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Greetings to all.

Living with an abnormal number of children (not to mention the children themselves) opens doors of knowledge and experience that, for the most part, one of aging constitutions, like Carrie and I, could, we think, mostly get along fine without. For example, I think I could have done OK another 50 years not knowing how much 100 feet of guardrail along a west Texas road cost or the cost of a 60 mile ambulance ride to Lubbock. I did fine for 50 years not knowing how long it takes a helicopter to get off the ground after a child is reported lost at White Sands National Park in New Mexico. I'm really not sure why I need that information now.



To get on with it, the event of the past 2 years is the Marty Jacobson/Monica Hurd (aka M&M) courtship, engagement, and wedding.<sup>1</sup> It all happened about as fast as you just read the words and they were off to Atlanta to set up house. The wedding was a lot of work but a lot of fun.

Now, I must admit in hindsight, that while we did most things right with Monica's rearing, we made some mistakes too. Having just turned 19 years old, she is well equipped to manage a household AND a husband. But she doesn't drive. We were a bit short-sighted when we decided her driver's education would be a suitable job for her husband.<sup>2</sup> Carrie says one thing she learned from the first of our many upcoming weddings is, "don't plan a wedding with an opinionated<sup>3</sup> eighteen-year-old and especially one who cannot drive herself around to take care of wedding preparations on her own."

The only other mistake we made was encouraging her with her collie breeding business and allowing her to use the money to buy horses. How could we have ever known? I mean, it was all well and good and fun at the time. But do you think she took the 3 dogs and 2 horses to Atlanta to live with her and Marty at their apartment? Oh no. Somehow, we were left with the feed and shoeing expenses. Oh well.



On to the thrills of homeschooled drivers. Carrie and I were already in Ruidoso with Cameron, our youngest. Lindsey, Clarke, and Melody met us there Wednesday so Carrie and I could go on to Albuquerque for the New Mexico State Home School Conference. We regrouped on Saturday in Ruidoso with the intent to be home by Sunday night. Everyone was content to leave for home late Sunday afternoon except **Lindsey (23)** who, for some unknown reason, wanted to get home early. That was fine - we were in two vehicles and she could head for home in one of them. I was looking forward to a sunny, warm, relaxing Sunday April morning before driving home. We smiled and waved as she backed out of the driveway for home.

Now if there's a smile on my face  
Don't let my glad expression  
Give you the wrong impression.  
Don't let this smile I wear  
Make you think that I don't care  
'Cause really I'm sad....<sup>4</sup>

I wasn't sad because she was leaving. I was sad because she hopelessly bottomed out the Taurus in the bar ditch while backing out of our driveway, suspending the rear end in the air. Two hours of digging was enough to pull it out of the ditch with the Explorer. So much for a relaxing Sunday morning.

Oh. Did I mention to you that she ran out of gas on the way to Ruidoso and that she, Melody, and Clarke walked about three miles back to a gas station in the dark? Of course they had to walk three miles back to the car with gas (it was daylight by then). After having lost so much time, she was speeding only a little to make up time but enough to catch the local



Sheriff's attention. And no, she has not perfected the art of crying her way out of a citation. Maybe we need to add that as a part of our homeschool driver's education program.

Speaking of the Explorer, fast-forward a *mere - mere* 3 weeks. Wesley was to study for CLEP tests and Lindsey needed a concentrated week of last minute preparation for World Magazine's Journalism Institute. As is the Hurd custom, they headed west for Ruidoso about 4AM. I knew there was trouble when Wes called me at work about 8:30am.

They were only 30 minutes from Post (not much farther than where Lindsey previously ran out of gas) where we always stop for gas and etc. when traveling to and from Ruidoso. It was barely dawn. Lindsey was asleep in the back seat when she suddenly felt a sharp jarring and swerving of the vehicle. She wrapped an arm under and around the seat, holding on tight while listening to the squeeching of tires, the breaking of glass, and feeling the sensation of being upside down then back up again as the car rolled over and landed on the wheels. Sensing they were finally at a stop, she popped her head up for a view from the ditch of the median of the road. All was quiet in the dawning morn save the settling of dirt and dust outside the car and the hissing of steam from the radiator. Seeing Wesley frozen but intact at the wheel, she said, "Oh my...this is NOT good."

