



**December 2011
Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year!!
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May the blessings that surround the birth of the Christ Child be with you and your family this holiday season. Join us as we pray for peace on earth.

It has been a crazy, busy year for us. We have been blessed with good health and only slightly declining energy levels. Barb's travel schedule was extreme as usual and she did plenty of dragging Phil around with her. We began the new year by being snowed in for 10 days at our cabin in Blue Ridge, Georgia on the top of the mountain. Luckily we had warning of the pending storm and had lain in provisions. We ate quite well and we were able to do a lot of hiking, even though driving was impossible.



Barb and Phil Tubing

Susannah and Luis are planning a "destination wedding" for April 2012 on Grand Bahama Island. Luis will be graduating from Stanford University with an engineering master's degree right before the wedding. Susannah's summer "internship" with a firm in San Francisco has turned into full time employment and Luis is deliberating job offers, so we are waiting to see if they stay in California or head home to Texas. We have made 4 trips to California since they moved there a little over a year ago. We love visiting but it would also be nice if they lived closer. We loved playing with Suze's dog, Duncan, and were saddened by his sudden death this summer.



Phil and Susannah on Father's Day

This year's big trip for Barb and Phil was a three week trip to New Zealand and Australia where we mostly stayed with friends. In New Zealand, we experienced a "shake" in Christchurch while staying in an apartment near the epicenter. Our host was out at the time, and we were glad that it was a minor aftershock, especially since witnessing first-hand the devastation caused by the two earlier quakes. The scenery in New Zealand was spectacular and our various hosts were fantastic.

We joined friends, Joy and Barrie, from near Melbourne, Australia for a car trip around Tasmania (where we watched the royal wedding of Kate and William with Mike Sims who was in the youth group we advised while living in Peekskill in the 80's). Michael has been living in Australia for many years and it was really great to see him. We made road trips on the mainland of Victoria, Australia with Joy and Barrie and enjoyed self-catering accommodations, cooking local foods and tasting Australian wines.

Barb managed another big trip. She was convinced by another Australian friend to go to a conference in Germany and accompany her on a biking trip along the Rhine.

This was the hottest, driest summer ever in Texas. Even with Barb's trip to Germany and a several-week stay in the mountains, we managed to be home for more than 50 of the 89 days above 100 degrees.

Gwyneth and her family are still in the Atlanta area so we use our cabin as a base for visiting with them. They recently downsized, trading the big suburban house for the city condo life in Decatur, GA. We tested it out by having a big crowd for Thanksgiving in the condo. I prepared most of the food

(including the turkey) at the cabin. After participating in a 5K Turkey Trot near the cabin, Phil and I loaded up the car with pies, potatoes, turkey, and all the dinnerware, tablecloths, extra chairs, etc. and headed off on the two-hour trek south. We had a great time with Gwyneth, Rob and Camille (now 13) and Chloe (9 and attending public school for the first time after having been homeschooled). We were joined by Rob's parents, my brother Jim and his wife Marty, Marty's daughter and her family, and a former student of Barb's for the big feast.



Chloe and Camille -- after dinner walk in the cemetery!

Gwyneth and her family and Jim returned to our cabin for Barb's now annual participation in Tuba Christmas in Blue Ridge.



Gwyneth and Rob

This is Barb's last academic year teaching, so changes are afoot. However, she still has a lot of professional commitments that will keep her in the skies for a while longer. Phil continues in the men's choir at church and both of us in chancel choir.





Phil, Barb and Phil's sister Belle in Carver, MA – Feb. 25, 2011
Dressed to honor victims of Christchurch Earthquake



Murawai Beach near Auckland, New Zealand



Phil with Aussie friends Barrie and Joy in Tasmania
Phil was always cold there!



Phil and Sydney Opera House



Barb was crowned queen at conference banquet in Germany!



Barb biking along the Rhine



Barb, Chloe, Camille and Gwyneth at Ruby Falls, TN



Luis, Susannah and Duncan in California