



Sixteenth Annual Granger Holiday Newsletter



CURRENTS

This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it.

– Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 – 1882)

Happy holidays from the Grangers! Despite the shopping chaos of “Black Friday” and the crush of traffic, we love this time of year. It has the familiar feeling of a favorite warm-up suit which has grown more comfortable with age, with links to warm memories of holiday seasons past. Unfortunately, it also feels a bit tighter around the waist than it used to.

We especially enjoy the week after Christmas, which affords the opportunity to disengage the clutch, pause and reflect, and spend quality time with friends and family.

Milestones

Karen’s dear brother Ken Galley lost his battle with lung and prostate cancer in May. His loss has left a huge void in the family. Ken will live forever in our hearts, and will be remembered for his warmth, sense of humor, and inventive genius.

Big brother Art and wife Linda moved to their new home that they built in Placerville. They became grandparents again when daughter Adria gave birth to Colton in April.

Sister Ruth Ann continues to work two full-time jobs, one for the Postal Service and the other caring for two of her grandchildren (Windi & Andy). She became a great grandmother when another grandchild (Kristi) had a baby, also making Karen a great, great aunt. Windi and her girlfriend Veronica stayed with us for nine days in August. It was great fun to spend time at the beach, Sea World, Wild Animal Park (among other things) with two 13-year-olds.

Ma & Woody continue to amaze everyone, pursuing a variety of activities with the combined energy of two 20-year olds. They love to pull up stakes each year and travel in their 5th wheeler up the west coast and into Montana. They especially enjoy their “rock hunting” adventures. Ma has been very busy on several projects – crafts with her rocks and dried weed arrangements – which have earned her multiple first place ribbons at the Indio Fair.

Great niece Roxy turned 18 this year and graduated from high school in June. She is currently living in Adelanto and working in a department store, and is leaning toward pursu-



Windi, Veronica & feathered friends at Wild Animal Park

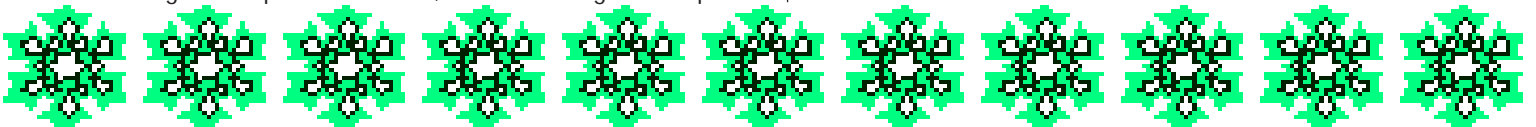
ing a career in the military. Congratulations Roxy!

Niece Lindy and her beau Martin finally tied the knot in Hawaii in September. Lindy recently achieved her long-term goal of becoming a probation officer, and will be working in nearby Riverside County. Their adorable daughter Angela is a photogenic four-year-old with a possible modeling career in her future. Son Trey, 9, continues to be a multi-sport wonder, tackling soccer with the same enthusiasm as football.

Much to the family’s delight, John’s sister Carol and son Dylan, 12, returned home after living for several months in Virginia. It didn’t take Carol long to get her old job back, but now she is considering a career as a masseuse in San Diego’s red light district. She says it pays better (we’ve always enjoyed her off-beat sense of humor).



Great nieces Roxy, 18, Windi, 13, and Kristi, 20, give great nephew Andi, 7, a lift at the YMCA Circus in May.





Karen parties with the cast of the HBO series "The Sopranos" at VIP Superbowl party in Las Vegas. Bada-BING!

Mom's sister Nancy flew in from Texas for a visit in October. Although they have stayed in touch for many years, they haven't actually visited in more than twenty! As you might imagine, it was quite the homecoming. The family celebrated with an epic feast at the Pechanga Casino Buffet in Temecula.

Sister Alisa's home-based child care business continues to thrive, and sister Laurel and husband Luis are now in the 25th month of their extended honeymoon.



The pigeons of Piazza San Marco are as well-mannered as their Venetian hosts. They ate politely & left no "calling card".

SPORTS

There's a fine line between fishing and standing on the shore like an idiot. — Steven Wright

2005 began on a thunderous note as our beloved Chargers clashed with their nemesis, the N.Y. Jets, in their first playoff game in nearly a decade. Although they lost in the first round, the Bolts' 12-4 season was a mark of pride for every San Diegan. Continuing their momentum into the fall season, the Bolts shocked the football world in December by ending Indianapolis' bid for a perfect season at 13 wins. Whether they make the playoffs or not this year, the Chargers have given fans another exciting roller-coaster ride. And with the San Diego Padres winning the NL Western Division crown in October, it's been a great year to be a sports fan in San Diego.

