



MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM JOSH, ELISE & MALY

Happy Holidays to one and all! I always find it difficult to write the annual newsletter with much “Christmas spirit” because as I type this, I’m staring out of my home office window thinking about how the yard needs to be mowed and watching my neighbors put up their Christmas lights while wearing their shorts and flip-flops. It’s a little-known fact that Santa visits Texas each year on his sleigh pulled by 8 giant mosquitos!

Anyway, I hope this year’s newsletter finds you all happy and healthy. This year started out with a bang for us. After being with the same company for a few years and a recent change in management, I decided it just wasn’t the place for me any longer, so I quit. I’d quickly lined up another job with a company here in Austin and I thought this job was going to be a fantastic opportunity for me, and a place where I could really grow, lead and flourish. It turned out to be anything but that. I quickly learned that this place was more like a Bangladesh sweatshop run by a tyrant. The place was really bad and, at one point, I seriously thought the chief was going to start throwing chairs at people. Thankfully I caught him on a good day shortly after I’d started and we agreed that he would “fire” me so I could at least draw unemployment compensation. So, since mid-April I’ve been one of the 14.8 million other unemployed Americans.

Although not having a job has been somewhat of a stress from a financial perspective, it’s afforded me something far more important: Time. I’ve had time to spend with the girls, work on projects around the house and cook. To date I’ve built a rain harvesting system for the house, a second set of steps for the deck, an end table for the living room and taught Maly how to make ice cream and cookies, and I finally figured out how to smoke a brisket! I also started a couple small “businesses” to provide a wee bit of supplemental income and I even taught myself how to sew buttons and do minor textile repairs (after I ran out of manly projects).

This year Elise started teaching the two- and three-year-olds at St. Catherine’s Parents’ Morning Out. She’s in the classroom two days a week molding the minds of our future generations. A few months ago she also started her own portrait photography business, which in recent weeks has really started to take off. So, while Elise is out earning some bucks, I’m sitting at home, catching up on Oprah and reattaching buttons to couch cushions.



Maly turned 4 this year, is a “Shining Star” at St. Catherine’s Parents’ Morning Out and will be starting Kindergarten next Fall. She has really taken a liking to playing baseball with dad and learned to ride her bicycle sans training wheels in November. She also loves to be dad’s sous chef in the kitchen! Check out www.Maly.TV

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR!



For Elise's 35th birthday in February this year, I surprised her with roundtrip tickets to Frankfurt Germany. After a lot of kissing up, I finally convinced her to take me along on the trip. My plan was for us to spend a week exploring Germany and a week in the Czech Republic via train. Because of our economic situation and after much deliberation, we decided to truncate and forego the Germany leg of our trip and instead, stay with my friend and pen pal, Radek, and his family in Prague.

It was actually Radek's idea that we skip Germany and stay with him and his family for the week so we wouldn't have to worry about room and board. And how blessed we are to have friends in Prague. Radek and his wife, Jana and their little daughter Nicol were so generous and hospitable, and such a warm and friendly family!

Prague is, in a word, beautiful. The landscape and architecture are breathtaking and the city is rich with history. You can catch up on the details and photos of our trip at Janicek.com. Needless to say, since we chose to skip a tour of Germany, we decided that that's just our reason to go back to Europe in the not-too-distant future. In the meantime, we're hoping we did a good enough job in convincing Radek and Jana to travel to Austin so we can repay them for their generosity, and to be their tour guides in central Texas.

Maly continues to grow like a weed and is our constant source of entertainment, conversation and reason for us to bang our heads against the wall.

This year has been full of milestones. She played her first season of soccer, she took dance classes and performed in a recital, she learned how to ride her bicycle without training wheels, she filed our taxes and, my favorite, she finally learned how to wipe her own butt!

The day she told me she'd wiped herself, I gave her a big hug, \$8 in cash and set her out on her way as I thought my part was done. She can feed and bathe herself, she knows most of the numbers of our phone number, she speaks English and she can ride a bike. The child wouldn't leave the front yard.

She's at that pivotal point in her life where she's becoming more of a member of the family instead of merely a dependent. She has her off days, but by and large, she's turning out to be to be an alright kid. I think we just might keep her.

Just a few weeks ago Maly took the scissors to one of the sets of blinds in our home office. After receiving her fair share of tongue lashings by Elise and me, I set forth on a punishment and repayment plan since the blinds had to be replaced. We've had her doing work around the house that is outside the scope of every day expected chores. It's our goal to instill the notion of

responsibility, respecting communal property, consequences and the value of hard work and money. We frequently have to remind her of why she's having to re-shingle the house and rotate the Jeep's tires, but we think this is a lesson that will carry over long into her adult life and help in driving her that much further away when she finally moves out of our house.

I'm just kidding about driving her far away. We'll always want her to stay near her home. She already owes us \$200,000 and I need to make sure she's close enough so I can collect.

We owe it all to our family and friends for the undying love, inspiration and helping Elise and me continually strengthen our bond, and for the guidance, support and encouragement in raising Maly. You know what they say, "It takes a village to sing 'YMCA!'"

So here's to you, our blessed family and friends. We hope the holidays and the year to come provide you with happiness and time with those you love. We wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Our love,

Josh, Elise & Maly