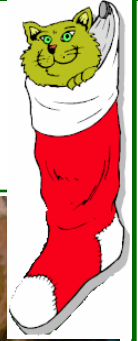




Twenty-first Annual Granger Holiday Newsletter



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 “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 offers the opportunity to disengage the clutch, pause and reflect, and spend quality time with friends and family.

Sadly, we have lost several core family members these past two years. It seems we're at that stage in life where experiencing a loss or knowing someone who has is not that uncommon. Our hearts go out to friends and family who have also lost a loved one.

John's dear Mom, 83, passed away in October 2009 after a long battle with lung cancer. True to her feisty nature, after the doctors gave her 3 months to live in April 2006, she outlived their dire prognostications by more than 3.5 years. She lived as she wanted and maintained a reasonably good quality of life until she passed surrounded by her loving family. Patti Ann will live forever in our hearts, and will be remembered for her warmth, generosity, and sense of humor.

Karen's beloved stepfather Woody, 91, passed away in April 2010 from natural causes. He is dearly missed. His kindness, thoughtfulness and good humor will always be remembered. Karen's Ma continues to be involved with a lot of activities at 89. Staying active and alert in the golden years seems to run in the Casner family. Maybe it was something in the water when Ma and her siblings were growing up, or their great positive attitudes, or both. We spent Thanksgiving day with Aunt Joan's and Uncle Wren's family and cousins and their families. It was great to spend time with all of them.

We also lost our precious kitty Celeste to a particularly virulent form of cancer in March 2009, despite our veterinarian's best efforts to control it. It was hideously expensive, but we had to try. In June 2009, we were at a party when a friend suggested that we adopt a 5 year old domestic longhair named Maxwell being offered by another friend whose boyfriend was allergic to cats. He has warmed our hearts and is very well-mannered and smart enough to open French doors (the kind with levered handles) and open cupboards and snoop into their contents.

Sister Alisa's handcrafted jewelry business, [Treasures by Alisa](#), continues to prosper after 5 years. Alisa has become quite the



Maxwell, our newest family member, is very easy going.

marketer, with a Web site and selling merchandise on consignment at [Touch of Glass](#) in old town Temecula and at festivals throughout SoCal, assisted by sister Carol. She and husband John attended a conference in steamy Ft. Lauderdale, FL in July. A highlight of the trip was dining on alligator at Emeril Lagasse's restaurant (it tastes like chicken), but they decided to pass on the dessert wine at \$8,000 a bottle. Daughter Savannah, 12, placed in the top 10% in a statewide educational assessment test in math and languages. Daughter Shannon, 10, who has been autistic since age 1, has been making steady progress in reading and writing skills development.

Son Garrett, 29, has returned to San Diego and renewed his junior high school romance with girlfriend Amanda. He will soon be putting his UCSD BA degree in Psychology to work. Having recently completed a specialized training course, he has taken a position that involves working with autistic children.

Niece Lindy received her 2nd Masters degree in curriculum and instruction and continues to teach math and science to middle schoolers. Because of her background as a probation officer, she also gets the more "challenging" students. One recently drank Borax just to see how it tastes and then asked Lindy if he was going to die. Incredulous, Lindy replied "Yes, if you don't get to the nurse's office right now!" (yet another example of what Bill Cosby famously referred to as "[the brain-damaged people](#)"). Son Tre Sean, 15, has taken up track in lieu of football and continues to get good grades. Daughter Angela, 10, plays flute and was recently elected by her 4th grade peers as a student council member "without having to bribe the other kids with candy for their votes as other candidates did!", she says proudly. Now that the mortgage



lending market has started to rebound, husband Martin is back with DHI Mortgage and traveling a lot. Lindy and Martin will welcome a new family member in 2011 ; at this writing, she is 7 weeks pregnant.

Nephew Gary has moved to San Diego and bestowed his catering management talents upon the La Jolla Village Country Club. He is busy as ever, also working part time at Nordstrom. Over a year ago, Gary received a surprise revelation from an old flame who had recently divorced that he shared more than a passing resemblance to her son Braden, 10. It seems she had married soon after their breakup and kept the news a secret until the divorce. Gary has since embraced fatherhood joyfully and traveled to Boston for the reunion with Braden and his grandmother, who has been caring for him for some time. We all met Braden last summer and he is a great kid - and a dead ringer for his father at that age (see photo).

Sister Laurel is also happy to be a grandmother once again. She and husband Luis traveled to Utah this fall to visit Bryce Canyon and Zion National Park. Sister Ruth Ann continues to work for the Post Office while caring for daughter Cheryl and her son Andy. Karen's brother Art and wife Linda have moved into their beautiful custom-built home. They are enjoying retirement, constantly hosting events with all of their children and grandchildren. Cheryl's niece Windi graduated high school and niece Roxy is pursuing a degree in criminology while working part-time as a dog trainer.

