



Ninth Annual Granger Holiday Newsletter



CURRENTS

HA! Had you guessing, didn't we? Yep, we're still here. As another year passes with terrifying speed, we are sobered by the fact that teenagers graduating from high school in 1999 were being born the year Karen and I first met. It's enough to send a chill down a spine that has long since been desensitized by predictable horror novel fare. And it appears from the cards and newsletters received so far this season that it's been that kind of year for you, too. While 1998 may be a year most remembered for titillating Washington, D.C. soap operas, we'll always look back with fond memories of our 10th anniversary celebration at the Horton Grand in downtown San Diego.

The big news this holiday season is the birth of Savannah Noelle Sharon on December 22nd to sister Alisa and her husband John. Savannah, arriving full-term at 7 lbs, 1 oz., 20.5 inches, is the first Capricorn in the family. Being the scuba diving fanatic that he is, John (not me, Alisa's John) brought Savannah a toy puffer fish from his collection and as he held it before her attentive blue eyes, told her repeatedly, "you're going to love fishes...!" John may have been tipped off when he first caught a glimpse of Savannah's snorkel as she made her entrance to the world. You just know this is going to be a good kid, as she had the courtesy to be born in time for Alisa to come home from the hospital for Christmas Day, and bought me a few extra days to write this newsletter!

More big news - Karen's mom Dorothy was happily joined in matrimony with Woody Worthington (no relation to Cal) on Thanksgiving Day. It was a great opportunity to bring family members (Ken, Barb, Art, Linda, Ruth Ann, Gus, nieces and nephews) together again for the start of the holiday season. The elusive lovebirds were coy about their honeymoon destination, but rumor

has it that they snuck away to an undisclosed location in the desert. Ma has always been a rock hound, and Woody shares her love of travel.

John's mom Patty greeted 1998 from a hospital bed, laid up with a severe flu that turned into pneumonia. She doesn't remember much about the first week of January, only that she had a lot of visitors. After 21 days she was fit enough to leave the hospital and all that wonderful hospital food. It has been a blessing in disguise, as she hasn't smoked since and has more energy than she knows what to do with.

Sister Laurel received her teaching credential in June and was immediately inundated with job offers from San Diego to L.A.. She brushed up on her Spanish by spending

a month of intensive training in Cuernavaca, Mexico, then began teaching 2nd grade at Hazeltine Elementary in Van Nuys in August. Although she's not compensated for it, her bilingualism helps her to communicate with her Spanish-speaking students whom she adores.

Sister Carol is taking math and computer courses, while 5-year old nephew Dylan tutors his mother on the finer points of Windows 98. Like most kids his age, he can solve mind-bending computer games without breaking a sweat. His early impressionist works of art are hanging in the teacher's lounge. He is still the source of endless quotes, such as "which animal has a wishing bone?"

Nephew Garrett graduated a year early from high school and just finished his first quarter at Moorpark College. He's taking Japanese, Philosophy, and Abnormal Psychology classes (we'll leave it to you to speculate on the intriguing career path possibilities). He received the top grade in his Japanese class, which is all the more impressive considering that over half his class of 25 are high-achieving Asian-American students. A visiting tutor surveyed his work and assumed that this blond-haired, freckle-faced Irish kid was raised in Japan! His philosophy instructor predicts that Mr. Big Brain will soon be headed for UCLA.

Niece Lindy is continuing her part-time studies in criminal justice at Mira Costa College while working as a recruiter at Volt in Carlsbad. She is excited about her upcoming interview with the Ventura Sheriff's Department. Niece Mara is starting her last semester at Cal State LA as a music composition major. She's now working as a post-production assistant in Hollywood assisting movie editors in the cutting & editing process. She's still getting work as an "extra"; she recently jogged for over three hours on the set of Party of Five for 5 seconds of footage. Where else can you stay fit, make money, and meet celebrities all in one day?

TRAVEL

We'd always wanted to visit Kauai, Hawaii's Garden Isle. July seemed like as good a time as any. There's something comfortable about visiting a tropical paradise which happens to be in your own country. And you know us forty-somethings...we like our adventure mixed with a large dose of "comfort" on the side. After long mornings of "roughing it" diving in 76° water (cold when you've been spoiled by temps of 83° or more), we had plenty of time to take in Kauai's topside attractions with the Umscheids, Neil, Cherie, Neil Jr. and Karen's goddaughter Kristine. The problem with Kauai is that it presents far too many fascinating opportunities for exploration in a week's time. Herewith is a brief summary:

Most Beautiful: Look in any direction. Shafts of sunlight glowing through serrated mountain peaks. Waterfalls by the side of the road. The Napali coastline. Waimea Canyon.

