

A YEAR WITH THE VERLEYS - 2005

January – Welcome to another year of Verley family adventures! We hope that you had a good year!

The year began with not one but *two* home improvement projects – the kitchen and Mary’s room. The Verleys remodeled the kitchen by laying down ceramic tile and giving it a new coat of paint. They also upgraded their stove. The result is amazing!



Two weeks later, the Verleys remodeled Mary’s room; now that Mary is no longer a baby, it was time to turn her room into a “Big Girl’s” room. They painted her walls Pink, decorated it with Disney Princesses, and (to top it all off), replaced her little toddler bed with a Big Girl’s bed.

In between the home improvement projects, the Verleys did manage time for a few outings, including a few day hikes, a snow-play day in Flagstaff, and nephew Joshua’s birthday party, too.



February – The month of February brought rain (and lots of it) to the Valley of the Sun...and that kept the Verleys home for most of the month. But they made the most of it by spending time with close friends. During the first weekend in February, Heather’s best friend Suzanne Daggert and her daughter Katie came to Phoenix for a visit, and the whole group got together for a party. It was great to have all of the girls together...and it was fun to see Mary and Katie (the “August 8” girls) playing together.



On the first sunny weekend in February, the Verleys met up at the Phoenix Zoo with John’s great friends, Brent Finley and Mary Traub, and their new baby, Nicholas (who was born in September 2004). It was nice to finally meet little Nicholas, and they were glad to see that Brent and Mary were enjoying parenthood, too.

March – In March, Heather took a couple of days off from reality to be a teenager again. On March 2, she flew to San Jose, CA, where she met up with best friend, Suzanne, to see the 80’s pop band Duran Duran in concert. It was the first time that they had seen the whole band together (because the band split apart in 1985), and it was the best concert that they had ever seen.

The rain dried up in March, bringing beautiful temperatures back to the Valley. The Verleys went on a number of hiking and backpacking adventures in the Superstition Mountains – adventures that you can read about on the Verleys’ website, ArizonaHikingTrails.com (more about that later...)

During Easter weekend, the Verleys attended a Thomas Family Reunion at Rio Vista Park in Peoria. They also hosted Easter dinner for John’s family. They had an Easter Egg hunt for the kids, and dinner, as usual, was exceptional.



March was also the start of Kindergarten registration; the Verleys got Mary registered for Kindergarten, so that she could start school on August 15.

April – The Verleys began the month of April with more hiking adventures...and a project that was three months in the making was finally revealed: the brand



new Arizona Hiking Trails web site was published, just over four years since it first went live. Heather revamped the entire site, with new graphics and new journals, and John wrote up new trails, too. They are very proud of the work that went into making the site better than ever.

And now, some sad news. For the first time ever, the Verleys missed the Rocky Point Skydiving Boogie. Long story short, there was a snafu with the dates of the boogie, and John had to go on a business trip, to attend a conference in San Diego. Rest assured, this will not happen next year!

May – The month of May brought business trips and busy days to the Verley family. John went on two back-to-back business trips, both in San Diego. Meanwhile, he started doubling up on his University of Phoenix courses in order to graduate in October.



The Verleys did have time for some fun trips into the outdoors, though. For Mother’s Day, John and Mary took Heather hiking at Tonto Natural Bridge; two weeks later, they backpacked in Clover Creek. As usual, you can read about these adventures on the Verleys’ website.

At the end of May came Memorial Day, which is the weekend of the Arizona Challenge. John was invited again this year ...but only a week before the Challenge, John broke his hand! He had a hairline fracture in his hand, and it caused him a great deal of pain. Needless to say, it kept him from doing the Challenge this year.

June – June brought the beginning of another summer camping season, and the Verleys spent as much time as they could hiking and backpacking in the high country. For Father’s Day this year, they backpacked along beautiful Chevelon Creek and had a great time.



Sadly, the Verleys lost a member of their family during the month of June. Calvin the cat passed away on June 22; he was 15 years old. He had lived a very long life and had enjoyed many years as a feisty tom cat that caroused the neighborhood. During the past year, he had lost much of his vitality and spent most of his time snoozing in the Arizona room. The Verleys knew that his time was growing shorter when he stopped grooming himself earlier in the year. Calvin died peacefully in the Arizona room, and John buried him under the pecan tree in the backyard. He will be missed.



