

MARLER CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 7

December 1997

Well another year has passed and it is time for our annual newsletter. This year's newsletter will cover 15 months. But you say there are only 12 months in a year. Well, we have to back up to October of 1996 to give the full story of our new baby, but don't worry I think we can squeeze it all in.

Jeff returned from Bosnia October 2nd and we immediately went to work of making up for 9 months of separation. "Some of the best and most enjoyable work I've ever done," Jeff would later say. Kristy had been preparing for 6 months with vitamins, folic acid, magnesium and a caffeine-free diet (not even chocolate).

Halloween has always been one of our favorite holidays and last year's was even more special as we found out we were pregnant. We held this info out of last year's newsletter because we wanted to wait out the first trimester before telling you, for obvious reasons. Thus the 15 month year.

From the first appointment we had good news. Everything was going well and we heard the heartbeat for the first time on November 8th. Words can't describe our feeling at that moment. We thought we would wait until January to tell, but by Christmas we could hold out no longer so we told our families. It must have been quite a Christmas present. (Don't expect the same present this year.)

In January, after being back for only three months, Jeff was deployed for 3 months to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to work with a U.N. Task Force watching the Serbian border. It was best that Jeff go then so he could be back for the final trimester starting in April.

Of course because of our history (2 previous miscarriages) we worried whenever Kristy felt any unusual pain, even though the pregnancy was going well. She began getting deep muscle massage therapy to help with lower back pain caused by the pregnancy. Kristy said in February she started getting really tired at work, but kept working, though she could have done without the snow and cold. Kristy longed for her daily lunch nap. She claims it was the only way she made it through an 8 hour workday.

In March Kristy flew back to Maryland so that her parents could see her during her pregnancy. Her parents flew in her sister Kerri, from Colorado to see her as well. Kristy shopped for maternity clothes, nursery items and over all cute baby stuff while there. Not much of a selection in Germany.

Upon Kristy's return from the states, she started half days at work as she wanted to save what remained of her energy for the baby. Jeff returned from Macedonia in early April as Kristy was sick with the flu. We immediately started our 8 week Healthy Pregnancy/ Healthy Baby/ Lamaze classes.

On the 16th Kristy had her birthday and started her 8th month of the pregnancy. One of the first projects was the baby nursery: Peter Rabbit. Kristy had been planning this room for years and there was little we needed to buy to complete it as she has collected Peter Rabbit items since the first pregnancy in 1993.

In May Kristy finally got to have a baby shower given for her. Over the years she has given many, many showers for others. Of course she had most everything already because of the years of preparation and our very generous parents, but the women put on the final touches. She was extremely touched by this event.

In mid-June we went on a tour of the hospital that we would deliver in. June 30th was Kristy's last day at her job. They gave her a bonus award for all the hard work she had done as a Transportation Counselor. She still had "morning" sickness and was starting to feel too uncomfortable to sleep. We finally decided on a name be it a boy or a girl. Believe us, picking a name was quite a monumental event. We put a lot of effort in choosing the perfect name for our son-, or daughter-, to-be.

Kristy had stuck fast to not asking the sex of the baby until the birth. Jeff on the other hand, finally caved in and asked but later wished he hadn't. The doctor said he could only give Jeff a 60-80% guarantee (since doctors can be wrong/fooled). And being told what the doctor thought the sex of the baby was, didn't give Jeff the feeling he thought it would.

With less than a month to go Kristy had still only gained 8 pounds and the baby was 7 1/2. The little person had been breech the whole pregnancy but after the 35th week flip flopped from normal to breech weekly. Even during the final two weeks. But the baby was not "dropping" into the birthing canal.



Our doctor began discussing a planned C-section. We were told that the baby was big and healthy, but he would only let Kristy go 8 days overdue before inducing/C-section. On July 11th, Kristy's due date, the baby still had not dropped and so we decided to do a planned C-section on Monday the 14th.

Unfortunately Jeff was not allowed to be in the operating room (German law), but he heard Braden Matthew screaming and immediately started crying. The midwife brought the baby out for Jeff to see and let him give Braden his first bath while the doctor finished with Kristy. She came through the surgery fine and Jeff brought Braden to her in the recovery room.

Braden weighed in at 9 lb. 2 oz. Over the next few days he would sleep a lot and began to lose weight while learning how to breast feed. We both began to stress as he continued to lose weight. This did not help Kristy with breast feeding, so we began supplementing with formula on doctor's insistence (He did not return to his birth weight for a month). On top of that he was slightly jaundiced.

Kristy's parents arrived on the 18th to see the baby and help the new parents. Things got better when Kristy was released and we all went home after 8 days. Kristy left the hospital 26 pounds lighter than when she first started the pregnancy. On the 30th we celebrated our 9th wedding anniversary.

In picking our son's name; we wanted something uncommon, but not something unusual and thought Braden sounded perfect. The middle name came much easier to us, as Matthew means "Gift of God". There is no better way to describe our son.

On August 1st Braden was circumcised in the base clinic, as German hospitals do not circumcise. Kristy didn't have the heart to be in the clinic as this would be Braden's first traumatic experience. Afterwards, Jeff took a very upset Braden to an even more upset Kristy waiting in the car. We were supposed to christen him the same day but the Chaplain saw Kristy on the way out of the clinic in tears and suggested moving it back. On the 3rd a much happier Braden was christened with Kristy's parents standing in for the Godparents, Kerri and Jonathan.



Because of the surgery and being new parents we were not able to take Kristy's parents around Europe, but before they left we went to many medieval, walled German cities like Nuremberg, Rothenburg, and Ansbach.

