

THE HODGE-PODGE GAZETTE



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Hodges Recount Blessings Again And Again

The recent federal election system notwithstanding, the Hodges Family takes time again this Holy Season to recount many blessings. At the top of the list is the safe return of John and Liz and their family from three years in New Mexico and Arizona. Jean and Jack are pleased to have their family members each within a 45 minute drive of the Hodge-Podge Lodge.

Another blessing is that Ben continues to return safely from his commute to Washington, D.C. to help the I.R.S. restructure. He spent perilous hours on rainy runways to earn his Executive Premiere status on United Airlines. Ben may have spent more time in Washington, D.C. than Denver since May as part of a team revamping the Taxpayer Education unit of the IRS. Wayne was recently named vice-president of Internet Advertising for Healthwell.com. Even so, both guys continue to tend their garden, remodel various rooms in their home, and travel to fun places like Amsterdam, Vancouver and NYC.

Beth has been named "the world's best mom" by her son Kristopher who began kindergarten this fall. The Vowell family drove to Arizona to visit Michael's grandmother, mom, sister and family in July in their new van. A major blessing to have a working vehicle! Michael's grateful to belong to the Moose Lodge where he enjoys some male-bonding and helps make some tasty Sunday morning brunches.

Liz is glad to be part of the Boulder Valley Schools as a bilingual speech pathologist, but she does weary of the driving to serve children in four schools around the county.



Jonna, Jack, Kristopher, Jean, Katelyn and the rest of the Hodges Family wish you the very best this Holiday Season and for the New Year to come.

However, their blessing is a wonderful child-care provider for 20 month-old Katelyn and an excellent nearby elementary school for Jonna who is also in an enrichment program in extended kindergarten. John, who loves being back in Colorado, bagged several deer as well as an elk in this fall's hunting season. Besides his plumbing work, he is working on some remodeling jobs around their house in Coal Creek Canyon. Liz calls that a "mixed blessing." Since she and the girls may have to move in with Grandma and Grandpa for awhile this winter until the new furnace is working. (She loves G & G but yearns to be settled in her own home.)

Jean and Jack are grateful to be healthy and able to travel, as well as to maintain an active schedule of daily workouts and volunteerism in the community and church. Jack's knees are functioning well but now his sciatic nerve makes him hobble, so he plans many trips while he is still able to manage the travel stress.





20 Year-Old Spanky Rests on the Hodges Family Porch



Marching For Change

Jean and Jack spent ten days last spring in Washington, D. C. and Cleveland. At the National PFLAG Conference in D.C. Jean shared experiences and insights from her Boulder Valley Safe Schools Coalition work to help other PFLAG chapters learn about Safe Schools strategies. Marching with the thousands of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders in the PFLAG contingent at the Millennium Pride March was a highlight of the weekend. Honored to be invited to be a PFLAG mom on the platform, Jean's time was usurped by many famous big names. After six hours of exciting speakers, Jean and two other moms had about a minute each to be on stage. Quick Jack managed to snap one photo of Jean on the big screen.

Moving from unity in Washington to disunity in Cleveland, the Hodges went to the General Conference of the United Methodist Church as part of a Parents Reconciling Network. After experiencing the Holocaust Museum only days before, the act of wearing a sign around their necks gave a whole new appreciation of how it must have felt for Jews to wear a Star of David as their only identity. Their signs read, "My child is of sacred worth" over a photo of Ben. The hardest part was standing in the lobby in silence as delegates passed by, glanced at the sign then avoided eye contact. Joining with a thousand other demonstrators by week's end to surround the convention center with a rainbow ribbon, singing "Jesus Loves Me" was part of finding solidarity in the face of overwhelming alienation. It was good to return to a church that proudly proclaims that all people are included in its fellowship.

Ode To Spanky Family Feline Friend of 21 Years

*You came to our family at young Ben's urging
And taught us to love a cat.*

*You romped on our deck bringing gifts of small prey
To our doorstep.*

*You raced on our rooftop exuberant in morning sun
Casting a fleeting shadow on the grass below.*

*You gave life to our empty nest as children left home
By purring with affection at our touch.*

*You sat patiently as eager grandchildren pounced
On you with rough loving.*

*When your dying process began, you sat at our knees
With pleading eyes.*

*You taught us to love enough to let you go-
A release from pain with the cost of loss.*

A gentle goodbye, a reminder that love endures.