Basically, all was well except for the car. Lindsey required a couple of stitches on a foot from climbing out of the car. She and Wes had a great time entertaining the semi-captive audience attracted by Wes' spectacular sleep-stunt driving: the helpful truck driver at the crash site, the ambulance paramedics, the ER doctor and nurses, and Uncle Leroy and Aunt Rogenne, who rescued them from the hospital until Carrie could get there. The loss of the Explorer was a bit of a setback for our transportation needs.

Aside from various driving escapades, Lindsey has busied herself with enough cleaning jobs to be sporting around in her classic 1986 BMW 535I. As of late she was full time nanny for a family in our church for eight months. More on that later. As of this writing she is travelling Europe until August with a girl friend.



**Wesley (20)** is also styling around town in his Dodge 1500 truck (Rachel "loves Dodge trucks"). He pays for it and his trips to Hockley, TX from his work at Westfield Solutions, his sole proprietor computer/network combination construction/remodeling business. Spending several weeks this fall in Monroe, LA with the Parkers and completing an addition to their home, was only a small number of the miles he has put on his Dodge. As of late he is working for a realty company and studying for the realtor's exam.

But that's not the most important thing going on in Wes' life. It may not have happened in the whirlwind fashion as with Monica and Marty but everyone was just as certain from the day Wes asked Pastor Franklin if he could court his oldest daughter, Rachel. They are as of May 13, 2006 officially engaged with a wedding date set for early October, 2006.

Yes, Rachel said "yes" in spite of some prior "issues" in Wes' life. You see, Wesley was kicked out of our house last spring, becoming named among the homeless of Weatherford. Basically, we needed to make room in the house for younger kids who are getting older and requiring more space and the fact that he just couldn't keep the room clean seemed like a good reason to boot him out. It was quite humorous and Wes has been a pretty good sport about the whole thing. For the first couple of nights I found him in the mornings asleep with all his "stuff" in the 1986 T-Bird he inherited from the Fergons by virtue of yet another car incident involving now son-in-law that I won't go into at this time. Then he moved to sleeping on our concrete front porch under our bathroom window. Eventually, he moved to the barn for the summer - his head resting on the door-sill for what coolness of night could be had. I was wondering what he was going to do for this winter when he bought a fixer up travel trailer from the grandparents and set it up on our place. Thus his abode until he can secure other living quarters for his lovely bride-to-be. There's just way too much of me in this poor young lad. Please pray for him AND his wife to be.

With an impending wedding, Monica was feeling the need to sock away some money. A couple of years or so prior, she asked me what she could do to earn money. There just didn't seem to be many opportunities for a non-driver living out in the sticks. But God is always faithful and we heard of an opportunity at a vet's ranch very close to home. Dave-the-vet specializes in in vitro and artificial insemination of horses - right up Monica's alley - horses, that is. It was full time work during the spring and summer - hot and dirty work. Monica loved it.



But as the breeding season waned, the hours at Dave's diminished and an opportunity for Monica popped up at my office through the wedding date.<sup>5</sup> So part-time ranch-hand work at Dave's was passed on to Micah. **Micah (16)** is a homeschool driver's education success story, at least by our standards. With Lindsey and Wesley mostly out of the house and Monica being a non-driver and now really out of the house, the errand running duties have fallen to Micah. He has proven to be our most responsible driver thus far. Only two tickets and no collisions that we know of.<sup>6</sup> He shuttles Clarke around town to do window washing, attend classes, etc....

Micah's interests lean toward electronics and techno-geeky discussions and argumentative debates, topics upon only a few like-minded guys have the patience to wade through with him. He is definitely his father's son when it comes to long-winded story telling. Then there is this whole wrestling and arm wrestling thing he has been into for a while. Micah is going to be a very interesting adult, keep your eye on him.

**Clarke (15)** received his covenant ring this fall. He busies himself hoarding money from the window washing business, continuing with classical guitar lessons, various wood working projects scattered across the car port, and sometimes doing school work. He accumulated enough money to buy his very own desktop computer and has loaded it up with various CAD programs and the such. Remember from the last letter that Clarke and, now Carrie, breed and sell half-breed kittens. It is the most amazing thing to me that people will drive for hours to give us money for these half-breed barn cats. So well they did last year that they paid for the whole family going snow skiing. Isn't America great?



