



## Greetings!

It's hard to condense a whole year down to just two<sup>1</sup> short pages, even using a 10 point font. 2006, for better or for worse, has been quite a year. I hope I can do it justice.

Politically, 2006 will be remembered as the year Americans finally came to their senses. Most finally realized that the war was wrong, that government corruption was rampant, that massive budget deficits (due to "spending like drunken sailors" and massive tax cuts for the rich) were not just looming but here, and that our very civil liberties were at risk. They not just realized it, but took action, and threw the Republican bums out. With luck, in 2007, America can be put back to rights.

My family has done well this year. No new additions, and the third generation is probably completed at 13 (although Lisa keeps hinting she may be next.....) My Dad turned 80 this year, and my Uncle Mike, his little brother, turned 70. Both are in good health and still quite active. My cousin Andy gave us all quite a scare, by tumbling out a tree during deer hunting season. Unlike most hunters who injure themselves, he was neither drunk nor acting foolishly. Andy merely made a misstep when climbing to his hunting "perch." He thought he had just sprained and bruised his neck, but x-rays revealed three cracked vertebrae which necessitated surgery. Andy is doing well, but will be wearing a huge brace and not laying down any time soon. And he didn't get a deer!

The rest of my immediate family is doing fairly well. My mother was slowed down a bit by bursitis of the knee, but she's doing well for a woman of 76 well over forty! My father's slowed down a bit in the last decade or two, and doesn't hear much any more, but otherwise remains in quite good health. My parents celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary this year. They had a small ceremony at church, and then we threw them a big party. The highlight of the celebration, of course, was a "small" slide show I put together<sup>2</sup>.

I've been reasonably well this year, except for a gardening injury which put my left knee out of commission for several months<sup>3</sup>. My brother Bill has changed jobs, leaving Eberspaecher (and a 50 mile commute) to work at Ford. Laurie continues to spend most of her time raising children and running her household, and is working part time for a UPS store (but she doesn't have to wear the brown uniform, much to her children's relief). Smoochie, aka Belle, has finally settled down a bit, although she is still quite the puppy. She is clever, but quite devious, and has learned whom she has to obey, and whom she can safely ignore.

Kalyna, my goddaughter and heir, has turned 14, but has yet to become a complete teen brat. She seems to have fairly horrible taste in television, watching innumerable "teen" shows on cable, but enjoys going to the theatre and symphony with me. She continues to study both the piano and oboe, play sports, and overachieve in school. I have

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1. OK, probably more like four..... I will write a longer, fuller version, of course, with photos, as I did last year. Copies will go out to a few friends who are still computer-free; others will receive a pdf version through e-mail, or will be able to download from my site: <http://web.mac.com/lubap/iWeb/Christmas/Letters.html>
  2. I spent a more than a month going through old photo albums and scanning old photos. This was no small feat, as my family takes LOTS of photos. The result was a twenty minute presentation, with music, and slides flashing by at 3 seconds per. There were 419 slides with anywhere from one to seven photos per slide. I've put the show onto my website at <http://web.mac.com/lubap/iWeb/Anniversary%20Show/Home.html>
  3. While walking in my yard, I hit my foot against a hose guide, and severely twisted my left knee. It didn't hurt the day I injured it, but, two days later, I could barely walk. More than once, when I thought it had finally gotten better, I would stress it out and the pain would return. This made travel a bit of a challenge..

yet to convince her to travel anywhere with me, as it might entail missing a day or two of school.

Nick's year hasn't been quite as good. While both of the girls seemed to grow like weeds this past year, he didn't, and seemed a bit lethargic and listless. After a medical work-up which included some not very pleasant procedures, Nick was diagnosed with Crohn's disease. He's been put on appropriate medications and is doing much better. Nick still doesn't much like school, but he's become interested in reading again, especially Roald Dahl (a personal favorite of mine), and has regained his impish charm.

