



*Season's  
Greetings*

Love from Diane, Rick &  
Christo Schiano Voreck  
2006



## *Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2007!*

Ho, ho, ho!

Greetings from Diane, Rick and Christo! All the news that fits on one page (ok, two w/ front & back)!

Christo is now 8 yrs old and has a full set of teeth at last. He's in second grade at Las Lomitas; Room 20, Ms. Brown's class. In first grade he loved Writing Workshop and drawing pictures of fish and fishing. He made an "All About Me" poster, giving our extended S-V clan as his "family" and his three wishes were: 1) to fly, 2) to disappear & reappear, 3) do magic. He said he might become a house builder, and he listed LOTS of favorite things. Second grade brings required homework, more tests and less parent participation, but he really likes his teacher. He's doing especially well in math and spelling, winning rewards from us for excellent performance.

Christo likes I Spy, paper airplanes, treasure hunts, mazes, and hidden pictures. He's into Legos in a BIG way; they comprise most of his Christmas wish list and a possible career option. Lately he's also into cars (Mustangs & MiniCoopers); he just got a model Mustang GT kit. He loves computer games (The Hobbit, The Conquerors, Lego StarWars) and movies: The Lord of the Rings was an obsession, now it's Star Wars. Rick finished reading the Harry Potter books at bedtime, and they moved on to The Chronicles of Narnia. The Magic Treehouse and The Secrets of Droon were favorites for reading together--and sometimes alone. This year he sent a joke in to Highlights magazine: "What does Manny the Mammoth eat for breakfast? Ice Krispies!"

Christo's daily life has been very full. Morning rituals, school, afternoons at CCLC or with Veronica, often an activity and/or playdate, and sometimes Family Game Night. He played basketball, coach-pitch baseball, soccer & tennis and earned a yellow belt in Hapkido. There's also scouting (he's a Wolf Cub now) and of course, piano. He now plays "Heart and Soul" and "Chopsticks" with us, and is working on "Fur Elise". He performed "Drum Beats" and "Munchkin Rag" at his Fall recital with aplomb, and is considering taking up the guitar.

Diane is doing well. She was very disciplined about health and lifestyle changes and made progress early on, but it's a continual struggle! She consulted a bit in 2006, then hired on at the Palo Alto Research Center in March. She's very happy to be at PARC, of course, but between working and motherhood, there never seems to be enough time. She spent 2+ weeks in Tokyo doing fieldwork again in November, and just recently got an award for co-authoring one of the most frequently downloaded ACM papers this year. What she really wants for Christmas is more time with friends and family!

Rick is still working at Space Systems Loral, building commercial communications satellites. After 1.5 years, SSL has recovered from bankruptcy VERY well, and has orders pouring in. SSL is hiring and expanding--need a job? Rick's work has been very interesting (he added TV cameras to 2 recent satellites) and rewarding: he recently got promoted! This year, he traveled to Rome twice for work (fascinating!), and will go to Japan next year. Skiing is still his favorite sport, but biking and rollerblading are in there too.

Our home menagerie (not counting the wildlife) now includes 2 mice (Squeaker and Spinner2), 2 goldfish and Monty our beloved adopted cat, who was gouged badly in a cornea this year but recovered well.

Last Winter Christo was in our church's pageant (as a shepherd) for the first time; it was really lovely. We had a quiet Christmas at home, then flew Back East to be with family. Boxing Day at Don and Rachel's was delightful, and we took a family trip to visit NYC. Christo especially enjoyed New Year's Eve at Susan & John's. He danced like a maniac, and his wish for snow came true! Our creek rose to its highest point last year on New Year's Eve, but there wasn't much we could do about it from New York. Fortunately, all was well.

Back home there was the PSF crab feast at the Simisons', and Epiphany at Pierre & Louise's, just after Rick & Christo returned from skiing at Kirkwood. The neighborhood effort to stop Stanford's proposal to "improve" Alpine Road continued, but there's not been much action lately. We took a ski week at Squaw Valley, where Christo got very attached to a snowboard named "Spike" and we were lucky to meet up with the Mette family. Rick & Christo skied there again with the Simisons. Gramma & Granpa came up from SoCal for a few days and then we drove down to see them some weeks later, visiting cousin Steve and family in Santa Barbara on the way. Ruth brought together the local Casler clan for our visit again; turns out this was the last we'd see of Rick's dear Uncle Jack, a wonderful man who brought Christo balsa-wood airplanes and danced with Diane at weddings.

In the Spring, Rick skied with some old buddies on Mt Bachelor. We went to Bay Meadows with Diane R. We celebrated Easter at MemChu, MayDay at LocusVoci, and in June we did a lot of archery and riding at Bass Lake with LCC. Our fireside "skit" now includes juggling torches, "The Arch of Doom", and new-and-improved patter. Christo was avidly into archery & shooting imaginary Orcs. Christo and Rick went on a Cub-On camping trip, and entered a homemade "tank" in the Pinewood Derby, which did quite well and won the "Most Dangerous" award. Rick took Christo to SS/L for "Take Your Child to Work Day". We went to the Nativity carnival again with the Strehlows, and participated in the Las Lomitas Hoedown. We visited Santa Cruz and Christo won drinking glasses for his coin-toss acumen and Rick actually caught a fish on the pier! We camped in Portola Redwoods with friends, enjoying lots of "creek walking". We held 3 backyard parties--our usual Spring Fling, Room 29's end-of-year party, and one for Jim Migas, a friend of Ricks who'd worked with him at Loral.

