

It's been another eventful year with significant happenings for each one of our family. We have begun adapting to the new socialist-centric government and there is now sufficient angst to pretty much ensure a change in Congress and possibly the Senate during next November's election - hopefully. That will provide some much needed balance and begin to restore faith in the capitalist system and allow us to grow out of the recession with a new less meddlesome bureaucracy.

Difficult to know where to start but perhaps one of the most important events was Lauren's ordination in August. She has worked really hard over the past 4 years to make this possible and managed to balance it with work and college activities as well. She now has a part-time job in the admin group at the church as well as her Continental part-time job and there is also a good chance she will graduate from college with her Finance degree at the end of next year. She moved into her own apartment in August - it's about halfway between us and the church so more convenient for her. She still ministers to the girls group and teaches the new Church interns. She was very excited to go on a 10-day mission trip in March 2009 to Cape Town and surrounding areas. Thank goodness for my cousin Bev and her husband Rob who hosted the group for the first night and then 2 nights at the end of their mission trip.

The other exciting event was that Ryan popped the question and Meredith accepted in August. They will be married July 31st next year and they have just moved into a house south of downtown Houston - a very trendy area. Just a few minutes from Ryan's office and within easy reach of a buzzing nightlife. Ryan has survived many layoffs in his company as they manage their way through the downturn in the economy. He now has credits for being on the developing team on three published Wii games (Rock Band, Rock Band 2 and Rock Band - the Beatles). This is quite an achievement in the game development world!

Cheryl has had another successful year with Continental and survived several layoff cycles. There is a new CEO starting in January and all are hoping he doesn't make major changes. In the last few months she has been doing the rounds of colleges in various parts of US looking for interns for their paid intern program. Looks as though she has found another great bunch so they will keep the program going. As I write she is suffering from shingles and hopefully she will be okay for the UK trip we have planned over Christmas.

I am still with ePartners and have had a slower year than last year although I had a significant win against SAP in August. Things are starting to pick up again so hopefully next year will be good again. I am still enjoying the job and the people I work with and don't miss the travel at all. At end of October I sold Gameforce. Those of you who have followed the saga will remember that in 2008 I sublet some of the premises to a young couple who were running a PC repair shop. This worked well and so I sold Gameforce to them. They will do well with it as they are there anyway so don't need someone to run it for them. Most of the \$25K or so I was paying for wages will become their profit and they plan to expand to other areas in Houston so the brand will survive. I am pleased to be off the hook for the lease and monthly shortfall and can focus on clearing the debt. I have also started to build my small business service organization income as a basis for a future retirement job.

We had snow in Houston at the beginning of December - this is the second year in a row

– most unusual and of course we are already being told it is because of global warming and so our government (who knows what is best for us) will bring in legislation to make sure we don't have too big a carbon footprint. Of course, while they discuss these troubling issues in Copenhagen they use a fleet of 1200 limousines instead of carbon footprint friendly mass transit. Almost as bad as Al Gore who stands to make millions out of the cap and trade legislation in US.

We continue to really enjoy living in our little bubble outside Houston. It's a great community with lots of forests, parks and trails and enough shopping and restaurants that we don't have to travel too far. I am still with the Lions Club and also manage our Kingwood community events although it's been a tough year for us to find sponsors for both groups.

Our travel this year took us to UK in July for a short trip. We met up with our friends from Zambia and enjoyed an excellent surprise birthday party for the host and also stayed with our Durban friends where we had a wonderful dinner and too much wine! We had a great day with my aunt in Daventry and that included an outstanding pub lunch with both of the cousins and also another aunt who I had not seen in more than 40 years. A packed but memorable visit! In October we spent a long weekend in Cancun, Mexico at a resort on the beach. Cheryl had won a 3-night stay at the all-inclusive resort so it cost us nothing.

On 21st December we are scheduled to fly to London for a short Christmas trip. Cheryl's niece from SA is visiting with her brother (Cheryl's nephew) in Camberley with both their families, so we will spend some time there. Ryan and Meredith and Lauren are going with us so we are looking forward to a large family Christmas celebration – just like the old days! We will head back to Houston before New Year.