Maria, aka Fuzz, remains totally fuzzy, living in a world of her own, a visiting ours occasionally. She still likes school, but it's not the same with Mrs. Ekhout. Still, she has set a goal for this school year—winning the perfect attendance award (not something her father nor I ever strove for). And she still wants to become a teacher someday, or perhaps a doctor. Petrusha Elementary school continues to function, with frequent classes, and many new students, including an exchange student from Australia. Maria quite enjoy making lessons plans, and trying to individualize lessons for each of the students. This summer PES<sup>4</sup> had their first big class trip on 4th of July weekend to my brother's hunting camp in Harrison<sup>5</sup>, Michigan. There were nature walks, and Mr. Nick and Miss Kalyna helped to provide natural history instruction. I got to drive the bus (my Jeep), and, on an outing to the forest, a school group portrait was taken.



Kalyna, Maria and Nick

On a sad note, I lost another friend this year; as we all get older, this happens more and more often. I met David Holloway in 1987, when he and Christobel were sharing a flat in the East End of London (Whitechapel). Christobel was in medical school; David was pursuing a career in writing for the theatre and television, but worked mostly as a reviewer and script doctor. David loved musicals and American television, particularly campy shows like the Golden Girls. He always knew what good shows were on, and sometimes went with me. And he loved to eat and cook—I learned the term "peckish" from him. David would speak with awe of huge American breakfasts, with blueberry pancakes. After Christobel moved on, David took sole possession of the flat and made it magnificent, with a well designed kitchen, and full of lovely things (some of which I had brought for him from my travels).

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4. Photos here: <http://web.mac.com/lubap/iWeb/Maria%27s%20World/Home.html>

5. We spent the 4th of July holiday weekend there with both sets of grandparents. We took walks, visited the flea market, played badminton, and set off lots of fireworks. Maria has a limit on how many of her friends she can bring with her on trips: Nick and Kalyna surprised her by packing almost her entire school into a couple of spare duffle bags of theirs.



David had spent much of his adult life living with the AIDS epidemic. Many of his friends died in the early years, and he provided help to AIDS sufferers. He refused to be tested himself; it was a political stand, I think. And in the end the disease claimed him. A friend tells me that a bench with David's name and details on will be placed outside the Actor's Church in Covent Garden, where his ashes have also been laid together with a rose bush. I think he would have appreciated it. And I know that I will have to go and visit.

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I did get a chance to do some visiting this year. I trotted (well, limped) around the globe a bit this year, and had a good time doing it.

**INDIA:** In mid-February I traveled back to India, to Vellore, to finish a project I had started the year before. My friend Sara Bhattacharji had added a labor and delivery wing to her hospital, and I had promised to help her get it organized and running. In 2005 I had spent a month training the nurses and doctors, putting together protocols, and creating chart forms. I'd had a chance to work in the outpatient antepartum clinic, but we hadn't done any deliveries. Since then, there had been laboring patients, deliveries and babies. I was coming back to evaluate the program, and tweak it if necessary.

I found that there had been a large turnover of nurses, so I did a good bit of education. We reevaluated our forms, and made modifications, as well as creating an OB register of births. I spent time in antenatal clinic, stressing the importance of accurate gestational dating, and taught the staff how to use the two Dopplers that my boss, Dr. Bayram, had donated to them. I also did a chart review, and found a high rate of routine episiotomy; Sara and I made an effort to stamp out this practice. And I spent time with Dr. Kiruba and the other staff learning how to use the new ultrasound machine that Sara had gotten donated. And we had several pysanka making sessions again this year, with various staff and volunteers.



My OB nursing staff at LCECU

It was not all work, though, and I got to spend time visiting with friends. I spent most of my stay with Jiji and Prasad Matthews, who were kind enough to take me in and feed me.....again! Prasad and I talked politics, and Jiji taught me more Indian recipes. I had a chance to get better acquainted with Avinash, now aged ten, and his baby brother Tarun, almost three. Sadly, Jiji's father, who'd been ill for several years, passed away in February. He and Jiji's mother had been staying in Vellore and getting care at CMCH at the time. During his last days we had many visitors coming to visit and pray with the family. The funeral was held in Madras, where I got to meet both of Jiji's sisters, Rupa and Binu, from Delhi and Connecticut respectively.

