

Season's Greeting! We hope you, and your family, are doing well.

Mike kicked off the year by joining the local Sinfonia, a small orchestra, so that he could play his flute. In January, they performed "Peter and the Wolf" with children acting out the story. Emma really enjoyed watching the performance, especially the part where the wolf ate the ducks. Right when the narrator paused, she blurted out "It looks like the wolf ate the ducks for real" which made everyone laugh. Over the summer, Mike played flute duets with a retired musician who used to play for the Seattle Symphony. Emma and I both enjoyed listening to them. When she and her husband moved to the mainland, Mike found another musician who plays both clarinet and flute. They performed some beautiful duets for the local performance group. In the beginning of December, Mike played Christmas music in a flute trio along with a baritone sax player for the annual Library Christmas Tea. Over the course of the year, Mike has acquired quite a flute collection including a bass, an alto, a piccolo and a new soprano flute.

For my birthday in March, Mike built two more planter boxes in the garden. He also installed drip irrigation to all the planter boxes (what a time saver). I planted 26 bare root strawberry plants in one of the boxes and they produced about a pint per day for three months during the summer. I also planted the usual greens along with bok choy this year, which did very well. The summer was so long and warm that the tomatoes and green beans went crazy. As a result, we have a freezer full of tomato sauce and green beans.

Mike's company, Actional, was acquired in March by Progress Software (based in Boston). He took the month of April off to decompress from several years of hard work. He spent most of the time overseeing the completion our workshop and moving all our garage things into the workshop. The last week of his time off, we took a few days to visit the Olympic National Forest, which was awesome. Upon returning to work Mike found that he likes the new company and plans to continue with them. All his work travel is now to Boston and Montreal instead of the Bay Area.

During the summer, Emma and I started piano lessons together. I figured she might be more inspired to practice if she saw me doing it as well. It seems to have worked because she practices at least twice a day. I have continued piano lessons with the same teacher and found another piano teacher for Emma who teaches preschoolers. Emma also took swimming lessons during the summer and learned to go underwater. So far she's up to almost 30 seconds, well on her way to joining us in some ocean diving in a few years.

Emma is in her 2nd year at the Montessori preschool and attending the full day (her choice). I haven't found that I have much free time, though, because of all the volunteer work for the school. I created a website (<http://www.orcasmontessori.org>) for the school and took over work on the database of donors that is used for the school fundraisers. Mike helped the school select a new laptop and configured it for them. He gets called to save the day whenever there is a computer problem. I also help with lunch clean up at the school one day a week, which I admit I enjoy because I can see all the kids in action. I've decided I'm ready for Emma to start kindergarten in the public school next year so I can get a break from all the work!

We had several visits from family and friends during the year, which we always enjoy. We also took a week in August to drive to California and visit family and friends, mainly to see Emma's new cousin Allison, courtesy of Mike's sister Cathy and her husband Rich, and to see my Mom who is battling cancer again. She's fighting like a champ despite loosing sight in one eye and regaining it after radiation treatments and then getting pneumonia and having to spend 5 days in the hospital the first of December.

We almost had a white Christmas this year after getting 18 inches of snow the end of November (see picture of Emma). Most of the county lost power for two days because of falling trees. Thank goodness we have a wood burning stove, gas range, and 4-wheel drive vehicles. At least the snow put us in the holiday spirit. We hope you enjoy the spirit of the holidays as well!

Take care and love,

Mike, Michelle, and Emma (<http://www.mclements.net>)