

December 2009

One of the things we most look forward to at this time of year is getting caught up on all the news of our family and friends. We hope that this season finds you sharing the celebration with *your* family and friends.



Mary: This has been my second year co-chairing the Missions Ministry at our church, and it has been a time of great growth and excitement for all of us. We have a dedicated group full of passion for helping others. I've been blessed to work with them as well as with a terrific co-chair and some wonderful pastors, all with big hearts for missions. So this whole year has been hard work but also a great joy. Our 26 teams feed, clothe, and house those unable to provide for themselves, tutor at-risk students, build housing and support children's homes locally and globally, provide Christmas gifts for 500+ children, and much more. Numerous teams traveled to sites around the nation and the world. And roughly six days each week members of our church go out locally to help. This year I had the opportunity to lead a mission team to Appalachia. We came to love the people we worked with and now have a new initiative supporting the people near the Henderson Settlement in southern Kentucky. There isn't space here to talk about all 26 of the projects we are involved in, but you can see the details on our church website at www.fumcbirmingham.org.

Rich: At Delphi I continued to work on gathering information and planning strategy for fuel economy and hybrid vehicles. In the spring, I enjoyed a mission trip to Dulac (near New Orleans) where we repaired houses damaged by flooding from hurricanes. The houses have been raised on stilts to protect them from future flooding. I am on a church committee that works to provide information to church members on important issues like health care, the environment, etc. One enjoyable project is a monthly book group where we have read some great books including *Banker to the Poor*. It is about the man who started micro-loan banks in Bangladesh. We also sponsored a visit by Sister Helen Prejean, a tireless opponent of capital punishment. Her book *Dead Man Walking* is fascinating. Unfortunately, my Dad is facing some health issues. I was glad to be able to make several trips to see him over the past few months.

Travels: This was a year for travels, particularly to visit family. We spent time in Florida visiting Mary's family, then flew to Wisconsin for our great-niece Andi's baptism. Off to Death Valley for a week with Alan and Tyler, then back to Wisconsin for Mary's sister Jane's BIG birthday – for which the family gave her a cow! (Actually, we donated a heifer to a 3rd world family in Jane's honor.) In the spring we made our last trip to Carnegie Mellon for Carnival. It was fun to see the booth that Alan and Tyler and their team from Allies had built, complete with a clever computer game and decorated with hand-sewn "monsters." And it was great to be there when their booth won the Chairman's Award. Then back to Carnegie Mellon a few weeks later to smile proudly as Alan and Tyler graduated, Alan with an M.S. in mechanical engineering and Tyler with a B.S. in materials science engineering.

Our summer trips included a week in California where Tyler's mother hosted a wonderful party – complete with towers of beautifully decorated home-made cupcakes. We made 2 trips to Boulder to see Rich's family and one to visit John & Cyndi in Chicago. Fall was busy with a weekend in Stratford with John & Cyndi, Cam & Jean, and David & Mary, followed by a week in Door County (Wisconsin) with Cam & Jean.

Mary also spent a week at a retreat in New Mexico and another week at Jane's cottage with her sisters Jane and Barb, her cousin Linda, and several childhood friends. In the fall, Mary enjoyed a second weekend in Stratford with her friends Karen and Kate. It's been a whirlwind year!

Visitors: We had a number of special visitors this year. On the evening of one of the worst snow storms of the year, we picked up 3 students from Garrett seminary who were spending 10 days at our church as part of a class on the practical workings of local churches. We very much enjoyed their visit and have stayed in touch with one of the young men since then. In the spring we had a chance to renew our friendship with Beatrice Gbanga, a nurse who is a Methodist missionary in West Africa. Then some of Tyler's family flew here for a delightful Thanksgiving weekend.

We also had a very special group here the first weekend in November, when Mary's family gathered at our house for a family reunion. We were delighted that for the first time Mary's cousin Linda and her family came, so there were 24 of us – including 4 little girls under the age of 5. It was great fun, especially watching these girls – who are 3rd cousins – get to know one another.

What next? The meltdown in the auto industry finally forced Rich's group at Delphi to downsize. He was happy to accept a retirement offer effective on December 1. Mary is retiring from the Missions Ministry at the end of her term as co-chair on January 1. Tyler is attending grad school at the University of Michigan, and we are delighted to have him and Alan so nearby for a few years. This summer they bought a Bernese Mountain Dog which they named Leo. He's now 70 pounds but is still an exuberant puppy – and thinks he's a lap dog. Much fun!

Rich and Mary will be spending Christmas with Alan and Tyler, then flying to Colorado for a post-Christmas gathering with Rich's family.

We want to wish you all the best in the New Year!

Love,

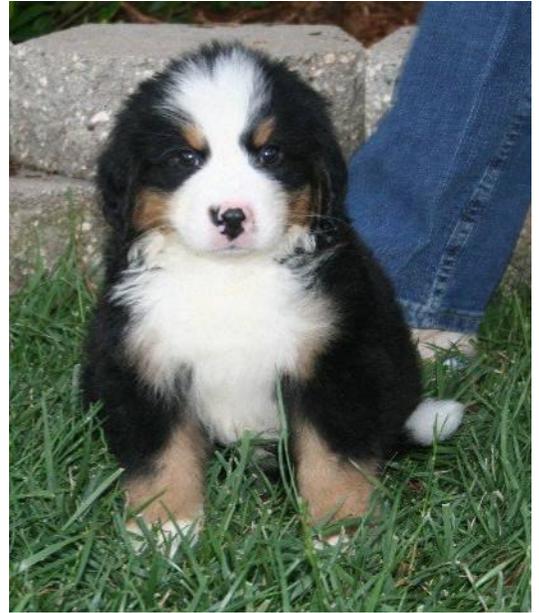
Mary and Rich



Rich and Mary in Door County, Wisconsin



Tyler and Alan on graduation day at Carnegie Mellon



Leo back in June (then see the photo of Leo below at the family reunion 5 months later!)



Mary's family reunion