I spent some time with Prasad's family, too; his brother and family came from the US to visit, and we went to Madras to see them and Prasad's parents. I spent time with Dr. Daisy at CHAD and lunched with her, and spent a pleasant evening by the pool with Prasad's medicine department. And I made a new friend, Ingrid, a graduate student from Johns Hopkins working at the LCECU. Check my blog for more about this trip (<http://lupaluba.blogspot.com>),

including lots more pictures.



Prasad, Tarun, Jiji and Avinash Mathews

**UPPER PENINSULA:** In May, much later than usual, I traveled to the UP, where I stayed with the Klemps in their red sandstone copper baron mansion. I had time to cook, bird, and visit with all my friends, as well as attend Kara's high school graduation<sup>6</sup>. It was quite warm, and the blackflies made an unwelcome appearance; the bites itched for weeks thereafter. Although the scenery was gorgeous in the warm, sunny weather, the birding was poor, and the bites itched. And itched. Between the biting flies and the lack of birds, I prefer the cold of April.



Lorri, Kara and Rick Oikarinen

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6. Yet another opportunity to feel old. I still have the baby picture I took of her hanging on my refrigerator.



**UKRAINE:** In the summer I made my annual trip to Ukraine. This year UCARE organized its own summer camp in Crimea<sup>7</sup>. We had two camps of twenty children each<sup>8</sup>. I went to the first camp, along with Marianna Lis, Askold and Nadya Haywas, and several volunteers from Ukraine<sup>9</sup>. I was the camp doctor, taught pysanky and photographed all the activities.

This was the first UCARE camp, and it was a challenge. We had to work with a Russian-speaking staff in a Russified part of Ukraine. The children from Chernihiv were in the Chernobyl exposure zone, some had related illnesses and all had to avoid the midday sun. The group from Zakarpattya was very poor and many spoke only the local dialect. Several children from each group had emotional problems and learning disabilities, the consequences of difficult lives and institutionalization.

Our goal, at camp, was to keep the children busy, to teach them to respect themselves and others, and to give them respect, affection, and approbation. We wanted them to better understand their Ukrainian heritage. The camp program was in Ukrainian, and our camp was an arts camp, stressing creativity and self-expression. We taught painting, drawing, puppet making, and macrame, as well as the traditional Ukrainian arts of beadwork (gerdany) and pysanka-making.

There were outdoor activities as well, in the fresh sea air. Each morning kozak Yura would lead a "ruhanka"; he also organized soccer games and taught the "hopak," kozak martial arts. An "olympiad" was organized, with all sorts of races and competitions. There were frequent trips to the sea to go swimming – Crimea in mid-summer gets quite hot. And there were several hikes through the Crimean mountains.

There were several local excursions, including the Yalta waterfront, with its carnival-like rides and attractions, the Nikita botanical gardens, the museum of poetess Lesia Ukrainka, and the Aquatorium, a water mammal performing arts center. A boat ride in the Black Sea was arranged as well, an excursion from the docks of Nikita to the Swallow's Nest, a landmark on the other side of Yalta.



Our campers in Chersonesus

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7. Photos and much more information here: <http://web.mac.com/lubap/iWeb/Tabir%202006/2006.html>
  8. The children were from internaty, those orphanage/schools that warehouse the hundreds of thousands of children in Ukraine who have no home to call their own. Some are true orphans, both parents having died. Others have been removed permanently from abusive or neglectful parents. Still others come from large households with parents too poor to support them. Many have had to deal with the results of parental alcohol and drug abuse, and the ravages of AIDS and Chernobyl. Many have emotional and psychological problems. All are needy, all are deserving. Our children came from the far corners of Ukraine – Zakarpattya, Chernihiv, and Odeschyna. Most had never been to the sea before. Many had never been on a train before. Some had never been away from their home town before. And a few had never experienced the luxury of indoor plumbing or a hot shower before.
  9. Two of the volunteers, Daria and Ruslan, had attended camps with me in the past. They had come as campers, finished university, and had been volunteering with Priyateli Ditey an dUCARE for years. Daria spent 6 months in the USA helping us raise money and organize the Hearts for Art program.

