

1-8-2014

## Greeting Friends and Family –

I began our holiday letter early and with good intent, however before it could be edited and sent, our world spun on its axis and the original letter no longer made sense. (I've included portions below). On December 9, my father died suddenly and very unexpectedly, from that time until now we have been caught in the whirl that rearranges one's life and way of evaluating it. In many ways I was tempted to just skip a note or cards this year, but one of the things I have learned through this process, is the gift of family and friends and the strength they provide and the responsibility and rewards of remaining in touch. I have been buffeted and protected by multiple layers of generations of writers and communicators most of my life, but my Grandma Loewke also passed away in January, and suddenly I find that if I don't make the effort I may lose our connection, even if it is held by sharing of yearly notes! I have been remiss in sending notes the last few years due to health issues. I was diagnosed with Lupus in February. While a little frightening, it is good to have found medications and therapies that have improved the way I feel. Through this year of trial, I have found most of my comfort comes from friends and family that appear with hugs, cards, food, and memories. I want to say thank you to each of you for being a part of the Walsh-Cobb contingency! Our connection is a gift to be celebrated.

Talia is dare I say it, twenty and a sophomore at Ohio University. Like her parents, she has found a new home and is growing and setting her corner of the world on fire. She lives on East Green, but plans to move off campus next year. Her roommate is a delight, her differences complement Talia and they seem to get along very well. They are both on the water polo team and like to travel about together. Talia is vice-president of Ohio University Historical Association, joined a service fraternity, and got a job on top of taking a full course load. She is double majoring in history and psychology. She has also working on her women and genders studies certificate – I guess all those years of buying her non-gender specific toys did have an influence. She has turned into all the promise she showed as a little girl. I enjoy my time with her so much, though she makes me tired! Olivia and I went to visit her and take a campus tour; everywhere we went there was someone she knew! When she couldn't be with us, her friends joined our tour. Olivia was the most popular kid on the tour! My dear friend and old roomie, Kelee, also lives in Athens, so it is the ultimate treat for me to visit her along with Talia. When home, she works at the winery and helped me get a gig bottling wine – yes they pay in bottles of red wine! You can also sample on breaks! She is saving for her trip to Rome this spring with school; I'm considering a career change.

Olivia is a senior this year and still considering college options, though she's dedicated to being an English major. She was the captain of the color guard for band; their show was called Warpt and they had the right outfits to complement the theme! She sported a four inch Mohawk for the show. I (with help from my hairdresser cousin Kelly) secured serious hair glue and got really good at pasting her hair up. It put her total height at over 6 feet. I knew I had done well when Olivia received a hair complement at Grand Nationals (Indianapolis) from a girl sporting shoulder length rainbow hair! Because she doesn't believe in down time, she is also vice president of NHS, swim captain, and class vice president. Translation; my life is outstandingly crazy trying to keep up with her schedule and activities and she rarely sleeps! We are planning her graduation party for Saturday, July 12<sup>th</sup>, so mark your calendars! It will be a 3 day extravaganza, be sure to let me know if you need rooms. We will be reserving college rooms as needed.

Sophie is in eighth grade this year. She has inherited her father's sense of humor. I often run into fellow teachers, and other co-workers who've been having conversations with Soph and they always report she's very funny. It makes me a little nervous, because like her daddy, she's funny but wickedly sarcastic! Foregoing the standard clubs, she has created an international food club, talked a teacher into being an advisor and recruited and organized her classmates to bring food. This supports her love of cooking and organizing others. She also participates in Power of the Pen and has become a good little writer. She continues in band, recently adding jazz band playing the drum set and participates in Leadership (a club of

school leaders). She has been babysitting for a couple of families and her charges love her. They beg their parents to have Sophie over to 'play'. She took an engineering class this fall and had a lot of fun. She managed to talk her dad into helping her design and build a ¼ size replica of a unicorn. It is ride-able if anyone needs a lift.

Christopher is still at Philips, but has a new job. He is finding the transition to a highly FDA regulated world to be difficult. He has also brought additional pets into our family. Bad Dog has passed on, but there are now two Yorkies that live here; Georgia Bear (a rescue) and Spike (a puppy). They are totally dedicated to Christopher. We have remodeled the kitchen and finished the room over the garage. We use it to host large kid parties and for movie viewing. Chris was elected to village council, so he is an official politician.

I moved from fourth grade to third, the only grade I've never taught! My partner teacher is wonderful – I've always told her I want to be her when I grow-up. She was Sophie's third grade teacher, and she is innovative, generous, and creative. It is a joy to work with her and my students are a delight. These are the bright spots in a very difficult year. The transition to common core, a new evaluation system in which we are told we cannot achieve the top category, and a series of new administrators feeling the need to be dictators has lead to a lot of angst and growing pains in our district, enough so that I have really been reflecting about what I want to do with my career.

Grandma Loewke's delight in travel continues to inspire the girls of the house. Olivia spent a week in France this spring and had a delightful time. She was so inspired that we took on a French exchange student. He is 17 and his name is Emeric. He has two sisters of his own, so he is quite adept at tormenting the girls here! He fits in well with our crowd and has been a joy to have with us. We spent two weeks on a family vacation this summer. My parents rented a wonderful house on Nahant; it is across the bay from Boston. We toured all the revolutionary sites, saw Paul Revere's house, the Old North Bridge, visited Concord and Lexington, as well as Salem and the House of Seven Gables – still as cool as it was when I was 10! The best part though was breathing the same air, under the same roof as my sisters, brothers, parents, and nieces and nephews. The best times were playing in the house and exploring the beach. We also took our annual cousin camping trip, we went to Letchworth State park for a change. I took my '9 children' rafting – the guide didn't even question that they all belonged to me! I must be looking old! I was very lucky and spent a long weekend with my parents in Puerto Rico for my cousin's wedding. It was good to see cousins under happy circumstances. Biz and I also took our parents on separate trips this year as Christmas gifts. We took Daddy on a 40 mile bike ride and stayed in a bed and breakfast in Yellow Springs. Mom we took to Lake Erie, visited a light house, went shopping, and visited a winery. Olivia went to Phoenix with the band over Christmas break. Chris spent two weeks in Chicago for work and because he has wonderful and dedicated family that can haunt him, he actually went out and did something other than work! Sophie and I are also planning to join Biz and Eili for a 10 day extravaganza in June including England, France, and Spain.

We hope this letter finds you happy and healthy.

Hugs to you and yours.