

We picked a new font for the Christmas letter this year. It's been a slow year so we had a lot of time to plan. How do you like that, we write once a year and we start off with a lie. Actually it is well after midnight on December 5. We do our best writing with one eye shut and with fingers on the ~~etpmh~~ wrong keys. Or maybe not. Forge ahead fearless reader and you decide.

This year was really all about The Megan and the Clinic. Yes, we really do use "The" in front of her name. We can't remember how that started. If anyone does remember please let us know. That nickname has stuck while doodle, flipper, thumper, bum, squirmy worm, munchkin, mega_____ (just about anything works to fill in the blank; go ahead, try it), and porco paipo (very loosely "piggy" in dialect Italian and something Keith's grandmother used to use on us) have all fallen out of regular use. The Megan is now somewhere north of 30" (99th percentile, she's 14 months old now and is the average height of a 19 month old) and 75th percentile for weight. So she's tall for her age and has burned off a lot of baby fat. Keith is still working on his baby fat. Yesterday she was one inch from being able to get her leg up and over her crib front. Soon we'll hear the late night crash announcing her successful climb and not so successful fall.



Megan started sleeping through the night in February, which was a complete reversal from her formerly nocturnal status. It happened very quickly, almost overnight, so to speak. Even naps are something she does relatively little during the day now. When she sleeps at night she sleeps a lot, 10 to 12 hours at a stretch. And very, very soundly. Which is due entirely to superior parenting skills and not dumb luck. A list of things she's slept through this year includes flapping open a garbage bag in her room, a vacuum cleaner (also in her room), a nail gun 25 feet away (if you haven't figured out that we do construction projects at all hours you haven't really

been paying attention), a CAT scan, and an EEG. We know, we know. You're all shocked to read that we vacuum while she's sleeping. Although Megan is generally (99.9% of the time) extremely happy and healthy she has had some bizarre health moments this past year.

Last December she screamed for two days. Loudly, with dedication, with a great deal of turning purple and sweating and with very little eating. Then she stopped and has done nothing similar since. Look up "idiopathic". Doctors love to use that one to sound smart when they have no idea what's going on.

In July she broke her leg. She was standing on the floor holding on to Jo's leg and plopped down on to her butt in the classic baby move. She'd done it a hundred times before and a thousand times since. Except this time her leg broke. Loud enough that Jo's mother heard it in the next room. The doctors did not believe us, couldn't see it on x-ray, and sent us home. The next day we were at an orthopedist and he had it cast. Again the doctors say to chalk it up to being a baby and it will probably never happen again.

Happily, she's never looked back. She almost learned to walk in the cast. Jo bet Keith that she would walk within one week of the cast coming off. It took another month. Keith wins, but Jo still hasn't detailed his truck. Megan walked at 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ months. There was a week of "falling with style" that Keith refused to count as actual walking (possibly because he was traveling).

Then in October she decided to have a seizure. Yup, grand mal. We don't do things by half measures around here. This led to the CAT scan and EEG (ah, moment of clarity). Again, the doctors give us the reassuring advice that there is nothing we can do about it and it will probably never happen again (but come right back if it does). Twelve years of college, internship, and residency and we get "come back if it happens again" three times. None of it has happened again and our solution is to forget about it until it does (and to joke about doctors).



The other major thing that happened this year was introduced in last year's letter. We hope you realize that you're meant to be keeping all these letters and making a book out of them. If you've neglected this responsibility we do have back issues. No charge for a reprint, \$9.99 shipping and handling. Somewhere there was a point. Right, the other major event in our lives was the work on the clinic. If you're keeping score at home we closed on the clinic property the day after Megan was born. Exactly one year later we (finally) had an open house at the clinic. We (Jo's dad, with second shift work by Keith, a great deal of staining and polyurethane from Jo, and patience and help from the staff) managed to overcome the town (this required help from the state) and got Phase I of the clinic up and running. Someday we'll actually put pictures on the web site. The 40' x 80' barn has six stalls, a treatment area (technically we're still working on this part), reception room, doctor's office, lab, inventory room, and bathroom (ADA compliant don't you know).

We projected college costs for Megan and have determined that at the current rate of increase college won't be worth the investment in 2022. So we're spending the money on ourselves and Megan will get a scholastic/basketball scholarship. Respect the WNBA.

The menagerie is now six cats (two more came with the clinic property), Roscoe, Clark (Jo's horse), and Muddy (Keith's horse). And The Megan, of course. She gets along great with all animals so far, no fear at all. The only thing we've seen her be afraid of are very tall men with beards. It was funny, but you had to be there. Roscoe (the muttweiler) has been absolutely great with her. The cats just run away and Megan loves chasing them. Yes, she pretty much can run now. As much as 10 inch legs can be counted as running.

Jo is still the owner and sole Partner in Frontier Equine, now expanded to the clinic location. We had an associate vet the past year but she just moved back to Oklahoma so we're looking for a replacement. Jo was just in Seattle for a national vet conference. It was 40°, damp, and cloudy

every day. Keith would rather have a real winter than that but Jo was OK with the temperature. Jo's plan calls for us to work out of this phase of construction for about five years. Sure, we'll do little things as we go along but we won't start any of Phase 2 (the new hospital) for at least five years. We just *can not wait* to see what new pearls of wisdom the town will throw up in our path. We, being smarter than them, are working several channels to make sure all our ducks are in a row before we even bring it up. In the mean time we'll be trying to increase the size of our customer base and generate interest and support for the hospital project. Besides the construction, regular work, The Megan, and everyday life, Jo is also a Director on the local Horse Council and donates time and effort to supporting the Erie County Mounted Sheriffs.

Keith is still at Parametric Technology Corporation and just passed his 10 year anniversary in August. He was promoted to Director and is still working exclusively with John Deere although he thinks he'll probably change projects some time this year. There's a cliffhanger for next year's letter. This is better than Star Wars. Keith is a county Director for Farm Bureau and is also a Director with Jo on the local Horse Council. His night shift is often devoted to Frontier Equine work (and once a year to this letter). If he ever stops traveling he's interested in a part time job as a Mounted Sheriff. We'll see if Muddy turns out to be a good police horse. He'll almost certainly be too short though.

There were too many visits by family (thanks to Megan, no one cares about us any more) to list them all here. We also took several trips with The Megan to New Jersey, Gloversville, New Berlin, and probably some other spots we're forgetting. Derek and Molly Henderson with Michael (go Yankees), and Jacque visited when Pete, Brenna, Stewart, and Jersey Kelley rode through on the way back to Maine. Christian and Sandra Stromberg also came to visit all the way from Vermont. We think Paras also stopped over on a trip back from Michigan to Massachusetts but we're really not sure if that was this year or last year. We will be terminally ashamed if we forgot anyone's visit.

Time to close this out. It's already the longest one we've ever written and no one is still reading anyway. We could say nasty things here and no one would ever know.

We're certainly looking forward to a 2006 filled with new experiences with Megan, work, occasionally some recreation, and once in a while a nap or possibly a full night's sleep. That would be very good. We hope to see many of you in 2006 and wish you all the best health, happiness, and joy.

Love,

Keith