There were two longer excursions which I quite enjoyed. The first was to the ruins of Chersonesus, an ancient Greek settlement near Sevastopol. There we were shown around by the director of the dig; we got to view active excavations, see real human bones, and to learn how people had lived on Ukrainian soil 2000 years ago. We got to not only clamber around the ruins, but also to see the site upon which Volodymyr Velikiy was said to have been baptized in the 10th century. We also visited central Crimea— Chufut Kale, an old fortress town built in a series of caves in the mountains, which was occupied at various times by Khazars, Turks and Karaites (an old Jewish sect); Uspenska Lavra, an ancient church (the oldest in Ukraine) built into the side of a mountain; and the Tatar town of Bakhchysaray, where we visited the palace of the Khan (with its museum, cemetery and harem) and the market.

The camp had to end eventually, and it did. There was true sadness and lots of wailing and tears all around. After two weeks of being loved and respected, of being treated as family, these children really hated to go back to their institutions.

After camp, I survived severe bronchitis, visited with family, and traveled around Ukraine a bit. After meeting with Vera and Yarko in Kyiv (who were on their way to the second camp), I took the train out to L'viv, where I stayed with my cousin Myrosia and her family. We visited a lot of museums, a few ruins, our village, Kniazhe, where her mother still lives, and Ruslan's home village, Strilkivtsy, to see his parents.



Ruins of an old fort at Skaly Podil'sky

We spent a day in the Carpathian mountains, first at the Kosiv market, and then visiting with my rizbar and his family at their mountain home in Richka.

We shopped for books and embroideries, and only looked at pysanky (damn the bird flu). I had a chance to see my old friend Andriy the dermatologist, lunch at his gracious flat, and with him visit brother Sebastian, a monk of our acquaintance, who has made it his life's work to rescue Ukrainian art from the Philistines<sup>10</sup>.

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10. Ukrainians, like many people the world over, prefer new and shiny objects to old and tarnished ones. In recent years, they have begun to fix up and remodel old churches, often discarding old paintings, tapestries and other antiquities. I've seen many a church with lots of twinkle lights and glowing Madonnas. Sebastian "rescues" these old works, and his monks then restore them.





View from Pan Mykola's house in Richka (with haystack)

In Kyiv I stayed with my cousin Inna, and we spent time at the dacha, wandering around Kyiv, and shopping for Ukrainian pop music and books. We took a day trip (with Vera and Yarko) out to Zolotonoshe, to my Aunt Lida's house, to see her and all the other relatives from my Dad's side of the family. While there, Vera and I visited Antypivka, the village where our fathers were born, to see our ancestral land and the village church.

Inna and I visited the town of Trypillia, where Neolithic ruins and artifacts were first discovered in Ukraine. There are two museums there now. The older government museum has a large number of artifacts, but an unexciting presentation. The newer one is private, run by a odd man with some wild ideas about the Trypillians and Aryans (e.g. the Virgin Mary is of Ukrainian ancestry). It's quite nice, though, with beautiful presentation, and a recreation of a Trypillian house on the grounds.



Family group portrait in Zolotonosha

In both cities I had ample opportunity to spend time with my godchildren. Daryna is 12, still a beanpole, and a pretty good student and artist. She loves reading and Ukrainian pop music, and loved the Sims game I brought her. (I had to



spend hours updating her computer so it would run.) Zhenya (Eugene) is seven, big for his age, and loves all sorts of gadgets and games. He loved the remote control car I brought, and the new Gameboy games.



