

Seasoned Greetings

from the entire Arnold Family

Dear Friends,

Another year has come and almost gone. All in all this has been an excellent year for the Arnold Family of Descanso. There have been a few low points, but we seem to be finishing the year in better shape than we started it.

One thing has not changed, we are still so very blessed and we all know it.

We have continued at the Church of Christ the King in Alpine, where Grandma Delna used to be a member, attending every traditional 1928 BCP service, except one when we were in Colorado. With Nelson Chase, the previously senior Acolyte, having been called up to Active Duty with the Army Reserve and going to Kuwait, Jack is now the senior and only Acolyte on Thursday nights. We have had a chance to share our traditional church service with several visitors.

The Arnolds have been in our new house now for 8 1/2 years. Hangar One, our steel building, is now full with the return of the Old Man. The Old Man, whose image is on our Christmas card cover, is a 1942 Chevrolet 3/4 ton pickup. He was originally delivered in October 1941, to the US Navy at NAS North Island, where he was driven by Johnny Olson, the Commander of the Aircraft Repair and Overhaul Facility. When he was surplused out in 1947, Johnny bought him and painted him battleship gray with a brush. When Johnny passed away in 1971, he came to live with us. Seven years ago, he threw a fan blade through his radiator and sat until after Hap's accident when we decided to return him to his original condition. Finally, this August he finished his overhaul. After seven years, from the outside, he looks just like he did on delivery, thanks to Johnny Delgado's fine body and paintwork. Underneath, he has an automatic transmission, power brakes, dual carburetors, headers and dual exhausts on his Blue Flame straight six all late 40s hot rod style, after long arguments by famed hot rod builder John Ray. Very conservative and non-flashy, except for the original orange color. He is now a joy to drive.

Young Jackson is now just over eleven and is just as tall as Dru. He is a first rate Sixth Grader, homeschooling, having dropped out of school in First Grade. He still prefers history and art, but is excellent at math. He is still growing by leaps and bounds, not only physically, but spiritually and mentally. Jack now drives all our vehicles, except the M601 and M38A1 which have the clutch pedals a bit too far out for him. Jack is a very careful driver and a responsible young man. Jack is so amazing! There are no end of Jack stories. He is concentrating on being God's Buddy, something we all need to do more of.

We have not heard from William at all this year. We saw him at his supermarket job on Christmas Day last year. We write every month, but we have not heard from him. Mutual acquaintances have seen him and he still lives. We ask your prayers that he might stay safe until he finds what he is looking for.

Dru's job seems to be less a nurse for Hap and more a teacher for Jack. She is now Jack's Sixth Grade teacher, another full time job. With Jack going to school at home, he is advancing rapidly towards his educational goals and taking Dru with him!

Physically Hap is doing very well. He still has nerve damage, walks like a penguin and all the rest, but he is here with us. He is flying and happy about that. He is very busy at work. The office had a lot of changes, some as the result of 911, others also. Everybody seems very happy together there now.

Angelina Catalina, Angie Cat, or AC is still keeping our home and garage free from rodents. Our main family unit augmentation is still the various and assorted fabric based life-forms who in outward appearance vaguely resemble different species, but are all rodents at heart, as in pigrat, sharkrat, tigerrat and even the odd rat-rat.

No family vacation this year. We did make a trip to Colorado Springs for the 91st Tactical Fighter Squadron reunion in the Aztec. It was a beautiful flight, both ways, although there was a bit of weather. We got to see Monument Valley, miles and miles of miles and miles and Active Mountain. We had a wonderful visit with old (even older than last time) friends. We took two more days and drove around the area. We rode the Royal Gorge Railway, drove through Garden of the Gods and rode the cog railway up Pike's Peak. We went to dinner at the Flying W Ranch. All in all, a wonderful trip.

