



Merry Christmas!

We hope you and your family are doing well. We're enjoying life here on Orcas. But after almost four years of living here, we're ready for more independence... from the ferry schedule! Our neighbor Mark is a pilot and got Mike started on flying. Mike is now half way through his flight lessons and has soloed three times. We're looking forward to the day when he gets his license and plane so we can travel to and from the mainland in 15 minutes instead of over 2 hours. Mark keeps a car at one of the airports on the mainland and we plan to do the same.

Mike continues to work for the same company, Progress Software, and travels once or twice a quarter to Boston and Montreal. Despite his busy work schedule, flying lessons, and weekly home chores, he still manages to practice his flute almost every day. He quit playing with the local Sinfonia group for lack of time, but he does get together with other musicians to play chamber music. His best duet partner so far is my piano teacher!

Emma finished off the last preschool year at the Montessori school and started Kindergarten at the public school this fall. The Kindergarten program is all day with twelve kids in each of two classes. Emma *likes* school a lot (she's reading this as I write and says *loves* is too strong a word). I help out in the classroom on Friday mornings and enjoy it. Emma continues to blossom with her piano lessons. She occasionally gets to take ballet lessons and swim lessons. Her favorite activity is having play dates with her friend, Lilia, from school.

The beginning of the year was a sad time for me. My Mom could no longer be treated for her cancer and passed away the 1<sup>st</sup> of February. Fortunately, my siblings Jackie, Jim and Diana and I were able to meet and see her before her passing. A few months later we were able to meet again to lay her ashes to rest in a remote spot of the Sierra Nevada, as she wanted.

Most of my time is spent doing domestic chores and driving Emma to and from school or extracurricular activities. No complaints -- at least I get to do them in a beautiful environment. In my free time, I continue to take piano lessons, participate in my book club, and work in my garden.

The summer was very busy with visits from Mike's parents for a week, Mike's college friend and family for several days, and my sister Jackie and family for a few days. Emma had a great time playing with her cousins and showing them all her "secret holes" in the forest. We traveled to California for the Thanksgiving week and got to visit Mike's family and had Thanksgiving at my sister Jackie's place. Emma was very excited to play with her cousins again. We're looking forward to traveling to Connecticut in January for a family reunion to celebrate Mike's grandmother's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Today is the 1<sup>st</sup> of December and it has snowed. As Mike went out to fetch some wood this morning he found my cat 30 feet up a fir tree. It took us three hours (in the snow) to get her down using our neighbor Mark's 25-foot ladder and the rappelling gear I made Mike buy for working on our steep roof! What a way to start off the holiday season. We wish you all a Happy New Year!

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