



# THE HODGE-PODGE GAZETTE



The Family Newspaper

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Christmas 2011



## The Hodges Family Faith Tested During Changing Times

"To choose what is difficult all one's days as if it were easy----that is faith." These words of W.H Auden in his poetic Christmas Oratorio, "*For the Time Being*", written in 1941-42, are a timely thought for these days. In 2011 the Hodges Family's faith was stretched to meet the challenges of changing times.



from her job led Denise to enroll at Red Rocks Community College where she is pursuing a degree in Early Childhood Education. Her older daughter, Destiny, lives in Ft. Collins. To see lovely wedding photos, go to [HodgePodgeGazette.com](http://HodgePodgeGazette.com).

Government cut-backs have meant that Ben's travel and training of other

Occupy Wall Street is the populist protest of the alarming economic realities of the rich getting richer while the poor get poorer and the middle class diminishes. The unemployment rate, rising to over 9%, claimed Beth Vowell this year. What appeared first as a dismal loss has turned into an opportunity for change with the Gift of Time. Having worked steadily since she was 16, Beth has discovered the satisfaction of volunteering in her community. She is not only eligible for participating in a community food share, but Beth serves meals at the OUR Center too. She has learned new ways to economize and spends more time with her parents and new friends. She has returned to her church as a Sunday School teacher and participates in the St. Vrain Safe Schools Coalition and PFLAG activities as she continues to seek employment.

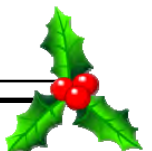
Families also change. Kate, 12, and Rae, 16, were attendants for two weddings this fall. The 2-year divorce process was painful for John, Liz, Kate and Rae, but moving beyond pain to new beginnings, both John and Liz each found new partners and a new lease on life and love. Denise and her daughter Rhiannon, 12, joined John in his mountain home. Being laid off

IRS communication specialists have been curtailed. His involvement in Denver Asset Building Coalition (DABC), the non-profit he started in 2003, is ever more needed to help the elderly and indigent get their earned income tax credit and refunds. Ben and Wayne's new family addition this year is Baxter, J&J's adorable granddog. Two parents couldn't be more diligent in their caring for this bundle of fluffy joy. Wayne's boss sent him to Milan, Italy, in October to attend a trade show and Ben was happy to accompany him. Jean and Jack were delighted to meet them for several days together in Cinque Terre and Milan. (Travel photos also on HPG website.)

Jack keeps saying "the parts wear out" as he struggles to keep his now 83-year-old body going. He is grateful for good health care coverage as one various body part needs boosting or replacement. Loss of balance means using trekking poles wherever he walks. Never one to succumb to the wages of aging, he is eager to continue plans to travel. Accompanying Jean to National PFLAG meetings in New York City and Washington, DC is his pleasure as Jean, known to many as "the energizer bunny", attends fitness classes, walks and swims in addition to being in three book groups when she's not doing PFLAG business.

Visit the Hodges Family website for additional 2011 news and photos:

[www.HodgePodgeGazette.com](http://www.HodgePodgeGazette.com)



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## News of the Younger Set

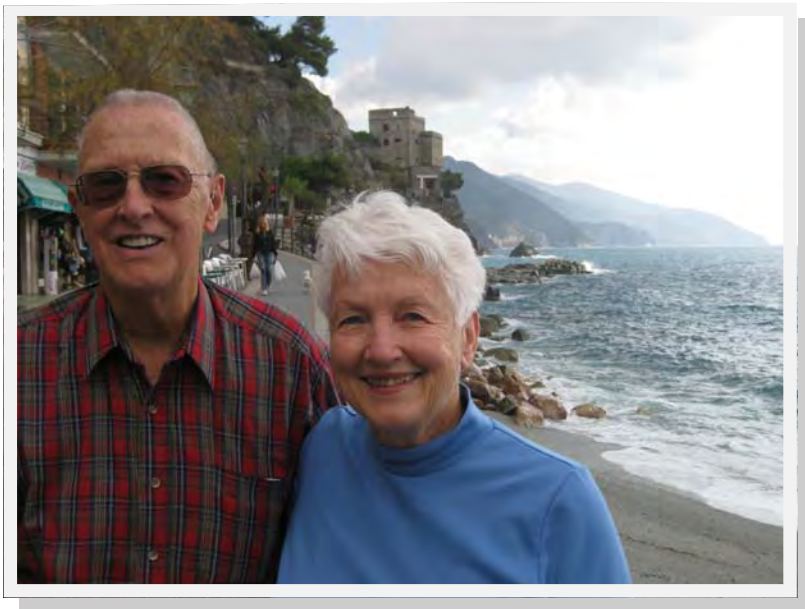
Turning 12 with spring birthdays, Rhiannon and Kate were treated to a trip to Disneyworld with Grandma and Grandpa for four days. Both are 7<sup>th</sup> graders at Gilpin County School where Rhiannon is a cheerleader and would play lacrosse, she says, if she didn't have braces. She also plays the flute while Kate continues her study of violin and bass. Both play in the school orchestra. Kate hates being taller than others in her class even though her parents and grandparents assure her that time will surely make things better. She loves her new hamster who replaced a guinea pig for which she sewed a blanket with Grandma's help.

Rae (no longer called Jonna Rae) at 16 made a happy switch this year from her mountain school to New Vista, an alternative high school in Boulder for her last two years of high school. She has chosen as her community internship to work in a mortuary in preparation to be a forensic pathologist. "I'm painting dead people's nails!" she announced to her startled grandparents and then went on at length to describe many more things she is learning as she begins to consider her future plans.

Grandson Kris finds that football has given structure to his summers along with increasing his physical strength and a huge appetite to feed this young man who is now taller than his parents and grandparents. Kris sings in two choirs, is taking honors courses and enjoys time with his girlfriend, Corrie.

## Our Italian Travel Tale

Having won the bid at a fundraiser, Jean and Jack shared a week in Spoleto, Italy, in October with Boulder friends, Ken and Marlys Thurow. Their lovely apartment was in the center of this medieval hillside town made famous by Gian Carlo Menotti in the 1950's when he began the famous World Festival of music, dance and theatre. Day trips to Orvieto and Assisi enriched the week. Since this is likely to be their last trip on their own in Italy, their second week included a nostalgic visit to Venice to renew their 1956 memories of that romantic city. A new discovery was Desenzano, a charming resort town on Lake Garda. The final leg was a return to Pisa with Ben and Wayne followed by three days in the village of Riomaggiore in Cinque Terre. They underestimated the challenge of staying at the top of the town in a B&B only reached by climbing steep steps and winding streets several times a day. But the gently sloping walk to the next town on the Via Del Amore high above the deep blue sea was a path of beauty never to be forgotten.



## First United Methodist and the Arts Still a Priority

Rae, Kate and Denise joined Jean as teachers' aides for a week-long Arts for Kids' Souls Camp in August at FUMC. Jean created a reading for a 9/11 commemoration. In Nov.-Dec. Jean was stage director for the beautiful jewel of an opera, Menotti's "Amahl and the Night Visitors" with a cast of 40. J & J enjoyed 3 days in Chautauqua, NY soaking up culture before heading to Ohio for the Reconciling Ministries Convocation to gather communal strength to continue the struggle to change anti-gay church policies in 2012.



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