The problem, though, is that we didn't know where the father of these kittens to be. So in an effort to upgrade the quality of the breeding, they bought a pedigree Rag Doll male for breeding. \$500 for that kitten. That's right - \$500 - for a cat. The first litter from Fritz (named after our beloved GBT tutor, Mr. Henrichs) was stunning. Clarke and Carrie sold those kittens for \$225 each. The second litter was just as stellar. The kittens were snatched up in just two weekends. Then Fritz disappeared. Coyotes we suspect. So we have another male, given to us by our dear Chef John, who is now old enough to show us what he can do. Nothing. He's been fixed. That revelation came after we had sent him off to a lady's home to "spend time" with her female. How frustrating for all involved.



**Evan (13)**, on the other hand, tends to busy himself other ways. Lindsey only had her BMW for a day or two when she came home for the weekend. You cannot imagine how much relief Lindsey and Wesley getting their own vehicles has given to our overly pressured family transportation system (FYI - the BUV is dead). As is our habit, we leave the keys in our cars at home. You may know that BMWs have a lot of bells and whistles to them one of which is the ability to double lock the car doors such that one cannot get in or out of the car except with the key. We thought it was not possible to double lock the car except by using the key and, thus, you could not double lock the car while the key was in the ignition. Enter Evan, who unbeknownst to anyone is crawling all over the inside of the car, testing out all the bells and whistles, and somehow upon leaving the car double locks the keys in the ignition.<sup>7</sup>

We tried everything to get that car unlocked short of breaking glass (which I was very near to doing). We had a locksmith out twice to work on it. He even tried to make a duplicate key from the key code to no avail. Ultimately we ordered a duplicate key through a dealership which arrived four days later. Meanwhile, the car sat for over a week and our transportation issues were, again, quite frustrating.

One thing about Evan - he doesn't let uncontrollable circumstances interfere with his plans and activities. I mean, so what the whole state of Texas had been under a burn ban for over three months, that we were 20 inches behind in rain fall levels, and that wildfires had been so rampant across the state that that much of north Texas was declared disaster areas. So bad it had been that fireworks were banned for the New Year's celebration.

Let none of that hinder our dear Evan from a little Saturday morning sport. Carrie and I had arrived at the Ruidoso cabin only 12 hours prior to learning that the whole Peaster Volunteer Fire Dept was on our property putting out a grass fire started by Evan setting off fireworks. Fortunately, Wesley was home and able to talk to the Fire Marshall rather than a house full of underage unsupervised children trying to burn the whole of Parker County. Poor Evan is such a jokester that when he came running into the house to report the fire no one took him seriously. Reminds you of something far back doesn't it: a boy, wolves, crying.

**Allison (12)** is growing up faster than we can keep up with. She and Melody are sharing the bedroom vacated by Monica and have some of the same decorating issues Lindsey and Monica dealt with when they shared a bedroom. Allison has been waiting in the wings for her chance to step into Lindsey and Monica's shoes around the house. That time is now and she is full blown into taking over running the house. At this point, that means doing most of the household cooking. She has a huge advantage over Lindsey and Monica in that Chef John<sup>8</sup> has started with her much earlier than he did with Lindsey and Monica. I suspect it won't be long before she is planning the meals, doing the grocery shopping, getting married.... Egads!. Aside from household duties, she is progressing quite well at the flute and could often be seen galloping Libby across the field at full speed – much to General's chagrin.



**Melody (9)** is the baby girl of the family. She divides her time between doing sister things with Allison and the older girls with running through the house on all fours with her three little brothers. She is quite the tomboy much like Monica was. A couple of years ago the neighbors loaned us their pony, Doolittle. He became Melody's project. As ponies are wont to do, they do just what they please. But Melody found out that if she saddled and rode him when Monica was riding the big horses that he would follow and run behind them. You have never seen a funnier sight than this short-legged little horse running after two "real" horses, Melody holding on for life,

bouncing up and down.

When in Ruidoso, one of our favorite family activities is a day's visit to White Sands National Park. Thousands of acres of white gypsum sand makes for a fun day of hiking and exploring. We drive as deep into the park as possible, set up camp, and the kids have a spot another mile or two deeper into the park where they split off for climbing, digging, rolling in the sand, etc.... It was at this point that Melody decided to go back to camp alone. It was about an hour before we realized that she was not with any group of children. There are enough of us to spread out pretty far and sweep the area looking and calling for her. I thought she might have varied off the path to camp to the left or the right in some degree. She actually headed in the opposite direction from camp and then curved around. Thus, 2 hours of hiking the dunes produced no sign of her. The park ranger assured us that this sort of thing happens once or twice a month and only 1 or 2 a year turn out to be overnight stays. The park was locked down and the helicopter ordered when Carrie, having discovered tracks in the sand



going opposite the camp site finally caught up with her in a part of the park we had already swept. Fortunately, the helicopter had not yet left the pad. My calves and feet ached for days.

