

Dear Friends,

Thank you for the cards, letters, and pictures this past holiday season. FYI, we're not the only ones late sending holiday greetings, just one of the later late ones. All you other late people know who you are. Perhaps I'll do better next year. But then... In the meantime,

The highlight of our year was the birth of **John Cameron Hurd, November 6, 2002**. Cameron is the 11<sup>th</sup> such highlight in our 24 years of marriage.<sup>1</sup> I'm not sure the exact reason for going to the hospital. Maybe because our insurance will pay for a \$40,000 hospital birth but not for a \$1,500 home birth. Maybe because the midwife has been on time for only two of the last four home births. Maybe because we are older and less adventuresome. Be that as it may, Drill Sergeant Floor Nurse, R.N. didn't seem overly impressed when I announced, "We'll have this baby by midnight and be outta here by 2."

For Drill Sergeant Floor Nurse, R.N., Carrie was just another soon to be mother who checked in too early with the false hopes of getting it over with quickly. Those suspicions were confirmed when she "checked" Carrie: a measly 3.<sup>2</sup> Of course, we knew better. Though this was Carrie's second dose of castor oil in a week, she was much more confident this time than earlier. Thus we drove into town and spent the evening walking the mall, then walking the hospital, and finally checking in under the supervision of Drill Sergeant Floor Nurse, R.N. about 10PM.



By 12:30AM Carrie was much more uncomfortable and wanting to labor on her side. Well, this was just *too* much for Drill Sergeant Floor Nurse, R.N. who insisted that Carrie lay on her back so the monitor could read the baby's stats. After all, after 2 1/2 hours of labor Carrie was now at 3 1/2. But Carrie won the battle and Drill Sergeant Floor Nurse, R.N. stormed out of the room muttering something about telling the doctor on her.

**"You're not checking me. I'm about to have this baby!" Carrie to Drill Sergeant Floor Nurse, R.N. moments before Cameron's Birth**

We're not sure what happened about 1AM, but it was drastic and Carrie went into hard labor quickly. We asked Drill Sergeant Floor Nurse, R.N. to call the OB<sup>3</sup> but instead she insisted on "checking" Carrie first. I wish you

could have seen the sarcastic expression of disbelief on her face when Carrie said, "You're not checking me - I'm about to have this baby!" The other nurse, perhaps to ease the tension, chimed in suggesting that we "take a peek under the covers" and I wish you could have seen the expression on Drill Sergeant Floor Nurse, R.N.'s face at the sight of Cameron's little crown exposed.

The rest is often repeated history. Two or three contractions later Cameron was born at 1:10AM weighing in at 8lbs 13ozs, 22 inches long. We were home by 6AM, much to the chagrin of Drill Sergeant Floor Nurse, R.N. and the duty Nursery nurse. Our pediatrician must have gotten an ear full that morning during his rounds for he mentioned, with a smile, to Carrie a couple of weeks later that he knew she had been there. Without giving much detail, he smiled and astutely concluded, "It's a difference of worldviews."

Cameron's birth was none too soon as we had been on "Red Alert" for nearly two weeks. Knowing that I was 50 minutes away at work, Carrie was having increasing misgivings about me going to the office. Likewise, Lindsey, Monica, and Allison (knowing that birth pangs would strike with lightening speed at any moment) was not about to let Carrie get too far away for too long of a period.

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Did I mention to you that **Lindsey (19)** moved away from home? That's right, and she took Melody with her. It was just getting too crowded in the house for them to stay here. After all the years of Lindsey and Monica rooming together, Lindsey is now rooming with Melody in the apartment in our back yard.

There is some irony to the change in roommates. You may know that Lindsey is a decorator like her mother and, therefore, somewhat particular about her home décor. But she graciously made allowances to Monica (albeit small allowances) who was more interested in dogs and horses than décor and desired to display her collection of horse figurines. Well, Monica out grew the figurine stage some time ago and recently passed her collection of figurines to the next young animal lover of the family - Melody. That's right, Lindsey is *still* making allowances (albeit small allowances) to her décor for those horse figurines.

Living with **Melody (6)** must be quite an experience. She retains the title of *Decibell*. Apparently it must be extra difficult to be 8<sup>th</sup> in the birth order for an extra expressive and dramatic child. Volume appears to be insufficient.

