



Merry Christmas from the Steiger Family



God is so **Gracious** and **Merciful**. The Steiger family has had an over full year from joining a new church to traveling to losing a loved one to a miracle saving our son. It started out at a normal pace, came to a screeching halt and then raced forward again. We began the year still looking for a new Church home. After visiting many Churches from the Woodlands to Tomball to Sugarland we finally started to attend Family Life Fellowship Church in North Sugarland. It is a Bible based non-denominational Church that is friendly, growing, Missions oriented, and has God's Word taught at every Worship service. John and I are starting to get involved at our new Church in ways of serving.

Susanne's Dad became ill and after several diagnostic tests it was determined that he had pancreatic cancer. That led to going to the top cancer hospital in the country, M D Anderson Hospital here in Houston, Texas. Weekly visits down to the Medical Center ensued during Dad's strong willed war with the disease. Chemo was started and the battle began. Like the WWII Navy fighter pilot he was, he fought hard. But soon the pancreatic cancer took over and Dad passed away at home where he wanted to be on Oct. 9th. Our son Seth was the family member to be at his bedside when he died. All the rest of us were close by. He was able to talk or at least listen a few days before to several of his siblings on the phone. Beautiful memories of Dad during this last year are many.



A highlight of the year was the great trip in June to Alaska. First an ocean cruise up the Alaskan coast to the towns of Ketchikan where many of us hiked up into the rain forests; Juneau where many of us went on an excursion to see the whales and other wildlife; up to Skagway where many road bicycles down the mountain with beautiful views; and on to Whittier where we were met by two of our cousins who live in Anchorage. They met all 31 of us there on the dock, gathered up our multitudes of luggage and took us to



their welcoming home. The place was loving packed full with everyone trying to get caught up with each other. It just so happens that my three brothers and I have a family set of four first cousins that all live in Anchorage. Soon it was time to get on a hired bus and travel up to the Denali area. One of Dad's dreams was to see Denali and that we all did on the way up. It was unusually clear weather and the bus made a stop at a local park. There it was Denali, the tallest mountain in United States. It was a beautiful sight and learning from the locals a rare sight to see the mountain without it being covered by clouds. Next was on up to Princess Lodges for a few days during which we traveled inland via bus onto the Denali Natural Reserve Park.

We were able to visit a maternal first cousin and his wife from Susanne's maternal side of the family. They have lived in cold Fairbanks Alaska for 20+ years as a Pastor of a Church there. Yes, Fairbanks is where it was recently reported to be -34°. But the weather was very nice last summer, not at all humid like Houston area. This November my Fairbank's cousin's wife, Connie, become very seriously ill starting from a fairly routine surgery, spending 17 days in ICU with still a long recovery to go. During the June trip Susanne chose to fly around Denali in a 6 seater plane to view the majestic mountain from that view. Seeing mountain climbers traveling up the steep cliffs of Denali from that perspective was awesome. After our visit, we all headed to the Alaskan train to travel back to Anchorage for more visiting. It just so happens that one of my Anchorage cousins works for the Alaskan Railway and so he gave us a personalized tour along the way. We saw lots of bears, moose, a fiddler by the side of the tracks, beavers, and lots of other critters. We would recommend the trip to anyone as it is beautiful natural country. After our sweet but all too short visit we headed home on a red eye flight back to Houston. A lot of people stayed awake all night on that particular flight.

Tired by elated by our trip we settled back into a routine of 4-5 days a week over with Dad and Mom, weekly trips to M D Anderson, work and other daily events. By late summer the chemo treatments were getting to Dad who turned 87 in August. Hurricane Ike rushed through doing much damage to some areas in September and then traveled on up the country to visit other fine folk. John worked at Channel 2 during the hurricane and Susanne road out the storm by