Best Food: Hyatt Regency Poipu Beach Buffet

Best Hospitality: Embassy Suites Poipu Beach Resort

Most Awesome Resort: Hyatt Regency Poipu Beach

Most Unusual: Hawaiian Lomi-Lomi Massage & Spa

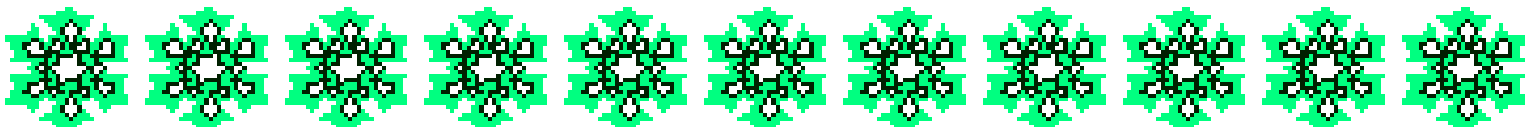
Most Unique: Karen (the cutest spot on earth) standing in front of Wai'ali'ali (the wettest spot on earth, over 400 inches of rain yearly.)

Biggest Surprise: 5pm rush-hour traffic in downtown, or the diminutive serving of French cuisine Karen received at a well-known plantation style restaurant.

Wouldn't Want to Repeat: 7 Hour round-trip boat ride to Niihau island through huge waves.



While Alisa cuddles Savannah, father John quickly learns art of cat-napping.



Best Serendipitous Moment: seeing 12 giant green turtles, a frogfish, and several white tip reef sharks on one dive.

Most Thrilling Moment: Hitting an air pocket while riding shotgun in a helicopter over Waimea Canyon.

Craziest Moment: Petting "Burt", our divemaster's favorite moray eel.

A runner-up and a close second for Craziest Moment was when we decided to sign on the dotted line for a timeshare at Embassy Suites resort. Now I've finally found a use for my college calculus class: find the derivative of X, where X equals one timeshare unit multiplied by the number of weeks purchased plus maintenance fees plus options for a second and third week provided that one week is traded before March 31st in the next Chinese new year and is not applied at the original resort. By the time you figure it all out, you're ready for an aspirin and another vacation. Kauai has that effect on you; after a brief stay, you'll do just about anything to reassure yourself that you'll be coming back...

The best antidote for post-dive trip depression is, of course, another dive trip. November found us hopping a plane for Dominica, the self-described Nature Isle of the Eastern Caribbean (not to be confused with its larger neighbor, the Dominican Republic). Independent but still part of the British Commonwealth, Dominica is also the last refuge of the Carib Indi-



Diving Scott's Head Pinnacles on Dominica with new dive buddies Stephanie, Rich, Mike "Kubuli Man", and Margie.

ans, fierce fighters with dispositions similar to IRS agents for whom the region is named. Although well-known to divers and eco-tourists for its pristine reefs, whale-watching tours, and hiking trips, it is one of the better kept travel secrets in the Caribbean. Having researched Dominica on the Undercurrent Newsletter's web site <http://www.undercurrent.org>, we didn't expect to see many large critters while diving. What we did see was lots of great macro stuff, like seahorses (3 on one dive, each a different color), spotted morays (yawn, a dime a dozen), well-camouflaged scorpion fish, an octopus, nudibranchs (brilliantly-colored sea slugs). Other memorable visuals included corals and sponges of all colors and hues, armies of bold urchins - normally nocturnal creatures - "marching" across the sea floor in broad daylight; a giant spider crab perched on a sponge; ubiquitous large bristleworms, flaming scallops, and barrel sponges large enough to sit in. After two morning dives in 83° water and lunch, we were ready for afternoon nature hikes that typically included a waterfall and pool to bathe in. With a topography that features 365 rivers and is 95% rain forest, you can also count on lots of rain. However, since most of Dominica is mountainous with altitudes up to 4700 ft., the cool air provides some relief from the mild humidity felt at sea level. The island

beer "Kubuli" is a short for Waitukubuli, the Carib Indian name for the island which means, "Long is Her Body". How the Caribs came up with this name is anyone's guess, but it seems they did have quite a bit of time on their hands, and you have to admire their imagination. As the beverage of choice at meal times at the 'ol diving lodge, Kubuli could just as well mean "Happy Are Her Tourists".

SPORTS

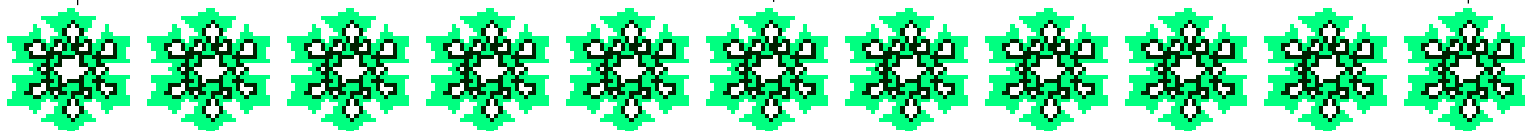
Pad-res! Char-gers! Pad-res! Char-gers!

