

# Merry Christmas!

## Happy Holidays!

**M**erry Christmas from Julie, Brian, Tony, and Brock. We hope that this holiday season again finds you in good health, grand spirits, and filled with great anticipation for the year to come. We continue our family tradition with this newsletter—a sprinkling of pictures, stories, and tidbits of family activities over the past twelve months. The only format change is to have all the pictures printed on the good side of the ink-jet paper.

## Family Update

As the holiday season nears, it's comforting to look back on the year and find that little has changed. Brian is still working for Compaq as a training manager. He was busier this year after Compaq acquired two other large computer companies. We hope it will settle down this coming year.

Julie has been actively involved with the kids at school and as team mom for numerous sports. She returned to teaching this year to substitute several days a week, and is debating whether to return full time next year. Much to everyone's surprise, Julie cut short her long hair. Brock's response was "At least you don't look like a boy." So much for compliments.

Tony (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) and Brock (1<sup>st</sup> grade) continue to be actively involved in as many activities outside of school as will fit in the span of a day, including Cub Scouts, baseball, chess, soccer, and basketball. There is never a dull moment.

## Home Improvements

After nine years without change, this was the year for home improvements. We turned our rainy-day mud pit for a back yard into a pool, and Brian built a screened-in porch to fend off those foot-long Texas mosquitoes. The "new and improved" back yard has been a welcome addition to the home, especially with this summer's heat wave. We spent more time outside this summer than we had in the previous nine years combined. Of course, Brian is now of the opinion that any project over four hours is worth paying someone else to complete.

## That Darned Cat

We added a new pet to the family. While Brian wasn't paying close attention, the rest of the crew conspired to adopt a stray kitten. At least, we thought she was a kitten. It turns out Frost is more than a year old. And, the scrapes down her back were not from a fight, but rather the result of reckless abandon with a one-night stand. It seems we *will* be adding kittens to the family after all. Our other cat of 11 years, Whiskers, seems to be taking it all in stride. He puts up with Frost's changing moods these days. Brian and the boys can empathize.

## First Time Skiers

It seems we missed the snow of Illinois and Indiana a little too much this past year, and the family took to the slopes in Colorado. Brock and Tony had never skied before, so the first half-day was spent in ski school. Tony became known as "Rocket Man" by his classmates. Why? Because while most normal people weave down the slope at a controllable speed, Tony aims for pure speed, straight down the slope. At the conclusion of one high-speed run, the momentum was simply too much. He barreled into the plastic netting, and bounced up to do it all again. Brock had a slower start, but after a friend skied backwards in front of him, Brock became the Nordic wonder, weaving in and out of us with ease. The kids have decided that snowboarding is our next adventure.

## New Email

Our address remains the same at 15 Dusky Meadow Place in The Woodlands, TX 77381. Our phone number is also the same, 281-292-0791. However, we're finally on the Internet at home. You can reach us at [duelm@flex.net](mailto:duelm@flex.net).

**Happy New Year!**



Tony competing in the Pinewood Derby.



Brock leaving the scene of Dad's adventure in carpentry. I think he was afraid it would fall.



Dad and the boys decided to surprise Mom with self-inflicted buzz cuts. Was she pleased? I think the response was "Oh @#\*%!"



Julie with our newest niece, Jessica, daughter of Laura and Brent (Brian's brother).



Brock and Dad cutting down the Christmas tree.