



MARLER

Christmas Newsletter

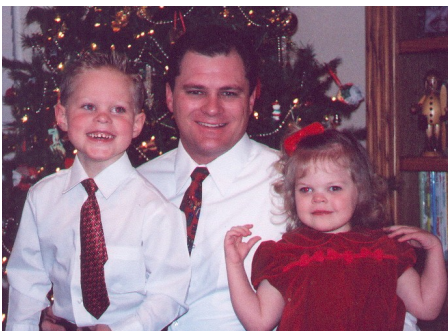


Volume 13

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December 2003

Well this has definitely been an eventful year for our family. As we wrapped up 2002 we were nervously watching the news. Jeff was awaiting orders to deploy to the Middle East. Luckily we were able to celebrate Christmas and New Years Eve together.



However every time the phone rang we all took a deep breath. Ironically, after being told nothing would happen for a few days, another phone call informed Jeff that he would be leaving. Although we thought we had prepared ourselves, it was hard news to get.

In January Jeff's unit was notified they were leaving. After saying our last goodbye at the house, Jeff drove to work, but he forgot his flight jacket and had to have Kristy and Braden deliver it to the hangar. Jeff played with Braden in the helicopter and said another goodbye to Kristy. As he was packing his jacket away, a local newspaper photographer took his picture, which ended up on the front page the next day. It took several days for Jeff to finally reach his destination: his new home for the next 4 months. There was little communication in the beginning, which was hard on Kristy. She stayed glued to the TV for any bit of information.

Kristy remained busy with the kids and their autism schedule. Luckily a couple of visitors helped keep them busy. A special treat for Kristy was a visit from her Grandmother, whom she hadn't seen in 12 years. This was the first time the kids ever met their Great Grandma Streeter. They fell in love with her immediately. She was passing



through with Kristy's Auntie Nancy and Uncle Ed. The visit was short but very memorable.

Shortly after, Kristy's high school friend, Chrissy, came to visit with her family. Her sweet daughter, Tehya, and our Braden were inseparable. It was precious. Another short, but wonderful, visit.

In February Keegan got another MRI to check for any tumor regrowth. The first attempt wasn't successful because of the sedation. Kristy was frustrated with the process, so Keegan's oncologist had to figure out another way to get the MRI accomplished. It took a couple of weeks to reschedule.

Kristy took both the kids for allergy and food tolerance testing. Autistic children have many food related problems, and Kristy finally found a doctor who could order the right type of tests. It turns out Braden was allergic to most everything he was eating and Keegan had a few food allergies as well. Kristy started the kids on a Gluten and Casein free diet; which had immediate and dramatic results. It is a regimented diet to adapt to and one we struggled with for a long time. The kids have limited choices and refuse to eat most of what they can have. Needless to say Braden and Keegan eat the same things over and over and over.

To add to their already busy schedule, Kristy enrolled the kids in a Kindermusik class. It incorporated music, dance, singing and musical instruments. The kids loved it.

In March Keegan had her 4th birthday. She had a Minnie Mouse party with all of the teachers and therapists. Keegan's favorite gift was an electric, musical keyboard. She spends a lot of time on it. Later that week Braden had his annual IEP. Kristy was very



upset with Braden's Kindergarten teacher. He was unresponsive to Braden's special needs and felt Braden didn't belong in his class because of it. The entire team was irate at his unprofessional behavior and unkind heart towards Braden. Kristy fought to get Braden out of that teacher's class and into another class, as Braden deserved better. It was the best move he ever made. Braden continued to love school, the classmates and his new teacher, Mrs. Walker. Braden made huge social and academic gains in the regular kindergarten class.

Keegan finally had her makeup MRI. This time the results were perfect. Kristy couldn't wait to share the news with Jeff, but it took awhile to get word to him that Keegan was still in remission. Keegan remains a miracle! Unfortunately, Jeff's Grandma Tebow died while he was deployed. He wasn't able to attend the funeral. Sadly, he had to hear the news through email. Joyfully, a new niece joined our family: Sydney Jaimes Marler.