**Andrew (7), Packy (5), and Cameron (3)** are affectionately referred to as "da boys-2". We achieved two major milestones with the Andrew and Cameron this past year. They are POTTY-TRAINED!!!! For the first time in 22 years we have no one in diapers. Hallelujah! I think Kimberly-Clark's stock value hit a 22 year low recently. We were beginning to wonder if Andy would

ever be completely potty-trained. It had become our custom over the summer to take Andrew outside and hose him and his underwear off when he had an accident. Sometime early fall one of the kids pointed out that Andrew was in the backyard with the hose taking care of that job for himself. That was the last accident he had.

**Cameron (3)** is a fairly big boy for his age. He almost outweighs Patrick and Andrew. He turned three (our magic age for PT) in November. With the impending wedding and many wedding related trips during the fall, Carrie kept putting off this dreaded training ritual. She would only occasionally talk to him about going without a diaper for a short time. NO WAY! "I want my diaper!" He was very persistent and opinionated about what was near and dear to his bottom. I might add, he was also very vocal in his dislike of sitting on the toilet even with bribes of candy.

After Christmas, with all the busyness of the wedding and holidays behind us, Carrie steeled her nerves and definitively went into action. She took his diaper away and sent him outside to play (we love Texas weather). It was very traumatic for him at first. He cried and Carrie ignored him. Finally, after about a week, he figured out that it was easier than he had originally thought to claim that piece of candy. Now he is in that stage of going to potty every 5 minutes.

**Packy (5)** is a very pleasant, easy going sort of guy. He has taken over the role of being Andrew and Cameron's older brother, letting us know if they are doing anything they shouldn't and sometimes keeping the peace between the two of them. He loves to talk and is still in the stage of enjoying helping with the household chores. Carrie just purchased a small vacuum cleaner and three brooms for him and his brothers to, hopefully, channel some of their energies into constructive uses. Of course, they fight over who uses the vacuum first as well as fight *with* the brooms. Extra long swords! Lances! Rifles! They are boys! Everything they come into contact with becomes a weapon of destruction. Carrie and I know that God's grace is to be sought minute by minute. This is no coward's war.



**Carrie (38)** can only be described as the grease that keeps all the wheels churning, the hands that keep all the plates spinning, the fuel that keeps all the pistons hitting. She is a project oriented girl. In between marrying off one daughter and potty training little boys, she truly enjoys hosting and throwing parties. Each party is its own project. The past couple of years have been especially ripe for a host of parties: post conference parties, post cotillion parties, July 4<sup>th</sup> parties, ordination parties, wedding parties to name just the more obvious. Couple her love to entertain with the fine tuning in food and presentation she and Lindsey have received from Chef John, and Carrie can throw a pretty nice party in our humble abode.

Then there are the other projects which include attempting to transform me and all the kids into project oriented people like her. A constant source of frustration for her as her determination is surpassed only by our resistance.

Which leads me to another interesting development the past couple of years – the way Carrie and I fight. I once overheard her telling someone that she was mad at me right now and not speaking to me. I suppose the hearer inquired as to the reason for her being mad at which she informed them that she couldn't remember why, only that she knew she was suppose to mad. And so it has come to a couple of times that we have fussed and argued with each other only to go to our separate corners in fumes only to awake the next day and neither one of us remember just what all the fuss was about.

No doubt a product of old age coupled with over stimulation of life circumstances, but nice nevertheless. So don't give up guys, there is indeed hope. I mean, she still may stay mad at you for your inconsiderate behavior 30 years ago but at least there will come a time when she won't be able to go over the details about it with you again.

**“Having a lot of children is an expensive habit.” Carrie to a group of parents at the New Mexico State Homeshooling Conference.**

Another interesting development with Carrie the past couple of years or so I just took notice to is her stashing away of candy in our closet. Now, it did start innocently enough: candy on hand to reward the kids with good school work or good chore work or whatever. But it has become increasingly more of a reward for her, an obsession if you will, kept quietly and secretly hidden away in the recesses of some old and stale dresser drawers in our closet. Then she discovered that one of the grocery stores she shops at regularly started carrying a variety of chocolate. I mean REAL chocolate – 85% and up cocoa content – for \$1.00 a bar. So if you're ever in need of a chocolate fix.....

