

Colville Update

Arctic Ploverland News

December, 2011

Greetings From the Jim Helmericks Family

Introduction

This newsletter covers approximately the time period from Summer 2010 to the end of the year 2011. We did not have a Spring 2011 newsletter, so this is a year and a half catch-up epistle. This will put our annual update back closer to year-end instead of mid-year as it has been for quite a few years. As ever, we give thanks to God for his loving care and guidance for our family throughout all circumstances. In the midst of it all, we have true JOY in knowing God's saving grace, forgiveness, and constant care.

Family Highlights

◆ **Jim and Teena's** status at the Colville "homestead" has changed little in recent years other than daily life and chores have become increasingly difficult as we age. Our boys come to visit and help their dad with the heaviest chores when they can, like handling full drums of fuel. Thanks to GCI, we are quite spoiled with high speed internet and great phone service.

Teena has continued working part-time for Pioneer Natural Resources over the summers as Subsistence

Representative and Bear Guard for environmental studies near our home in the Colville River Delta.



Plus she worked a second Season for Marsh Creek LLC, as a camp manager and administrative assistant. Both of these jobs usually kept her away from home for 2-3 weeks at a time, which meant Jim was home "holding down the fort" as usual. During the summers Jim again hosted crews working out of our place on various projects involving bird studies in the area. The crews generally used our guest cabins and took care of themselves as far as meals and transportation. Helicopters or boats were their means of travel.

Jim continues his photography and produces a wonderful photo calendar every year, besides many other photos sold or shared with many fans. Again, his main websites are:

- 1.) *Arctic Smoke Signals* at <http://kingeider.blogspot.com/>
- 2.) *Golden Plover Photography* at <http://speikiei.zenfolio.com/>

Jim's long time companion, Toby, died Spring of 2011, but

fortunately we had our beautiful Ruby to lessen the trauma of his passing. We ended up getting another Chesapeake Bay Retriever this past fall, a little girl we named Jade. She looks and acts just like a little Toby and has attached herself to Jim even more than Ruby, so now Jim has two loyal followers. Jade will soon overtake Ruby in size, but we think Ruby will still be "boss".



Ruby & Jade

All our boys are doing well and have experienced significant changes in their lives since our last newsletter.

◆ **Derek** has moved to Anchorage and purchased a lovely home in Indian, Alaska, overlooking the Turnagain Arm, a little south of Anchorage.





Winter view of bay and mountains from Derek's house.

Derek remains employed by Pioneer Natural Resources as their Environmental Specialist and continues to work a 2&2 schedule on the North Slope. When at work, he is usually at a drill-site nearby the family homestead, so Jim and Teena often get to see him. Derek recently announced his engagement to girlfriend Cindy Milligan. She got her first visit to the homestead for our recent Christmas on the Colville 2011.



Derek & Cindy

◆ **Jay** and his family sold their house in Fairbanks and bought a place near Fox on the Steese Highway, north of town. It was like moving to the country, and they now have rabbits, chickens, and lots of outdoor room. The house was a "fixer-upper", so Jay has

been very busy with house upgrades, plus building animal pens, and other improvements. Jay and Amy are homeschooling the children. Natasha is 8 now, Melody 7, and Elisha is 4.



Jay and children around a fire in their yard.

Jay got his pilot's licence in 2010 and one of his personal highlights was flying his children home to the Colville for a visit in July 2010. This is another story covered on Teena's blog, if you are interested in reading more and seeing the pictures. Jay also took over his dad's Cessna 206, put it on floats and looks forward to the day when he can fly it to the Colville and land on our lake as he used to watch his dad do hundreds of times.

◆ **Isaac** is still Alaska Airlines' Customer Service Agent on Adak Island and the family has lived there 4 years now. They just welcomed another member to their family when Danian James

was born on Thanksgiving Day, 2011. Teena was in Anchorage to see Danian when he was only a few hours old, but was sad not to be able to later accompany the family back to Adak, as she did when Rhianna was born. None the less, Teena was blessed with over a week of grandbaby loving.



Danian James born 11-24-11

◆ **Aaron** still works for Pioneer Natural Resources and, as with Derek, we get to see him quite often when he is on the Slope. It is interesting to have our oldest and youngest boys working for the same company that their mother has also worked for off and on and who are also our closest neighbors. Aaron and Autumn bought and moved into a new home this past year between Wasilla and Palmer. Although the house is newly finished, the yard has considerable landscaping work to do. Teena has been able to visit several times and watch that project as it progresses.



Aaron & Autumn's new house

Our remote "neighborhood" continues to be invaded by more and more oil industry. This winter season is bringing ice roads and four more drilling pads within a few miles of our home. This brings jobs, and other advantages such as closer road access making the logistics of getting our supplies easier. However, winter lights and noise have increased greatly. Poor Ruby and Jade go berserk trying to protect us from all the new commotion invading their normally tranquil world.

trip to the Hawaiian islands, with beautiful flowers, landscapes, beaches, and sunshine.



Teena in Hawaii

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Travel

Teena made several fun trips this past year. In the fall of 2010, Teena took her mom to Adak to visit Isaac, Crystal and Rhianna and also to see the beautiful Aleutian island that Isaac calls his "island paradise." Despite the usual winds, we had a few gorgeous days to get out and enjoy the spectacular scenery and even got some fishing in.



Teena's mom & Isaac fishing

Another trip was Teena's birthday present from Derek and Aaron. They also accompanied her to Maui, Hawaii, for a wonderful first

In May of 2011, Teena and her mother Bonnie went on a trip to Georgia to see family we hadn't seen in many years. Mom was able to visit her 93 year old sister-in-law (Teena's Aunt Ruby), and Teena met first and second cousins for the first time. It was a wonderful trip, full of beautiful flower gardens, hikes, waterfalls, and companionship with precious people. More on these trips with pictures can be seen on Teena's blog at:

<http://teena-arcticalaska.blogspot.com>

More Pictures



Teena & Bonnie in Georgia

God Bless You All!

Love,

*Jim and Teena
Derek & Cindy
Jay, Amy, & children:
Natasha, Melody & Elisha
Isaac, Crystal & children:
Rhianna & Danian
Aaron & Autumn*



Ruby and Jim on 15 foot snowdrift near house in May.



Aaron & Autumn at party Dec. 2011



Jim & his dogs



Danian & Rhianna - Nov.2011



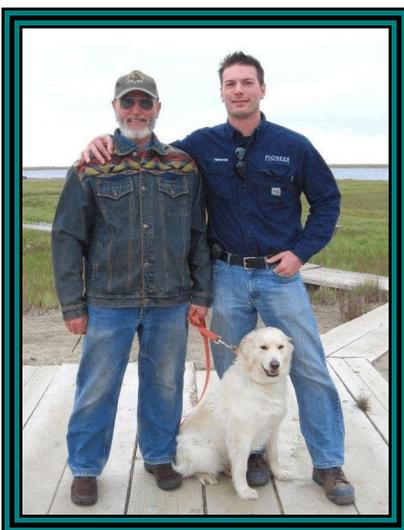
Jim and Derek Christmastime



Crystal, Isaac, Rhianna, Danian



Rhia summer 2011



Jim, Aaron & Ruby, Aug. 2011, on the Colville.

Amy at new homesite in early winter 2011.



BYE