At the invitation of Pablo Nogatoches, football pundit and chat room moderator for Mad Jack Sports, we attended a VIP Super Bowl party in Lost Wages, NV in February. The stars of HBO's series "The Sopranos" made an impromptu appearance, adding a spark to the festive atmosphere.

John continues to enjoy playing softball every Tuesday night at the Sports Park in Poway. Win or lose, the beer and camaraderie at the end of each game are always satisfying

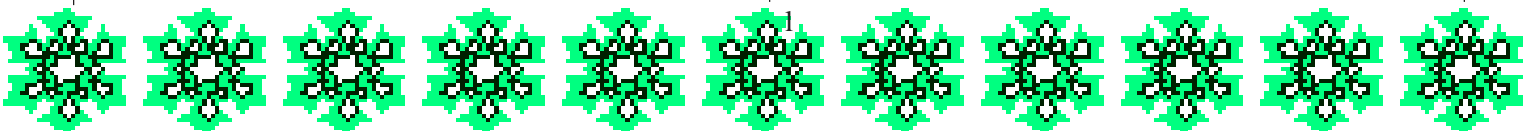
TRAVEL

Public money is like holy water; everyone helps himself to it. — Italian Proverb

In March, we visited Borrego Springs, nearby Torrey Pines, and Catalina Island to see wildflowers in bloom. Due to the heavy rains, it was an extraordinarily beautiful year for wildflower viewing. About this time, we learned how to create "photo stories" — slide shows of digital pictures set to music. We're indebted to Richard & Mimi Sampson for this great alternative to stuffing pictures in shoeboxes.

In May, we visited our timeshare in Kauai to make sure that it was still there.

In October we traveled by plane, train, and automobile to Italy to visit the charming hill towns of Tuscany, with stops in Florence, Venice, and Rome over 17 days. Our home base for the first week was "Il Poggio", a family farm converted to a hotel and restaurant. We awoke to a homemade breakfast each morning, wondering which medieval hamlet to visit next. We could actually feel time slow down. Each night we came "home" to a four-course dinner. The food was unbelievably good!





Karen outside the Coliseum in Rome.

It has been said that the best way to enjoy Tuscany is to just "get lost" on the back roads and explore the lesser byways. In fact, this is very easy to do. You'll find that the region's windy, narrow, hilly roads are very well marked...except for the one where you were supposed to turn. Driving can be especially challenging at night, in the fog (hint: if the road turns to gravel, you've definitely gone off the reservation). Driving on the autostrada, Italy's high-speed toll roads, is like playing a video game for keeps, and you only get one quarter! Everyone drives their tiny sedan like it's a Ferrari - even the grannies. There is no Italian word for "tailgating", but next to soccer it could be the national sport.

The Italians' passion for fast cars belies their simpler, slower-paced way of life that is both endearing and maddening to us Americans. However, we found a picnic lunch of bread, cheese, and salami chased with a bottle of Chianti to be the perfect attitude adjuster. Within a couple of days, we had shed our cares like so much old baggage. We found that a smile, and a few Italian phrases like "Dove il toilette?" and "Molto bene!" were all we really needed to get by.

We spent the 2nd week touring Florence, Venice, and Rome by train and on foot. Each city was fascinating and breathtaking in its own way. After visiting the umpteenth museum, we began to adopt the European perspective on antiquity. Stuff from the 1700's no longer impressed us as "old". To be truly

ancient, we're talking at least 1st or 2nd century A.D. What is truly amazing is how well preserved it all is!

If you're thinking of taking a trip to Italy, we're your huckleberry. Just give us a call if you need ideas or recommendations - we're more than happy to help. And now, the 30-second highlight version of our trip:

Most Fun: Feeding pigeons in St. Mark's Square, Venice
Most Beautiful: Italy (no country has a right to be this beautiful!)

Best Food: Il Poggio, Tuscany. Runner-up: The lasagna at Trattoria Nella, Florence.

Best Hospitality: Il Poggio, Tuscany. Runner-up: The Hotel American Dinesen, Venice

Most Awesome Hill Town: Civita di Bagnoregio. Runner-up: Orvieto

Most Breathtaking Work of Art: Michelangelo's David in the Academia Museum, Florence and his Pieta at the Vatican

Most Unusual: The Towers of San Gimignano (of Romeo and Juliet fame)

Most Unique: Canals of Venice and the Cemetery in Pisa.

