

A YEAR WITH THE VERLEYS - 2006

January – Welcome to another edition of the Verley Family News! As usual, it was an adventurous year in the Verley house, so sit back, relax, and get ready to hear their tales!

In January, the Verleys decided that it was time to trade in their battered Jeep Grand Cherokee – a Jeep that had been down roads on which no vehicle should ever tread – and they purchased a 2004 Toyota 4Runner. It came with all of the features that they needed: four-wheel drive, roof racks for the pod, plenty of space...and a DVD player! Road trips have never been so peaceful.



January also brought visitors and adventures aplenty. During the month, the Verleys went on several hiking and backpacking adventures, and they were also visited by Heather's best friend Suzanne Daggert and her daughter Katie. Mary and Katie had a great time playing together; but the best part was having the whole group of friends get together again!



February – In February, the Verleys took a ride on the Grand Canyon Railroad. John had received two free club-car tickets for the railroad as a reward for his 20 years of service with Banner Health; so they purchased a third ticket for Mary and booked the trip for President's Day weekend. The trip included a Wild West Show and a three-hour stop in Grand Canyon National Park: just long enough for a short hike down the Bright Angel trail and lunch at the famous El Tovar Lodge. Although it was very cold and windy at the Canyon, the Verleys still had an enjoyable time there; and the train ride was a memorable one.



Mary and Heather spent one weekend in February at the Renaissance Festival in Apache Junction. They met up with Heather's friend Lori Ballard and her daughter Megan there. They also spent some time with Heather's friend Nacole, who was working there in the Queen's court. They had a great time getting to see the Renaissance Festival from behind the scenes: Nacole introduced Mary to the Queen, and Megan got her hand kissed by the very handsome King's Herald!



March – In March, it was time for another United Friends baby shower: this time, for Marcheta Strunk, who was pregnant with her first child. And it was a good thing that they had her shower early, because her baby couldn't wait to make his appearance! Tanner Russell Strunk was born on March 26, 2006. Although he came five weeks early, Tanner is very healthy, and he and Mom Marcheta and Dad Erik are all doing very well.



The Verleys got the news of Tanner's arrival as they were on their way back from a great backpacking adventure in West Clear Creek, where they were trying out their new gear. John and Heather both sported new backpacks, and all three of them

had new, warmer sleeping bags. The new gear passed the test, so they are ready for the adventures that lay ahead.

At the end of March, during Mary's Spring Break, Heather took Mary on a trip to Disneyland! They drove to Anaheim, where they met up with Suzanne and Katie, as well as Suzanne's aunt-in-law Casey. The group had a wonderful time meeting characters (Mary met five Princesses this time!), riding new rides, and shopping. They also celebrated Suzanne's birthday while they were there.



April – In April, the Verleys celebrated Easter with the rest of the Verley and Guckenburg clan in Heber-Overgaard, at the "Gaard-Chak": the property co-owned by Erika Verley and Lotte Chakowski. While the rest of the clan stayed at the trailer, John, Heather and Mary camped in the nearby Sitgreaves Forest overnight and came by during the day to help perform some "sweat-equity": cleaning up brush, painting the new deck, and moving the shed from one part of the property to another. Even the kids (Mary and Joshua) helped out by picking up nails. On Easter Sunday, they had an Easter Egg hunt for the kids, both young and old, and they had a nice dinner as well.



April also took the Verleys south of the border for the first time in two years, for the Rocky Point Skydiving Boogie. While Mary and Heather and Erika relaxed and played on the beach, John and Bill, along with the other skydivers, made several jumps each. The group also went on a Margarita Cruise one evening, and everyone had a wonderful time. All in all, it was a great boogie...but they all hope that there will be another boogie next year...

May – As usual, in the Verley house, the month of May was a busy one. John went on two, back-to-back business trips – one to Seattle, and the other to Orlando – and was gone for more than a week. Immediately following his return, he participated in the Arizona Challenge, the skydiving invitational involving large, intricate formations (*photo by Gordon Lindsay*).



For Mother's Day this year, the Verleys took John's mother Erika on a special "backpacking" trip...to Kentucky Camp, a Forest Service Rental Cabin near the Santa Rita Mountains, south of Tucson. (They had told Erika that they would be backpacking; she was quite surprised to hear that she was going to sleep on a bed!) The rustic cabin, which used to be part of a mining operation, was built in 1904 and had most of the comforts of home: they certainly didn't have to "rough it"! They were also conveniently on the Arizona Trail, so they were able to hike at their whim. It was certainly a lovely weekend!