The holiday season presents an opportunity to remember and support our men and women serving abroad. A year ago we became interested in supporting the troops when we learned that our friend Paul had sent a care package to a friend deployed to Afghanistan. The box contains DVDs, chocolate, books, sports magazines, and other items that are difficult or impossible to get at a remote base. Since starting **Operation Wildhorse** last December, we have sent 24 care boxes and continue to receive grateful emails letting us know how much the troops appreciate the little things we take for granted. If you would like to contribute, please

contact us or see our Web site for more info:

<http://www.jkgranger.com/links/OperationWildhorse.pdf>

S P O R T S

Cross country skiing is great if you live in a small country.

– Steven Wright

In the last five years, San Diego sports fans have been rewarded with division championships by the Chargers and Padres multiple times. During this span, San Diego's teams have also been compared to the "Engine That (Almost) Could" by Pablo Nogatoches, Las Vegas football pundit and faux Bolts fan. The Chargers have followed a familiar script, tantalizing their fans with exciting, late season dramatic finishes to compensate for poor starts, only to fall victim to a lower ranked opponent in the playoffs. Still, it beats living in Cleveland or Oakland. The Padres front office keeps pulling proverbial rabbits out of their hats, working magic with one of the lowest budgets in baseball to find quality players to keep the team in the playoff hunt.

John has been working out with a fitness trainer since January and continues to enjoy playing softball every Tuesday night at the SportsPark in Poway (<http://www.sportsplexusa.com/>), recently celebrating his tenth year playing with the same group of guys on team BrewTality. Win or lose, the beer and camaraderie at the end of each game are always satisfying.

T R A V E L

If you come to a fork in the road, take it.

– Yogi Berra

I was once asked in a job interview to define my ideal occupation. "That's easy," I replied. "Rick Steves has MY job." Like travel gurus before him, Rick Steves has made a highly successful career of marketing tours and writing travel books about Europe. There is something wonderful about exploring different countries, especially those so much older than our own and rich in history. We plan to return to Europe a few more times while we're young before eventually joining the RV vagabond crowd.

In 2009 we visited southern Spain with our good friends Craig & Amy Anderson. Staying in the seaside town of Malaga, we took day trips to Tangiers, Morocco and Granada, Spain. If there is ever an alternative Olympics, the sport selection committee should give serious consideration to sanctioning races between street vendors and tourists, as they make a mad dash for the tour bus. We also stayed in the Black Forest town of Todtmoos in southern Germany, where we met Daniel Pape. A memorable cruise from San Diego to Cabo San Lucas on the Carnival ship Elation with 40 of John's high school classmates capped off the year. The food was great, and unlike those aboard the ill-fated Carnival Splendor, we never touched the spam.



Gary and Braden with Savannah & Angela jumping for joy.





Like Karen, it's easy to lose yourself in Keukenhof Gardens...

This year we landed in the charming, old German spa town of Bad Homburg. After three leisurely days enjoying Bad Homburg's parks and spas, we visited Cologne and its magnificent cathedral. While dining in a tavern, we met some young Germans named Jessica, Thomas and Christina. They were very curious about American life. After a long, wide-ranging conversation about politics to social customs and everything in between, we closed down the tavern and continued our discussion ambling through the cobblestone streets of Cologne. We parted company at our hotel after midnight, but not before exchanging contact info. We have been writing each other ever since and plan to meet Jessica and her husband in Berlin next June.

Next we traveled to Paris by superfast Thalys train and spent a week exploring the old city on the Ile de Paris and several intriguing suburbs, including Versailles and the old artist haunt, Montmartre. Karen was in heaven! In Amsterdam we took a hair-raising bike tour through the city and celebrated our survival by dining in the medieval town of Haarlem. A highlight of the trip was visiting the flower gardens of Keukenhof - all 70 acres of them. Every spring, the flower exporters of Holland try to outdo each other with extravagant displays of over 3,500 different tulip varieties and other bulbs including lilies, gladiolus and narcissus. There is also a vast orchid exhibit with every imaginable color on display. Keukenhof is simply Holland's version of the Disneyland theme park, with over 800,000 visitors packed into two months each year.

In June 2011 we plan to return to Germany for a visit to Berlin, with a side trip to Bruges, Belgium and a week in our favorite Dutch town, Haarlem. If you're thinking of visiting Europe, 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 trips in 2009-2010:

Most Fun: Exploring the Louvre and the Montemarte district of Paris.

Most Beautiful: [Keukenhof](#) flower festival in Leiden, Holland. Little known fact: the town of Leiden celebrates the American Thanksgiving holiday; it seems many of the original pilgrims came from there.

Best Food: Pork medallions with noodles and sauce and a stein of beer at the end of a long flight at the [Das Hardtwald Hotel](#) in Bad Homburg. It just doesn't get any better than this!

