

2001 in review: E-mail to the Family

FOR SIX YEARS, I've kept in touch through weekly (more or less) e-mail messages to my folks, sisters, and other kin. Here are excerpts from messages over the past year...

January

The drive north to Mt. Shasta went well; we left about 10 and arrived by 4. We quickly found a pleasant motel (17 rooms, breakfast included). The town's population is only 3500, but it has some great restaurants.

Tuesday, after looking over the shopping area, we went to the Ski Park. Cold temperatures had kept the snow in great condition. There was little wind, and lots of snow was still in the trees. We had great skiing both Tuesday and Wednesday.

Thursday we took the scenic route to Lassen Volcanic National Park; about 100 miles mostly through forest. We spent about an hour poking around the trails. It was another 30 miles to I-5, and we got home a little after 7pm.

This afternoon we elected new church officers. After four years, I get to hand off the Stewardship committee. My last council meeting will be Tuesday. On Wednesday we start a Spiritual Gifts class, then Thursday there's choir. ■

Wednesday I came out from work to find a note on my windshield "Sorry I hit your car...please call me." When the driver pulled into her space, her bumper scraped my wheel well and back door. I got an estimate on Thursday: \$1300 to get the dings out and repaint. ■

February

After months of trying, I finally had my first successful eBay auction purchase: a 1941 type catalog.

Saturday is the monthly San Jose Printers' Guild meeting at the Museum. There will be a special "all volunteer" brunch meeting, featuring the Guild and the Trolley Barn. (Silicon Valley joke: one of the Trolley conductors is only 16. Since he's too young to drive, he's a semi-conductor!) ■

We had a good trip to Lake Tahoe for our yearly Presidents' Day visit to Stanford Sierra Camp. Friday afternoon we met up with the staff and the weekend visitors—all familiar faces. The road had plenty of snow so we skied 3 miles to camp.

We had a good ski Saturday morning, and then rested in the afternoon. I went out on a four hour tour while Liz took it easy today. There were a few flurries this afternoon, and they are expecting a lot more on Monday. We hope that's **after** we ski out to our cars. (Then we'll head over to the other side of the lake and stay at the Hyatt until Thursday.) The Camp has a few Macs with s-l-o-w connections, so I'm taking the opportunity to read and send e-mail. ■

March

For those who had not heard, we had shocking news from Watsonville: Liz's mom had a heart attack and did not recover. She had several chronic conditions, but did a good job of taking care of herself...living with her golden retriever on the family farm. She would have been 82 in November.

The family did a good job of planning the memorial service, which was held Thursday afternoon. Jim had a nice talk about how "practical and efficient" Virginia was in all

she did. About 40 came out to the ranch afterward, including quite a few of Liz's aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Virginia left detailed lists of who should get many of the family heirlooms, which will be a big help. There are still big decisions to be made about the house, etc. Luckily, we don't have to do things in a hurry. ■

April

Had a nice Easter afternoon in Watsonville. Before and after dinner, we looked at Bruce and Virginia's slides beginning with box # 1...taken in 1939. We got through about 8 boxes (36 slides each), which brought us up into the mid-1950s.

Liz went back on Tuesday. She set up her old computer down there to track all of the accounts. She'll be back next week to meet with the lawyer (together with both brothers).

HP has decided the "span of control" (average # of people reporting to a manager) is too low...about 6 instead of the industry average of 8...so they will eliminate 3,000 of 14,000 management positions in the company. (I should be glad I have 9 people reporting to me!) Also, they want us to take 6 "incremental" days of vacation from May through October, in addition to any previously planned vacation. (We're calling these "Carly days" in honor of our CEO.) Since I hadn't planned any vacation, anything will be "incremental"! One more thing...the new "company performance bonus" that replaced "profit sharing" is unlikely to yield anything for the first half of the year. It usually ran 3 to 9% of base pay. Our CEO decided it was too internally focused, so it now depends upon performance compared to competitors...and the bonus formula is not made known because it could put HP at a competitive disadvantage. Even though the company expects to show a modest profit, the employees don't get any of it—for the first time in 40 years. You can imagine the lively discussions among employees this week! ■

It's almost stewardship time at church. I'm helping the new chairman, and will be ready to record the new pledges. Giving was good the first 6 months of the fiscal year (July - December), but has been down since January, due to a sudden economic downturn here in Silicon Valley. ■

May

Went to the Printers' Fair in San Francisco after church on Sunday. Got to see some folks I hadn't seen for a while, and bought interesting stuff. On the way back, I was real close to a collision. I was first in line at a stoplight, but a couple of motorcycles pulled up to my right. When the light turned green I waited on them. The first cycle made it through the intersection, but a Volvo ran a red light and hit the second. Both people on the cycle were knocked off. The car driver stopped. I was just into the intersection, so drove around the cyclists and parked on the other side. Lots of pedestrians were helping the cyclists so I left my card in case they need a witness. There must have been plenty of others who could give a statement because I haven't heard anything. ■

Tomorrow our octet sings with the bells at the early and late services. We have to be at church at 8:20 for a final run-through. Makes for a long morning, but should be fun. ■

June

Made our reservations for Florida to help Dad celebrate his 80th birthday. We'll arrive July 31 and fly back August 8. A great way to use my "incremental" time off!

