

April 15, 1999

Last year's tax day letter left off with Sarah and I getting engaged, so it is only fitting to start this year from there. We spent the summer planing the wedding and managed to panic over the plans asynchronously: I would panic that we had missed the deadline to line up a location (according to someone else's schedule) and Sarah would calmly remind me that we weren't following anyone else's schedule and everything would work out fine. As she put it (on advice from friends), "As long as we are legally married at the end of the day, it's all OK." Then she would panic that no one made a decent wedding dress anymore: they all had huge, unflattering bows on the tail or trains a mile long or just plain looked ugly, and I would gently remind her that whatever dress she choose would shine with her in it, and, "As long as we are legally married at the end of the day, it's all OK."

She also panicked that we didn't have enough people in the house and so we adopted Max and Zip. That's not strictly true: Maxime de la K and Zip Drive III (at the time, Butch and Spot) were rescued from under a trailer by a neighbor up the street. Sarah asked Lisa (now Auntie Lisa) if she needed any help taking care of the kitties (4 and 6 weeks old at time), and after one of their sulfur dips (they were not in the best shape), Lisa took Sarah up on her offer. A day or two later I was invited down the street to see the kitties. Shortly after that Auntie Lisa offered to let us test adopt the kitties for a week with no strings attached. Anyone who has ever played with a kitten knows what had to happen next, and thus there were four at 503 E. Nelson. This was really the beginning of the wedding festivities as it marked a shared responsibility of our growing family.



In order to afford the excessive costs of kitty ownership, I picked up a second job at our local Giant bagging groceries. OK, that's not true; what did happen is AARP gave me a promotion and shortly after that (though not directly related) we launched the AARP Research web site: <http://research.aarp.org/>.

Then, strictly for research purposes, we went out to Sonoma Valley, on the Left Coast, to attend the wedding of Peter Henry and Maureen Valley, two of Sarah's friends (Peter from way back when the Zapolsky's were living in Silver Spring). We got a chance to see how they were handling the wedding activities and what we especially liked about their ceremony and the surrounding events. That trip was a pre-honeymoon for us since it was our first vacation together after making the commitment to marry.

We had a great time touring the wine country (where we stopped at Stag's Leap vineyard and learned the difference, which I didn't expect, between a 25 dollar bottle of wine and a \$125 bottle of wine -- we bought neither, but the more expensive *SLV* was clearly more enjoyable, they called it "huge"), and enjoyed the chance to visit with Frank Green and his betrothed, Lynette, in San Francisco (they took us hiking in the





nearby Redwoods), and Elizabeth and Ernie in Dublin, CA (Ernie had to work, but Elizabeth and Jordan took us hiking in El Diablo state park). Frank was on the Grand Canyon trip that I was on and hosted the post trip, photo-swapping party. Elizabeth I've known for almost as long as Sarah has known Peter Henry: we got to know each other on a backpacking trip in high school. I enjoyed the chance to meet more of Sarah's friends and I think it safe to say she enjoyed the visit with my friends (I got to hear a couple old stories about her and Elizabeth returned the favor with old stories about me).

However the summer turned somber as Sarah's mother was spending more time in the hospital and less time comfortable at home. We brought some pictures from the West Coast trip and the dress that Sarah had picked out for the wedding (which, of course, I hadn't seen) on a visit to New Jersey when Lois was in the hospital. And in early October we bid her farewell. This was a very sad time as I had gotten to know Lois and enjoy her stories. And Sarah was having fun with her mother planning the wedding and comparing notes on Washington, DC -- where Lois spent some time after W.W.II between postings overseas and then at NASA as it was getting off the ground. The wedding planning became bittersweet, though one of Lois's requests was that we not change our plans.

We took her at her word and the wedding went ahead as planned for Thanksgiving weekend. We were surrounded by friends and family (with the major exception of Lois) for the extended weekend starting with a very non traditional Thanksgiving dinner for our families at our favorite Thai restaurant, followed by a party with all our friends and family at base camp (the Embassy Suites hotel) on Friday catered by our favorite Lebanese restaurant and winding up on Saturday with the wedding at the boyhood home of cousin Bobby (though the link from the Lees to the Williamses is not as strong as some historians might hope for). We were especially happy that Gardner Van Scoyoc (who my family knows from Richmond) was able to perform the ceremony and provide pre-marriage counseling.



After the events of October and November, we were happy to sink back into work as usual for a while to use the "normal" time to recover. Then in March, Sarah attended the annual conference of the American Association of Geographers in Hawaii (and I, of course, tagged along).

We arrived several days before the conference started and turned that time into our honeymoon. And, of course, we had a great time. We spent two days and one night diving (Sarah's influence exerts itself -- I'm now a certified Open Water Diver, she has had her certification card for years), snorkeled and did a bit of surf kayaking. On one of the dives we saw a Hawksbill sea turtle and Roger Miller, tutleguy@gte.net -- our instructor/guide, told us later that they like to have their shells scratched (it is hard to get that much information across underwater -- neither the Professional Association of Diving Instructors nor the



National Association of Underwater Instructors have hand signals designed to convey that kind of detail; the signals are more geared towards, let's go up, let's go down or I'm out of air). At the time neither Sarah nor I indulged in the turtle scratching activity (I should also mention that turtles are pretty fast underwater). On a later dive we heard strange sounds that



Roger told us (again after the dive) were likely whales.

We also found a day to drive around the island to marvel at the surfers in the 10 foot surf on the North Shore (the real crazies were on the beach complaining that the waves weren't big enough to be worth going out) and visit the Pali overlook (site of a famous battle that united the Hawaiian Islands and also a very windy spot -- Sarah decided to stake out a space on the ground rather than risk one of the especially strong gusts).

After the conference we flew to the big island, checked out the lava flow by night, and then the next day we hiked in the mist across the Kilauea Iki caldera (complete with steam venting across the path -- I won't mention the picture we took in front of the sign we didn't read, resulting in a slight detour). From there, we flew back home.



And that brings us up to today, our first time filing taxes as a married couple.

