

Christmas 2003

Whoever thinks road trips aren't an entertaining experience has never traveled with my family. When Mike finished his years at PLU (five playing football, and one coaching), we believed that family road trips were a thing of the past. Little did we know...when Mike entered Mt. Angel Seminary in January, we'd be taking the ultimate road trip – across the Atlantic through Sicily and Italy!

In March, we traveled with five seminarians, a Benedictine monk, and a group of pilgrims interconnected with Mt. Angel – following in the steps of St. Paul on his last journey from Sicily to Rome (except we weren't beheaded at the end of the pilgrimage, thankfully). We spent ten days on a fantastic journey through some of our faith's most amazing, holy places – including a special Mass at St. Peter's tomb in the Vatican, Montecassino (mistakenly bombed by the Allies in World War II) and the Shrine of the Holy Rosary in Pompeii. As for the 'entertaining', we were in a bus crash in Sicily, and had some interesting experiences as Americans in Europe – just five days before the war began in Iraq. We were so blessed to be able to spend this time together as family.

On the home front...earlier this year, we put our beloved Pepper to sleep. Realizing any house isn't a home without a four-legged companion, Mom and Dad set out on a venture to find a new puppy – a Portuguese Water Dog named Andy. Porties love the water – and Andy quickly acclimated to life on the Puget Sound. He is not afraid to jump in any puddle, fountain, or bathtub as the urge arises. From my perspective, it's much nicer to hear Dad complain about the dog making a mess, instead of one of us kids! Andy and Dad had a special bonding time this summer – as Dad recovered from his hip replacement (yes, now he's the Bionic Man with two titanium hips) and Andy recovered from a little tangle with a Honda Accord. Mom was probably most relieved to have her two guys up and around again...

My new puppy, Viper, a five-pound force to be reckoned with, joins Andy in the four-legged fold. What she lacks in size, she makes up for in attitude, so they get along just fine!

Mom's kept herself quite busy throughout the year – my grandparents visited over the summer and she and Dad traveled home to Iowa to see her niece get married in November. Her practice has been flourishing and she continues to find great joy in her work. One might think she and Dad actually miss having Mike and me around the house, but think again! Dad's passion for canaries has been out of control – there must be close to a dozen at the house – and the new babies are learning how to sing. If you ever want a surefire way to keep grown kids from returning home to the nest, fill your home like an Amazonian jungle!

Dad and I celebrated two full years in our partnership at work, and I'm pleased to say that we're both still alive and thriving! We've been blessed with wonderful clients, a great staff, and even a recovering market! I was named one of the "Top 40 Under 40" young adults in business in the South Sound, and am serving as co-chair for the 2004 Relay For Life for the American Cancer Society. Don't be surprised if I come knocking your direction for a team or some help!

Mike is finishing up his second semester at Mt. Angel. In the midst of speaking to groups about vocations, helping with the local youth group in town, studying Greek, philosophy and the history of the church, he is discerning a call to the priesthood. It's definitely a transition from the world of college life and football, but wherever the Lord leads him will be a wonderful journey.

As we celebrate the Lord's birth, know that we are keeping you in our prayers for a wonderful Christmas season... *Merry Christmas!*

*Tom, Karol, Shelley, and Michael Mauss*