

Every year it's a challenge to find a unique way to grab your attention right off the bat. Some years we do better than others, we admit. This year we think we have a surprise that should propel us to the top of the Christmas letter best seller charts. We'll cover work, trips, Megan, all that eventually, but first...



After four years of work we finished construction projects at the clinic this October. That's *not* the surprise. About three weeks after we finished we decided to sell the business. That's the surprise. Don't read it again; you got it right the first time.

If all goes well, it will be a done deal by the time you read this. By early summer we ought to have sold the property and the house. Then we're going to move to New Hampshire near Shelly, Jeff, and Paige. This was a family and quality of life decision, although it certainly wasn't done without a lot of introspection, having built a large and growing business. When our associate vet moved back to her home we had a reality check and the only logical choice was to cash out.

Now Jo is retired. Well, not quite. Since the other vet quit Jo's been on call 24/7. That's one thing (and hard enough) when you're starting a business and the client list is short. With a large business and a Megan, the stress, workload, and impact on the family are way too much. So Jo's going to be semi-retired soon, we hope. We'll figure out what's next after we pack up here. New York is doomed anyway. We're just getting out while the lights are still on.



We took a few trips this year. January saw us on a pilgrimage to the Mouse in Florida. We had a great time at the parks. Megan had no interest in Mickey, Donald, or any other character except Pluto, although she suffered Minnie's presence. Megan loves roller coasters. She made the height clearance by the thickness of the barrette strategically placed directly on top of her head.

We were soaked and cold from a downpour on the way to *It's a Small World* (which, thank God, Megan hated). Megan was sitting on Keith's shoulders. While in line, Keith suddenly felt a little warmer. About a half second later Megan (who was just over 3 at this point, remember) was off his shoulders and the rest of the pee went on the floor of the aisle. Being soaked already, no one else could really tell, but we're pretty sure everyone else in line was wondering what we were all laughing at.

Jo's reining horse (that's the kind that runs, slides, spins... never mind) was 4 this year and there are several special events for 4 year olds only. One was in Mississippi in July. We were dreading 100 degrees and 100% humidity every day, but got lucky and caught a great weather week. Megan only cared that there was a pool. We flew down but drove back non-stop hauling three horses and one Megan (24 hours for those keeping score at home). Let's not do that again until Megan can help drive.



We also hit Ohio (with Megan) in September for the Regional finals and Texas (sans Megan) in October for the Appaloosa World Show. Jo did great at both shows. Megan racked up some air miles and still doesn't have any trouble flying (thank God). We burned up a bunch of frequent stay hotel points and had a pretty cheap mini-vacation out of the deal.

Also in October Keith and several college friends got together for a long weekend of sports and carousing. Wait. Scratch that. Reverse the last two. They're already pipe dreaming about the next trip being to London when the Patriots play the Buccaneers at Wembley Stadium in October, 2009. It would be something to pull that one off.

Megan is in preschool and loves it. She could either start "big kid" school next year and be about the youngest in the class or wait a year and be near the oldest. We don't know which way we're going to go yet. Megan can't



wait to live near her cousin Paige... because Paige has a Clipo. Other than plotting to steal Paige's Clipo, Megan's favorite thing has to be crafts of any kind. If it involves markers, paint, construction paper, crayons, play-doh, silly putty or anything messy she's there. Megan loves to make cards for people. Her trademark



is tracing her hand, which is a leftover from before she learned to write her name. The OCD seems to have calmed down this year. She's nowhere near as apt to randomly line up a row of shoes or toothbrushes.

Megan's had a borrowed pony to play with all year. She loves it. Only been bucked off once, but she's fallen plenty of times. Her favorite game is to take the reins, climb most of the way up the six foot fence of the pen she plays in and shuffle sideways around the fence while leading the pony. Invariably she drops one or both reins after 10 or 15 feet. She climbs down, picks up the reins, and goes back where she started (never where she dropped the reins, maybe the OCD isn't really tapering off) to begin again. And again. For as long as you let her go. Cheap entertainment.

Keith is now in his 13th year at PTC. He's in his second year of managing the consulting business for the eastern half of North America. He still gets to work with companies who build everything from cars to toilets to Big Wheels to tractors to bomb-disabling robots to surgical equipment. When everything is going right his project teams help them build their stuff better. It's still interesting and challenging.

We've bored you long enough. Back to your family and the egg nog. Best wishes to everyone for a joyous, healthy, and safe, Christmas and New Year.

Love,