

Merry Christmas!

from

Dennis, Bert, Tommy, Stephen, Aaron & Andrew Griffin

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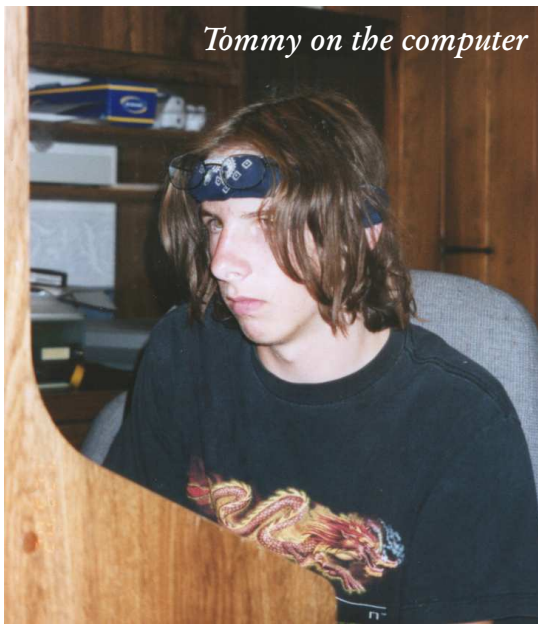
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Our beautiful October weather has now stretched into December. The sun shines; we've had little snow. It's hard to believe that Christmas is just around the corner. Luckily, we are reminded of its impending arrival by the rehearsing of "Silent Night" and "Three Jazzy Kings" by our budding pianists, as well as, the ensuing groans of their older brothers, "No! No! Not again!"

In June, Bert felt so blessed to be able to share the final days of her Dad's life with him and his family and friends. He so enjoyed everyone who came to see him and we had many reminders that his life had been richly lived. Although it was hard to say goodbye, we all knew we had been given a great gift.

High school has opened up a whole new satisfying world for Tommy. Like every normal fourteen year old, his choice of extracurricular activities is heavily influenced by the interests of his friends. Luckily, he has terrific friends who say wonderful things like, "Man, I've got enough



Tommy on the computer

problems without having a girlfriend." and "Let's try and get a job at the pool next summer". He had a wholly successful experience competing with the high school X-C team this fall despite his initial

reservations. "I don't know why I'm doing this; I don't even like to run."

Another of Stephen's lifelong dreams came true this fall

when he joined the TACKLE football team. Those 7th graders are a dedicated bunch. Even Bert and Dennis have to admit that they really enjoyed the sport for the first time and were sorry to see the season end. Stephen is now looking forward to basketball (Dec-Mar), track (Mar-June) and swimming (June-Aug) and football (Aug-Oct). Believe us, it's best to keep the boy busy. He and Tommy are planning to dance again in the spring.

Andrew wants to know how everything is made. "Do you think a dishwasher is hard to build? Could you (Mom) make the knobs that go on the stove? How do they make spoons? He hates most foods except for cereal, hotdogs, peanut butter and, would you believe, curried creamed eggs on toast? Inspired by some secret school project, Andrew is currently fascinated with "stitching". Bert let him try out the sewing machine and is hopeful he'll stay inspired long enough to attack that backlog of mending.

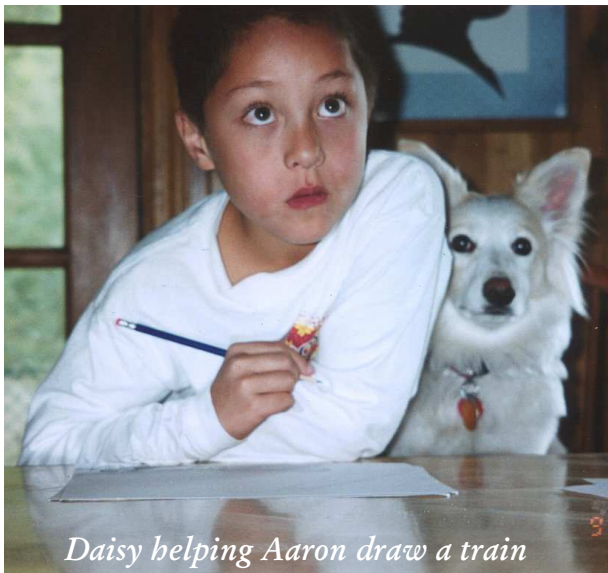
At this time last year, Aaron was trying to avoid the trip to Hawaii because he was afraid of flying. He finally aged to go, but "Could we have a 'pray' right before we get on the plane?" Five minutes into the first flight, he was hooked and now he searches toy aisles for every miniature passenger plane ever made. He still, however, loves trains.



