

Merry Christmas 2004



Ho Ho Ho! Happy Chanakkwanzaamas!

By the way, the "C" in that big word is silent. It is silent only in presidential election years and only if you live in one of those red states. If you lived in a blue state you wouldn't really be in the holiday spirit seeing how the color blue is more commonly associated with National Beekeepers Day. Besides, being surrounded by those red states sort of makes you look purple. Red and purple – not the colors of the season, more like the colors of a bruise you might find after taking a good clean whack to the inside of your bare thigh with a baseball bat by a guy wearing a pin striped suit who goes by the name of Vazzoli.

Speaking of holiday spirit, I'm so chock full of holiday spirit this year that I could sit in a heaping bowl of figgy pudding, wearing nothing more than my kerchief, and tell everyone about how Christmas once meant that everyone would get a Cabbage Patch Kid or all four Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. That is, if your parents loved you enough to inflict bodily harm upon other holiday shopping parents.

You see, the holiday season is all about spending time with family, loving one another, looking back on the year past, singing, rejoicing and irritable bowel syndrome.

Two years ago we spent Christmas in Des Moines. I wish I could recount the details of that trip but my brain froze while there and have since not been able to perform even the most simple of tasks, such as swallowing peanut butter or remembering that the tag in my boxer shorts goes in the back.

I'm looking forward to Christmas in Des Moines this year as I've been promised by all of the indigenous folk that it will be, indeed, a white Christmas. That or they're planning on having Vazzoli take me out behind the liquor store and pelt me in the face with miniature marshmallows.

Last year Elise and I spent Christmas in Texas with my parents. We passed tumble weeds as we rode our horses into town to visit Miss Kitty where we were welcomed with boilermakers and armadillo jerky. We watched a fireworks display and all shot our six-shooter into the air at midnight while a hootin' and a hollerin' "Yeeeeeeeeehaw. Happy birthday, J.C.!"

And then our governor executed someone.

Okay, Josh. I want to write now!

Happy Holidays from Elise!

I hope this newsletter finds everyone in good health and spirits. It's hard to believe another year has past. Josh and I have a lot to be thankful for. If you recall from last year's newsletter we were shopping for our first house. I guess the old saying of "third time's a charm" rings true because

after putting in offers unsuccessfully on two houses we finally found a house that suited our style and budget. We are now the proud owners of a three bedroom house with two bathrooms, an office, formal dining room, living room and kitchen with an attached thirty year mortgage on the southwest side of Austin. Although the house is only ten years old and in good shape, Josh and I have been working hard over the last eleven months to make it our home. The previous owners had an eclectic choice of wall colors and although we like mustard yellow, merlot red and pistachio green, we prefer to keep them for food and not décor. FYI the following formula is very helpful:

Four gallons of paint at Home Depot = \$100.00

Miscellaneous painting accessories = \$50.00

Getting your parents to come for a "visit" and having them paint your family room, office and kitchen (with decorative technique) = Priceless

As you noticed I mentioned Home Depot above. If any of you are planning on retiring in the next few years I would highly suggest buying stock in the old Ho Po as Josh affectionately refers to it. We may not be able to send you cash donations, but your stocks will definitely rise as long as we have house projects to attend to. That reminds me, (512) 891-5400 is the number to the Ho Po we spend all of our time at...in case you can't reach us at home. Just ask for the couple who's always asking where the thing-a-ma-jigs are located.

In addition to a home, this year has blessed Josh with a job promotion and raise. Change of ownership took place at Wellness Works at the end of May when Josh's current boss took over as sole owner. Josh's new title is Operations Manager, which translates into Sales Manager, Comptroller, Human Resources Manager, Payroll Manager, Customer Service Rep, Marketing Director, Network Administrator, Webmaster, Technical Support Manager and sometimes Janitor. He enjoys what he's doing, albeit stressful sometimes...a lot of times, but he's learning a lot and definitely can say there's never a dull moment at work.

