at Trinity United Methodist in Fort Walton Beach. Steve recently took on the responsibility of webmaster for our church; Peggy taught Vacation Bible School this summer; and Steve and Peggy taught a rotation of Children's Sunday School in early Fall. In June Steve became a board member and webmaster for the shooting range. He has become quite the skilled shooter and tries to get to at least one International Defensive Pistol Association (IDPA) match each month. He is always one of the top scorers, but Peggy teases him that she is not surprised since as the webmaster he is the one who posts the scores. Since leaving Chicago Peggy has continued her volunteer work with the American Society for Quality (ASQ). She is the treasurer for the local ASQ section and also a Technical Committee Chair for the national Quality Management Division of ASQ. Peggy has concluded that she really needs a hobby that will provide her a break so she is attempting to venture into scrapbooking. Suggestions and assistance are welcome and greatly appreciated!

If you have seen our website, you already know that we made a very difficult decision about Peggy's dog, Riley, in early September. He had just turned 16-½ and his health had been declining for some time. We all loved him very much and it was very difficult for all of us.

Steve still loves working as a software engineering consultant for the Air Force and is traveling from time to time working on the new Joint Strike Fighter project. He also still dabbles a bit with his friends Tim and Jeff in their web development and hosting side-business. Peggy is now into her fourth year as a Director and the Ethics Officer for L-3 Communications Crestview Aerospace. Running the training and continuous process improvement departments while managing the ethics program for a company with over 1000 employees is challenging and provides interesting dinner conversation most days.

Despite converting one of our bedrooms into the new nursery we will still have a guest room along with a heated pool, we are minutes away from the beach, and we obviously love to have visitors, so please plan a trip to visit – it's beautiful! As this busy year draws to a close we are reminded that we have been truly blessed and wish the same for all of you. We hope you have a very Merry Christmas and we wish you a Happy New Year!

*Steve, Peggy, and Jacob Milz*

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