

Merry Christmas – 2002

Tim and I began this year with a wonderful trip to Puerto Rico. He had to attend a conference in San Juan and I tagged along. My mom extended her Christmas visit until our return, and thus began our first vacation without the kids. While Tim attended conference meetings, I explored the streets of Old San Juan and relaxed in the sunshine. Tim took one full day off from his obligations and we headed to the east coast of the island for a fantastic day of snorkeling. A catamaran whisked us off to tiny islet where we could lie on the beach and swim with the fish. Add to this picture a bottomless daiquiri on which to sip and you will understand our bliss.

Adam continued to excel in math competitions this year. He tossed off first place finishes and carted home trophies on a frighteningly regular basis. The most exciting competition was National MathCounts. Fifty-seven teams of middle-school mathletes descended on Chicago's Downtown Marriott and spent time preparing for the competition, sightseeing, and devouring Chicago-style pizza. On Friday morning several buses whisked the teams to CNA Headquarters for the written portion of the contest. A bagpiper greeted the mathletes as they exited the buses, and employees of CNA lined the hallways and cheered the students on as they entered the competition room. Later that afternoon, families of the mathletes gathered at the Field Museum auditorium to await the announcement of the team results and for the head-to-head Countdown Round. Colored lights and raucous music filled the air as the mathletes and their coaches entered the auditorium in a parade of states. The top ten finishers in the written contest took the stage to compete in the Countdown Round – a series of high-pressure, quick-answer duels to determine the final ranking. Adam, in the best-ever showing of a Washington State competitor, made it into the Countdown Round and finished 5th nationally! *Well, la-di-da. I can still do some math problems he can't – Tim.*

Yet another instance of motherly denial occurred in Chicago. I called Adam's hotel room on the morning of the competition to make sure he and his teammate were awake. Imagine my surprise when Tim answered the phone! He hadn't been able to make the trip to Chicago, so only I accompanied Adam. How had he managed a last minute flight?? I was so flabbergasted I said nothing and the line went dead. He'd hung up on me! A few seconds of reflection brought the truth to my reluctant brain. That was Adam who'd answered...he sounds just like Tim now.

Nathan also managed to play his part in this insidious conspiracy children have of growing up. We'd all gone down to Tacoma to attend an Open House for a three-week summer academic camp that we thought Adam might like. Nathan, of course, wouldn't be interested because he likes to hang around at home and play with Legos and be with me. So whose voice was it that said, "Mom, I think I'd like to do this, too." Egad! Was I going to have to send both of them off for 3 weeks? The two of them thrived at camp, but Nathan was especially brutal about it. One evening I finally managed to reach him by phone (he was NEVER in his dorm room) and I asked, "Do you miss me just a little?" His response: "Well, Mom, considering I never even think about you, NO. But I do miss the cats." Ouch.

Nathan's experience at camp introduced him to the sport of fencing and he's continued participating since his return home. Twice a week now he dons fencing jacket and mask, grabs his foil and does his thing. I must admit the sport baffles me, and I struggle to differentiate between a "parry" and a "riposte," though "en garde" is pretty clear. Nathan also continues to hone his chess playing skills and I dread playing with him. He seems to know what moves I'm going to make before I do. *He's gotten quite good. As for how he knows what moves she'll make—Nathan, should we tell her?* ☺

Unfortunately, Tim was swamped at work during the weeks the kids were at camp, so we weren't able to do any traveling ourselves. *Too true. It was a busy summer; I had two college interns and a high school teacher working with me, to write a chapter for two introductory stats textbooks. This is an incredibly exciting project, because the texts are best-sellers, and we were writing about something that has the potential to revolutionize statistics education, letting students experience how randomness matters using computer simulation rather than just memorizing ever more formulas (and hoping they can figure out which formula to use for each problem on the final). Stay tuned—when I'm rich and famous (or otherwise and infamous), you can say you knew me* ☺

Imagine a world like that! Rich and famous for contributing to a statistics textbook instead of rich and famous for throwing a ball through a hoop. And peacemakers would be superstars. What a world that would be...

With all our love and a little laughter,