



## Twenty-third Annual Granger Holiday Newsletter



### CURRENTS

**“Experience is often what you get when you were expecting something else.”**

– Anonymous.

Happy holidays from the Grangers! If you're reading this after December 21<sup>st</sup>, then one of the following is probably true:

- The Mayans got the date wrong
- The world ended, but in an alternate universe
- The world did end, but you woke up on December 22<sup>nd</sup> in an alternate universe

Much like the year before, 2012 seemed to pass very slowly. Our visit to Disneyland on January 1<sup>st</sup> with Windi and Andy seems like an eon ago – not that we're complaining. As we've learned over the years, the secret to enjoying a long life – or at least the perception of one – is derived from experiencing many and varied activities.

We especially enjoy the week after Christmas—an oasis of calm between the Mayan End-of-the-World and the impending Fiscal Cliff—which offers the opportunity to disengage the clutch, pause and reflect, and spend quality time with friends and family.

If you've read our past newsletters, you know that we like to include pithy quotes from famous people who also happen to be wise and observant. This year we decided to start a new tradition by using particularly memorable and recyclable quotes from friends and family.

#### Milestones

In October our cousin Kathryn in Texas informed us that our beloved Aunt Nancy had passed away. Kathryn produced a memorial slideshow with many photos from Nancy's long life. It is a warm and very touching tribute ([link](#)).

In November, Karen's mother Dorothy was honored by the Rialto Historical Society for her pioneering work as its founder and for leading the charge to preserve the old First Christian Church. Now a museum, the church houses many artifacts from the city's early history, providing residents with a view back in time that would otherwise be lost.

Nephew Brian married his long-time sweetheart Christina in June. Held near Valencia, the wedding was well attended by family, including mother Cheryl, sisters Windi, Roxy, and Kristi, and brother Andy. All of them danced the night away and we managed to catch the rare moment on video.

Nephew Danny and wife Jessica, married in 2011, welcomed baby son Grayson in February.

By day, niece Amber is a mild-mannered mortgage analyst for a local bank. But by night, she indulges her passion for roller derby by skating for the San Diego Derby Dolls. When she's not delivering

blocks or scoring points, Amber—whose nom de guerre is “Ballistic Bomber”—serves the team as promoter, announcer and ticket taker. To improve her technique, she likes to practice on boyfriend Aaron by blocking him around their apartment (think Kato surprising Inspector Clouseau in *The Pink Panther*). Held at the Del Mar Fairgrounds several times a year, Derby Dolls bouts are highly competitive and entertaining; once they lace up their skates, these girls are as serious as a heart attack! Amber's enthusiastic play has also earned her a spot on the All Star Team, which will be competing regionally in 2013 (<http://sd.derbydolls.com/>).

After breaking into the retail trade at Kohl's Department Store in Redlands last year, niece Windi found steady employment as a cashier at Lowes. Her positive attitude and strong work ethic soon earned her additional responsibilities in Customer Service. As she continues to learn more about the business, it wouldn't be surprising to see her promoted to a manager trainee position in 2013. She also aced her first college class – in Sociology, John's college major.

Sister Alisa no longer has her store in Temecula, but is continuing her home-based, hand-made jewelry business on her own. In a much needed break from her family caretaking responsibilities, she and daughter Savannah, 14, thoroughly enjoyed their 6-day visit to NYC in April. Traveling on an affordable package deal offered through [Smithsonian Journeys](#), they packed in a visit to the Statue of Liberty, Empire State Bldg., Kennedy Center,



Family turned out for Brian & Christina's wedding in June. From left, Roxy, Cheryl, Kristi, Brian, Windi, and Andy.



Metropolitan Museum of Art, Times Square, and took in two Broadway shows. As icing on the cake, Savannah was able to earn school credits for the tour.

Sister Laurel has continued her rehab from a bicycling accident last year and, with the help of husband Luis and yoga classes, is now fully recovered. Undeterred, she traded in her mountain bike for a three-wheel Catrike recumbent model. Laurel visited daughter Mara in Albuquerque, NM, where Mara works as a massage therapist and is enjoying her new apartment. The two went on a road trip to Taos where they stayed in the [Old Taos Guest House B&B](#) and relaxed at the [Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs Resort & Spa](#).