As for jobs, I am still with El Arroyo Catering and busy as usual. After a year and a half in the catering industry I've managed to pick up some tricks of the trade and find myself learning more everyday. I love working with the customers and hey, let's face it, you can't go wrong with bringing people food and drinks. My only wish is that the hours and manual labor were not so grueling. I often times come home with so many cuts and bruises after a big catering that Josh swears I've taken up cage fighting on the side. Being in catering does have its advantages. Although I'm not star struck, it is kind of neat to admit I've catered for the Governor of Texas and his wife, Lance Armstrong and for a movie called *Drop Dead Sexy* that's coming out next year that stars Crispin Glover (George McFly from *Back to The Future*) and Jason Lee (*Chasing Amy* and *Kissing a Fool*). I'm not sure if it will happen, but I think El Arroyo and

Merry Christmas 2004



possibly my name will appear in the credits. If you see the movie and my name is in the credits I will be signing autographs.

Now here's Josh to fill you in on some of our other activities from 2004.

So now you're probably thinking to yourself "Josh, when are you going to fill us in on Elise's and your physical activities from this past year?" Well, I was going to avoid that question all together, but since you asked...

Elise participated in the 2004 Austin Danskin Triathlon in June. She and a group of friends set a goal to start training early in the year and do well in the race. I think 2.6% of the group started training early. But all that participated finished the race and I admire all of them, especially Elise. She swam 87 miles in 39 minutes, bicycled 213 miles in 1 hour and 11 minutes and ran 56 miles in 44 minutes and 35 seconds.

You're probably thinking "Josh, isn't that like, Superhuman?" Well, if you call falsifying my wife's triathlon statistics Superhuman, then you should see me in my afghan cape and Underoos.

This time last year I was riding my bicycle to work. Since moving into our house, work was 7.5 miles away versus 3 miles from the previous year. I was riding my bike 63 miles round trip to work! Uphill. Both ways. In the snow. Sorry, I forgot to take off my cape.

I was riding my bicycle 15 miles round trip to and from work and I was getting some great exercise. I was getting lean and toned. I had plenty of oxygen getting to my brain. I had a fun commute that allowed me to think. And then our bicycles were stolen out of our garage. We were both really upset. Thankfully some friends loaned us their bicycles. I was able to ride a bike to work again. Shortly thereafter, Wellness Works consolidated in Marble Falls. I thought about riding the bike the 45 miles to work every morning through hill country of central Texas but decided against it as I would be tired, smelly and sweaty by the time I made it into the office. And it would be an all day commute.

I have, however been regularly attending my Tae Kwon Do classes. In October I tested for my second star, which means I'm at the halfway point to earning my second degree black belt. In late September I fought in my first tournament in over ten years where I won the gold medal in the men's division. A few hours after the tournament and after the adrenaline subsided, I quickly realized that I'm nowhere near 18-years old anymore. It was a great experience and I will hopefully participate in many more tournaments in the future.

Here's Elise again. I need to go and figure out how to get frankincense off of the ceiling fan... Don't ask.

Riley and Annie (our cats) continue to be a source of entertainment for Josh and me. Moving into a house was a big deal for them as well. "Going outside" used to mean a cement patio with metal railings encasing it, but now it means grass, trees, bugs, birds and other things to bring in the house. Annie is very street smart and we weren't really worried about her, but Riley is one fry short of a Happy Meal so we were a little concerned about how he would handle the big world. Annie took off over the fence the first day, but it took Riley about five months to figure out there is a world on the other side of the fence. Now we can't seem to keep him home. Last we heard he was organizing a street gang to harass lizards and neighboring cats. In all sincerity Riley is a very friendly cat and curious too. Just ask our neighbors He usually can be found snooping around inside their garages or climbing out of their open car windows.

Back to you, Josh.

So all-in-all, this year has been good to us. We hope it has been for y'all (that's Texan for 'red states') as well. Elise and I look forward to many, many more years of figgy pudding, irritable bowel syndrome and perhaps even more collaborative Christmas newsletters. That's assuming one of us doesn't sign a deal for a solo project, make it big, forget about the other, retire, come out of retirement in Las Vegas, repeat coming out of retirement three times and get chubby from eating shrimp cocktail.

We hope the New Year finds every one of you healthy, happy and enriched with the love of those whom you care about and who care about you. We love all of you very much and keep you in our thoughts and prayers.

Love Always,

Josh & Elise