Summer brought lots of playing in and near the creek. Christo was on the Ladera Rec swim team again, and did well, especially in backstroke and breaststroke. He attended Las Lomas summer school, Ladera Rec tennis camp and Camp Galileo. We were in Ashland for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival with the Berg family over Summer Solstice. Diane flew into Ashland, but Christo and Rick drove up, stopping to camp (& fish) at MacArthur Birney Falls. Christo attended Twelfth Night, his first play there, and was even awake for some of it... We scouts led the Menlo Park July 4th parade, and we saw fireworks on Stanford Quad and at Shoreline with Elaine et al. Joanne, Vincent and Lauren came for a visit late in the month. It was so hot Rick installed an air-conditioner in our bedroom for them. It was great to have them here; they were wonderful with Christo and we all had a fun time except for "the rat incident"! Rick was in Rome for a week but returned just in time to hang out with them a bit; they visited the Winchester Mystery House en route to the airport. August was **absolutely fabulous** with the Voreck family cruise on the Diamond Princess—Vancouver to Whittier, with a side trip to Denali. We traveled the Inside Passage, Glacier Bay and Prince William Sound. We saw glaciers, especially in College Fjord and near Whittier, and some whales from rather far off. We also explored glaciers by helicopter, landing on one (see photo). We did a zip-line temperate rainforest canopy adventure, some sea kayaking (Christo the "Extreme Sleeper" slept face up w/mouth open in the rain), and we took a plane tour around Juneau. We took a train through the White Pass and from Whittier through Anchorage and up to Denali. We spotted an elk in Denali, but the weather was so bad—the wettest summer in recent memory—we never did see Mt. McKinley. Christo loved it all—being with family, playing games, room service, sleeping in a fold-up bunk etc. He definitely got into the cruise-ship lifestyle, and came home wanting to play Mah Jong (Voreck rules) on family game nights.

In the Fall, Christo did his first full sleep-over with Ben & family in Carmel. We camped at Pinecrest with the Mah Jong Mamas and families (it was C-O-L-D) and then held a Star Wars- themed bash for Christo's birthday, complete with parental fire juggling (among other celebrations). We saw "An Inconvenient Truth" and bought a Prius. We missed the scouts' Fall Cub-On, but made it to the Corn Maze. Christo was a Star Wars clone for Halloween; he carved a wonderful ghost jack-o-lantern, trick-or-treated with friends in Menlo Park AND Ladera, toured a Haunted House and went to the Hirsts' party. Diane left for Tokyo next day, but left a hefty survival manual and somehow the guys carried on. Christo entered a rocket in the scouts' Space Derby, which did especially well after losing a wing! We took an MSI Bay Discovery Trip (Christo touched a "starry flounder"), and went to Cathy's Casbah birthday party (w/a brief, embarrassing appearance by The Amazing Ricardo and his Lovely Assistant). We had Thanksgiving dinner at Lisy & Stu's house again, and feel like part of the family now.

In December we lit Advent candles, including the candle of Hope at LCC. Christo has TWO Advent calendars, one w/ chocolate, the other w/Legos. Harry and Janey's Christmas party was wonderful as usual; we were glad to see everyone doing so well. We spent Diane's birthday weekend at the Stanyan Park hotel, a Victorian B&B near Golden Gate Park, and biked around the park, saw ACT's "A Christmas Carol", and visited Union Square and Aquatic Park. We played Monopoly or went to the Exploratorium when it rained. Christo actually remained seated during the entire Sing-Along-Messiah this year (w/ the help of "The Hobbit" on an ipod). We visited the Humphreys, Lunds (live Nativity) and parties at the Edwards' and Rordens' (Paul's 40<sup>th</sup> and Bob's 80<sup>th</sup>); we worshipped the full moon, lit Hanukkah candles, and are looking forward to Brenda & Rob's Yule celebration, Christmas dinner at Cousin MaryAnn's, and Boxing Day at Ruth & Wally's. Our "vertical wreath" is up, we decorated gingerbread thingies, and Christo is incessantly singing the joke version of "We Three Kings". He wisely said the real "gift of Christmas" was being with family, so we decided to fly back earlier this year. We'll be taking the redeye Christmas Eve, just after the LCC pageant (with Christo as The Innkeeper).

Looking back, we are reminded that we have so much to be grateful for, and we thank you all for being part of our lives. We miss Uncle Jack—and Uncle Bill, and we're so thankful for Gramma & Granpa's continued good health and great spirits—and those of Lori Ann and Aunts Janey & Anne.

Looking forward, we're so happy for Don and Rachel, who are expecting a baby in April 2007!!! And Marilyn and Eric will be getting hitched on 7/7/07!!! We send our love and gratitude to Veronica, Christo's nanny, who has been with us since he was 5 months old, and such a blessing in our lives. She's expecting another child and will be focusing on her own family now, but our two families have a bond that can never be broken.

Thank you all—friends and family alike—for warming our lives. You're in our hearts whether we see you often or not! Our love and best wishes to all for the holidays and coming year. Keep in touch!

Love,  
Christo, Diane & Rick

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