

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders.
And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6*

1998: THE FLYNN'S' YEAR IN REVIEW

Howdy y'all (just a little bit of "Texan" for you!) and welcome to our annual Christmas newsletter. We hope that it will give you an idea of what we've been up to this year--a year of travels, vow renewals & weddings, and perhaps most importantly, reconciliation...

1998 began pretty uneventfully--even our winter was mild. In February close friends from Pepperdine came out and stayed with us while they checked out Baylor as a possible graduate school. On February 13, Chantal's life-long friend Jenni got engaged, setting in motion plans for a November trip to Chantal's home state of Michigan.

In early March, Carl finally sold his 1980 Buick Skylark--for a while we couldn't even give it away!! We've been carpooling ever since (in Chantal's 1987 Plymouth Sundance), which has simplified life and given us more quality time together. On March 17 we hosted our 2nd annual St. Patrick's Day Party. Once again we served baked potatoes and our guests brought their favorite toppings.

On the evening of Good Friday, we hosted a Passover seder (traditional Jewish meal and celebration) in our home with a handful of close friends. We incorporated various Christian elements (such as the Last Supper and Jesus as the Passover Lamb) into the standard Jewish order of events. It was a wonderful time of fellowship and a deepening of our Christian faith.

Again this year, Carl spent the month of July teaching at Pepperdine University, our alma mater. He again taught "Religion and Culture" (Religion 301 to you alums), one of the three required undergraduate religion courses. Chantal flew out for a few days halfway through, and got to see family, friends and her former co-workers at SmileSaver Dental Plan. We also visited the new J. Paul Getty Center, perched high on a mountaintop overlooking Los Angeles. It was fabulous! Carl enjoyed his second time teaching the course, and has been asked to teach again next summer.

In early August, we made another trip to California to attend the vow renewal ceremony of Carl's dad & stepmom, who celebrated their 10th wedding anniversary. They had recently sold the family home in Ojai, and everyone was in the process of moving: Dad & Deb to a condo in Camarillo; Carl's brother Jim and his fiancée Cathie to a rented house in Ojai; and Carl's stepbrothers Eric & Sean, Eric's son Chase and Sean's girlfriend August to an apartment in Ventura. With the family heading off in different directions, it was a very important time for all of us to be together.

Chantal began her third year of employment at the law firm of Naman, Howell, Smith and Lee in mid-August as the assistant librarian and assistant receptionist. She continues to enjoy her work and the people she works with.

She still loves Waco and still says that she could live here until the day she dies, but she's slowly coming to terms with the fact that we will probably relocate after Carl graduates.

This fall Carl began his third and final year of Ph.D. coursework at Baylor University. He will finish his coursework next summer and is planning to take his written comprehensive exams in January of 2000. His projected graduation date (dissertation and all) is looking like May of 2001. He is ready to be finished and out teaching at a university somewhere. In addition to his classes, he is graduate assisting in the student computing services department on campus, serving as president of Baylor's Graduate Theological Fellowship--the organization for graduate students in religion, and serving as secretary of Baylor's Graduate Student Association. He also spent the fall playing in a power volleyball league at the YMCA. In other words, he's as busy as ever!

In late October and early November we had back-to-back weekend wedding trips. Carl's brother Jim was married on October 31 (yep, Halloween) in the beautiful Santa Ynez Valley in California. It was a country-western wedding (which perfectly fit the personalities of bride & groom): the guys looked like Wyatt Earp, the girls wore blue denim dresses, and there was a fabulous country-western band complete with fiddler at the reception. That same weekend, we were also able to attend Carl's 10-year high school reunion reception. Carl enjoyed catching up with his former classmates, and Chantal enjoyed meeting those she had only ever heard about.

Chantal's life-long friend Jenni was married on November 7 in Michigan, and Chantal was a first-ever bridesmaid. The trip itself was significant because she hadn't been "back home" on Michigan soil in 10 years. The wedding was beautiful and immediately after our wedding responsibilities were over, we drove to Chantal's hometown of Utica for a couple days' journey down "memory lane." She saw high school friends, family friends, schools she had attended and houses she had lived in, and Carl got to see her "ol' stompin' grounds" for the first time. It was truly a cathartic experience.

Perhaps our most significant news of this year is that, stemming from the trip to Michigan, Chantal has reconciled with her father after 13 years of estrangement. While we were there, she somehow mustered the courage (she says she'd never been so scared in her whole life) and found herself on her father's front porch, only to discover from the new owner that her father had retired and moved to Florida. She wrote him a letter and he responded. They've talked on the phone a couple of times and are working on being friends. We are amazed by the power of forgiveness and reconciliation.

We spent Thanksgiving at the home of one of Chantal's best friends from work. As we write this newsletter, we are celebrating our 6th wedding anniversary (December 12). Woo-hoo!! And we are looking forward to having Chantal's Mama visit us for Christmas.

We continue to be blessed by our involvement with our church, Crestview Church of Christ. We have seen many changes this year to our Young Couples group with friends moving away and babies being born. We miss those who have moved on and welcome all of the new additions.

We are looking forward to 1999 and all that it will bring. We wish you a Merry Christmas, and may the Lord bless you and keep you in the new year.

Love,

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At Jenni's wedding reception in Michigan (November 1998)