herself; in the dark at home we lost power for 36 hours. One of John's personal friends had 16' plus feet of tidal surge in his beach front home, everything for him was gone. John's Dad's property in Bolivar was destroyed. Don't know how, but that trailer home, which had survived Hurricane Alicia in 1983, stayed on the property, although totally ruined and tossed about like abandoned children's toys. My brother Charlie was staying with my parents during the storm. He bravely crawled up into the attic crawl space during the height of the storm to put gathering buckets under the holes where the 28" diameter oak had fallen on there home. Our daughter, Breanne and friends came the day after the storm and proceeded to chain saw down the leaning tree. It was quite an undertaking. Dad and Mom then stayed with my brother Charles and his wife Carolyn out west of Houston in Katy, Texas. There was very little damage there and they were only without electricity for a few hours. My parents' electricity came back on in a week, but they lost everything in fridge and freezer in the process and a large tree fell through the roof as seen in the picture above. Considering the power of the storm the Steiger home had minimal damage, a few shingles missing, tree limbs down, and fences damage.

Susanne's mother Barbara is being strong, steady, and working towards moving into Eagle's Trace, a local retirement community in West Houston. In the mean time, Susanne along with the rest of the clan have been helping Barbara by staying with her and assisting her until she moves, which should be sometime in early 2009.

A week after Dad's funeral we almost lost Seth to bacterial meningitis. He and wife Tyra had returned Monday after dad's funeral to Norfolk, Virginia where he is stationed in the Navy on a submarine. The following Monday he was taken to Naval Hospital Portsmouth and put on a ventilator. God worked His miracle through the doctors and 5 days later he was off the ventilator breathing on his own with another 3 weeks in the hospital recovering. Susanne was able to spend three weeks in Norfolk helping with his Seth's hospital stay and supporting Tyra. He has lost his hearing and was getting around with at first with a wheelchair, then a walker and now just a cane, but he is alive and kicking (sort off). In early December he received Cochlear implants. The doctors said 12 of the 22 receptors were already responsive immediately after surgery. The cochlear implants will be activated in 4 to 6 weeks after Seth heals from the surgery. His prognosis is good and by God's will make a full recovery. They are coming back to home to Houston for Christmas.



Susanne has been very active in Blessings Unlimited as an independent sales consultant; her website is <http://susannesSeiger.blessingsdirect.com>. She is busy with Gatherings where she shares the Gospel and sells her inspirational personal and decor items from Blessings Unlimited. She loves meeting new people. Susanne has also been attending a Wednesday night bible study at our new church, Family Life Christian Fellowship. On Sunday evenings she has been attending the new member class by herself since John works weekends. She looks forward to a new Beth Moore Bible study starting in January 2009 and a new class at our Church on Truth.

John has just wrapped up his first year of college taking US History and Mass Communications this past semester. Next year will mark his 25th year with KPRC TV; he is still an assignment editor in the news department. John been helping teach a course for public information officers (police officers) at Sam Houston State University in their law enforcement institute and was just asked to help with new police chief media training. Last week he gave a lecture to the Texas Association of Colleges and Universities Police Administrators in Clear Lake. John is still active as the president of the homeowners association.



Breanne is wrapping up her last semester at Houston Community College and has not decided which four year college she will move on to. She spent weekends this fall attending and camping at the Texas Renaissance Festival. Breanne has blossomed into a quite beautiful young woman.

Susanne and I are healthy with usual mid fifties aches and pains. This next year will bring John's 6th anniversary from his gastric bypass surgery, he is keeping off 80 percent of his weight loss. His weight fluctuates by 30 to 40 pounds, but is a far cry from almost 500 pounds he once weighed. We will celebrate our 17th year of marriage on April 25th of 2009. In July there will be mini family reunion with Susanne's siblings, their kids, and Barbara. We are going to Russellville, Arkansas, the birthplace of Susanne's Dad and place where her Grandfather traveled to his preaching assignments either by mule or his Harley Davidson complete with sidecar back in the 20's.

In 2010, we along with Susanne's siblings are in charge of the Hansen Family reunion, so we are checking the facilities in Arkansas. We are working towards selling our home, the plan as it stands now is to live with Susanne's mother until Barbara gets settled at Eagle's Trace, then stay in her home as we fix up our place to sell. Merry Christmas and a Joyful New Year from the Steiger family. May God Grace your family with good health and blessings in 2009.

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