Hard-working nephew Gary earned his commercial real estate license this year and has begun building a new career in La Jolla. He is continuing to work in the restaurant biz but is looking forward to having his evenings free for the first time in recent memory in 2013.

Last year, we reported that our Texas cousin Kathryn's daughter Hannah won 3rd place in [America's Next Top Model](#) competition. Since then, Hannah has moved to Los Angeles and teamed up with nephew Dylan and girlfriend Amanda Michelle to promote each other's modeling careers. Based on a model's looks and market appeal, the agency may send them to NYC, Europe, or Asia. We're excited for their prospects and look forward to updating you next year.

Niece Lindy and husband Martín were gracious hosts once again on Christmas Day. Lindy, a math and sciences teacher in the Menifee School District, has been nominated for an annual teaching award by her district. Son Tre, 17, will graduate high school in June and has been accepted at several colleges. Daughter Angela, 11, joined a school cheerleading squad which won a regional competition in December.

### **Operation Wildhorse**

The holiday season presents an opportunity to remember and support our men and women serving abroad.

We first learned about Dave Stimmell, a career Army Master Sergeant, through our friend Paul Noga in late 2009. Dave was deployed to Afghanistan and posted to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Mehtar Lam. We became interested in supporting the troops when we learned that Paul had sent a care package to Dave containing DVDs, chocolate, books, sports magazines, and other items that are difficult or impossible to get while serving in a locale resembling the far side of the Moon.

Since starting Operation Wildhorse, we have sent over 50 care boxes to eight different contacts at FOB Methar Lam, including Dave. We continue to receive grateful emails letting us know how much the troops appreciate the little things that we take for granted. If you would like to contribute, please contact us or see our Web site for more information: <http://www.jkgranger.com/links/OperationWildhorse.pdf>

## S P O R T S

### **"That is NOT a bolt...!"**

—Neil A. Umscheid (commenting on daughter Kristine's creativity as she applied face paint before a Chargers game)

In the past few years, San Diego sports fans have been rewarded with division championships by the Chargers and Padres multiple times. However, after two years of numbing mediocrity, those heady days have become a distant memory. But as any true fan (masochist?) will tell you, it's the down times that make the up times so special.

And San Diego sports fans are nothing if not resilient. 2013 is shaping up as a year of transition, and while change is no guarantee of success, at least it provides the illusion of hope. With the San Francisco 49ers and Washington Nationals going from worst to first within a year, who's to say it can't happen in San Diego?

With a new ownership regime in place, the San Diego Padres may have at long last found a means to the end: a return to the (whisper!) playoffs. And after a truly dreadful season that has seen the Chargers play better on the road than at home, the Bolts are poised for a front-office makeover.

Chargers fans may be able to take solace in the New York Giants being on the verge of also missing the postseason. No surprise here, but the New York Post didn't hold back when it came to Eli Manning, who famously snubbed the Bolts in 2004 after the Giants' loss to the Ravens on Dec 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Post's headline with a picture of Manning on Monday: "What a Bum!" Pablo Nogatoches couldn't have said it better. Gotta love those New Yorkers!

On a personal sports level, we've enjoyed bicycling around San Diego this past year. As a Christmas present to ourselves, we plan to buy mountain bikes and a rack for the truck for quick weekend escapes to the beaches and parks.



Family and friends turned out in force to cheer on the Ballistic Bomber in her debut bout with the San Diego Derby Dolls.





## TRAVEL

**"The adventure doesn't start until you really screw up."**

— Richard Sampson (quoting an unnamed kayak adventurer who solo paddled across the Pacific Ocean)

By now you have probably surmised that we are certifiable travel junkies. The tedium of flying notwithstanding, we love visiting places we've never been to and meeting people from other parts of the world. For us, half the fun of traveling is the planning and anticipation of a great trip.

