

## Christmas 2006

If the 2005 theme of our Christmas letter was *milestones*...the 2006 theme is definitely *life-changing experiences*. They started out small...in the form of a new four-legged Portuguese Water Dog puppy for Mike – named Gina. Mike proudly showed off how he trained her to ring a bell each time she needed to do head outside, but she quickly learned to ring it each time she wanted to play.

In March, the life changing experiences took a deeper turn – Mike proposed to his sweetheart, Kristine, by Snoqualmie Falls. Both our family and Kristine's were in on the surprise -- gathering for a very special dinner immediately following.

The wedding adventures began in April with Mom blurting out the surprise honeymoon destination to her future daughter-in-law...and a road trip adventure by Mom and me for one of Kristine's bridal showers – which had us covered in motor oil by the time we reached the shower. We really made an entrance.

Our lives changed once again with Michael moving down to Tacoma. He is the newest Mauss to be hired at Merrill Lynch - spending the summer and fall studying for his licensing exams and volunteering as a Loaned Executive for the United Way. What a blessing for us to be able to work together – though we're finding that Dad is not as willing to take us to lunch when there are two of us tagging along!

In August, we were joined by our family and friends in Bellingham, when Mike and Kristine were married at Sacred Heart. The Wedding Mass was beautiful, symbolizing the "two becoming one" with the Latin phrase used frequently throughout: *et erunt duo in carne una*. She is a perfect match for Michael -- you will just love her. Following the wedding, she moved down to Tacoma and started at St. Charles as the new third grade teacher in 3A. On her first day of school, Mike framed a photo of his own third grade class – nearly 20 years ago – when he was in 3A himself!

After the wedding, Mom and Dad escaped away to Napa, bringing back a bounty of good wine to share with their fabulous kids (well, they didn't actually share any with us, but if you could put in a good word for us, they just might). They give Mike and me a great model in life and love – we couldn't ask for a better example than them.

Over the summer, I began focusing my creative energy into photography, and was published on the Fall 2006 cover of *Living Faith*. When I wasn't shooting images, I was invited to speak and train about the Relay For Life – teaching others how to Relay throughout the Pacific Northwest, in Reno, and keynoting internationally in Canada and in Ljubljana, Slovenia on behalf of the American Cancer Society. I was even featured in a national workplace giving campaign video for Merrill Lynch – though I used Dad's office for the filming...just a bit bigger than mine!

The end of the year holds a very special event for us, when Dad turns 60. We've got some tricks up our sleeve for his birthday, but that will have to wait to disclose those in the 2007 Christmas letter...as our 2006 life-changing experiences draw to a close, we send our love for a blessed Christmas season as we celebrate the birth of the Lord.

We hold you in our thoughts and prayers, and are so grateful for you in our lives.

Merry Christmas from the Mauss Family - *Tom, Karol, Shelley, Michael and Kristine*