

Colville Update

Arctic Ploverland News

Spring, 2002

Greetings From the Jim Helmericks Family

Introduction

Hello to all our wonderful friends and family members. We are a little slow this year getting the usual newsletter completed. Teena has spent a great deal of time getting a new family web site up and running, which has slowed her down with her other winter pursuits, including this newsletter. For any of you who haven't seen the website yet and have access to a computer, you may enjoy visiting:

<http://astacalaska.com/~jwhgpa>

Family News

God continues to bless us all with loving care, good health, and active lives. Jim and Teena still live full-time at Colville Village while all of their grown children live in other parts of Alaska. Derek & Melanie and Jay & Amy have homes in Fairbanks, and Aaron lives on campus there. Isaac rotates between Anchorage and Deadhorse. Rendezvous at the Colville whenever time, work, or school allows is enjoyed by all the family.

♦**Jim & Teena** With all our kids off on their own with families, work, or school to attend to now, we spent our second winter "home alone". Dealing with the burden of handling this large "compound" on our own is something we need to work out. It is particularly difficult when one of us has to be gone for awhile, leaving the other alone. Summers remain busy

with lots of extra people coming and going. (Aaron spent three months during his summer break at home helping us through the busy season.) Jim had one of his busiest flying seasons ever this past summer and was in the air almost every flyable day. When the flying season was over, Jim was soon busy with his commercial fishing operation, despite the difficulties in handling the nets alone out on the river ice. That continues to occupy much of our fall/early winter activities. Jim has been teased that he needs to teach his big Chesapeake Bay Retriever, Toby, to pull the rope at the far end of the nets to help out with the work during the fishing operation. The dark days of mid-winter are spent mostly at the desk catching up on office work. Teena stays busy as ever keeping home and lodge cared for. She spends a lot of time on the computer these days with writing, research and keeping in touch with family and friends via e-mail.

♦**Derek and Melanie** Our oldest "kids" have had a busy year. Melanie received her Master's Degree in Geology in May and is presently

employed at the University of Alaska Fairbanks as a research technician in the Chemical Oceanography lab within the Institute of Marine Science. Derek spent much of last summer here in the Colville River Delta working at Alpine, a new oil-field



Our home in summer

operated by Phillips Alaska, coordinating logistics for environmental studies in the area. He was even able to catch helicopter rides home periodically. Derek now works for URS Corp., a company that provides environment assessment and engineering services throughout the world. Right now Derek specializes in water resources engineering, and has been involved in a lot of work on the North Slope including areas on and near the Colville River.

Although he works in an office in Fairbanks, he looks forward to the summer field season and expects to be working on the Slope quite a bit.

♦**Jay and Amy** These two have stayed busy too. Jay, having finished his Master's Degree in Electrical Engineering, accepted full-time employment as Project Engineer at



Toby



Our home in winter

the University of Alaska Fairbanks' Geophysical Institute. He continues to provide aid to the student rocket program, plus finds many challenges in designing and building electronic components for special projects throughout the university's scientific community. One neat project that Jay has been involved in is the design and deployment of special atmospheric pressure-sensing instruments that can detect any explosive activity anywhere in the world such as bombs, meteors, exploding volcanos, sea storms, etc. This work included some exciting travels to New Zealand and Antarctica. Amy is nearing the completion of her Bachelor's Degree in Photo Journalism, which included an internship at the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. We all enjoyed getting to see her pictures published in the paper. Jay and Amy are both excited about a new house they are in the process of buying and hope to be moved into by late May. They have become certified foster-parents and will soon be caring for their first child under this program.

✧**Isaac** Many decisions and new challenges has kept Isaac well occupied. He has continued to work for Alaska Airlines in Deadhorse as Ramp Service Agent and Trainer,

while also pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Aviation Technology and professional pilot training at the University of Alaska Anchorage. Needless to say, Isaac has to fly back and forth between Anchorage and the North Slope often.

✧**Aaron** School and campus life dominate Aaron's time right now. He continues to get top-notch grades while devoting a lot of energy to his resident assistant job at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He takes time for snowmachine outings or other adventures with his brothers and uncles whenever possible. Aaron spent his summer and Christmas vacation at home on the Colville.

Other Events

September 11th will be etched in all our minds forever. For many Alaskans the horrible events of this day were punctuated by added confusion and in some cases comical situations involving stranded pilots and hunters unaware of what had been happening. Jim was in the middle of flying a wildlife survey when Teena had to relay a message to him about all aircraft being grounded. Although Jim was not buzzed by a military jet before he could land, some Alaskan pilots weren't so lucky. Many people out in the wilderness with no communications were left stranded for days not knowing what was happening.

Travel

Trips here and there by family members took place through-out the year. Teena made a trip to Missouri with her mother to visit her brother Clayton and family in November. This included an unexpected layover in Memphis due to airline difficulties

Teena made her usual trips to Fairbanks and Anchorage also. Isaac made his first visit to Hawaii in May, and enjoyed driving all over the big island. He also made trips to Washington State and Canada. Melanie visited her mother and others in Germany. Derek made several hunting trips, including one in March where he was able to harvest his first muskox. Jay and Amy visited Washington DC for work-related training and vacationing.

Extra Tidbits

To many this may sound rather strange, but a special event this year, especially for Teena, was the purchase and installation of a new Maytag front-loading washing machine. Teena washed clothes and diapers by hand in the "old days", and then upgraded to a Maytag wringer washer in the mid-1970's. That faithful machine served this family for over 25 years. We hope this new fancy contraption will serve us equally as well, with a lot less labor on Teena's part!

GOOD BYE FOR NOW!

Love,

*Jim & Teena
Derek & Melanie
Jay & Amy
Isaac, Aaron*

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