In fact, we've found that the best antidote to post-vacation depression is setting about immediately to plan the next trip. As fellow travel junkies are quick to acknowledge, pre-trip planning not only helps you to be better prepared, it allows you to extend the enjoyment of your travels ([link](#)).

Months of planning culminated in a trip to Germany in May 2012 to wander the Märchen Straße ([Fairy Tale Route](#)) with our adopted family member Jessica Kalscheuer. The Route passes through several scenic regions in central Germany, including nature parks, towns and cities associated with the Grimm's Fairy Tales of childhood legend. We visited Sleeping Beauty's Castle in Sababurg and Cinderella's Castle in Polle, as well as Hameln, the home of the Pied Piper and the world's largest chocolate rat. There is something magical about towns many hundreds of years old and the hospitality of the German people is also legendary.

In September we traded in our timeshare week for a cruise to Alaska with extended family members Neil and Cherie Umscheid. The amenities on board the Royal Caribbean [Radiance of the Seas](#), with a capacity of 2,600 guests, left nothing to be desired. Our 7-day cruise took us from Vancouver to Seward, Alaska near Anchorage, with stops in Ketchikan, Icy Straight Point, Juneau, Skagway, and Hubbard Glacier. We kayaked on a glacial lake, rode a 1-mile long zip line down a mountain, hiked, biked, and ate more Dungeness crab than we thought was humanly possible.

We've also discovered it's great fun to play tourist in our home town! In December we were thrilled by the [Cavalria](#) horse show and [John Williams](#) conducting the San Diego Symphony in the performance of his greatest movie hits.

And now, the 30-second highlight version of our trips in 2012:

**Most Fun:** Guided bicycle tour of Munich with [Mike's Bike Tours](#); riding the White Pass Railway over the Klondike Trail of 1898.

**Most Beautiful:** [Bergpark Wilhelmshöhe](#), Kassel, Germany. Hubbard Glacier, Alaska.

**Best Food:** [Osterwaldengarten](#), Munich offers traditional Bavarian fare in a nice biergarten setting. [George Inlet Lodge](#), Ketchikan, Alaska serves the best Dungeness crab on the planet!

**Best Hospitality:** Schlosshotel Bad Wilhelmshöhe, Kassel. The crew of the [Radiance of the Seas](#).



*Chowing down on Dungeness crab at George Inlet Lodge, Ketchikan, Alaska.*

**Favorite Museum:** [Albrecht Durer Exhibition](#), German National Museum, Nuremburg.

**Most Enchanting Town:** [Hann-Munden](#), a well-preserved medieval town in central Germany filled with over 700 half-timbered houses. Looks like a movie set.

**Best Fairytale Town:** [Steinau am der Strasse](#), home to the Brothers Grimm. Hameln, home of the Pied Piper, is a close second.

**Most Amazing Sight:** [Löwenburg](#) (Lions Castle), Kassel, Germany. [Mendenhall Glacier](#), Juneau, Alaska.

**Most Breathtaking Work of Art:** The block prints of [Albrecht Dürer](#), Nuremburg.

**Most Unusual:** A tie between the [Museum of Sepulchral Culture](#) in Kassel and the [Baron Von Munchhausen Museum](#) in Bodenwerder. But IMHO, a six-legged rabbit trumps a tricked-out hearse.

**Most Impressive Monument:** [Hercules Monument](#), Kassel, Germany. Totem poles in Ketchikan, Alaska.

**Most Intact Ruins:** A tie between [Polle](#), home of Cinderella's Castle, and [Sababurg](#), home of Sleeping Beauty's Castle.

**Best Adventure:** Bicycling and canoeing along the River Weser near [Bad Karlshafen](#). Kayaking on [Mendenhall Glacial Lake](#).

**Most Unique:** Exploring the Devil's Cave ([Teufelshöhle](#)) near Steinau am der Strasse. Gazing upon [Hubbard Glacier](#) near Seward, Alaska.

**Best Serendipitous Moment:** Drinking a liter of Spaten-Franziskaner and eating a giant pretzel under the chestnut trees with fellow cyclists in the Chinese Biergarten nestled deep within the English Garden, Munich. Ever notice how beer and serendipity go well together?

