

Merry Christmas from the entire Arnold Family

Dear Friends,

Once again we come upon a Christmastide, remembering those who have gone before us that we might live free in this wonderful country is crystal clear. We give thanks to God that we were born here, into loving families, at this time. We thank God for our family members who have gone before us and given so much that we might live free and thrive. In particular, we acknowledge the un-payable debt we owe members of our Armed Forces and Coalition Allies protecting our freedom, at great cost to themselves and their families, under extremely difficult circumstances with little support from the government at home. God bless the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, coastguardsmen and contractors of our country and Coalition and their families.

Each year we marvel we have been so fortunate. This year like each year past, this has been a wonderful year. All in all we finished the year far better off than last year, a year very good in and of itself, better in fact than the year before that. The thing that stands out the most is our friends. We have been blessed to work with good people around the country who have become our friends. Each year we grow closer. If you are getting this letter, that means you (that may be good or bad depending on your perspective, we hope good). One thing has not changed, we are still so very blessed and we all know it.

The Silver Tipped Grizzlies (STG) (mostly retired Air Guard people) have been getting together now for a several years the third Saturday of each month at a local Los Angeles area airport for breakfast. They call it breakfast, but Jack and Hap mostly eat hamburgers. Take a look the website: <http://www.grzly.org> and see what we have been up to. Better yet, join us. Pat Rodgers has been putting together Number 11 prototype F-4; like our Cessna 150, it will fly soon! Maybe even sooner than it was going to fly last year. If you want to get on the mailing list, send a note to our SOF: cmac@grzly.org.

Not a lot of news from the Guard. Everything seems classified, but we think the 163rd is still flying Predators. They may like it, maybe they are having a good time, maybe not. Still, they are getting paid.

As with most years, no family vacation. But, all was not lost. There has been a lot of travel, not much vacation on Hap's part, but lots of travel. Jack spent all of January in Perth, Australia with our Australian relatives (military relations), the Langstaffs. January is their summer, so after a month of Sun N Fun with a family who really knows how to have a holiday, he was NOT ready to come home. The Sheilas are calling him back. Home for a few weeks, then he and Dru were off to Amsterdam to see Mad Uek (aka Thorsten Uekermann). Mad retired from the GAF where his last assignment had been at the local base, Wittmundhaven, home of JG-71, the GAF unit Hap converted to F-4Fs in the 1970s! They had a great time with Mad. Jack got to meet the Wing Commander, fly the simulator (which Mad somehow remembered how to operate five years after retirement) and watch a bunch of takeoffs, day and night. After a few wonderful days there, the pair were off to Hamburg, Hanover, a German riding school, the Volkswagen factory and then to the ferry for Hull, UK where they picked up a car and headed for York to see Mrs. Kay, Len and the Langstaffs! A couple days in to the visit, Dru decided a small car with an automatic would be more practical than a big car with a stick that had to be shifted with the wrong hand while driving on the wrong side of the road. The trade was made and all was well. After about ten days there, the intrepid pair was off to Heathrow, via RAF Coningsby where they got to watch some Typhoons fly and the Battle of Britain Spitfire and Hurricane. Then home. Did we mention that the Iceland volcano erupted in their rearview mirror? A few hours and they would have had another three weeks in the UK. No more travel for a bit, then Jack was off to Lexington, Kentucky and the World Equestrian Games (WEG). He joined Horse Instructor Ryan for a few days there, then the pair was off to Maine to see Ryan's parents' cabin where they were joined by our neighbor Lisa. Home from there, then after a bit, we were off to the Organization of Flying Adjusters annual meeting in Fredericksburg, Texas at the Hangar Hotel. <http://www.hangarhotel.com/> It was a wonderful time. OFA meetings always are, but this one was really special. The venue was superb. Many thanks to Don Hendricks for thinking of it, Bob and Joan Balslev for hosting and to Patty Otto for making it a reality. There is a tremendous amount to do there, it is a vacation destination, there is the Museum of the Pacific, Fredericksburg being Admiral Nimitz hometown. The trip was really fun, at least parts of it. As this is written the Aztec is still in Midland, Texas in response to the question by Rob Spencer, "What is all that oil?" A huge crack in the right engine case was the answer. Did you know that it is only a 5 hour van drive from Midland to Fredericksburg? We know for sure! The trip had an upside, the engine loss was on Jack's 18th birthday, so he got to celebrate at the Texas Roadhouse BBQ in San Angelo! A few work trips to Seattle, Wichita, Portland, San Francisco, Las Cruces and other places no one cares about and the travel for the year was done. Just for the records, the TSA actions are unconstitutional, time consuming, irritating and useless. They do function to keep criminals off the streets and in uniform, however. Anyway, there are a lot of pictures here: <http://www.descansorodents.com/travel.html>.

Since we have been doing the custom printed Christmas cards, each year the cover has been a new to us vehicle. Somehow we did not manage to get any new vehicles this year and it is raining, not snowing as this letter is being written on Thanksgiving Saturday. What will the card be this year? Something for sure. We will decide later. Sad about the no new vehicles, just not the vehicle, no new delivery trips, either. They are such a good time for Hap and Jack. The adventure! Maybe just a trip next year.

We know this will be a major surprise to the reader, but for the eleventh year in a row our Cessna is still in pieces. Once again, it was supposed to fly by Jack's birthday, but that slipped. God willing, it will fly before summer. Summer 2011, we hope. It is going to be pretty nice, 170hp or so, real radios, even traffic and an HSI (the HSI once was lost, but now is found). Sure would like to fly it before Jack gets too big to sit in it. The Aztec is stuck in Midland and its right engine on a truck headed that way, a story in itself.

