

# THE VERLEYS' 2002 ADVENTURE

## January



Our new year began with a wonderful surprise, when our little Mary started walking! We had been waiting for a long time for her to take her first steps. On Christmas Eve, she finally stood up by herself...and four days later, she took off. By New Year's Day, she was walking across the room...and getting into everything!

January also saw the completion of a home-improvement project that had been in the works for 2 years: our laundry room. And out with the "Olds", in with the new...It was time for Olla the Oldsmobile to retire, so we traded her in and bought a white 2001 Dodge Intrepid.

## February

The winter flu season hit our house at the beginning of February - that, and the cold weather, kept us at home for a while...but once we were healthy again, we went on our first camping trip of the year. We spent one weekend desert camping near a ghost town called Sundad and enjoyed temperatures in the 80's. While we were there, we explored the backroads in our Jeep and did some short hikes in the area. It was one of those weekends when I truly appreciated living in Arizona.



## March



In March, we took our first family vacation of the year, to attend the wedding of Richard Kherlopian (John's cousin) and Lori Peel, which took place on March 2 in Athens, GA.

After the wedding, the three of us went to Columbia, SC, where we spent time with Aunt Lotte and Uncle Richard Kherlopian, as well as Grandpa and Grandma Chakowski. And, of course, what would a vacation be without a Verley-adventure? We visited Watson Mill State Park in Georgia; Congaree Swamp and Myrtle Beach, SC; and the Blue Ridge Parkway and Grandfather Mountain in North Carolina. While we were in North Carolina, we stayed at Lotte and Richard's mountain house - a most cozy little cottage just miles north of Lenoir, NC. All in all, it was a relaxing vacation, and we had the chance to spend quality time together as a family.



John and I hosted the Easter celebration this year at our house. We had the whole family over, including Bill & Erika, the Guckenburgs, my father (Butch), my Uncle Joe, and my brother Clyde, who lives in Baltimore, MD. John put together a great Easter egg hunt for all of the kids - *toddlers* and *adults* - and a good time was had by all!

## April

As tradition goes, the last weekend of April took us to Puerto Peñasco, Mexico, for the annual Rocky Point Skydiving



Boogie. Four words can best describe this year's boogie: *Best Rocky Point Ever!* While Mary discovered the joys of splashing through tide pools, John and his father made several jumps each. The highlight, however, was when I made my second-ever tandem skydive! John put together a group of ten

people to jump with me, and our friend Glen Medley videotaped it all. It was an incredible rush, and the views of Rocky Point from 13,000 feet were breathtaking!

## May

In May, John received his first invitation to participate in the Arizona Challenge, a skydiving event organized by George Jicha and members of the World



Champion Team Arizona Airspeed. The challenge is to achieve the impossible. This year's challenge was to build an X out of four 24-person "zippers". (Photo by Brent Finley.) The event took place during Memorial Day Weekend.

At the same time, my friends and I co-hosted a baby shower for my best friend Suzanne Daggert, who was due to have her first child - a girl - in August. After the shower, the girls and I had a slumber party, thus proving that you're never too old for a sleepover! We also learned, two days later, that our friend Charlene Magee was pregnant as well with her first child (another girl)! She is due on December 2.



John was also invited to participate in a world record 300-way skydiving attempt, which was scheduled to take place in the resort city of Maceió, Brazil in December 2002. We had planned for all of us to go...but political turmoil in Brazil forced the organizers to move the event to a new location...Eloy, AZ! *Not exactly the luxury vacation we were hoping for!* Nonetheless, the participants are confident that they will break the record this year.

## June

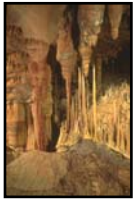
Our summer began on a sour note when a severe drought and rampant wildfires forced the closure of most of the national forests in Arizona...and just as John and I were trying to get back into shape! We did manage to do one short hike...on the Flagstaff Urban Trail System, on Father's Day. Mary hiked a quarter-mile of the trail - *let the Sherpa training begin!*



On June 24, John underwent surgery to repair a hernia he received during the Arizona Challenge in May. Although the procedure caused him a great deal of pain, he was back on his feet in no time at all.

