

2004 Holiday Greetings From the Martinka's



Hello friends and family! In 2004, we try to put into practice the first "Martinka Mantra": **Life is Grand**. This year has been fun, but seems to pass more quickly than ever.

Arielle and Peter are in 1st and 2nd grade in our public school's dual language program, focused on Mandarin. Arielle carries on Chinese conversations with neighbors and local storekeepers weaving around difficult words like "walk-a-thon" and "hazelnut" with aplomb. Both kids take Kung Fu martial arts, Peter a little less enthusiastically. It is hard work. Arielle achieved her white belt on Pearl Harbor day. Both she and Peter also play soccer and take piano lessons.

Arielle, 7, loves animals, particularly fascinated by insects. In January she got her first real pet, a hamster, that she named Arthur. Arthur was an escape artist. One time he crawled under the refrigerator, chewed through the ice cube supply to get at water. The subsequent *Lake Kitchen* gave away his hiding place. We all enjoyed Arthur, so our distress was worse when he died early. A lesson of life....



Peter, 6, relishes Playmobiles. He also continues to love art and drawing. His homework is adorned with drawings. His current career plans includes being an artist and a donut shop manager. He discovered "Nate the Great" books and plows through them without a break. Recently Peter joined tiger-scouts with his "born-to-be a den leader"

father. Both son and father are having a lot of fun with the neighborhood boys. Peter is so proud of his gear that he cleared out one of his clothes drawers to dedicate it to Scout paraphernalia. Some boys sure love uniforms!

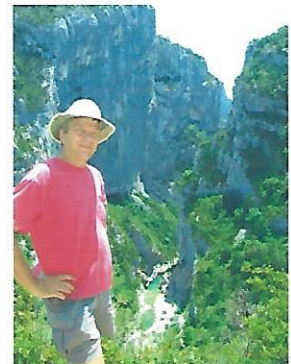
In April we had a fabulous Spring camping trip. We traveled to balmy Death Valley and spent nights in freezing Tehacapi, windy Lone Pine (in the shadow of Mount Whitney) and mild Paso Robles. The kids learned Uno by firelight.



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In June, Dorian and Joe headed off to the South of France leaving the darlings with Grandma Barbara. We drove from Nice north through the Haute Provence and the Maritime Alps. We had fantastic scenery at the Grand Canyon du Verdon and much driving on high narrow alpine



roads. The cuisine was a real treat. Dorian's screen background still features her first course of a Provencal style meal while in the medieval town of Moussiers St. Marie.

After a week on wheels we took a ferry to Corsica and swapped to wind power. We met 4 other friends including Joe's brother, Jeff, for a week sail in the Mediterranean. We traveled to two Italian islands and then back to Corsica. Corsica itself is like a Big Sur but with a quick 9,000 foot elevation change. We will return and enjoy the dramatic West side of that island another year! For those with broadband, see the 3 minute vignette at:



<http://home.comcast.net/~martinkaj/sail/Corsica/CorsicaNotes.htm>

On Friday, August 13th, Joe had his half-century birthday. Whew. Didn't take that long to get there, it seems. He spent his birthday week climbing peaks around Lake Tahoe. We did Mt. Tallac, Ellis Peak and took the kids up to the top of Squaw Mountain, hiking, swimming and ice skating in one afternoon. We are very lucky.



We wish you all a spectacular new year!