**Most Thrilling Moment:** Riding the mile-long [ZipRider](#) down the mountain at Icy Straight Point, Alaska.

**Most Memorable Moment:** Checking in to [Schlosshotel Munchausen](#) in Aerzen – a restored castle! Dinners on board the Radiance of the Seas.

**Craziest Moment:** see Most Thrilling Moment.



## BUSINESS

**“Why is the rum always gone?”**

– Capt. Jack Sparrow (a lamentation directed to no one in particular on his ship, the Black Pearl)

Okay, so Capt. Jack isn't a blood relative or even a close friend. However, since this pithy remark may come in particularly handy on vacations in Hawaii or the Caribbean, we decided it was worth sharing.

Karen continues to follow her interest in crafts of all sorts, especially crocheting, and enjoys Sudoku in her spare time. This year she managed several household projects and rekindled her passion for drawing. In 2013, she is looking forward to exercising her talents in painting as well. Speaking of exercising, Karen has vowed to return to the gym in 2013 (ha ha!). She will also be looking for rewarding volunteer work and plans to continue with self-development courses through the adult education center.

In 2012, John celebrated his 5-year anniversary with Sempra Energy. He has spent the past 2.5 years with Sempra Global, working primarily as a trainer, and the past 2.5 years with San Diego Gas & Electric as a software developer in the Business Intelligence Group. The past year has been particularly eventful and dynamic, with the development of business information dashboard projects progressing at a mind-bending pace.

John returned to UCSD Extension this year, taking courses toward a Professional Certificate in Technical Communications and in German I. While it's been challenging to take multiple courses in one quarter, it is also rewarding – like performing mental calisthenics outside your comfort zone (how's that for a mixed metaphor?)

John will be attending the Consumer Electronics Show (<http://www.cesweb.org/>) in Las Vegas for the third year in a row in January. Equal parts trade show, pop-culture phenomenon and geek-fest, CES is the largest technology convention in the world. It's always fascinating to be able to see innovative technologies (like HDTVs a few years back) before they hit the market. In 2013, wireless technologies and trends take center stage.

## PERSONALS

**“It's just people talking.”**

– Paul S. Noga

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 2013.

**For Him: The Wrap-a-Nap** (<http://www.wrapanap.com>)



Has this ever happened to you? Your eyes are closed, and you're trying to sleep. Just when you start to drift off, you hear the annoying sound of people talking. You open your eyes and say, “Can you people PLEASE KEEP IT DOWN??” Then you get in trouble, because you forgot you were in a staff meeting at work. If that sounds familiar, you need the Wrap-a-Nap. This revolutionary product combines, for the first time ever that we know of, a pillow, a blindfold AND earmuffs. You simply wrap it around your head, and suddenly you can't see or hear. And the best part is, your boss and co-workers will never even know that you're wearing the Wrap-a-Nap! We're assuming here that they are blind. But the Wrap-a-Nap isn't just for office workers. It can be used to grab a quick “40 winks” in many environments – museums, funerals, State of the Union Addresses, the cockpits of commercial airliners – any place where oblivion is welcome. It is our understanding that the New York Metropolitan Opera sells these babies by the crate.

**For Her: The Toad Purse** ([www.toadshop.com](http://www.toadshop.com))



Imagine this holiday scene: A fashionable woman unwraps a gaily wrapped package and finds ... What's this? A dead toad! Sound too good to be true? Well it could be a reality for some lucky lady on your holiday gift list, if you give her this toad purse. That's right: This is a real, functioning purse, made from a real, formerly functioning toad. It has a cord so you can carry it on your shoulder, and there's a working zipper in the toad's butt, so you can open it up and put small items inside the toad. Smelling salts, for example. We're sure this item will make a huge impression on whomever you give it to, based on the reaction of the Holiday Gift Guide staff, Judi Smith, who refused to touch the toad purse with her bare hands, and had trouble even looking directly at it. The toad purse: A gift she will always remember, even after therapy.

