

# A YEAR WITH THE VERLEYS - 2004

**January** – The Verleys closed 2003 on a solemn note; on New Year’s Eve, they scattered the ashes of their son, William Jonathon, who was stillborn at 37 weeks. A small gathering of family and friends were there to say good-bye to little William, as John and Heather scattered his ashes under the white rose bush that was planted in his honor by his grandmother, Erika.

With the closing of 2003, the Verleys began a new year of adventures. In January 2004, they remodeled their living room. They ripped up all of the old carpeting and replaced it with laminate wood flooring. Then, once that was finished, they decided to paint, too. The result is stunning – it added a whole new life to their home.



John and Heather and Mary went on a number of adventures during the month of January, including a trip to the Biosphere II and the Casa Grande Ruins, a day hike in the Eagletail Wilderness, and a snow play day in Flagstaff. John also embarked on a new adventure: at the end of January, he began a Bachelor’s Degree program at the University of Phoenix. Meanwhile, Heather began her third semester at Paradise Valley Community College...and she also rejoined Weight Watchers!



**February** – During Valentine’s Day weekend, John’s 8-way skydiving team, Tornado (*pictured*), competed in the Valentine’s Money Meet in Eloy. The team had a great match and took second place!



On February 20, Mary underwent outpatient surgery for her third set of ear tubes (to battle her chronic ear infections) – and she also had her adenoids removed. She recovered quickly from the surgery and was bouncing off of the walls within 24 hours.



While Mary “recovered” from her surgery, the Verleys spent some time at the Renaissance Festival, where Mary got to ride a camel! They also took in a few shows, including the Birds of Prey, which, as always, was spectacular.

**March** – As the Verleys prepared for a very insane springtime, full of trips and family visits, Heather took some time off and flew to Petaluma, CA, to spend a three day weekend with her friends, the Daggerts. She had a chance to do “girl-things” with Suzanne...and she got to play with little Katie (*pictured*), too! While Heather was gone, John and Mary had a Daddy-Daughter weekend that included a spring training baseball game and a backpacking trip to the Superstitions!



The Verleys also went on their first backpacking/camping trip of the year during the month of March.

They backpacked the West Clear Creek Trail near Camp Verde...and they had quite the adventure! During the night, their campsite was invaded by skunks!

As always, you can read about the Verleys’ adventures in the outdoors on their web site: [ArizonaHikingTrails.com](http://ArizonaHikingTrails.com).

**April** – Let the insanity begin! As in years past, April was a busy month for the Verleys. First, John took a three-day weekend to train in the wind tunnel in Perris, CA, with his skydiving team, Tornado. The following weekend, John, Heather, and Mary went to a Thomas Family BBQ at Sahuaro Ranch Park in Glendale. That same weekend, they hosted Easter Dinner for their family.

Just days after Easter, the whole Verley clan flew to Myrtle Beach, SC, to celebrate Grandpa John Chakowski’s 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, on April 16. It made him very happy to be surrounded by his children, his grandchildren, and his great-grandchildren, all of whom were there to honor him and to celebrate his long life.



Upon returning from Myrtle Beach, John flew to Atlanta, GA, to attend a conference. While he was gone, Heather took Mary to see The Wiggles in concert...again! Mary had a fantastic time dancing in the aisles and singing along with her favorite songs.

The day after John’s return from Atlanta, the Verleys went on their annual trip to Rocky Point, Mexico, for the Rocky Point Skydiving Boogie. Although Bill & Erika brought their motor home down there as usual, John and Heather and Mary stayed in the hotel for the first time. This year, John only made six jumps, and he spent the rest of the time playing with Mary on the beach...and doing homework!



**May** – There was no end to the madness in May; just days after returning from Rocky Point, Heather and United Friends (Suzanne, Marcheta, Debbie, Charlene, and Lori) left for Las Vegas, NV, during Mother’s Day weekend, to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their friendship.



The girls had a great time seeing the shows, plugging coins into the slot machines, shopping, and...oh, yes, eating at the marvelous buffets! But the best part of the trip was having the whole group together!

For the next two weeks, things began to calm down in the Verley house...but soon Memorial Day weekend came, which meant that it was time for John to participate in the Arizona Challenge, a skydiving invitational in which the best skydivers are invited to Skydive Arizona to put together very intricate formations. This year’s attempt was a 96-way Hope Diamond.

**June** – In June, the summer camping season began, despite the continued drought and strict fire restrictions in all of Arizona’s national forests. The Verleys headed to the Mogollon Rim during the first weekend in June to “take William on his first campout”, so to speak. They camped at John’s



favorite meadow and scattered the remainder of William's ashes at Potato Lake.

