

Happy Holidays!

Sending you happy wishes for the holidays and throughout the new year!



Jerry joined the Corvallis Mountain Rescue Unit. This is a volunteer group that rescues climbers on glaciated or very steep terrain. The photo on the left shows the Unit getting ready to retrieve a simulated hurt climber on a cliff. They practice mountain climbing, like Mt. Washington on the right. Jerry finished a three month wilderness EMT class, one of the requirements. Jerry has not had to rescue anyone for real yet (which is good).



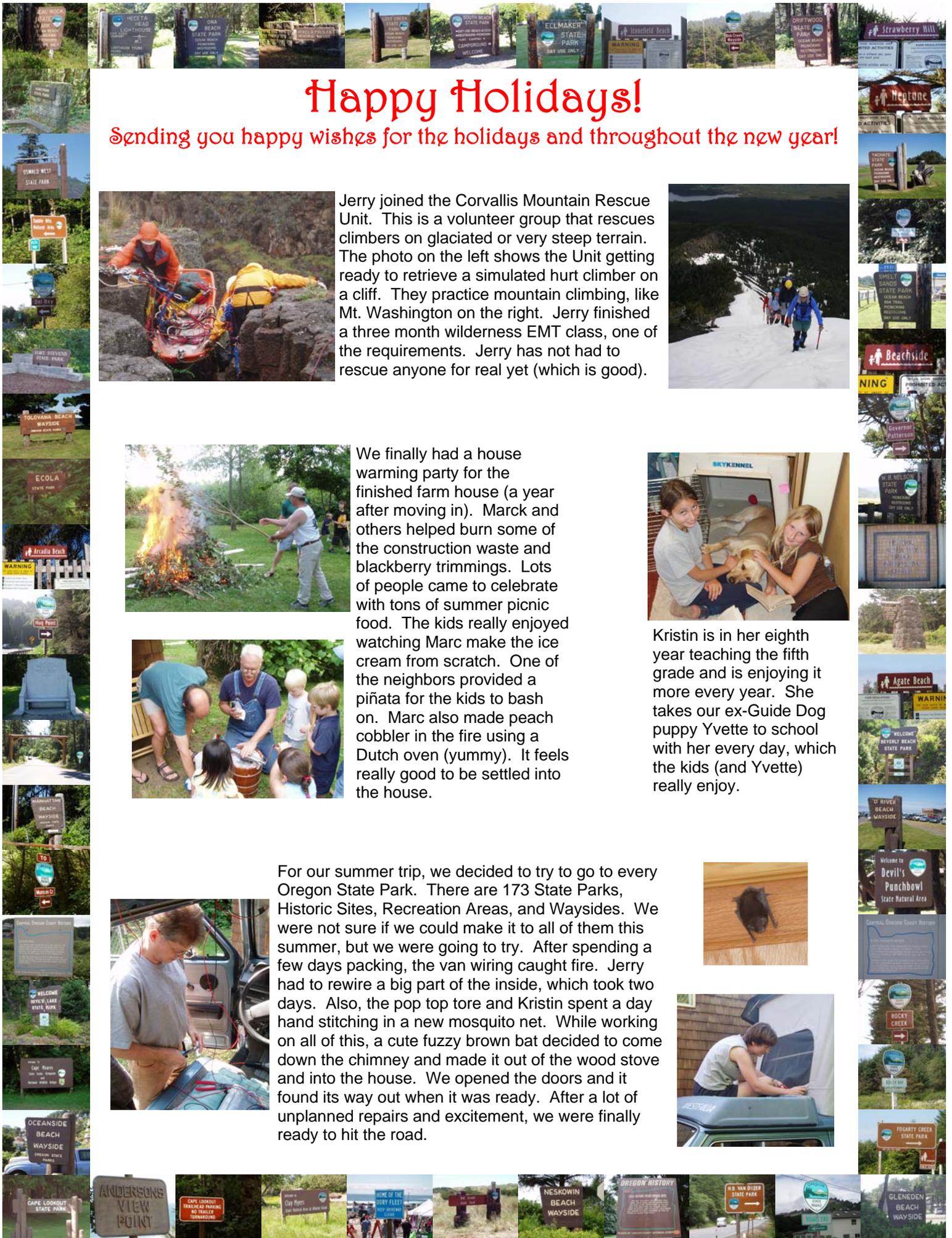
We finally had a house warming party for the finished farm house (a year after moving in). Marck and others helped burn some of the construction waste and blackberry trimmings. Lots of people came to celebrate with tons of summer picnic food. The kids really enjoyed watching Marc make the ice cream from scratch. One of the neighbors provided a piñata for the kids to bash on. Marc also made peach cobbler in the fire using a Dutch oven (yummy). It feels really good to be settled into the house.