It's hard to recall a more momentous year in sports. The year started with San Diego hosting the Broncos & Packers in SB XXX, complete with an NFL Theme Park. Then MacSosa hit a combined 132 home runs, smashing Maris' record. Then the ship finally came in for members of our Padres Pennant Investment Club (PPIC), who finally received the ultimate reward after faithfully attending Padres games for several years: a trip to the World Series!!! It was truly a magical season for our Pads, and one that will be remembered with great fondness years from now, long after the new ball park is built. Pablo Nogatoches, renowned sports pundit and resident cynic, remains skeptical of Padres management. Like most loyal fans, he was seared by the infamous "fire sale" of 1993 and fears the Pads may again shed talent to cut costs. However, savvy PPIC investors know that with the current owners at the helm, they can look forward to another thrilling season in 1999. If you would like to join us, just send an email to jgranger@san.rr.com before March 15th. We'll be getting our tickets for the season in mid-March this year.

And now, if you please, a moment of silence for our poor Chargers...At 5-11, it was another season for Charger Masochists to relish. On Sundays we faced a tough decision: watch the game or recline on a bed of nails? Witnessing the final game of the season, losing to Arizona with 3 seconds left, we again felt the excruciating ecstasy of yet another loss which served as a microcosm of the last two years. On the upside, the 1999 season should provide great opportunities for improving our season ticket seat locations! All Charger fans repeat after me, "There's nowhere to go but up...there's nowhere to go but up...!"



Padres Pennant Investor Club members had a lot to cheer about in 1998, as the Padres thrilled fans on their drive to claim the National League Pennant. PPIC'ers Mike Fey, Tom Brotherton, Alan Winters, and Yours Truly root from the cheap seats on Sky Show night at Qualcomm Stadium.





Work is the meat of life, pleasure the dessert...
 - Bertie Charles Forbes

BUSINESS

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Stellcom Technologies has continued its rapid expansion during the last year, but with fewer of the growth pains experienced in 1997. Although high-tech companies as a rule seem to thrive on chaos rather than in spite of it, a major reason for the company's increased stability is that it strives to learn from its mistakes, and tends to avoid repeating them. And that would appear to be a good formula for success in any field of endeavor (Ryan Leaf, are you listening?). John's title changed this last year from Employee Relations Manager to Director of Training & Employee Development. While organizing and delivering training programs had been a strong focus, the change acknowledges the importance of training crucial to the success of any computer engineering company. Seems like the promotional skills developed during all those years of organizing Viking parties are really starting to pay off...



24-Hour Fitness is on the verge of restructuring following a three-year moratorium when Family Fitness was purchased by 24-Hour Nautilus. As we wait to see how the changes will affect Karen's position, she has had the opportunity to reflect on her many years of service and weigh the possible outcomes. As a Family Fitness "lifer", it's been difficult at times to contemplate the various alternatives that restructuring poses. Many of you know the feeling, a curious mixture of FUD (fear, uncertainty, & doubt) and the euphoria that accompanies genuine change, a euphoria that is sometimes accompanied by an overwhelming desire to sing a well-known, working-class country song written by Johnny Paycheck at the top of your voice. Stay tuned....

FYI - Karen's new email address is kgranger@san.rr.com

PERSONALS

As we careen toward the millenium, and another year filled with promise as well as uncertainty about how many corners those computer programmers in the '60s, '70s and 80's REALLY cut , it would be great if we could share ideas about how and where to celebrate NEXT new year's eve. I just know that at midnight on 12/31/99 we will not be in an elevator, in an airplane, or in a car. Wishing you and your family all the best for 1999!

And now for a little ditty that we know everyone - as we renew our vows to resume regular trips to the gym - will appreciate...

Post Christmas Blues

*T'was the month after Christmas, and all through the house
 Nothing would fit me, not even a blouse.
 The cookies I'd nibbled, the eggnog I'd taste
 At the holiday parties had gone to my waist.
 When I got on the scales there arose such a number!
 When I walked to the store (less a walk than a lumber).*

*I'd remember the marvelous meals I'd prepared;
 The gravies and sauces and beef nicely rared,
 The wine and the rum balls, the bread and the cheese
 And the way I'd never said, "No thank you, please!"*

*As I dressed myself in my husbands old shirt
 And prepared once again to do battle with dirt—
 I said to myself, as only I can,
 "You can't spend a winter disguised as a man!"*

*So—away with the last of the sour cream dip,
 Get rid of the fruitcake, every cracker and chip
 Every last bit of food that I like must be banished
 Till all the additional ounces have vanished.*

*I won't have a cookie-not even a lick.
 I'll want only to chew on a long celery stick.
 I won't have hot biscuits, or corn bread, or pie,
 I'll munch on a carrot and quietly cry.*

*I'm hungry, I'm lonesome, and life is a bore—
 But isn't that what January is for?
 Unable to giggle, no longer a riot,
 Happy New Year to all, and to all a good diet!*

Season's Greetings

