

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Greetings from Half Moon Bay 2009

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Greetings from the tail end of 2009, and from Half Moon Bay. Most of you probably have heard by now, but in case you haven't...Jim, Stuart, Graham, and Peg (along with three cats and a dog) relocated to Half Moon Bay, CA in mid-March 2009. We've been here for nearly 10 months now, and I still have surreal moments waking up to DJs talking about what the weather is going to be like in the Bay Area. In some ways, it still largely feels like we're floating above the scene rather than feeling completely in it.



Peg started a job as a Senior Product Manager with a company called Aplia in mid-March...the same day the moving van pulled up to the house we're renting here. So, suffice it to say, it's been a bit hectic. Still, Aplia is a part of Cengage, the company Peg worked for before she left to stay home with Stuart and Graham. Although this wasn't what we had planned, we feel very grateful that one of us was home with the boys for the first two years of their lives. Today, we have a wonderful part-time nanny, Marisol, whom Stuart and Graham seemed to instantly enjoy. Jim has taken over work with Fair Copy, the LLC we started in 2008 and seems to be one of those right-brain/left-brain people who can write well and be technically astute. (And did I

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While checking out at the grocery store last week, I glanced at the cover of Time magazine, which featured the headline "The Decade From Hell," and its subhead, "And why the next one will be better." From a personal perspective, it never occurred to me that the "00s" (pronounced aughts), as they're called, were so bad. But then again, for the insurgent in Iraq, or a pensioner in the United States, the first ten years of this century might easily rate "a real bummer." It's no



wonder that, according to the CDC anyway, Antidepressants are the most prescribed drugs in the U.S. Fortunately, we have the *Journal of Happiness Studies* to tell us that, for older people anyway, happiness is improved by the "intense engagement with daily activities." In our case, it is the morning routine that begins when Stuart and Graham toddle through our bedroom door and climb into bed for a few extra minutes of cuddle. It's the breakfast routine helping mom or dad grind the coffee beans, pushing chairs around the kitchen and helping dad mix the pancake batter. It is the possibility of a morning stroll through the fields behind our house, the discovery of spider's webs, stray golf balls, and the odd stick--which must be brandished and flung, at great risk to those standing nearby--which slows the pace of life to near idle. And the evening ritual, beginning with a short story video, a bath, one or more bedtime books, a song or two, and ending with a crane (qua pile driver) ride to bed. It is these daily activities that give us an "intrinsically rewarding and optimal state," also known as "flow."

Flow makes it easy not to get too worked up about all the other goings on in the universe--such as health care reform, Google Wave, and the indiscretions of one now infamous golf icon. Sure, the recession bit us, like most people, in the rear, but at least our feet are still touching the bottom of the pool. Moving house and home is always a little traumatic

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In January of this year, Alia re-started her college career at University of the Pacific, in Stockton, California. Word has it she's as happy as a clam, progressing well in her studies, getting involved in all manner of volunteer work and, most recently, is earning a little scratch tutoring some special-ed students in the area. She's as active and healthy as she's ever been, even though she doesn't get to ride horses as often as she did back home. Meanwhile, her brother, Liam, is off on another crazy middle-east adventure. After finishing his stint in the USMC, in January, he took a job with a private contractor (not Xe, aka Blackwater), providing security at some remote location in Iraq, which we're not supposed to know anything about. Hm. His plan for the spring is to head off to Australia for a month of travel, and R&R.

Half Moon Bay is a nice little town on the coast, just 23 miles south of San Francisco. There are several little bedroom communities just to the north, and almost nothing but farm and ranch country, plus the odd smattering of state beaches, from here to Santa Cruz, 46 miles in the other direction. The big difference, of course, is there is no ferry to catch (or miss) in order to get to a box mall, museum, airport, or any of the other great attractions on offer here. Business travel to Denver, Seattle, or Los Angeles are day trips once again (not that that's an issue for us right now, but just in case). The spring and summers here are mostly low clouds and fog. And much like the islands back in Washington, the warm weather season can come and go in just a few short weeks --the old 'if you blink you could miss it' scenario. Winter is just around the corner, and we're told it gets cold here. We'll have to report on that next year. (For those of you from Michigan, "cold" in this context means you would have to put on a sweatshirt. -Peg's editorial note.)

While checking out

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too, but with change comes opportunity, and there's probably a lot more of that here in the bay area than in most parts of the world.

Tonight, at a birthday party for several of our playgroup friends, I got talking with one of the other dads who is also starting a new career as a writer. He mentioned that one of his goals was to be working at home again in five years, and seemed envious of the fact that I had already managed to get there. "You seem to have pretty good flow," he said. (Really, that's what he said. This is the Bay Area.) I thought for a moment, and realized just how lucky I was, by way of having obtained a lifestyle that someone, and perhaps many others, only wished they had. For that, I'm grateful. Here's to the flow.

mention he can cook, brew beer, and give incredible foot massages...)

Anyway, 2009 started off with a bang. On New Year's Day of 2009, we started a dual full-on job search, which led us here to Half Moon Bay. Sitting here typing this right now is a great reminder to expect the unexpected.

We're all healthy. Stuart and Graham are growing like mad and keeping us on our toes every waking second. We've recently begun touring pre-schools in anticipation of next fall, and Peg has the Excel spreadsheet to prove it...taskmaster that she is. When we have our heads on straight, we are reminded of how lucky we really are...like when Graham says 'chicken' instead of 'kitchen'...a la "Mama, it's sunny in the chicken"...or when Stuart says "Mama, you make me drive crazy" when he means "you're driving me crazy." The best, though, is just snuggling these little guys. They are each somewhere in the 32-35 pound range, but we can both still carry the two of them at the same time...for now. (For those of you who didn't just do the math, we can carry 70 pounds of toddlers around!)

It's been Mr. Toad's Wild Ride this year, but we have fared pretty darn well. We have acquired an extra four-legged creature since moving (thanks to Liam and Alia) and are now responsible for three cats, a dog, and "Pumpkin the Hamster." Reasonable people that we are, we are sticking with our 5-four-legged-creature-max rule. Seriously. As for me, my days are about work, the Safeway, and getting home to Stu, Graham and Jim as soon as I can. Jim's are all about peeling away from home so he can research and write more articles. It's totally not what we were expecting, but it's a great place to be.

Here's to the unexpected. Cheers!

