

Merry Christmas -- 2004

Each year, come December, sending and receiving cards, pictures, and news from a community of friends and family that stretches from the west coast to the east coast, into Europe and down under to Australia is a highlight of my holiday season. Here's what's been happening with us Hesterbergs over the past year:

Adam is a sophomore at Garfield High School and has added "cub reporter" to his list of activities. He's working on the school newspaper as webmaster and is also a contributing writer. You can check out his work at www.garfieldmessenger.com. Plenty of mathletes in Washington state are eager for Adam to graduate, so that someone else can pick up a few trophies. Adam is sharing his knowledge by coaching the math team from his middle school. Last year the team he coached came in first at state MathCounts, and one team member went on to the national competition. He's also been known to slip into the Calculus room to give the teacher a quick tutorial on upcoming material.

He was invited to attend the Math Olympiad Summer Program in Lincoln, Nebraska for 3 weeks at the beginning of the summer. Each year, 6 students from this program are chosen to represent the US in the International Math Olympiad; a goal that Adam hopes to achieve sometime during his high school career. He also returned to MathCamp for a 5-week stint, totally reveling in being amongst 100 math geeks. He continues to "meet" with a group of them weekly for an online bridge game.

Nathan is in 7th grade at McClure Middle School and is especially enjoying his language arts & social studies teacher. Mr. Locklin demands a lot of his students and I'm glad that Nathan's favorite teacher is the challenging one, not the easy one. Nathan has an inherent tenaciousness that truly showed itself in our basement. We installed a ping pong table and marathon sessions of the game began. Over and over again, I whooped him, slamming balls precariously past his face, holding nothing back. But still, he wanted to keep playing. I felt not one ounce of guilt when I beat him soundly, knowing the inevitable would surely occur, and it did. Slowly the gap in our scores closed, then the fateful day came: "Queen of Ping-Pong, Dethroned!" Oh, and speaking of inevitability, Nathan is officially taller than me now...and he wears a size 12 shoe! They look like boats, and I cringe to think of the future height they foretell.

While Adam attended his various and sundry math camps Tim, Nathan and I did our own traveling. In July, we spent our traditional week at the Eliot Institute, a Unitarian Universalist family camp on the Hood Canal. In August, Tim had a conference in Toronto, and Nathan and I tagged along to play tourist. We headed to the top of the CN Tower, which is the tallest freestanding structure in the world and has the longest lines in all of Canada. We took a bus tour to Niagara Falls and rode the "Maid of the Mist" to the foot of the falls. Donning our flimsy blue rain ponchos, we stood right at the bow of the boat and were pelted with the spray. I heard Nathan whisper to himself, "Awesome!" That made the whole trip worthwhile.

Tim has been working an insane number of hours and has all sorts of irons in the fire. I'll let him describe what he's doing:

Iron 1 is at work, where I'm in the middle of a project to make a major improvement to the software our company sells. Until this year Insightful only licensed

the core software from the successors to the old Bell Labs, and as a result was reluctant to make major improvements, because we didn't own the core. Now we do. Iron 2 is also for work—I've taught some training courses, in San Francisco, Boston, London, Toronto, and Switzerland (too short and hectic, with the exception of a wonderful visit with an old friend in Strasbourg & a great hike finished off by local cheese in the hills). Next trips are Switzerland, and exotic Rochester MN. Iron 3 is my attempt to change how statistics is taught, hoping to change the status of Introductory Statistics as the most-hated college class. I'm working with the authors of the best-selling college statistics textbook to include new methods in their texts—fewer formulas and more computer simulation and graphics. Iron 4 is the Sierra Club, where I stepped down as chair of the Washington state transportation committee, but took over as chair of the 10,000-member Seattle Group.

With all our love, and a little laughter,