June – Things didn't slow down in June by any means. At the beginning of June, the Verleys were in the Arizona Republic newspaper, after Heather was interviewed for an article about weight loss.

On June 9, Heather flew to San Francisco with her friend Debbie so that they could attend Suzanne and Katie's conversion to the Jewish faith.

A week later, the Verley family flew



to Denver, CO. John was already scheduled to visit the Payroll Department at the Banner-run North Colorado Medical Center in Greeley; Mary and Heather tagged along. Once John's business was done, the family went on a three-

day, two-night backpacking trip in Rocky Mountain National Park. During their stay in Rocky Mountain NP, Mary earned a Junior Ranger Badge, which was played up nicely by the Park Ranger.

July – In July, the Verleys opened another chapter in the Verley Remodeling Projects; during Independence Day weekend, John gutted the main bathroom and completely remodeled it, with new fixtures, new ceramic tile, and new coat of paint. The result is very stunning!

A week later, on July 8, John, who became ordained through the Universal Life Church several years ago, performed his first wedding. He married Heather's friend Lori Ballard and her fiancé Ken Brodzinski in a small private ceremony at their house. (They plan to have a formal ceremony and reception next year.)



The Verleys wish the happy couple all the best in their future together.



The Verleys celebrated their own wedded bliss in July; they spent their seventh anniversary camping in Flagstaff. While in Flagstaff, they hiked and dined with their friends John Coffman and Jan Banka; they also went fishing on Lake Mary! It was Mary's first time fishing, and she caught three crawdads with her brand new Barbie fishing pole!

August – The fun didn't stop in August; on July 27, the Verleys embarked on an 11-day, cross-country road trip to South Carolina, to visit Grandpa John and Grandma Sofie Chakowski. Their trip included visits to Vicksburg Nat'l Military Site in Mississippi; Myrtle Beach, SC; and Great Smoky Mountains Nat'l Park in Tennessee.



While in South Carolina, they stayed at Aunt Lotte and Uncle Richard's lake house in Chapin (on Lake Murray), where they took the boat out every day to swim and fish. They also celebrated Grandma Sofie's 82nd Birthday.



Immediately after their return, the Verleys celebrated Mary's 6th birthday, on August 8. For Mary's birthday this year, they took her and her friends to do pottery painting.

Less than a week later, it was time for back to school! Mary started first grade at Indian Bend Elementary School on August 14.

September – In September, it was time to celebrate another birthday: John's 40th Birthday! John turned 40 years old on September 30, and Heather threw him a surprise party at Skydive AZ. John's good friend John Coffman arranged a great day of skydiving for him, and Heather and Erika and Mary Traub planned the party afterwards. A great time was had by all...especially the birthday boy!



October – October was a quiet, relaxing month, with camping trips and training walks. The Verleys spent one lovely weekend camping in Washington Park; John and Mary spent another weekend backpacking in Kinder Crossing.



In October, the Verleys also said goodbye to Pookie the Cat. Pookie had not been the same since Calvin (her companion) died last year. Erika's good friend, Lynn Larson, offered to take Pookie into her home, where she would have lots of other cats to keep her company. Pookie is very happy in her new home...and Lynne lives close enough to Erika that Mary can visit Pookie often.

November – After a nice, calm October came a busy November. The month started with an event that Heather had been training for all year: the Breast Cancer 3-Day! The 3-Day is a 60-mile walk benefiting the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation and the National Philanthropic Trust. Heather raised \$3,360 in order to participate in the walk, and she walked all 60 miles of the event, which started at Freestone Park in Gilbert and ended at Margaret T. Hance Park in downtown Phoenix. It was such a beautiful experience that Heather has signed up to work on the 3-Day crew next year.



The Verleys also spent two lovely November weekends at the "Gaard-Chak". They were there during Veteran's Day weekend, so that they could visit Potato Lake and pay their respects to their dear William. They also spent the four-day Thanksgiving weekend there with Bill and Erika. The five of them cooked up a fantastic Thanksgiving Day feast, which they shared with Rick, their neighbor in Overgaard. Of course, while they were there, they did some hiking and some four-wheel driving in the White Mountains, making it quite a Verley adventure!

December – And so, another year has drawn to a close. From the Verley house to yours, we wish you a wonderful Christmas and health and happiness in the New Year.

*Love, The Verleys –
John, Heather & Mary*