Also heard throughout the house are Melody's recitations of whatever is her latest movie or cassette craze. You've probably had at least one go through that stage of memorizing entire scripts. What is so entertaining is not only Melody going through every character's part with animation, enthusiasm, and appropriate voice inflection, but also the words in the middle of a sentence that she did not hear correctly and, thus, mispronounces or misuses.<sup>4</sup>

Last year Melody was content to lead the dogs around by the leash, but this year, she claims to be much older and wiser, and this deserves her to lead the *horses* around by her leash. So far, the answer is no. Thus, she settles for leading Andy and Packy around by the leash. Her goal this year is to lose as many teeth as Allison did last year and, likewise, cash in from the Tooth Angel.

On the other hand, **Allison (8)**, being Miss Prim and Proper, wouldn't be caught dead engaging in such irreputable behavior. Allison is a great help with Cameron and enjoys telling everyone else exactly what they should be doing with him. She loves the babies, and is quite adept at taking care of their needs, as she is the resident baby holder since before we can remember.



It has been said that Allison and Lindsey are much alike. One common characteristic that has evidenced itself lately is Allison's daredevil love for speed. Though Allison doesn't particularly care for the array of animals, riding horses appeals to her yearning for speed. Watching her and Evan riding double on Libby makes for a very laughable picture. Evan, the more careful and conservative child, yells, "Easy Libby, easy Libby!" while Allison holds onto his shirt, half falling off herself, and pulling him off balance as well. Evan hollers, Allison laughs, and Libby rolls her eyes (I'm quite certain).

Thus Allison is a strange mix of one who enjoys the feminine arts like her mother and Lindsey, but yearns to run, fight with and be one of *Da Boys*. Her boyish aptitude and love for math expresses itself in her love to learn and play card and board games. Perhaps you recall her motherly instincts overwhelming her during chess tournaments last year. I'm not sure what conclusion to draw, but know that cash payments for each victory took precedence over motherly compassion for her opponents.

**D**id I mention to you that Lindsey is still at the rigors of school? It's not that she hasn't done all the required work and more to graduate, we just haven't made it official...yet. It must be something similar to me insisting that Monica will always be 7 years old. Be that as it may, she is regularly taking various CLEP tests in preparation for some kind of college experience as well as continuing the Great Books curriculum and Latin.

The fizziest thing she has done this year (apart from the annual CWSC trip to Virginia) is teach a Great Books curriculum to a class of mostly boys for our home school group's co-op.



What is classic about Lindsey as a teacher is that, with the exception of one or two of the youngest ones, all her students are taller than she. In fact, equaling and surpassing Lindsey's height has become the "standard of passage" around our household. Passage into what I'm not sure but Micah is the most recent of our bunch to surpass this newly established measure of manhood.

**M**icah (13) may be progressing in stature but has made a definitive step back 6 years having adopted Calvin<sup>5</sup> as his inspiration for life. Being the only one in the family who consistently goes for the comic strips first, his infatuation with *Calvin and Hobbes* has infected the rest of the family and we get some good laughs when relating the antics of Calvin with what goes on around a house filled with seven boys.

Micah, like Calvin, sometimes views the world from a "minority" perspective. There was a time when Micah would often be seen walking around with just one shoe on. After all, one shoe is better than none when the other can't be found. But when the bare foot becomes too much of a liability when mowing the yard, just secure a piece of cardboard to the bottom of your foot with duct tape wrapped all around the foot and half way up the leg.



Duct tape works real well on cuts too. Just wrap the damaged area tightly with duct tape for several months. Sometimes you might wrap the damaged area with Seran Wrap first before securing the wrap with duct tape. Or if you can't find the duct tape, several rolls of scotch tape will make do as well as serve as an irritant to mom the next time she is looking

for the tape.

Micah's main task this year was learning to subdue his hair. It seems that Micah has not been blessed with docile hair. Instead, he is following more of the tradition of his dad and older sister. Sometimes his hair has been compared to that of the great Caesar Augustus or the late Liberache. To sum up, it is thick and curly and many times displays a will of its own. Accordingly, it is a thing of daily curiosity for the family when Micah emerges from a night's sleep and often times a challenge for him to get out the door in a timely manner AND with reasonably organized hair.

**Clarke (11)**, on the other hand, is the one who is spit-shined and ready to go if a trip into town is even suspected – hair perfectly combed and parted, clean clothes, and shirt perfectly tucked in Clarke is our meticulous and disciplined one who does well with one-step-at-a-time type programs. Thus he enjoys working through math exercises as well as gradually defeating a chess opponent one move at a time.