The biggest event of the year was the FIRE. On Jack's birthday, 26 October 2003, a wildfire started near our old home in Ramona, California. It was about 15 miles from us as the fire flies, and about an hour drive by automobile. The fire which eventually consumed over 330,000 acres, burned its way around the county. Due to various road closures, none of the out of Descanso guests made it to the party. We were awoken that night at 0230 with an evacuation order. Jack and Hap went to Hangar One in the middle of the night and got the two pickup trucks, the White Ford and the Old Man. Jack drove back to the house alone, through the blowing branches and the like. Hap followed after he secured the hangar. Meanwhile, Dru packed what little she could of our most precious items in about 30 minutes and off we went. We joined up with our neighbors at the world famous Indian casino, the Golden Acorn. We slept in the back of the Old Man. After four days as nomads, two nights of which were spent at brother Bruce's house, we got to go home. The house was untouched. The fire got to within 500 feet of us, burned our neighbor's roof a bit, but all in all, our little valley survived, though burned on three and a half sides. The firefighters did a great job in our area and we appreciate their help. Other areas were not so lucky. By this time next year there will be a fire truck in the hangar!

Brother Bruce and wife Lorena have been re-doing their home's interior and fixing up the back yard. Bruce has slowed down on his painting, the press of business and all. Their daughter, Megan, is doing quite well at La Jolla Country Day School. As she gets older, she takes up more and more of their time. They seem to be surprised, but pleased. Once again we had Thanksgiving at their home, it is a beautiful place and the food was wonderful. This year we had Uncle Jack and Aunt Muriel join us as usual, but most of Lorena's family were out of town. It was a great time to be together.

Brother Tuck, wife Robie and daughter Alison keep working on their house also. It is really looking super. This year Brother Tuck is again the Training Sergeant for the El Cajon Mounted Police; he has participated, or "ridden" as he puts it, many public events. His horse is doing so well, he has been selected to perform at "The Year of the Horse." Robie's job teaching Art at Valhalla High School seems to be even more enjoyable as the years go by. Ali is now the second tallest in her family and may soon be the tallest.

Robie's father, Bill Clemens, passed away since our last letter. A fine man who is missed by all the family, we ask your prayers for her mother Georgina.

Sister Jacquie is currently looking for a new job in sales and marketing. Other than that, she is doing well.

Uncle Jack and little Jack were set to celebrate their birthdays this year together as usual, but the fire intervened. We joined Uncle Jack for his birthday the following weekend. He and Muriel have both had their share of problems this year, but they are pushing ahead. Muriel's hip broke and she fell just before the letter last year. We spent all our time after work visiting her in the hospital and checking on Uncle Jack. She got out of the hospital and step down facility; only to be followed by Uncle Jack who went in for a pacemaker and then a giant cyst removal. They now have full time help at the house, which makes things lots more pleasant. Muriel doesn't get around too well these days and her vision has deteriorated badly. Jack is moving pretty well and is the same wonderful gentleman he has always been. We get up to see them three to five times a week. We ask your prayers for both Aunt Muriel and Uncle Jack.

Mrs. Kay Denton, our excellent friend from York, in the UK, had her son Paul and his family, Emma, Jack and Eve, move to Australia. We had hoped to see more of Mrs. Kay, but her physical condition worsened so she had to undergo dialysis. She seems to be doing well, but it makes a trip to the States very hard.

Once again, on the Friday after Thanksgiving, Hap and Jack went shooting with Butch Hadzima and son in law Bryce Shields. They had a great time. Jack is an ace with his CAR-15 and even better with the Crickett, he loved it!

Unless it rains, we are going on a Jeep ride this New Year's Day. 1030 Show for an 1100 Go. About 1500 we should be back to BBQ some dead mammal. If you are what passes for local and have a 4WD, come join us. If you do not have a 4WD but want to go, we have spare seats!

Those of you who have sent us your holiday letter, thanks! We really enjoy them, it is great to know what our friends are doing. For those of you who don't send them, start! As our friend Marge said, without the letters the cards hardly seem worth the postage. We would like to write each of you a personal letter, but the fact is we would only get one letter sent a year.

Please keep our family members in your prayers –Muriel and Jack Arnold and William Arnold

This past year, as much as any year in the past, it has been made clear how lucky we are. We have been blessed with health in soul, mind and body. Those of our family here on earth are all healthy and extremely happy. Once again, we have concrete evidence of just how kind God has been to us this year. As we look over our Christmas list, we think of our friends, some we have seen, most whom we have not, and a few no longer on the list. We think of years gone by, time spent together. We wish we could have spent more time together. May God be with you as He has made so clear He is with us.

Best wishes and Love, Dru, Hap/Bill & Jackson, Mr. O, and all the Buddies

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