And then the war began. Jeff had been building up his base and training prior to hostilities starting. Right before the war, he moved to another base and would remain there through the first week of the war. On the other side of the world Kristy's phone rang off the hook with prayers and well wishes. She received tons of email from people thinking of Jeff as well as Kristy and the kids. Those gestures were greatly appreciated. The kid's therapy team wrapped their arms around Kristy and the kids as well.

All communications were cut off once the war started and so it was a few weeks before Jeff could contact Kristy. That first phone call was very emotional.

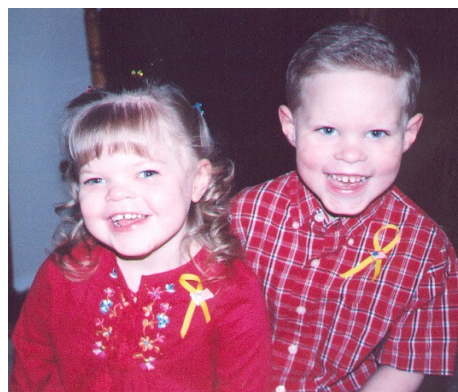
In April the therapists lifted Kristy's spirits by throwing her a surprise party for her 37th birthday. Everyone that Kristy cared about in Las Vegas was standing in her living room when she came home from an afternoon at

the spa. What a shock! Jeff missed it all. Kristy was extremely moved that the ladies would go to all that trouble on her behalf.

The Easter Bunny stopped by the house and left big baskets with chocolate bunnies. The last day of April Jeff returned home. Kristy and the kids (dressed in red, white and blue) met Jeff at the airport. Once again local news reporters were on the scene. They were on the evening news that night. Although the kids had a difficult time with Jeff's absents,



all was forgotten within minutes of being reunited. Everyone took a deep breath and began to relax.

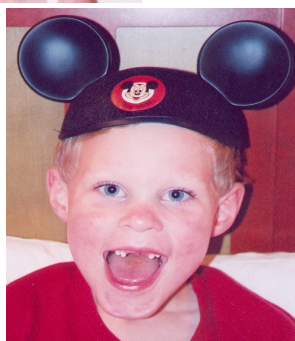


In May we got reacquainted as a family. Jeff tackled a few things around the house. For Mother's Day we stayed in a suite at the Venetian Hotel on the strip. One of the highlights of the weekend was a gondola ride down the river in the hotel. The gondolier serenaded Kristy and then shook Jeff's hand and thanked him for his service to the country. At the end of the month Jeff went to Albuquerque for a week to practice Emergency Procedures in a flight simulator. The day after he returned we left for a California vacation.



We spent the first week of June in the Grand Californian Hotel in Disneyland. It was the best week we ever had. Our kids love thrill rides!! They

rode on every roller coaster they were allowed on. The Matterhorn and Indiana Jones adventure were great, but Splash Mountain was our favorite. We also spent time in Disney's California Adventure. While



there Braden lost both his top, front teeth. He had the cutest smile. Who knew the tooth fairy liked Disneyland too. The next week we spent in San Diego at a Bay side resort. We went to Legoland, SeaWorld and the famous San Diego Zoo. Although these were all fun, nothing compares with Disneyland. When we returned from vacation, Braden traded tumbling classes for swim lessons; a perfect activity for summer in Las Vegas. Once again, Jeff was off. This time he went to Colorado Springs to attend an altitude chamber training class. While in Colorado he visited Kristy's sister (Kerri) and her family and Kristy's best friend (Tina) and her family.

We stayed at Mandalay Bay for the Fourth of July. We hung out poolside all day but missed the fireworks that evening standing in line for the buffet. The following Sunday, another high school girlfriend of Kristy's (Suzee) showed up on our doorstep with her new husband sporting a pregnant belly. It was such a great surprise and nice visit. Shortly after, we celebrated Braden's birthday. He had a Rolie Polie Olie party. Hard to believe our first-born turned six. He had a



great time and received lots of gifts. Jeff's Mom & husband came to Vegas for a bowling tournament a few days later. We met up with them for dinner and a visit. We finished



out the month celebrating our 15th wedding anniversary. We hit "Studio 54" in the MGM Grand, for an evening of dancing.