Oh. Did I mention to you that Carrie is a sweepstake winner? That's right. She is the 2005 Purina Mills National Sweepstake winner. If you want to read about it just Google Carrie Hurd. It was no small deal. Prizes included a \$14,000 fifth wheel horse trailer with no truck (we thought about converting the BUV to a fifth wheel) along with various horse products and food. It was fun.

The past 24+ months since we last wrote you have been significantly eventful in the life of our family and church family. It has been our desire for several years to align ourselves and our church family with like-minded churches, denominationally if you will. The meeting of our older children with the Franklin older children in Moscow, Idaho nearly three years ago has proven to be a God-send to both our family and to our church family. The union of our church family to the Confederation of Evangelical Reformed Churches via the sponsorship of Grace Presbyterian Church, Hockley, TX has blessed us and our families.

My (82) ordination April '05 as a ruling elder of our church within the CREC has been a blessing in my life in no less than two ways. First, I was honored to administer the wedding vows to Monica and Martin Jacobson. Our first wedding was much work and much pressure but the actual wedding was so much fun. The whole process of meeting and getting to know the Jacobson family has been enriching and enjoyable.

Second, our church family was better equipped and prepared to minister to one of our church families during the sickness and loss of a wife and mother. Kevin and Shelley Treadway celebrated the birth of their 8<sup>th</sup> child April, 2005. Shelley was diagnosed with cancer that May and went to be with her Lord that October. It was a great honor to address the family and friends gathered to honor a long-time friend, faithful wife and mother. Ministering to the Treadway family and extended family during the sickness and subsequent death has been an intense and consuming time for our small church family. But it has also solidified our relationships both within the church and with the other churches we are aligned with as they have helped and supported our efforts.

We are thankful for the cards and letters with pictures from you. The pictures stay on our refrigerator and remind us to pray for you. For those of you who became anxious or sorrowful, thinking you had been dropped from our list, I apologize for the long delay. For those of you who were hoping you had dropped from our list, well.....

God's grace to you all and to your families,

The Hurds: Pat, Cameron, Carrie, Andrew, Evan, Monica Jacobson, Micah<sup>9</sup>, Allison, Clarke, Wesley, Melody, Lindsey, Patrick



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<sup>1</sup> Of course, one cannot resist the encroaching thoughts of grandchildren. I think we should start submitting a list of “M” names for their consideration! How bout Maggie Mae? Eh? [Monica@martinjacobson.com](mailto:Monica@martinjacobson.com). ☺

<sup>2</sup> Our decision was based primarily on our questionable ability to teach her to drive based on the minor “incidents” of our first two students, Linds and Wes, after they were released to the road and onto unsuspecting fellow motorists.

<sup>3</sup> Carrie cannot figure out why any of our children can be sooo opinionated.

<sup>4</sup> You have to be my age to remember “The Tears of a Clown” by Smokey Robinson and the Miracles. I have yet to figure out WHY I remember that song but let it be enough to demonstrate the power of music. Even stupid music.

<sup>5</sup> December 21, 2005 to be exact and for your calendar. Never too late to send money! Remember how it was when you were newly wed? ☺

<sup>6</sup> Be sure to see our ad in the upcoming edition of the *Homeschool Digest* and enroll YOUR teenagers in the **Hurd’s Eclectic Driver’s Education Course**. Low cost with high results. I mean, with our experience and record why would you go somewhere else?

<sup>7</sup> Just that evening upon Lindsey’s arrival we learned that the only two keys to the car were on the same key ring. We all agreed she needed to get that extra key off the key ring and into the house first thing in the morning but Evan got to the car before she did.

<sup>8</sup> Chef John Paterson is a career head chef whose native home is Scotland but now lives in Granbury, TX with his beautiful wife, Charlotte. John and Charlotte’s friendship has been very enriching to our whole family. He quickly took on Lindsey and Monica to assist him at various catering events. Lindsey has been an excellent cook for many years, but Chef John raised the bar significantly not only in quality of food and taste but also in its presentation, its beauty. We have been most blessed not only by the training the girls have received but by John and Charlotte’s down to earth, real life friendship.

<sup>9</sup> Always remember: The facts DON’T speak for themselves. Micah is only taller than Wes when Micah is standing on his tip toes. Note the expression on Micah’s face.