Jeff also found out where we would be moving next; back to Fort Rucker, Alabama. Although that was not our first choice, (actually not our second through fifth choice) we began to look at the up side. First, Jeff will be going to the Instructor Pilot course and then stay to teach. Second, there will be a lot of time to spend with the family. Third, we know the area already. And last but not least, no field duty/deployments for three years. What a bonus for a military family.

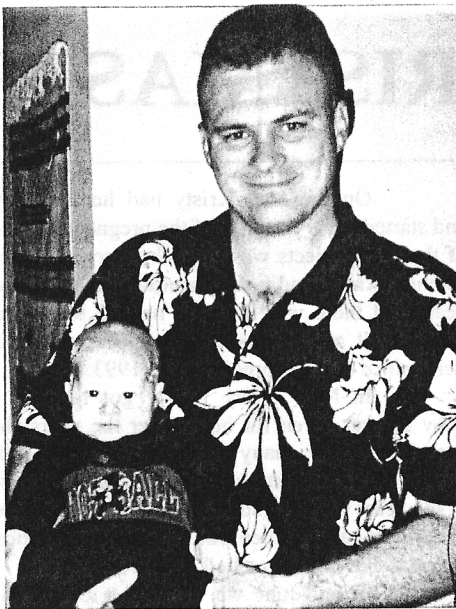
After an August like that, we kind of relaxed during September. Jeff went to the field for 10 days; stranding Kristy with the baby and two dogs in the colder weather.

In October Jeff would have to go back to the field for another ten days, so he put Kristy and Braden on a flight to Maryland to spend some quality time with the new grandparents. Kristy and Braden were spoiled rotten and Baby Gap made quite a profit. On the 29th Kristy and Braden returned just in time for Halloween. We made Braden a carrot costume to wear.



In early November the movers come to get our furniture. Shortly after Jeff's Mom and Aunt are expected to visit for a week to see the baby. We hope to see some sites before they leave as our house will be totally empty.

In December we will celebrate the baby's first Christmas in the base hotel. Not exactly perfect, but we fly out of Germany on the 30th of December on our way to Alabama. (Just in time for New Year's Eve)



FAMILY MATTERS

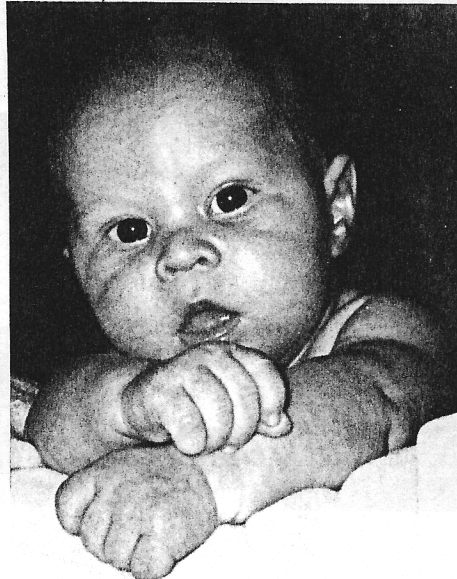
LAPPIN, Jim & Mary-Glad to have Kristy visit while pregnant in March. Enjoyed Germany and becoming Grandparents for the first time in July. Had a blast with Braden during October visit.

HINKLE, Jonathan & Kerri-Kerri vacationed in Maryland in March with family. Went to Las Vegas in October. She still substitute teaches in local elementary school and works evening at Sylvan's Learning Center. Jonathan remains a manager in the service department at his business and has taken on a part time evening job at UPS. Most of all they enjoy their new boat, right behind being a new Auntie, Uncle and Godparents to Braden.

MARLER, Lucille- Enjoyed her Germany trip with Sister Susie and meeting her newest grand baby. Planning a cruise to the Bahamas.

MARLER, Kelly, Natalie, Nicholas, Garrett & Payton- Moved to Amarillo, Texas to over see new stores. Moved back to Oklahoma after purchasing another store in Tulsa.

MARLER, Randy- Had a year of major changes. Chosen as General Manager of several Oklahoma KFC restaurants. Moved to Stillwater, OK in October.



MOMMY's CORNER



After waiting what seemed an eternity to finally become a Mommy, life has finally treated me right. Once my son was placed in my arms, my heart was finally whole and my life complete!

We have been truly blessed in many ways. He is a very alert & easy going baby who loves to smile, giggle, cuddle and stand on his chubby legs. We think he has my looks & personality, with Jeff's eyes and expressions. Braden's smile can light up a room while his tummy generated laugh can put you in stitches!

I love watching my son (not to mention saying the words "my son") tackle daily accomplishments. I look forward to all his firsts while documenting it on his baby calendar.

Although these firsts excite me it also sadens me- I want it all to slow down so that I can appreciate every moment.

I know when the day comes that he says Mama my heart will just melt and all the sleepless nights, breastfeeding trials & tribulation, fussy periods from baby shots & circumcision and being drenched in spit up at the most inappropriate times will bring a smile to my face.

My only regret thus far is our weaning from Breastfeeding at 3 months. Although I loved the experience and know my son benefitted greatly, the supplementing of formula from the beginning caused us to wean quickly. I was left feeling guilty but with a great sense of freedom. My main concern was Braden's poor weight gain and now that he's not quite 4 months old and weights 16.5 lbs, I know the supplementing and eventual weaning was the right thing to do.

Braden is an adventure and I am thrilled that I have an E ticket. Life is GOOD!

SEASON'S GREETINGS