The apricots are beginning to turn color. Liz "decorated" the tree with metallic ribbons and old CDs to scare birds, but squirrels seem to leave dozens on the ground each day. ■
Bad news on the apricot front...we don't know if we will get **any** good fruit off the tree this year. The 4-5 squirrels living in the palm tree next door are in the tree every morning and afternoon. Liz put netting around some branches, but they even get through that.

Liz is enjoying her new computer. She got a hub and tied the old and new one together to form her own little network! She also got a slide & film scanner. It takes one slide at a time, so the process is slow. She's learning to use the software to brighten and/or change the tint. She's got about 3,000 slides from her folks and 4,000 of her own, so this could be a long-term project! ■

HP's Executive Council took another step to reduce expenses: asking employees to take 8 more extra days of vacation from July through October. If there isn't enough employee response there could be painful choices later. ■

July

Liz continues to be busy scanning her folks' slides. She's finished 11 of the 80 boxes. She went to Watsonville on Thursday and back on Friday in order to get some of the estate filing done. Had a nice dinner with the family. ■

It's been a tough week at work. First, there's the turmoil of the pending reorganization. Then this morning the first thing I hear on the radio is "Hewlett-Packard is dragging down the Dow after announcing layoffs for 6,000 employees worldwide." A lot of employees are upset with the news, and even more upset they heard about it from outside the company. ■

August

Haven't written for a while, since we were in Florida and could catch up in person. Even though it was only a week, it was certainly a great break, and Dad's 80th birthday provided a great reason for a family celebration.

A couple of days after getting back, we were in Watsonville for Amy's wedding. We went down for the rehearsal dinner on Friday and came back late Saturday. The wedding was outside at a resort overlooking Monterey Bay. The weather was clear—no fog at all, which is unusual. Liz got to catch up with her relatives. About 90 people attended.

Much to do at work after two weeks off...not only normal catch-up, but the addition of two people and a new product to my project due to the reorganization. ■

On Monday we found out job cuts hit about 10% of our lab. Tuesday, people on the list were informed their last day as an HP employee would be Friday. Lab managers had no say in who was on the list, and there was no process for appeal. Four jobs were cut from my section, none from my project. There were surprises as we heard from around the company. It will be a task to get employees enthused about their jobs rather than worrying about whether this will happen again. ■

September

The executive council found a way to make us forget about last month's layoffs by announcing HP will buy Compaq. By the end of the week, HP stock dropped 20%. Very few

financial analysts see it as a positive move, mainly because so few big mergers work out. It'll take 6 to 9 months for government and shareholder approvals...then they expect about 15,000 from the combined company to be laid off.

We have a football game to go to this evening (7pm kickoff). Stanford has an experienced quarterback this year, but the best receivers graduated. The running backs are a good group, and the defense is improved over last year.

Choir practice started this past Thursday. It's good to sing again after taking the summer off.

Liz continues her painting spree. She finished the family room walls and closet doors. Today she plans to do the trim around the sliding glass door in the family room. ■

Not much to say about the week's big events that haven't already been said. Restrictions on air travel have affected two of my engineers who were visiting family. One in Puerto Rico hopes to be back by Monday. In the meantime, the HP office in San Juan lets him use their equipment to catch up on e-mail. The other engineer is in Taiwan. She's to fly back Saturday, but is unsure of the flight situation. ■

Another challenging week at work. The lab we work with in New Jersey got the news about their workforce reduction: the site will shut down. Only about 25 of the 120 employees will receive job offers to move to Colorado. The NJ installation was a point of connection for non-HP partners, and my team will have to get those relocated to Colorado. Months of planning and training must be done in weeks. ■

October

I need 3 more "Carly Days" off before Oct. 31. We will visit Monterey...drive down on Tuesday and back on Friday. We'll see what's new at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, look at the beach, and enjoy dinners on Fisherman's Wharf. ■

We made our travel reservations for Christmas. We'll fly to Tampa on Thursday the 13th and back on the 28th. ■

November

HP announced suspension of wage increases. When all increases were moved out by 3 months last December, we were told the folks who qualified for an increase in the 4th quarter (November) would have it moved to Feb'02. This week's announcement rescinded that promise. So the freeze affects one group much harder than the rest. ■

It's quite a soap opera at HP since Walter Hewlett went public with his reservations about the HP-Compaq merger. David W. Packard quickly joined him. David noted the change in company culture: "Bill and Dave never developed a premeditated business strategy that treated HP employees as expendable." The front-page headline on Wednesday's paper, in inch high type: "HP HEIRS SLAM COMPAQ DEAL, DECRY NEW PATH." ■

Conclusion

It's been an interesting exercise to re-read all my e-mail messages, grab what might be interesting, then edit it down to two pages. (Had to leave out descriptions of Stanford's games in its 9-2 season!) I hope the result gives you some idea of the rhythm of our life over the past year.

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