Clarke is the outdoor boy of the family and Scouting is right up his ally not only because it is outdoorsy but also because it

is a systematic program of achievement.. He enjoys fishing, hiking, and camping as well as working on his latest classical guitar piece or the latest chess opening that grabbed his attention.

What Clarke doesn't particularly enjoy is holding the baby (or any baby for that matter) but does his share of holding and changing diapers. He was recently heard to exclaim after being spit up upon by the baby, "Hey!! This baby has hydrophobia!!"

Being a gradualist, however, requires meticulous planing for the future and, thus, Clarke tends to drive us to the brink of madness with his constant desire to know every little detail of what is about to happen in the near and distant future: When are we going to wrap so-and-so's house? Who all is going? What car are we riding in? How many rolls of toilet paper do I get? What part of the house am I doing? Who is doing the other parts? What time are we leaving to go there? What if they are at home? Do you think they will know if was us?



**Evan (10)** rounds out the 1<sup>st</sup> set of 3 boys. Poor lad, as number 6 in the birth order, he is literally in the middle of everybody and often just lost in the shuffle of all that goes on. Evan's dinner table seat is between Clarke and Allison. If you've ever seen Lucille Ball's movie "Yours, Mine, and Ours,"

Evan is the little boy at the dinner table unable to get anything to eat because it passes by too fast.

Evan is the designated family pyrotechnic. His favorite times of the year are Independence Day and New Years because there are fireworks purchased and long contemplated experiments can finally be executed. It's a wonder any of the boys have all their fingers and eyes.

Though always looking for a new and better way to destroy the earth, Evan is a very sweet helper with the little boys and Cameron.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Evan may be the one person of the family to possess a little mercy and compassion for the little ones. Evan quickly notices when Cameron begins to cry and will rush to comfort him while the rest of us ignore the poor baby and continue with whatever we are doing (and we wonder why the baby is so spoiled). With three in diapers, we need as many diaper changers and baby holders as possible and Evan has stepped up to the plate, much to the relief of Wesley.

**W**esley (17) is still our number one errand runner. While we have greatly benefited from his willingness to shuttle the other kids around for their sundry activities, it has not been without incident. Or should I say accident. Let's see, he has hit another car from behind coming off a stop and been struck twice from behind. I suppose, in that regard, he is following in my footsteps. He also chose one of the coldest and rainiest nights we have had so far to run out of gas without his cell phone out in the middle of nowhere. Isn't it great to be young?

Perhaps you remember me bragging about how handy Wes is around the house and how that enabled me to convert the dreaded honey-do list into a sonny-do list. Well, somehow Wes has ingeniously figured out how to convert his dreaded sonny-do list into a daddy-do list! The younger boys are complaining about him converting the sonny-do list into a brother-do list. I think we've been tricked! Carrie's certainly not amused by all the buck passing either.

According to Wesley, "Wesley has extraordinary ingenuity, adaptability, versatility, dexterity, cunning, sophistication, sagacity, discretion, humbleness, and a host of other talents YOU don't have. A vanishing breed – that's me!"<sup>7</sup> Humm. Poor lad, he reminds me a lot of me when I was that age. Please pray for him.





Wes' best friend is still **Monica (15)**. Monica is our bionic girl sporting a completed \$6,000 smile and embarking on no telling how much for the eyes. Her passion ranges from curling up around a good book to curling one of the horses through a tight turn at break neck speed. As of late, she is working on riding General while standing on the saddle.<sup>8</sup>



The fizziest thing for Monica this year was to attend CWSC in Virginia with Lindsey and Wesley. While she enjoyed the daytime programs and lectures, Monica was quick to discover the "night life" of the conference. Perhaps it is a bit scandalous to suggest that our three oldest kids "painted the town" with dancing and reveling every night,

but such is the report we received back.

Monica and Lindsey particularly enjoyed the dancing and is reported that they conscripted Wesley into conspiring with them to organize the dancing for several of the nights. Alas though, for their nights could not be overly extended as they were unfortunate to draw a dorm counselor, Mrs. Wolf, as their roommate. Mrs. Wolf's claim to fame is that of a world class snorer and, according to the girls, boy, could that woman rattle the rafters.

