

April 15, 2002

Dear Family and Friends,

This year has been a musical one. Last year (just after tax day, in celebration of getting some of the benefits of home-co-ownership), we enjoyed seeing Sting live in a concert at the MCI center, across the street from work. The show was only disappointing because Jill Scott, who was scheduled to open, was sick and Sarah was really looking forward to seeing her in person. However a member of Sting's band played some lovely guitar instrumentals before the show and it really was an excellent evening.



In May, we journeyed to Ohio for Steve Hannah and Sarah Dewes charming wedding in Athens (http://www.kayakero.net/per/vac/may_01/). It was a beautiful outdoor ceremony and a nice chance to catch up with many of the Clark University friends. The New Grass group who played for the reception was lots of fun to listen to. And we managed to show up a day early to join folks at a local club which had a great Jazz band. (We won't mention the panic we caused ourselves with a "short walk around the lake" before the afternoon wedding – thanks again for the ride, Norma.)

Our next Ohio trip, in July, was further North to Cincinnati where we helped celebrate the marriage of Dan Henry and Jill Rhodes (http://www.kayakero.net/per/vac/july_01/). The highlight of the rehearsal dinner was Matt Gelvin singing all the verses to "Yoda, My, My, My Yoda" (complete with all the Star Wars references) sung to the tune of the Kinks, "Lola." It was part of a trivia contest Dan and Jill's parents arranged as an ice breaker: one of the questions was, "Who knows the lyrics to 'Yoda...'" Dan and Jill also had a beautiful outdoor ceremony – Ohio seems blessed with great wedding weather. (And no pre-wedding walks for us this time.) Since the wedding party recently returned from Russia, we were expecting something along the lines of Cossack Dancing rather than the lovely cellist at the wedding.



Later that month, the cellist's notes were replaced by the clickity, clack of a Palm keyboard (which makes note taking much easier) when David visited San Diego for a conference on Open Source software (which AARP Services, Inc. is starting to embrace). That was an interesting trip but would have been more fun if Sarah had been able to go and had we been able to tack some vacation days onto the trip. We still need to work a bit on getting AARP to help out with vacations (our honeymoon in Hawaii may have set our expectations a bit high).

We expected a to hear saws and hammers in the background when we took a few days off and escaped the heat by visiting Boone and Seven Devils in August. It was great to see David's folks, and Steve, Helen and Aaron, and the finishing touches added to the house they've built.

Following hard on the heels of that trip, Sarah joined in the musical cheers at Ohio State University's graduation ceremony where our friend Janek joined the ranks of PhDs. Cheering the loudest for the newly minted Doctor Mandel were her Washington, DC friends, unofficial stats advisors and editors: Sarah and Emily Bayer.

The marshal drumbeat of September 11th followed. We watched in horror as the TV coverage switched between New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. When we thought the worst was over, we eschewed the snarled traffic and the less than inviting idea of Metro's tunnels and walked home. A couple singular moments from that trek remain in my mind: The very calm, gridlocked, downtown traffic — no one was moving (or no faster than a slow walk) but there were almost no horns blowing. The silence of no planes heading in or out of National airport shattered by the combat air patrol flying above the Potomac River. The Park police directing all automobile, bicycle and pedestrian traffic into Crystal City rather than allowing anyone to approach National Airport. We feel incredibly fortunate not to have lost anyone close to us in the tragedy.

We had planned a Gauley trip for later in September and since we didn't see anything we could do about what happened on the 11th other than live our lives without letting the tragedy completely overwhelm us, we hooked up with Hank and Sally for the drive to some lovely cabins in Babcock State Park. There we met Steve and Annie Lebau, and Kathy Hems and Heinz. Sarah and Annie rafted one day, and Sally and Sarah rode horses the next day; Hank and I got to paddle two days. I did some substantial damage to my boat the second day but found a nice guy at Pillow Rock who loaned me (actually, gave me) some duct tape. The allegro of Sweets Falls was a very nice change from the adagio of DC.

After some more substantial boat patching we were able to compare the sounds of Sweets Falls on the Gauley River with Ohiopyle Falls on the Youghiogheny River (http://www.kayakero.net/per/vac/sept_01/index.html). Acoustically, Ohiopyle Falls is much fuller in bass than Sweets Falls; kayakingly, it is much more intimidating, but actually much easier to run (OK, I had a bad



run at Sweets Falls – but I blame it on my boat being noticeably beat up and taking on water, even though I completely lost the line through the rapid). Sarah, Hank and I had the day before the race to paddle the lower Yough and we all really enjoyed it. There is just the one waterfall, and that comes before the “real” stretch of river starts.

Later in October, David was off on his own again – this time North rather than West – for a couple of days at the MIT Media Lab. AARP is a sponsor and there were a couple projects which we may adopt. While it was fun to play with the uber-geeks for a couple of days, the electronic beepity, boop was a pale imitation of the birds chirping and rivers rushing around rocks.

Sarah exchanged the call of the Mid-Atlantic little brown bird for the much more exotic and entertaining sounds of the South-Florida little brown bird in December when she and Emily joined Janek in her new digs at The University of Miami in Coral Gables. Janek has landed on her feet as Dr. Mandel (not that there was any doubt), and she invited Sarah and Emily down for a girls weekend of celebrations.

The best part of which, in my humble opinion, was when I flew down to meet Sarah in Grand Cayman where we got the enjoy to lovely burbling sound of life underwater. We had a great time there watching the tropical fish in their native habitat and feeling only a little guilty dining on them later (in what is surely, for the fish at least, a less inviting habitat).



(http://www.kayakero.net/per/vac/dec_01/index.html)

We replaced scuba's burbling with the crinkling of wrapping paper as we celebrated Christmas in New Jersey with Harry, David, Lindsay, Ian (who

got a really cool nerf gun), Leanor, Orianna and Nick. I think the most interesting gift came for us from the Atlanta Williamses: a set of doll house bathroom furniture. They had asked a couple of months earlier what we wanted for Christmas and I said, since they'd just had their house remodeled, "Perhaps an extra bathroom, if you have one to spare." Thus the dollhouse furniture (and another example of, "Be careful what you ask for").

Returning to the Water Music theme, we joined forces with Hank and Sally again, this time heading West to Tennessee's Obed River in early April 2002 for the annual Gaar family and friends Obed/Emory whitewater trip – where a great time was had by all. On the way back to DC, we stopped in Hot Springs, NC to meet up with Hank & Sally's son Brian, who is hiking the Appalachian Trail this summer. The chance to visit and hear some of his travel tails was great. We even had an unexpected visit there from David's folks and Steve, Helen and Aaron, who drove down for dinner with the hiking party.

Interspersed with the our travel we were entertained by the lovely tones of personal chatter with visits from David's Aunt Cornelia and Uncle Leland (previous Alexandrians who have since moved back to Columbia, SC and who contributed to David's ever growing collection of desk trinkets with chips from early computers). We also met David's folks at Sarah's folks house in NJ for a couple of days in the Big City. Frank Green paid a brief visit for a documentarian's conference. Shaw stopped by to help us celebrate (along with Dan and Jill) the brief return of Chris from down under (he's signed up for another two year hitch). And we had a great party celebrating Bob Martindale's 50th birthday – complete with Steve popping out of the cake, so to speak (http://www.kayakero.net/per/vac/mar_02/index.html).



And bringing the motif full circle, we truly enjoyed a trip in the way-back (or at least, a-little-way-back) machine to catch a great concert by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young last month.

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