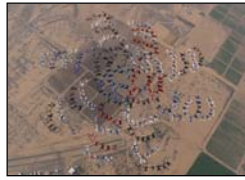


THE VERLEY-BEST NEWS – 2003

December 2002 – The Verleys ended 2002 with a bang! John became a world record holder, when he and 299 other skydivers built a 300-way formation in the skies over Eloy, AZ, on December 12. (Photo by Mike McGowan) After the event was over, the Verleys took off on a six-day adventure in Cancun, Mexico, where they visited the Mayan ruins at



Chichén Itzá and Tulum, took a day trip to Cozumel Island, and relaxed on the beach. It was a nice way to celebrate John's new world record... and to spend quality time together as a family, too!

January 2003 – “Out with the old and in with the new” was how the Verleys began their new year. They purchased a washer, dryer, and refrigerator, to replace their old appliances, and they also bought Mary a new toddler bed. Mary loves sleeping in her new bed... although getting her to take a nap in it is a different story!



February – Having a toddler in the house has certainly been an adventure for the Verley family... though not every adventure involves being in the outdoors. On February 8, John and Heather took Mary to her first concert – to see The Wiggles, a four-man Australian musical group for children, featured on Playhouse Disney. She is one of their biggest fans and has begun to collect all of their videos and CD's.



The Verleys also went on their first camping trip of the year, in the Little Horn Mountains! It was a beautiful weekend for camping, with temperatures in the 80's!

March – The Verleys kept very active during the month of March, with hiking trips, a snow-play day in Flagstaff, and a visit to the Renaissance Festival. They also painted their house – a project that added a whole new life to their old home. In other news, Mary saw her first movie – *Piglet's Big Movie* – on the big screen! What fun!



April – The Verley family is growing! On April 2, John and Heather got the official news: they were going to have another baby! The newest addition to the family was due on December 1, 2003!



During the month of April, John went on his only business trip of the year... to Orlando, FL (again!). During his stay, he spent some time practicing his skydiving skills in the Skyventure Tunnel.

Upon his return, the Verleys spent time with family at the Thomas Family

The Verleys at the Thomas Family Reunion

Reunion, which took place April 18 and 19 in Phoenix. They also spent Easter with Grandpa and Grandma Chakowski, as well as Aunt Lotte and Uncle Richard, during their visit to Arizona. (Grandpa turned 89 on April 16.) Soon thereafter, the Verleys went on their annual trip to Rocky Point for the Skydiving Boogie. While John put on a show for the crowds, Mary spent her time splashing in the water!



May – During the month of May, the Verleys got back to the outdoors with not one but *three* camping trips. They spent Mother's Day in the San Pedro Riparian Area, where they hiked with Heather's friends Manuela and Detlef from Germany. The following weekend, they did their first backpacking trip in two years, taking John's



mother Erika on an adventure to the Mogollon Rim to hike the Houston Brothers Trail. Finally, at the end of the month, it was time for another group camping trip, with the Verleys (Bill and Erika) and the Guckenburgs, too!

They camped at Aspen Spring and had a great time.

John was invited again to spend Memorial Day Weekend doing the Arizona Challenge, at Skydive Arizona in Eloy. This year, the challenge was to build an 84-person honeycomb – a formation that was built after only two attempts! (Photo by Jason Peters)



June – In June, the Verleys, along with Heather's mother Cherry, embarked on their first vacation of the year. They flew to Baltimore, MD, to spend time with Heather's brother Clyde and his friend John Sprinkle. Last year, Clyde and John bought a house in Baltimore, and they



had invited them to come out and see it. While they were there, they visited Baltimore Harbor and Washington, DC. They also took a day trip out to Laurel, Delaware, so that

John could make one memorable jump at Skydive Delmarva!

July – It is hard to believe, but the Verleys celebrated four years of marital bliss in July!

They spent their anniversary camping in the White Mountains and hiking in the Bear Wallow Wilderness Area. They also tried out their anniversary gift to each other: a brand new ten-by-ten tent!



Upon returning from their trip, Heather started a new job! After having spent the past year posting for jobs to escape an evil boss, Heather was finally offered an Administrative Assistant position for the Loan Delivery department at Bank One... and she gratefully accepted. She loves her new job and looks forward each day to the challenges it presents.

