

December 2009



Photo courtesy Anna Cyganowski

Dear Friends and Family,

As we finish the first decade of the 21st century, we are holding up quite nicely. John has never forgotten a former city council rep's description of his constituents' "quiet, subtle, little lives." We rather enjoy ours, while cheering our offspring as they embark on their own adventures.

The Marandas family move tops the list with their return to California. A San Francisco start-up lured Jason away from Cisco and Amsterdam. Having grown fond of their urban experience, Jason, Tiffany, and Ava settled into an apartment in the financial district. The challenge of living in the city without a car is eased by Jason's proximity to work and the fact that they live above a supermarket. Always a top sales performer, Jason struggles to maintain the European work-life balance while also building his resume.

Avalon started kindergarten in a public school in Chinatown. She takes her studies quite seriously, that is, when she's not drawing pictures for us or attending Hapkido classes. Her latest plea is for Chinese language instruction. We love having them close enough for a one-day or overnight visit!

John's current focus is learning how to tune up the HVAC systems in commercial buildings, the bigger the better. While his first project was a 6-story office building, his second has 17 stories and 322,000 sq. ft. of conditioned space. Between the utility company's energy audit and John's tweaks, he estimates that their \$1.3 million annual utility bill can be reduced by about 10%. Meanwhile, John continues to consult on special projects for a local HVAC company.

Susie marks her third anniversary at F5 Networks in January and hopes she is building more brain cells with all that technical input. She credits yoga with her vitality and flexibility. Susie took time out in October to attend her 40-year Stanford reunion, after serving as co-editor of the class book. Her connection with AFS remains strong, too, and she volunteers locally by interviewing students and looking for host families.

Eric is in his third year at RPI, and his plan is to finish in May. He's already lining up job interviews in the SF Bay Area during winter break. For a change of pace, Eric spent last summer as an intern at Bloomberg, LP in New York City, while living in a Columbia University dorm suite with three co-workers. By the end of the summer, Eric had earned enough money for a trip to Costa Rica with one of his RPI buddies. They traveled on a shoestring and stayed in hostels. Eric's favorite part was a visit to the Dúrika Biological Reserve. He was pleasantly surprised to discover how well he got along with his somewhat rusty Spanish. Find more about Eric's life on his blog at <http://svallens.com/eric/>.

Eric's temporary residence in NYC gave us an excuse for a trip ourselves. Anna (Eric's girlfriend) came down from RPI, where she was doing research for the summer, and helped us celebrate Susie's birthday in June with dinner at Ellen's Stardust Diner (where aspiring Broadway performers sing as they serve the food) and the Broadway play "Next to Normal." Even the downpour at the restaurant entrance didn't dampen our good time. Other highlights of our stay were the tour of the Bloomberg building, lunch with Susie's old friends from Argentina, and John's tour of the HVAC facilities in our hotel (by request).

As usual, we'll spend Christmas in Merced with Susie's extended family. Her parents look forward to the three grandsons' reports on their various college exploits—all different and all interesting. We hope your holidays are as satisfying, and we wish you the best in 2010.

Love, Susie, John, and Eric