Daryna and her brother, Maksym



Zhenya at the dacha

**AUSTRALIA:** In the autumn I took my biennial trip to Australia. It had been two years since I had seen any of my friends there. I was looking forward to seeing Tom and Christobel again, and to visiting with Jane and her new baby. The trip out was hellacious, and evidence of the abysmal state of the airline industry. I'll leave it at that.

WEST AUSTRALIA was first on my itinerary. Tom was on his school holidays, so we spent a good bit of time together, visiting the quokkas on Rottnest Island, going to the Perth Show, birding at Herdsman's Lake, and sampling the gelato offerings of Fremantle. I got to know Rene, Christobel's new partner, quite well, as he is on sabbatical from UWA, where he teaches architecture, and met Max, his daughter, who is quite a sweetheart. There were two other new additions to the family—Honey, a dog (possibly a dingo) and Sunny, a native viper.



Max, Tom and Honey



My old friend Siobean had moved to Australia last year; I got to see her again, and meet her husband, Alistair, and their daughters, Flora and Sadie. I drove out to Bridgetown for a few days, where I got to spend time rambling with Chris and David Johnston, although we never did find the kangaroo paws. I managed to catch Ken and Jenny Grinter just before they moved up to Shark Bay, and had a nice morning's birding and barbecue with them.



Flora and Sadie Malcomsen (with friend Jonathan)

Christobel arranged several interesting excursions for us. We spent one weekend the Wheatfields of WA. One night was spent camping out at the Kulin racetrack near Jilakin Rock (we watched a few races as well), and another at a yabbie farm near Kukerin (where we attended a formal charity dinner dance in a sheep shearing shed). Both nights were quite cold and windy. We got to see (and climb) Wave Rock and to walk along the Rabbitproof Fence, as well as view the giant ram of Wagin and many flooded salt lakes (due to typhoons last winter).



Rene, Christobel and Tom on Wave Rock

Christobel and Rene had recently bought a hundred acre block of bush near Gingin, an hour and a half's drive north of Freo. We camped out there as well—the bush was pretty, with kangaroos, wildflowers, and, sadly, kangaroo ticks<sup>11</sup>. It

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11. WA kangaroo ticks are not, thankfully, paralysis ticks, but they are very itchy. And they kept showing up for days after we had left Gingin. Rene and I suspect they had gotten into the upholstery of the cars.

was good fun, camp fire and all, lovely breakfast, but those tick bites sure itch. Still. A bit.

Next I was off to BRISBANE, where I stayed with my old friend Jane Brazier. Jane'd had a baby in August, and little Jonathan was three months old and quite cute by the time I came to visit. He had learned to smile, was great at cuddling, and loved to be rocked. Not much of a conversationalist, but very adorable.



Jean-Michelle, Jane and baby Jonathan

Jean Michelle, Jane's partner, now works for the Queensland government performing arts center, and got us free tickets (and quit nice ones) to see Noel Coward's *Private Lives* and Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Ian, Jane's brother, was a bit of a challenge to track down (his cell phone had gone wonky), but we had a few chances to meet and catch up. And I had a nice dinner with Christine and David Galbraith, saw their gorgeous new house (right on a creek) and then went birding.

Jane and I traveled around a bit locally, with baby in tow. We visited the botanical gardens, the arboretum, the university museums, Brisbane Forest Park and Tamborine Mountain. It was quite dry—there's been drought for a few years now, and the reservoirs are almost empty—and there were bush fires about. We also drove up to visit Greg in Noosa, taking baby on his first overnight outing. We had a nice weekend with Greg, a few nice drives, but mostly talking, drinks and snacks. And a lovely dinner, of course.

All that travel was lovely, but now I'm home, and getting ready for Christmas. The tree's just about all up, presents are mostly bought and made, and there's a big party at my house this Saturday. I've holiday cards to get out, cleaning and cooking to do, and a lot of wrapping of gifts. And then there's planning my travels for next year.

Enjoy your holidays and your time with family, and pray for peace.

Luba  
December 19, 2006