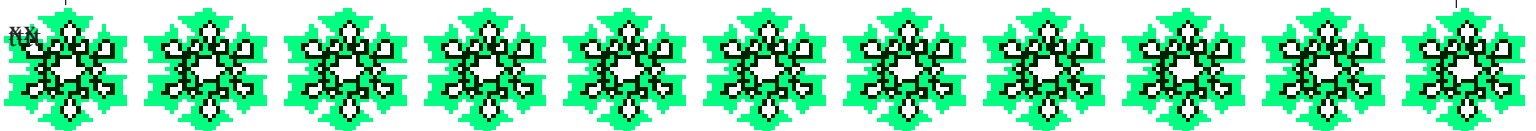
Biggest Surprise: Getting lost in Chianti and finding the hill town of Radda, which offered spectacular views of the vineyards in the valley below while enjoying a picnic

Wouldn't Want to Repeat: Flight delay in London (our plane was clipped on the runway by a Turkish airliner, good for 18,000 free air miles courtesy of American Airlines)

Best Serendipitous Moment: Arrival in Rome for (almost) 17 straight days of sunshine; it finally rained the day we left. The climate was like San Diego's.



You can make new friends at the Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary in Brisbane, AUS. The kangaroos are friendly too!



Most Thrilling Moment: Driving on the autostrada, Italy's high-speed toll road.

Craziest Moment: Figuring out the local roadmaps.

For a virtual tour, please help yourself to the photo stories on our Web site: www.jkgranger.com. You can also find "Il Poggio" at http://www.ilpoggio.net/frameset_e.htm

BUSINESS

I find it rather easy to portray a businessman. Being bland, rather cruel and incompetent comes naturally to me. — John Cleese

John celebrated two years at Eastridge Infotech in October, working as a Senior Technical Trainer at Cubic Transportation Systems. Life is good as a contractor: flexible hours, overtime pay, no one reporting to you...as long as you stay healthy! John logged more business miles this past year than in the previous three combined, with trips to Tullahoma, TN, Jersey City, NJ, Atlanta, GA and Brisbane, Australia. Doing system analysis, developing training materials and delivering courses to Cubic customers is satisfying work. And the additional frequent flyer air miles will enable us return to Europe again that much sooner. Next stop: Bavaria, in southern Germany.

Karen has kept busy with the house and family. Our gastronomical adventures in Italy have kindled Karen's interest in Italian cooking, and John is only too happy to be the beneficiary of her experiments. For example, she has succeeded in duplicating one of our favorite dishes: Bruschetta on garlic toast with olive oil. It's not only healthy, it surpasses the original recipe for flavor!

We have kept up the Career Management page on our web site as a public service. If you're considering a job or career change, or know someone who is, you may find the links and articles helpful: http://www.jkgranger.com/work/career_management/career_mgmt.htm

PERSONALS

Yes Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. — Francis P. Church

As always, we welcome this time of year for the opportunity it brings to reflect on our blessings and renew contact with those who mean so much to us. We hope this letter finds you well and smiling, and we wish you the best for a happy and prosperous 2006.

When you get a free moment next year, why don't you give us a call or send off a quick Email to let us know how you're doing? We'd love to hear from you.

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Karen's email: kgranger@san.rr.com

Home phone: 858-484-5137

If you found this newsletter to be too short, we've put an interactive version on our Web site. Click links for music, video, and pictures from family events. Enjoy!

A Politically Correct Christmas Greeting

Best wishes for an environmentally conscious, socially responsible, low stress, non-addictive, gender neutral, winter solstice holiday, practiced within the most joyous traditions of the religious persuasion of your choice, but with respect for the religious persuasion of others who choose to practice their own religion as well as those who choose not to practice a religion at all; Additionally,

a fiscally successful, personally fulfilling, and medically uncomplicated recognition of the generally accepted calendar year 2006, but not without due respect for the calendars of choice of other cultures whose contributions have helped make our society great, without regard to the race, creed, color, religious, or sexual preferences of the wishes.

(Disclaimer: This greeting is subject to clarification or withdrawal. It implies no promise by the wisher to actually implement any of the wishes for her/himself or others and no responsibility for any unintended emotional stress these greetings may bring to those not caught up in the holiday spirit.)



And to all, a good night...