On a much lighter note, Heather’s friend Charlene and her husband

Michael Magee (as well as their daughter Meredith) welcomed their second child during the month of June: Mitchell Charles Magee was born on June 24. The Verleys wish them all the best with their new bundle of joy.

July – In July, John and Heather celebrated their sixth wedding anniversary in style: they went on a cruise in Alaska. The cruise was wonderful, and they found Alaska to be breathtaking. While on board



Holland America Line's ms Ryndam, John and Heather sailed through College Fjord and Glacier Bay National Park, where they had the chance to see glaciers calve. They also went on a number of shore excursions: sea-kayaking in Sitka,

hiking in Juneau, and motorcycling in Ketchikan. To top it all off, they enjoyed fine cuisine and wines on board the ship. In the words of Jimmy Buffett, it was a "Lovely Cruise".

While her parents were on their cruise, Mary stayed with her grandparents, Bill & Erika, for the entire week. She had a wonderful time with them, swimming in their pool and camping in their motor home. (But she was missed, of course.)

Just before embarking on the Alaskan cruise, John began his first in a series of business trips to Greeley, Colorado, after learning that he is now in charge of their payroll operations.

August – August was another month of celebrations: on August 8, Mary turned 5 years old! To celebrate her birthday, the Verleys threw a great Disney Princess-themed birthday party at her grandparents' house, and a fun time was had by all.



During the following weekend, Heather celebrated her 35th birthday with a camping trip to Flagstaff. They camped one night in the forest, did some hiking with their friends John Coffman and Jan Banka (who were celebrating their one year anniversary), and ate dinner with the Magees and the Coffmans.



On August 15, the Verleys celebrated yet another milestone: Mary's first day of school. Mary started Kindergarten at Indian Bend Elementary School. Despite thirty seconds of tears at the start of the school day, Mary adapted to Kindergarten life right away, and she loves her teacher, Mrs. Gladden.

September – With gas prices climbing higher and higher, the Verleys found themselves at home for Labor Day weekend...so they made the best of it by finishing the kitchen remodel that they started in January. They installed a new countertop and a new stainless steel sink.

Despite the high gas prices, the Verleys did manage to squeeze in one backpacking trip. For John's birthday, they backpacked the Pine Creek Trail and spent two nights near Parsnip Springs, about 1.5 miles from Camp Lo Mia (in Pine). The Verleys had a nice time...even though John took a nasty tumble down a switchback! He received a good number of scratches and bruises, but otherwise, he was fine.



October – The month of October brought a momentous occasion to the Verley house: twenty-one years after John first entered college, he finally graduated! John received his Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Phoenix and marched in the Commencement Ceremony on October 15. After the ceremony, they celebrated with friends and family – even Aunt Lotte came out to congratulate John on a job well done!



To reward himself for all of his hard work, John attempted to embark on a three-day solo backpacking trip in the Galiuro Mountains, but his trip was cut short by a series of unforeseen problems. Two weeks later, he successfully backpacked in the Hell's Hole Wilderness.

For Halloween this year, Mary decided to be Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz. The Verleys only took her to one Halloween Party – the Halloween Carnival at Little Treasures, where she had a fun time playing with all of her friends (including Alana the Witch, pictured here). John also took her Trick-or-Treating on Halloween Night with her cousin Joshua.



November – The Verleys took their second vacation of the year in November. They spent the Thanksgiving holiday in Columbia, South Carolina, where they visited Grandpa and Grandma Chakowski and Aunt Lotte and Uncle Richard. While they were there, they went hiking in Congaree Swamp National Park, did a walking tour of



Ninety-Six National Historic Site, and went boating on Lake Murray. The highlight of the trip, however, was spending time with the family. They spent one



on one time with Grandpa and Grandma and enjoyed their stories; they also went to the Riverbanks Zoo with Aunt Lotte, where they had fun feeding the lorries. On

Thanksgiving Day, they all gathered at Aunt Lotte's house for a lovely dinner. It was a great trip, and the Verleys hope to make it back to South Carolina soon.

December – The holidays are here again...and a new year of adventures is fast approaching. From the Verley House to yours, we wish you a very Merry Christmas, and health and happiness in 2006.



Love
M. Verley

John

Heather