



Dear family and friends,

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! I wanted to write a brief note to let you know how we are doing.

Emma will be 18 months the end of December. She is very active and independent! Her favorite activity is looking at books or having us read books to her. She also loves listening to music (mostly Raffi, groan!), playing with toys, hugging and kissing her stuffed animals, and playing outdoors. She loves to take walks with us!

Mike is still working at Actional developing software. Fortunately, his employer values his contributions so much that they allow him to telecommute whenever he wants. Because of this, we were able to take advantage of the opportunity to move out of California.

In September, we took a vacation to the San Juan Islands of Washington state. While planning our vacation, we looked at real estate online to see if there was anything interesting. We found a wonderful property and decided that if it were still on the market when we went on vacation we would look at it. It was, we looked at it, and we made an offer a month after we returned from vacation (after Mike discussed the move with his employer).

Amazingly, we would have never considered going to the San Juan Islands unless we had not wanted to escape from all our current house problems! We had mudslides and drainage problems on the hill behind our house last winter. We had to get a soil engineer to analyze the hill before getting a landscaper to build more retaining walls and put in the more drainage. In addition to mudslides, we had water back up into downstairs bathroom, laundry, and family room three times! The outgoing pipe had to be redirected and replaced under the driveway and the hardwood and tile floors had to be replaced and refinished. What a mess. We had contractors in our house the entire summer. At least the insurance covered everything. In June, Mike built a new railing for the front deck (it is beautiful) and then we had the outside of the house painted. The house is 23 years old and I don't think it had ever been painted!

Fortunately, the house we bought on Orcas Island does not have these problems. It is a beautiful 6 year-old craftsman style home on 24 acres. It has a southwest view of the strait of San Juan de Fuca. It also has a wonderfully large yard and garden that is enclosed so Emma can run around without getting in too much trouble. When she gets older, she'll get to take advantage of the other 23 acres!

Orcas Island has only 4,000 people. However, the population doubles during tourist season. The biggest town has schools (K-12), library, stores, performing arts center, medical center, and more. The island is also great for outdoor activities, like hiking, cycling, diving, kayaking, etc. This is why we wanted to move there! Oh yes, and being an island, the only way to get there is by ferry or small airplane.

We are still trying to sell our current house, but we plan to move the end of January regardless of whether the house sells. We'd rather wait for the market to improve and sell at the right price, especially after we put so much work into it! Once we get established, we'll let you know our new email and home addresses (we don't know our PO Box yet). Our website will still be <http://mclements.net> if you want to see the latest pictures of Emma (assuming I get time to update her web page!).

Take care and love,

Michelle, Mike, and Emma