## July

Although the closure of the national forests put a strain on our active lifestyle, we still managed to find things for us to do. In July, we went to Kartchner Caverns State Park, near Benson, AZ. The caverns were discovered over fourteen years ago by a pair of college students and were opened up for public tours in 2001. The tour is an hour long, through a third of a mile of dark, living caverns that are 68° with 99% humidity year-round. During the tour we saw some of the most impressive cave formations ever! At the end of the tour is Kubla Khan, a 200,000 year-old giant stalagmite in the center of a large cavern. The three of us were fascinated by the caverns - even Mary enjoyed it, although she wanted to touch everything in sight!



To complete the weekend, we camped overnight at the state park's campground...in Bill and Erika Verley's motor home, which they had offered to let us use for the trip.

## August

In August, we entered into yet another phase of parenthood: the *Terrible Two's!* Our little Mary turned 2 on August 8. To celebrate, we took her to a Diamondbacks baseball game on her birthday and then threw a birthday party for her on August 10. Two of her friends from day care attended her party, as well as her cousin Joshua. They all had a wonderful time!



August 8 was a very special day this year: my best friend Suzanne gave birth to her *beautiful* daughter! Katherine Anne Daggert was born on Mary's second birthday, at 6:32 a.m., weighing in at 8 pounds 4 ounces, 21" long. *Congratulations to Suzanne and her husband Todd, and welcome Baby Kate!*



And, at the end of July, the National Forests reopened, finally giving us the chance to go hiking and camping again! You can read about our adventures on [ArizonaHikingTrails.com](http://ArizonaHikingTrails.com) (our web site).

## September

September was a busy month for us. On September 7-9, I flew to San Francisco to pay a visit to my best friend's new baby. (Photos by Todd Daggert) Meanwhile, John and Mary had their first "Daddy-Daughter Weekend".



On September 21, my friends and I hosted another baby shower, this time for Charlene Magee! What a lovely party!

And to celebrate John's birthday this year, he and I spent a romantic three-day weekend in the Chiricahua Mountains, where we hiked 20 miles, on three different trails. We stayed at the George Walker House: an old cabin built in 1902 in Paradise, AZ. It now serves as a "guest cabin" for visitors to the area and is available by reservation. And what about Mary? She had a fun-filled weekend with Grandma Erika and Grandpa Bill!



## October

In October, John was sent on yet another business trip, to attend convention in Orlando, FL. (He also went to San Antonio in April.) How lucky for him, because he was able to spend some time in the Skyventure Tunnel - a giant wind tunnel where he could build his skydiving skills *without* jumping out of an airplane.

October was a month for anniversary celebrations. On October 19, we toasted John and Sofie Chakowski on 60 years of marriage. They celebrated their special day here in Phoenix, with a family dinner at Cork & Cleaver. Then, on Halloween, my friends Marcheta and Erik Strunk celebrated their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, with a Halloween Party on October 26, at their new home. We dressed as the Flintstones for the party - Mary was a very cute Pebbles! (Photo by Suzanne Daggert)



## November

In November, we went on our last camping trip of the year - our last chance to relax before the buzz of the Holidays and before we leave on our two-week long vacation. We camped out in the desert near Superior and spent the day exploring the four-wheel drive roads in the area. The next day, we visited the Boyce Thompson Arboretum State Park, where we enjoyed an easy, relaxing day hike amongst the trees of the world. It was a nice way to end the year!



With Thanksgiving and the Holidays fast approaching, John and I certainly have a lot to celebrate. I joined Weight Watchers in May, to lose the rest of my "pregnancy and marriage" weight, and currently, I have lost 45 pounds on the plan - a total of 112 pounds overall since Mary's birth - and I have about 11 more pounds to go. John followed the plan with me, and he lost about 45 pounds, too! It is an amazing accomplishment for us, and we both feel better for it.



*The shrinking Verleys*

## December

We're entering into the month of December, in which John will be participating in the 300-Way World Record Attempt. Immediately thereafter, we will be leaving for Cancun, Mexico on a one-week vacation!

We have many more adventures coming our way next year, including a trip to Baltimore, MD, and several camping and hiking excursions...and most importantly, I'm going back to school in January to become certified in Web Development.

The year is coming to an end, and a new year is fast approaching. From our family to yours, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

**Love, John & Heather & Mary Verley**