What Monica is looking *forward* to is the March trip to Greece she and Lindsey are taking. The girls have been working hard at various cleaning and child care type jobs to fund their spring trip. Their accumulation of wealth has coincided with Lindsey's sudden interest in finance and economics. She has put aside her philosophy books to read the latest writings on finance, investment, and wealth management.

**I**t was the topic of product monopoly effecting company profits and share prices that led to the following dinner table discussion excerpt:

Dad: "For example, Pfizer is a company that has exclusive rights to a drug growing in popularity - Viagra."

Micah: "What's Viagra?"

Carrie, Lindsey, Wesley, and Monica break out in laughter.

I break out with sweat.

Micah: "What's so funny?"

Dad: "Uh..... It is a drug that...uh....gives older men more...uh... energy."

Carrie, Lindsey, Wesley, and Monica laugh harder.

Micah: "Great! We should get some of that for Wesley. He never plays with us anymore. What's everyone laughing about?"

Maybe there were better examples.

**I**n reality, our kids don't get out much if you can't tell. For example, Lindsey was stopped by the baggage screener at the airport with not one, not two, but three pairs of scissors in her possession. I don't know why I hung around to make sure they got through the gate OK, but I'm convinced that hanging around saved me a trip and Lindsey an insider's view of the airport jail.



**Patrick (2)** is currently the little gear head in the family, that is, he is never found without some 4-wheeled machine. He plays for hours vrooming his vehicle of choice for the day up and down the halls and walls or running them around and around the coffee table with Andrew. Often times he can be found quietly putt-putting his set of HotWheels across his pillow

when he should be napping.

Patrick and Andrew are best of friends. They play cars together, get in bed together, share their snacks with each other, etc... One morning they were discovered in Packey's

bed together peeling and eating bananas Andy had snatched from the kitchen. Packy was eating them and Andy was tossing the peels over his shoulder and onto the floor. I have a feeling this is only the beginning.

"It will be interesting to watch me, Clarke, and Evan grow up all over again." Micah commenting on the next set of little boys, a.k.a. *Da Boys 2 - The Sequel*.

**Andy (4)** is still the leader of *Da Boys 2* but only because of sheer muscle which is looking like it will change this year since Packy is starting to gain stature and wisdom. As for now though Andy especially enjoys

wondering around outdoors, jumping on the trampoline, turning on the hose and soaking him and Packy, eating, watching as many of those brain-cell sucking videos Carrie will let him, trucks, guns, and whatever other mischief might avail itself for his pleasure. And, according to Andy, all these activities are more fun when he and Packy are naked. There's not much to compare with looking out your window only to see Andy and Packy go streaking by.

While being the leader of *Da Boys 2* is gratifying, Andy has his eyes on promoting to the bigger boys.<sup>9</sup> For example, Micah and Clarke are responsible for keeping the immediate ½ acre around the house mowed and trimmed during the summer. It's an all day - every week job for the two of them. During the day when the boys are running the lawn mowers up and down the property, Andy is right there with them, pushing his plastic play mower up and down the length of the yard. All in all Andrew is just another one of the boys, but in slow motion.



**W**hen Carrie was pregnant with Packy two years ago we had just moved another house onto the property to fix up and sell. I think she felt that having two houses better fulfilled her nesting instincts. Accordingly, we purchased another home this fall just in time for those instincts to kick into high gear. The difference is that the previous house was only a ½ mile away and not for keeps. This latest one is 500 miles away and for keeps. Fortunately, it didn't require a lot of major work, but did require the usual tweaking for it to have that Hurd flavor.

The new house is just one more added complication to Carrie's life. As more of the kids become mobile and involved in outside-the-home activities, coordinating their schooling, working, and extra-curricular things becomes more complex. But that is only one aspect of Carrie's duties around here. There are diapers to be changed, groceries bought, meals prepared, broken things repaired, passports obtained, laundry washed, trash bagged, cleaning, painting, ad infinitum. You know the routine.

Up until the last year or so, Carrie has relied heavily upon the kids to partner with her and keep the home up and running. She is the manager, delegating chores and jobs to the various available skill levels and then following up with quality control. But with the older kids away from the house more this past year, Carrie finds herself actually doing a little more than previously.

For example, she actually prepared a few meals this past year. And a rather spiffy job she did of it I might add.<sup>10</sup> Plus, she finds herself involved with training the younger set in those tasks and chores left behind by the older set.