On June 12, Heather and her friends threw a baby shower for their friend Debbie Hannum-Brown, who would be having her first child – a boy – in August!

Towards the end of June, the Verleys finally made the decision to cut off their home telephone and convert the line into a DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) for high-speed internet access. Having the DSL line has enabled them to update their web site more frequently, with all of the latest pictures of Mary!

During the last weekend of June, the Verleys took John's mother on a camping trip to Flagstaff. While they were there, they hiked with John's friends John Coffman and Jan Banka (pictured) in the Lava River Tube. They also met up with their friends Don & Melissa Mann, and the whole group had dinner together.



**July** – Five golden years! On July 17, the Verleys celebrated anniversary number five, with a four-day camping trip near Flagstaff (the city where they were married). They visited the South Rim of the Grand Canyon (where Mary earned another Junior Ranger badge!), did some short day hikes, and enjoyed spending time together as a family.



On July 18, immediately after returning from Flagstaff, Heather & Mary went to a baby shower for John's dear friend, Mary Traub, who would be having her first child – a boy – in September!



**August** – On August 8, Mary Verley turned four years old! (Hard to believe, isn't it?) The Verleys celebrated her special day with a Wiggles-themed birthday party for her and her friends at Peter Piper Pizza.

Five days later came Heather's birthday...and, of course, they celebrated with a four-day camping trip in the Chiricahuas! While they were there, they visited the Chiricahua National Monument as well as the Fort Bowie National Historic Site, where they did some nice day hikes.



While the Verleys were in the Chiricahuas, Heather's friend Debbie gave birth to a 9-pound baby boy! Timothy Curtis Brown was born to Debbie and Brian Brown on August 14, 2004 – he missed Heather's birthday by about 5 hours! Timmy is a beautiful baby, and the new parents couldn't be more proud!



On that *same* day, John's friends, John Coffman and Jan Banka, were married in Flagstaff, AZ (a great place to get married, of course!). They are a great couple, and the Verleys wish them the all the best.

**September** – As summer drew to a close, the Verleys had a chance to slow things down a bit, in preparation for a very busy October. They spent some time at home working on homework and projects around the house.

In September, the Verleys' dear friends, Brent Finley and Mary Traub, finally became parents! Mary gave birth

to a handsome baby boy – Nicholas Joseph – on September 11 (picture by Brent Finley). What a blessing for them to finally have the child that they have always wanted!



At the end of September, the Verleys were visited by the Chakowskis! Lotte, Richard, and Grandpa and Grandma Chakowski arrived by motor home, at the end of a long, cross-country trip from South Carolina, and they stayed in Phoenix (with Bill and Erika) for a week. It was nice to see them again, because Mary got another chance to get to know her great-grandparents.

**October** – October brought another month of insanity to the Verley house. On October 4, John went to Perris, CA, to compete in the National Skydiving Championships, with his 8-way team Tornado and his 16-way team S.E.A.L.S. (Heather & Mary came along, too, to cheer for them.) Despite personnel changes that happened right before Nationals, Tornado took home the GOLD medal for 8-way Intermediate!



The very next week, John flew to Cincinnati for a job interview with Catholic Health Initiatives, based in Erlanger, Kentucky. He had been head-hunted by their recruiter and was one of four candidates interviewing for the Director of Payroll position. Although he did not get the position, the experience that he gained from going through the interview process was very valuable.

Two weeks later, on October 23, the Verleys embarked on the vacation of a lifetime...well, of Mary's lifetime anyway: they went to Walt Disney World in Florida! John was already going there to attend a conference; he decided to have Heather and Mary come along, too, so that Mary could take her first trip to



Disney World. They visited all four theme parks – Magic Kingdom, Epcot, Animal Kingdom, and Disney-MGM Studios – over five days and had a wonderful time! Mary was just tall enough to ride the fun rides – Splash Mountain was her favorite – and she also got to meet her favorite Disney characters: Cinderella, Belle, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Mary Poppins...and so many others!

**November & December** – The holiday season is fast approaching...The Verleys started off the holiday season with a wonderful Thanksgiving feast at the Cave Creek Recreational Area, lovingly prepared in Bill & Erika's motor home on a sunny, 70° Thanksgiving Day.

The Verleys are now looking forward to another year of great adventures as they enter into 2005. So, from the Verley house to yours, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Here's to another great year!



Love, John & Heather & Mary Verley