

Colville Update

Arctic Ploverland News

Spring, 2007

Greetings From the Jim Helmericks Family

Introduction

It is a white world out my window as I write. After a significant amount of melting in April had turned the white tundra brown-speckled, recent snowfall has turned the prairie totally white again. However, the sunshine broke through the morning fog and turned our world into a sparkling wonderland today. It won't take very many sunny days like this to melt most of the snow again and quickly bring the river "break-up" upon us. Such is life in the Arctic. Beauty and wonder surround us. God's love and goodness is unfailing, as HE has continued to bless our family throughout another year, daily bestowing His loving grace and guidance.

Family News

Jim and Teena carry on at the homesite at Colville Village. Life in Alaska's "bush" keeps us challenged with daily chores and duties, yet invigorated with our independent lifestyle. (This line hasn't changed much over the years.) Teena took a job in August 2006, as a logistics coordinator with a new independent oil company, Pioneer Natural Resources, that is developing a new oil production site near our home just off the Colville River

Delta. Teena's new job includes materials management and tracking, waste management, fuel usage tracking, and other tasks.

While at work she has enjoyed making many new friends and all the social interaction involved with living in a big field camp facility. Jim keeps busy with our usual commercial

fishing operations, the extensive maintenance of the homesite, aerial surveys and other flying or consulting work under Golden Plover Guiding, plus many other activities. Extensive photography projects such as winter aurora pictures and summer bird pictures have been pleasurable pursuits for Jim lately. He was able to get terrific photographs of both the McNaught Comet on Jan. 8th and the March 18th partial solar eclipse, besides a rare shot of a mystery rocket streaking across the night sky in February.

Derek and Beth continue their home life in Fairbanks with many building and landscaping projects on their property outside of town. One major mile-stone in Derek's life is obtaining his

professional engineering license (#11547) for the State of Alaska! He also moved into a new job in January and is now employed by

Arcadis US in their Alaska office as field environmental engineer. One of the more interesting aspects of this job is the varied work and

extensive travel opportunities. Since beginning his new job, the project taking up the majority of his time involves environmental compliance oversight for the oil exploration work being done in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A). As with most North Slope oil-related jobs, this involves working a "2-week on /2-week off" schedule. That means travel back and forth between Fairbanks and the North Slope twice a month, but also gives a full two-week break at home between "hitches". Beth is still employed by Watterson Construction, and is currently working as a construction manager on several 100-million dollar projects for the military.



Aurora looking east from Colville

Jay, Amy, and children continue a busy lifestyle in Fairbanks. The girls, **Natasha** (4) and **Melody** (almost 3), and little **Elisha** (1) keep their parents hopping. Jay still works as Project



Natasha, Elisha, Melody, 5-27-07

Engineer at the Geophysical Institute for the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and has recently been promoted to a management position. His work occasionally involves trips to various places across the U.S. and Antarctica. Amy obviously stays busy with 3 small children at home yet still finds time for several writing projects, church functions, and various teaching opportunities.

Isaac and Crystal remain in Anchorage and have been remodeling parts of their townhouse as time allows. Isaac graduated from the University of Alaska Anchorage in May with his Aviation Technology and Professional Piloting degrees. He is now a manager in the training department at his Alaska Airlines job. His new job is still based at the Anchorage airport but it entails a lot of traveling as he trains new employees at many other of

Alaska Airlines' stations. Crystal is now employed in a medical billing office as a billing clerk and is working toward getting her CPT coding license.

Aaron worked for his Uncle Jeff much of 2006 in Palmer, plus got his pilot's license and made several long distance flights to ferry airplanes to and from the "lower 48" for his uncle. In December 2006, Aaron began working for Pioneer Natural Resources as their field IT technician (computers & communications). When at work on the Slope, he works out of an office next to Teena's logistics office. Aaron became engaged to his college sweetheart, Autumn Botts in December. The wedding is scheduled for August. Another



Autumn & Aaron Frontier-style

big event in his life is the purchase of a beautiful house north of Anchorage in the Wasilla area. Aaron moved into the new house at the end of April and has

been busy painting and getting settled in when not at work on the North Slope.

Travel

Trips to Fairbanks or Anchorage are usual fair as we go to visit family and friends, get plane maintenance done, or make medical/dental appointments. Teena flew to Spokane in early December to visit her mom, sisters and other family for a week. Derek and Beth spent a month in Europe, mostly Germany, in December. Other trips within the state by various family members included birding in Cordova, camping in Seward, and other weekend adventures.

Extra Tidbits

As related in last year's newsletter, a new oil company moved in as our closest neighbor last year. During the winter of 2005-6, Pioneer Natural Resources (PNR) built a gravel island 6.2 miles north of our place, in the shallow waters of Harrison Bay just off the face of the Colville Delta. After a hectic 2006-7 construction season, an oil production drill site was built on the gravel island and a 5.7 mile sub-sea and 2.4 mile shore-side pipeline was constructed to connect the island to the existing pipeline infrastructure. Soon wells will be drilled and oil is expected to be flowing by next winter. This nearby oil company has affected our lives in many ways. We had

an environmental crew staying at our place much of last summer, as they conducted a fish study related to the presence of the oil industry in the offshore area. They will be renting our Guesthouse this coming summer also. However, the biggest change brought by this "new kid on the block" has been Teena's and then Aaron's new jobs. Teena is gone from home working full-time for PNR on a "2-week on" and "2-weeks off" schedule. She lives at the construction camp in Kuparuk, about 20 miles east of home, during her work period. She commutes to work by snowmachine and truck in the winter and boat or helicopter in the summer. Aaron usually travels to and from Anchorage for his time off, although he has come home to the Colville several times during his time off to help his dad with various big jobs, like plowing a road into the house over the ice in April so we could get our fuel and other supplies hauled in for the year.

We continue to have guests and clients staying at our



Sunset on the Colville with caribou antlers

place off and on throughout the year, and many visitors come to see the museum. Sharing the beauty and uniqueness of the

Arctic is always a joy for us.

God Bless You All!

Love,

*Jim and Teena
Derek & Beth
Jay, Amy, & children:
Natasha, Melody & Elisha
Isaac & Crystal
Aaron*

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Helmericks Family

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More pictures of Jay's family can be viewed online at:
<http://helmericks.net/pictures.html>



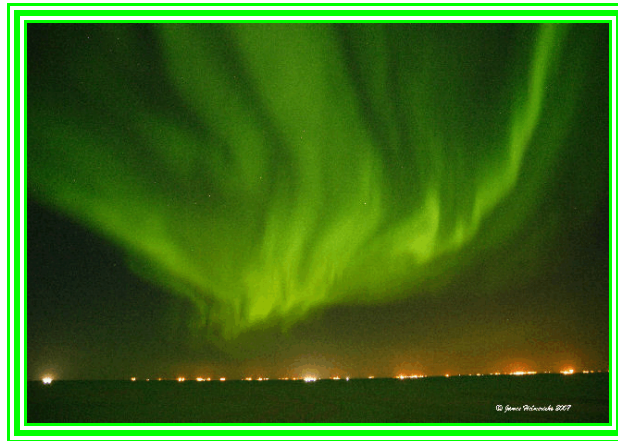
Our house with Aurora & PNR ice-road (left) & Drillsite Island (right) 6.2 miles to the north



Aurora Study Rocket 3-18-07

As this newsletter is about ready to go out, it is now early June and most of the snow and ice have disappeared from our homeland. Break-up is over and

we are surrounded again with open water. Summer, 24-hour daylight, and all the birds have arrived. The Arctic prairie will soon be a carpet of green grass and flowers.



Winter Eastern Sky from Home