Contact the Hodges Family by E-mail at:

JACK AND JEAN: JeanInBldr@aol.com

BETH AND MICHAEL: Beth.Hodges@cexp.com

JOHN AND LIZ: JandLHodges@earthlink.net

BEN AND WAYNE: BenjaminHodges@prodigy.net



Visit the Hodges Family on the Internet at:

www.HodgePodgeGazette.com

Keep in touch with us throughout the year!

Back To Nature And Our Human Roots



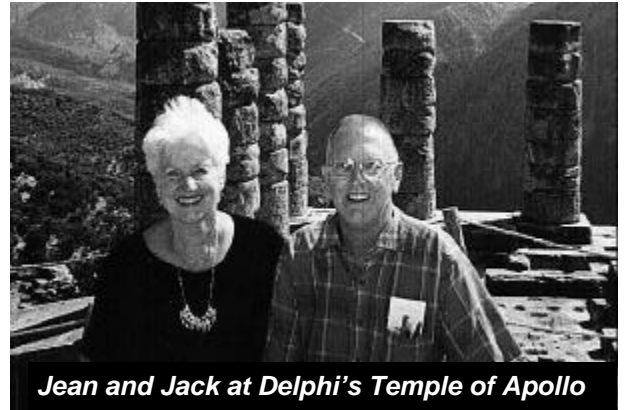
Life-long dreams of trips to Africa and the Greek Isles happened for Jean and Jack this summer and fall. They sneaked in six days in England, first in Derbyshire to visit the Bilson family, especially dear 2+ year-old Amelia. Then on to London to enjoy sights along the

South Bank of the Thames---the 400-ft. high London Eye, the fabulous new Modern Tate Museum, and the authentically replicated Old Globe Theatre to see Shakespeare's "Hamlet". On July 2 they flew to Nairobi as members of a party of 24 people on Safari in Kenya and Tanzania for 3 weeks. An evening with the large family of our tour leader, Nderitu Wanjau, was a warm welcome to African culture and communication beyond words in shared food, songs, and laughter. Two of Nderitu's brothers became our drivers and proved to be experienced at sighting animals as well as driving on precarious roads. Long hot rides on dusty, bumpy roads alternated with grateful stays in luxurious lodges and game-drives at sunrise and later at sunset to see



Jean in Maasai Village

elephants, rhinos, lions, cheetahs, hundreds of wildebeest, zebras, and antelopes of many varieties, not to forget exotic birds! Jean's birthday was spent in the Ngorongoro Crater, a 100 square-mile caldera where wild animals co-exist in their infinite variety along with nomadic Maasai herdsman in an area defined by the steep volcanic rim that prevents migration. Jack gazed with wonder over the Olduvai Gorge to imagine the Leakey's long search and final discovery of the cradleland of our human race. The trip concluded with three days in paradise-the small island of Lamu off the coast of Kenya in the Indian Ocean, where Swahili, Arabic, Portuguese and East Indian cultures mix in the narrow streets where only people and donkeys can pass. No high-rise hotels, no McDonald's, no Pepsi signs, no neon, no cars. Just a beautiful beach for walking, a small hotel with elegantly simple meals and friendly people.



Jean and Jack at Delphi's Temple of Apollo



Jack on Serengeti with Maasai Boys

As if this weren't enough, the last two weeks of Sept. found the Hodges with many Boulder friends (and Opal Wong from OWU days) on a trip to the Greek Isles---Crete and the amazing Minoan Palace of Knossos, Santorini, Mykinos, Delos, Patmos, Rhodes as well as a return to Ephesus in Turkey. Four days on a cruise ship taught them that they preferred to spend more time exploring countrysides and observing people to see how each island was unique. A return to Delphi after their boat landed in Piraeus was still a deep thrill, just as it was in 1986 when they first visited this ancient site the Greeks considered "the center of the earth". The majestic ruins of the Temple of Apollo sits below the theatre on the side of a steep hill overlooking distant valleys covered with olive trees. A walk even higher on the mountain leads to a stadium where athletic contests were held. An ancient spring of healing water filled Jean's water bottle as she communed with those who had also drunk the water in 400 B.C.

Jean and Jack Hodges and Family
6177 Olde Stage Road
Boulder, CO 80302



A Friend Is A Blessing Beyond Measure...

**Happy Holidays
From The Hodges Family.**