And then there is school. She runs the proverbial one room school house - K through 12 plus working with the older kids on degree plans, CLEPs, distance learning, co-op classes for the younger ones college for the older ones, etc....

It's not so unusual for people to ask, "Why are you doing this?" It's not unusual for us to look at each other and ask, "Why are we doing this?"

What we remind ourselves of often is our conviction that the family is an extension of and the means toward accomplishing the Great Commission of our Lord: Going, teaching, and baptizing. Our desire is for our children to go farther, teach better, and baptize more than we ourselves have been equipped to do. In other words, it is our vision to equip our children to advance the Kingdom of God further and more effectively than any previous generation. Our desire is to equip our children to stand on our shoulders enabling them to see farther and accomplish more than our generation did.

It should be obvious that such a vision has many more implications to a life and world view than one that simply aims to grow them up, pay for college, see them successfully marry, and have a career. Accordingly, to persevere to the very end of rearing our children is to recognize the threats and dangers to God's calling and to be equipped and willing to make the difficult choices for the sake of the next generation.

Difficult choices are embedded in the way we educate and rear our children as well as how we manage our marriage – the venue from which our children extract their personal calling and vision. To equip our children to advance the Kingdom of God further than we ourselves are capable of entails, therefore, educating them differently than we were educated. To better equip our children, we must be willing to come to grips with the debilitating effect of our own education and do the work to embrace a thoroughly Christian world and life view.

Yet, the best education and most meticulous professional training is quickly neutralized by bad character. Therefore, we should not only teach our children diligence, thoroughness, punctuality, courtesy, attentiveness, etc., but also proactively protect them from the lifelong consequences of emotional and physical baggage that can occur from just one unfortunate indiscretion.

But most importantly, and in spite of the busyness that surrounds us, is the sharing one's life with their life-mate on a day in – day out basis. The husband's leadership is essential in steering the course of his family down the path of a vision. His uncompromising support of his wife, especially in the eyes of the children, is crucial to her success. One can be assured that his wife and children will get their vision and convictions from somewhere if not from him.

Sir Isaac Newton is attributed with saying, "If I have seen further [than other men] it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants."

We need more giants to be stood upon.



<sup>1</sup> January 6<sup>th</sup> to be exact. Sometimes we wonder where the time has gone. Then we get a call from Wes who has been involved in *another* car accident or who has run out of gas again, and we remember. As for our anniversary, send money to the return address.

<sup>2</sup> I am assuming that most of you have been through child birth and know the meaning and implications of being dilated 3cms and 0 effaced. If you're not sure, ask your mother.

<sup>3</sup> Though our OB lives just minutes from the hospital, she is now 0 for 2 at the hospital with us.

<sup>4</sup> While amusing, one should not be surprised from a six year old. But how does one explain Wesley reading Palmolive (dishwashing soap) as Palm Alive and instead of Quesadillas he says something like kwisadila. See note 7.

<sup>5</sup> That's Calvin as in *Calvin and Hobbes*, not, unfortunately, John Calvin.

<sup>6</sup> Not my words. I would never describe Evan as "sweet." Helpful, responsible, conscientious-on-a-good-day – perhaps – but not sweet.

<sup>7</sup> Excerpted from that renowned children's classic, *Big Friendly Giant*, I think, and the movie, *Mary Poppins*. Perhaps we started him reading a little late.

<sup>8</sup> I must confess. When I watch her ride I pray she doesn't damage her mouth when she falls.

<sup>9</sup> So, the question before you is, "Is Andy wearing Wesley's hat or is Wes wearing Andy's hat?" Perhaps the answer is best left unspoken.

<sup>10</sup> Sometimes I worry about my quality of life after all the kids leave home. Her demonstrations of sustained skill levels reassures me though I grow concerned when I hear her call Lindsey and ask how much water is needed to cook rice.

*"When I get older, losing my hair many years from now.  
Will you still be sending me a valentine, birthday greeting,  
bottle of wine?"*

*If I'd been out till quarter to three would you lock the door?  
Will you still need me, will you still feed me when I'm sixty  
four?"*

*"I could be handy mending a fuse when your light have gone.  
You can knit a sweater by the fireside; Sunday mornings go for  
a ride.*

*Doing the garden, digging the weeds, who could ask for more?  
Will you still need me, will you still feed me when I'm sixty  
four?"*

- Lennon/McCarney