Best Scam: The [Lost Gold Ring scam](#) in Paris. Gypsies drop a fake gold ring on the street, pretend to find it, offer it to you, and then demand a reward far in excess of it's worth. The guy we encountered definitely needs to work on his moves...

Best Hospitality: The hotel staff of [Das Hardtwald Hotel](#) in Bad Homburg. Service with a smile, and they go the extra mile!

Favorite Museum: The Orsay Museum, Paris. Almost as many Dutch masters as the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

Most Enchanting Town: Haarlem, Holland. It is said the most contented people in Europe live there.

Best Fairytale Town: Todtmoos, Black Forest, Germany. A verdant land of gingerbread and cuckoo clocks.

Most Breathtaking Work of Art: The Cologne Cathedral, majestic and magnificent.

Most Unusual: The street markets in Tangiers, a kaleidoscope of color and humanity.

Most Impressive Monument: The Alhambra Palace, Granada, Spain.

Most Intact Ruins: Saalburg Roman Castle and Archaeology Park. The siege walls continue to hold up after 1,800 years.

Most Unique: A church, a school, and a brothel happily co-existing on the same block in Haarlem.

Biggest Surprise: The politeness and courtesy of Parisian waiters contradicted all known stereotypes.

Biggest Surprise (Wouldn't Want to Repeat): playing "pack the tram car" with the locals in Amsterdam.

Best Serendipitous Moment: Meeting Jessica Kalscheuer and friends in the tavern in Cologne.

Most Thrilling Moment: Navigating rush hour traffic on a bicycle in Amsterdam - in the bike lane!

Most Memorable Moment: Watching the sunset from the top of the Eiffel Tower.



Karen, god-daughter Kristine, John, and sister Carol at Luau Kalamaku on Kauai (Sept 2010).



BUSINESS

Banking establishments are more dangerous than standing armies.

– Thomas Jefferson

In March, John got bad news and good news. The bad news: his job was among those affected by a reorganization of Sempra Global IT staffing. The good news: in anticipation of the reorg, sister company SDG&E had held back over 60 job openings for months that managers were frantic to fill. And with billions invested in several long-term projects, SDG&E presented a stable growth opportunity. John lost no time applying for several positions and within two weeks was notified that he had been selected for a Sr. Software Developer position on the Business Intelligence team. The new team is great and the job offers many opportunities to contribute.

Sempra has a reputation for taking care of its employees. Within six weeks nearly all of the affected employees had been relocated or provided with a generous severance package. In the end, most of John's ex-teammates landed on their feet. John returned to UCSD Extension this fall, taking his first online course in Technical Communications. The first thing you learn is that taking a course sans classroom can be a challenge. Unless you stick to a schedule, it is very easy to get behind on the assignments. And there are a LOT OF ASSIGNMENTS!

Karen continues to enjoy working with our dear friend Cherie's consultancy doing part-time accounting work. She went back to school and completed QuickBooks courses in 2009.

We have kept the Career Management page on our web site updated. 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

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 wish you the best for a happy and prosperous 2011.

Last-Minute Gift Ideas from [Dave Barry's Annual Guide](#)

For Him: [The Pillow Tie](#)

A man wearing a necktie makes an important statement about himself. That statement is: "I am wearing an idiotic garment around my neck."

Yes, the pathetic truth is that neckties serve no useful purpose. We modern men wear them only because our



fathers wore them, and they wore them only because THEIR fathers wore them, and so on backward in history to a time of such ignorance that mankind believed solar eclipses were caused by a giant snake swallowing the sun.

Today, thanks to science, we know that the sun isn't being swallowed by a giant snake: it's simply being obscured by a shadow, which is cast by the giant snake. Yet despite all our modern scientific knowledge, we're still wearing these stupid neckties.

Well, finally somebody has done something, and that something is the Pillow Tie. This is a tie that can be quickly inflated to serve as a pillow, thus enabling the wearer to put his head down and catch "40 winks" during tedious situations such as attending meetings, holding congressional hearings or piloting long-haul commercial airliners. The Pillow Tie comes in a variety of colors and patterns, none of them particularly attractive. But what do you care? You'll be asleep.

For Her: [The Emergency Brassiere Face Mask](#)

This is the perfect gift for the lady on your holiday list who (1) has breasts, and (2) does not wish to die from inhaling bad things. The Emergency Bra, which was designed by Dr. Elena Bodnar, a female scientist, is a brassiere that, according to the website, "is like any other conventional bra in terms of its main function of supporting the breasts." But in an emergency, it can be removed and used as two face masks.

Is that a great idea, or what? We believe that Dr. Bodnar should receive the Nobel Prize for Lingerie. We also believe that this would be a far safer world if every woman wore the Emergency Bra. Granted, you'd have men constantly yelling: "This is an emergency! Take off your brassiere!" But they'd get bored and stop after a couple of decades.