Stephen

He spends every spare moment drawing both. He really tries to like third grade, but it's tough to focus on the teacher AND keep tabs on all the great ideas that keep popping into his head.

Andrew and Aaron didn't last long as wrestlers, but thoroughly enjoyed playing minor league baseball. They lucked out in having a coach who was a former elementary PE teacher. All four boys spent the summer on swim team, Tommy and Stephen loving every moment and Andrew and Aaron groaning and complaining until it was time to actually go to a meet, compete and play with their friends.



Daisy helping Aaron draw a train

Annie returned to Lakeview in February and is busy working at a real estate office. The boys love to hang out at her house playing with her Legos and her boyfriend Casey and her other two housemates which include her brother Michael who moved out in June. Annie will be also teaching Stephen's jazz class.

Kobi met a tragic end in February, but we had enjoyed him so much that we started looking for another dog almost immediately. Daisy (our first girl dog!) arrived as a puppy. She

is part cuddly, snuggling, kissing, curled up on back of the couch noodle and part stubborn, vicious, pay attention to me NOW or I'll rip your arm off tyrant.

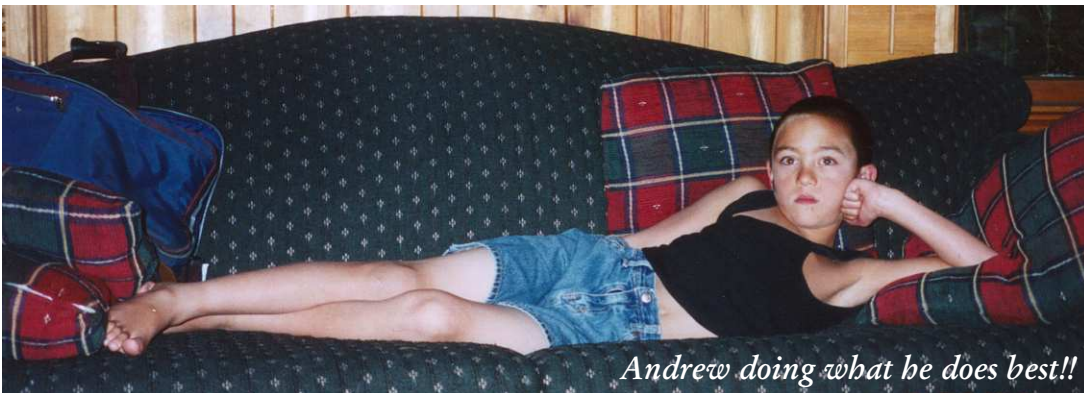
Since Aaron and Andrew have turned into hot little piano players, we decided we'd better buy a piano. Luckily, for Dennis and Bert, the store was throwing in a cruise for two with every purchase, so we're off to Catalina and Ensenada in February. We'll spend some time with Grandma Maxine and meet our great nephew Logan and play again with great niece Krysllyn while we're in Los Angeles. Annie, Casey and Michael promise to hold down the fort while we're gone.

Dennis and Bert both hit the big five-oh this year. Bert celebrated the occasion by throwing herself a murder mystery party. Her friends went all out dressing the parts and playing detectives, gangsters and floozies. (Yes, it was a stretch for most of them!) Dennis helped plan a surprise party for Stephen's thirteenth this past weekend and was very surprised to discover that the surprise party was also for him!

We'll be spending Christmas at home, then we're off to Reno to relax, help Dennis celebrate his actual birthday (the 29th, hint, hint) and fetch Grandma Uh-Oh (aka Bastian) from the airport. She'll be here for a two week visit with all her grandchildren.



Aaron & Andrew and Friends



Andrew doing what he does best!!

This holiday season, we're reminded again of how very, very fortunate we've been, and how very blessed we are to have the family and friends that we do. We wish you all a Christmas filled with wonder and a New Year full of joy.