Jack finished high school and is now enrolled in Western Governors University (WGU). As this is written, he is about 12 percent through with his Business Accounting degree. He is still working at the office with Hap on Tuesday afternoons and Fridays. Jack is still working hard on the guitar and his progress is incredible, although college has scaled back the practice time. For graduation he got a Carvin CT 624, which he plays most of the time now. Jack continues with martial arts under the patient direction of Scott Berry, known around our family as Taekwando Scott. English riding is continuing at Horse of the Sun

(<http://www.horseofthesun.com/>) in Pine Valley, two villages up the mountain from us. Interesting, he dresses Western, except while riding when he dressed the part for English or Eastern, if you will, learning of all things Dressage. Early this year, Jack had made enough progress that he would benefit from riding a single well trained horse, rather than whatever tail number came up on the schedule. So, we investigated buying a horse. We were looking in the \$10,000.00 range, not feeling too much like spending, when we found out that Buttercup had been abandoned at the ranch. Buttercup is about 25 or so and a Level III Dressage horse. She is more than lively enough for anyone. And, all we had to do was take her! So, we had a horse. Then Audrey, who runs Saving Horses, Inc., came to us with a tale of two young horses who were to be eaten. Now, we have two more horses, Luke and Leia, age around two. They need training and had a fair amount of tender loving care and vet bills to be gone through, but hey! They're free. Then Liberty was abandoned. Liberty is a miniature horse who loves to go out and walk with Jack. So, now we have four horses. All free. Hah!

Our church is beginning its Sixth year. Membership declined somewhat the previous year, but has trended up slightly upward this year, we now have an average attendance of 22.5 people each Sunday. The parish, known as Alpine Anglican Church of the Blessed Trinity (<http://www.alpineanglican.com/>), moved with the Diocese of the West under the leadership of Bishop Richard Boyce to the Reformed Episcopal Church and is now apparently moving into the Anglican Church of North America. The church is so small that everybody has at least two jobs. Jack is the Senior Acolyte. To accommodate contemporary and traditional music tastes, Jack and Father Acker (also known as Father Ironhand) play their guitars for the pre-service gathering songs every Sunday and for our service, the extremely talented and lovely Marianne Lane plays the organ. Except on the First Sunday of each month, when the Free Teen Guitar Class provides all the music. Hap is one of Blessed Trinity's three licensed Lay Readers, the Junior Warden and member of the Vestry, as well as being the Beadle. The last job is the most interesting; read about it here: <http://www.thebeadle.blogspot.com/>. With any luck, this will be Hap's last year on the Vestry. Dru is Jack and Hap's keeper and takes care of all the details they both forget, as well as an Epistle Reader.

We have not seen or heard from William for about four years. We would appreciate your prayers that God's grace may keep him safe until he finds whatever he is looking for.

Sister Jackie's big news is gastric surgery that has already resulted in the loss of well over a hundred pounds! In addition, she has been working on getting healthy.

Brother Bruce is still working in his law office. His daughter Megan is doing quite well at La Jolla Country Day School. Bruce and Megan were at their condo in Isla Mujeres on the Yucatan Peninsula for Thanksgiving this year.

Brother Tuck, wife Robie and daughter Alison are doing wonderfully. Ali turned 22 this year and is doing very well. Brother Tuck has had a bit less to do with the El Cajon Mounted Police Unit as he spends more time with the Black and White units. Robie still seems to enjoy her job teaching Art at Valhalla High School, but we hear retirement noises. Ali now lives at home and is taking classes at Cal State San Marcos. Her boyfriend Albert goes to Grossmont College; we are finding more and more he is a great fellow with a great family.

This year we had Thanksgiving Dinner at Tuck and Robie's cabin this year. Tuck almost did not make it as he was sick, but recovered in time to have turkey! Bruce and Megan were in Mexico. Dru found a two hour turkey recipe and we were off low carb for a day! What a great time!

Very bad news just after last year's letter was written, our very very wonderful friend Joan Jeffery passed away in Australia just before Christmas after a battle with cancer. We have been friends with Joan and Peter Jeffery for many years and our families are extremely close. We miss her dearly. Peter traveled to San Diego in early November, so we got to spend about a week with him. It was as if he had just gone out for a bit and was back.

Mrs. Kay Denton, our excellent friend from York, in the UK, is still pretty sick. You will never hear that from her, nor be able to tell by looking. She has been in and out of the hospital. She has neck and thumb deterioration problems, in addition to the heart and kidney problems, which require her to undergo dialysis. When you talk to Mrs. Kay, you cannot help but be in awe of her attitude. She is the most grateful person on the face of this earth and a positive joy to talk to. Thankful in all things comes to mind. Nonetheless, your prayers are appreciated.

This year the Friday after Thanksgiving Desert Shoot had great participation: Hap, Jack, Butch, Steven, Frank and Rory as usual, this time they were joined by Paul and Gary with whom Hap works, as well as Rory's friends Patrick and Eric. With so many new people, things were a tiny bit more structured, but everyone still had a great time. No Pumpkin Cromwell to shoot at, but hundreds of clay birds. Hap brought the electric trap. Time was short, due to other commitments on Jack's part, but in four hours they managed to expend more than a thousand rounds. We are up to 356 ground squirrels since the squirrel relocation program began.

Please keep our family members in your prayers – Mrs. Kay and William Arnold

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ, we look back over the past year and count our blessings: 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