In August, Kristy's high school in Hawaii held it's 20th reunion in Las Vegas. Although this reunion wasn't for Kristy's graduating class, several old friends made it for the reunion and Kristy was able to see them. We stayed at the Excalibur hotel so Kristy could have late nights with no drive home. Kristy, Tina and Chrissy were able to go out after the "meet & greet" party. The next day all 3 families spent the afternoon at the Adventuredome at Circus Circus, then Chrissy treated the girls to a late afternoon at the Belagio spa. The following day the families got together again for lunch at the Hard Rock Café and shopped at the M&M and Coca-Cola factory. Kristy had a fabulous time. It was fun playing with her girls.

Braden finished Kindergarten and two weeks later started first grade. This year he spends 50% of his day in a Primary Autism class with one other classmate. The purpose of the Autism class is to focus on academics.

The rest of the day he spends in a typical first grade class, which includes library, PE, music, drama and art. Braden is working on the three R's and is showing great progress. A true testament that typical classroom time, home ABA therapy and the special diet are benefiting Braden.

Keegan underwent another semi-annual MRI. Once again the results were great. Each time we do this it gets a little easier, but there is always a small part of us that is extremely nervous until the results are in.

In the last week of August, Jeff went to Florida for a week to learn a new computer program for work. While there he was able to see many old friends and visit Fort Rucker, Alabama (our old home). Unfortunately he couldn't visit for very long, but it



was great to see the Galuzzo family, Ramiccio family, Starritt family and Todd Johnson.

In September, as soon as Jeff got back, we were on the road again. This time for Colorado. We went to celebrate our nephew's, Connor, first birthday. We enjoyed seeing Christian too. Kristy's parents were also there and we spent a couple days visiting.



Before we knew it, it was October. We celebrated Jeff's 37th birthday and Halloween.



This year the kids were dressed as 1950's sock hoppers. The kids really enjoyed Trick-or-Treating this year. We could barely keep up with Braden as he ran from house to house. Jeff and Kristy dressed as Vikings for Jeff's work party.

The first two

weeks of November was very busy for Jeff. He planned for the Nellis Air Show. Jeff worked Saturday in case of an aircraft accident. The Air Force Academy Parachute Team's airplane broke, so Jeff flew them in his helicopter for their demonstration jump. After the jump Jeff was able to perform a fly-by near the crowd. So he got the fly in the second largest air show in the world (Paris Air Show is the largest). We all went to the show on Sunday. A family friend gave us VIP passes for the show and we all enjoyed the special treatment at the VIP pavilion. A college friend, Mike Smith, was here for the air show and took Jeff for a ride in an A W A C airplane. Since Jeff flies so low in helicopters, it was interesting to see how different flying is at higher altitudes.



We spent Thanksgiving at home since Keegan was recovering from the flu. Kristy immediately started decorating the house for Christmas before the turkey was even out of the oven. She just loves to decorate for the holidays. The house looked very festive.

In December we are planning our annual Christmas Party to thank all of our therapists and schoolteachers for their dedication and commitment to our children's fight against Autism. Many of our girls have moved on this year. We want to say a special Thank You to: Tara, Tearsa, Kathryn, Kimber, Leanne, Stephanie, Kassandra, LaRita, Amy,



Jill, Elizabeth, Whitney, Dani, L'Nyssa, Kim, Lucia, Marcie, Mrs. Walker, Cheri, Ms. Gliedman and Ms. Schaumburg. All these ladies have really big hearts and our children adore them.

Kristy's parents will be joining us for Christmas. We plan to stay at Treasure Island Hotel for a couple of nights, catch a Vegas show, do some shopping and take the kids to the mountains so they can play in snow. We plan to be busy but together.

We continue to have monthly Lovaas workshops, endless therapy hours (ABA, Speech, OT) and school. The kid's schedule remains full and they continue to achieve. We are proud of their accomplishments and progress. They are amazing and true blessings.

We hope your family remains blessed and together during this holiday season and New Year. We continue to pray for our fellow service members overseas, their families and America. If you are ever in Las Vegas, look us up. We love to see old friends.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year !!
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