

2008 Greetings from the Simpsons!!

Jim: CSMR

Paul: Citrus College/Nordstrom RACK/USMC

Maria: RTCE, Troop Packages, Military Families

David: Living with Nana in Anaheim

Abe: where we are now...

First of all I want to thank everyone for the wonderful Christmas cards. As always we feel incredibly blessed and honored to be remembered by so many. I didn't send any out this year in anticipation of writing a letter as 2007 came to a close and we look to see what God will do in 2008.



Christmas for us this year had some pleasant surprises for us. David spent a few days with us, and it's always nice to see his face. Jim's mother, Nora, and his brother Frank also drove out from Rockport Texas to spend the 25th at our house. Unfortunately I was ill and wasn't much of a hostess.



One thing that was new for us in 2007 was that

Jim enlisted in the California State Military Reserve, or CSMR. It has been a good transition from all the years of volunteering in Scouts. I think the only reason he never did it before was because he didn't know it existed. He spends one weekend a month in Los Alamitos, 10 days in October (cancelled this year because of the fires) and volunteering on an as needed basis. 200 volunteer hours a year are required, but he easily spends that and much more studying Army courses on line, attending sheriff department classes, exercising, and just volunteering for events. He got to spend one week at Camp Roberts processing reservists for active duty, and has just been enjoying the company of a lot of good



guys. Jim says by doing this he feels like he is able to make a contribution to the war on terror.

Paul, 19, has gone from being a part time "sound technology" student, working at Target, then working at Nordstrom rack, to becoming a United States Marine. He told me in May that he had all of a



sudden been thinking about it, and it became reality on August 27th when he left for boot camp at MCRD in San Diego. He loves being a Marine and it fits him well. There were a lot of people pulling for him to make it through, and he did it. We couldn't be more thankful for what God has done in our son.

Months before he left, he invented "Cooking Night" where he and his friends come over and learn to cook with recipe's, and then eat dinner together. It's been pretty neat: finding recipe's, shopping, and then preparing the food. He came up with it because he said when he and his friends got together they just did the same thing all the time: sit around, watch movies, etc.



Paul plays guitar and a little piano. Over the summer, Paul & I took a trip to Yosemite and San Francisco. We were gone about a week. It was a great trip, but for me it was also a good bye. I knew Paul would be



going into the Marines, and just as I cherished the "lasts" that I had with Abe, I found myself savoring

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every last moment with Paul before he would go off and does his duty as a man. I am so thankful for who he has become, and I knew the time would come when I would have to let him go. He is a wonderful son, and we have been through a lot together. I feel **lucky** that he still wants me around



(even though Christians don't believe in **luck**!)

How are we doing with "Abe" anyway? Because we have a son in heaven, summing up the last year also involves reflecting on the past, because that's all we have now in regard to Abraham, but that's okay. As all the time with him plays over and over in my mind, I am constantly reminded of eternity, and how everything matters. Mother's are just always aware of where their kids are, so as I think of David and Paul: what they are doing, if they are safe, hoping they are being wise, etc., I am always reminded that Abraham has made the transition from this life to the next, and he is very much alive somewhere else, just not here. I'll always especially remember the last conversation we had on the phone on November 1st, 2004 but also the conversations we had before that about the possibility of anything happening to him, and that he would be okay, and so would I, knowing where he was. And then, months later, it actually happened.



In some ways, I almost wish I could have one more conversation with him, to let him know how it all went, that we got through it all, and just to hear his voice one more time, then I would be fine until we are reunited one day in the future. But that is not the way it works. The assurance we have is in the Word of God, telling us like it is. "...if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world." 1 Corinthians 15:19

On August 11, 2007, Abe would have been out of the Marines. Many of his peers have finished their time and have recently gotten out as well. At times I wonder what it would be like if he had come home, if

he was out now and moving on to the next thing in his life, but for us and many others, that scenario is not to be. Many young men and women have no future to plan and to live out. Their time on this earth has concluded, because they wanted to do the right thing. And they did. I want to remember them here.

Also in 2007 my grandfather, William G. Valdez or "Grampa Lee" slipped into eternity on November 4th at the age of 87. He was in the hospital for a week prior, and we were all able to say our



goodbyes. He always kept his house neatly landscaped, and used to leave things out for the trash collectors that he thought they might be able to use. I was his barber for the last couple of years. He would always walk me out to my car when I would leave, no matter how cold, hot, or late it was. Even when he was

probably too weak to do so, he still did it. I remember him describing to me how he used to cut my grandmother's toenails, first soaking them in Epsom salts until they were nice and soft. He worried about my grandmother as she lost more and more of her memory, so he bought her an identification necklace in case she ever became lost. In the hospital he said to my cousin Randy and I, "Me and Gramma have always taken care of ourselves," and that's true. January 2 marks my Grandmother's 91st year.



Jim & I continue to support the Marines and all the military as much as we can. I think we always will. I enjoy praying and getting together with other military families through our church. I also teach Released Time Christian Education classes on Fridays at Briggs, Abe's old school.

It is our prayer that you find in God all the hope and wisdom you will need for what lies ahead in 2008 and beyond. May we all be found abiding in Him.

Love and blessings, Maria & family