August – It was another month of celebrations, as Mary turned 3 years old on August 8. The Verleys had a birthday party for her at Peter Piper Pizza, and all of her friends from day care, as well as her cousin Joshua, were there to play games, eat pizza and cake, and wish Mary a Happy Birthday.



The Verleys then celebrated Heather's birthday with a four-day camping trip to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon! It was Heather's first time there (as well as Mary's), and she was amazed at the beauty of the Canyon.



Just before embarking on their trip, the Verleys bought a roof-pod for the Jeep, in which to transport and store all of their camping gear. And after giving it a test run during their trip to the Grand Canyon, they decided that it was definitely worth the investment.

September – As the Verleys began preparing for the arrival of their new baby, they made yet another major purchase: they bought a digital camera...*finally!* John tested it out by taking it with him on a solo backpacking trip to the White Mountains. He took some fantastic pictures with it, including a great shot of the bear he encountered in the woods!



The Verleys took two weeks off in September to go on an incredible road trip. Their 11-day journey took them through 4 states (Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico – 18 counties total), as they drove 2100 miles of scenic



highways and byways (a total of 51 hours driving time), to visit 13 National Parks & Monuments, 1 Tribal Park, and 1 Historic Railroad (the Durango-Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad). They took over 600 digital pictures with their new camera. Mary made the trip with one emergency room visit (in Grand Junction, CO) and zero potty accidents! She also earned a Junior Ranger Badge at Aztec Ruins National Monument – it was a very proud moment for her.



October – Upon returning from their 11-day road trip, the Verleys began making preparations for the arrival of the new baby – and Mary prepared to become a big sister! She attended the 32-week ultrasound at the doctor's office and was utterly fascinated by the images that she saw. She also accompanied her Mommy and Daddy on the tour of the hospital. Most importantly, she attended a Sibling Preparation class at Scottsdale Healthcare Shea, in which she learned all about newborn babies – how to hold them,



how to help Mommy and Daddy care for the baby, and so on. The children in the class got to dress up in hospital scrubs, take a tour of the maternity ward, and hold a baby

doll to practice holding a real baby. Mary enjoyed the class and became very excited about becoming a big sister.



Of course, she was even more excited about Halloween this year, as this was the first year that she got to pick her own costume. And the little princess decided that she wanted to be...well, a princess! Mary asked to be Cinderella, so Heather made her a beautiful costume to wear. Mary also went trick-or-treating for the first time, and that was an incredible experience for her because it involved free candy!

November – It was supposed to be a time of great joy, but November brought tragedy and sadness into the Verley family. On November 10, during a routine prenatal visit, Heather's OB, Dr. Harpenau, could not find the baby's heartbeat. After several grueling hours of ultrasounds, the Verleys received news that no parent ever wants to hear: they had lost their unborn child, only three weeks before he was due to be delivered.

Their son, William Jonathon, was delivered by Cesarean section on November 12, 2003 at 8:19 a.m. He weighed 6 pounds 8 ounces and was 19.5 inches long. Upon delivery, the doctor discovered the reason for his death: his umbilical cord had become tightly entangled with his legs, cutting off his supply of nutrients and oxygen. It was a very tragic accident that no one could have prevented, and knowing this helped bring closure for John and Heather.

John and Heather had the chance to hold William shortly after his delivery, at which time they said their good-byes. The hospital staff then prepared a memory kit for them to take home, so that they would never forget what he looked like.

With the love and support of their friends and family, the Verleys are trying to cope with the loss of their son. They are so very grateful for all of the kind words and thoughtful gestures expressed by all.

William will be remembered during a private ash-scattering ceremony.

December – With the holidays approaching, the Verleys are trying to move on. Heather continues to heal physically from the surgery and will return to work January 7. The emotional scars will take longer to heal, but thanks to the love and support of friends and family, John and Heather and Mary will be able to move on past their unfortunate tragedy.

They are looking now to the new year, which brings with it promises of happiness and many more wonderful adventures. Heather will continue taking courses towards her certification in web design, and John will begin a Bachelor's degree program at the University of Phoenix in January. They will celebrate their five-year wedding anniversary in July, and Heather will celebrate 20 years of friendship with United Friends (her best friends from high school).

And, as always, you can read about their adventures on ArizonaHikingTrails.com, their web site.

So, from the Verley house to yours, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

With Love,
John & Heather & Mary Verley