Kristin is in her eighth year teaching the fifth grade and is enjoying it more every year. She takes our ex-Guide Dog puppy Yvette to school with her every day, which the kids (and Yvette) really enjoy.



For our summer trip, we decided to try to go to every Oregon State Park. There are 173 State Parks, Historic Sites, Recreation Areas, and Waysides. We were not sure if we could make it to all of them this summer, but we were going to try. After spending a few days packing, the van wiring caught fire. Jerry had to rewire a big part of the inside, which took two days. Also, the pop top tore and Kristin spent a day hand stitching in a new mosquito net. While working on all of this, a cute fuzzy brown bat decided to come down the chimney and made it out of the wood stove and into the house. We opened the doors and it found its way out when it was ready. After a lot of unplanned repairs and excitement, we were finally ready to hit the road.





We started on the southern coastline at McVay Rock, which of course we could not find! Not the greatest start. Our travels took us to many gorgeous beaches, most of them sandy and trapped between tall cliff points, others flat ten mile stretches, some covered with fist sized round cobble, and also rocky ones with tide pools. Not all of the parks though were scenic wonders; two of them were just bridges.



One of our first parks was a Scenic Corridor that we thought was a single area, but actually was eleven separate parks. This alone took us two days to get through. Maybe we won't make it to all the parks this summer?



We were surprised by the number of people surfing and painting. The painters were normally at areas with outstanding geologic formations (like the basalt "cannon balls").



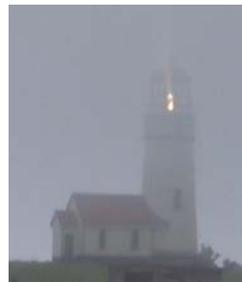
There was wildlife everywhere, from one inch crabs, to elephant seals, to harbor seals, to birds of all types. Jerry even saw some mountain goats while climbing around on some sea stacks at Natural Bridges Cove.



We enjoyed exploring lighthouses, hiking to waterfalls and coastal headlands, and walking on the beaches. One of our favorite hikes was on Humbug Mountain, a beautiful trail through some of the only old growth left on the coast. We enjoyed going to the many museums (like old Coast Guard life boat stations) and learning about the history of the coast.



We had been traveling around two weeks and were still in the middle of the Oregon coast!





We picked up our 11 year old nephew Colton at D River, the worst State Park we saw. It was just a small, packed parking lot. We told Sharon and Marck we would keep Colton as long as we were all having fun.

We continued up the coast exploring tide pools, caves, and sea stacks. We went inland to Saddle Mountain State Park. This was a great wildflower hike. Colton got to climb his first mountain and Jerry wore him out a bit. The middle section of the Oregon coast was familiar for us so we sped things up. One of the coolest parks in the area was Oswald West. Wheelbarrows were provided to haul camping stuff to the sites (and that was the only way to get there!). The beaches, forest, and streams were all very scenic.

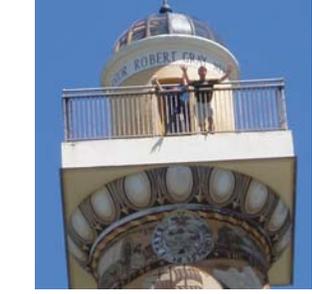


Colton had his own tent that he set up each night. He became an expert fire builder and didn't remove any fingers with the axe! By now, we had noticed that we were getting the very last camping site at many of the State Parks. This probably happened four or five times and there was usually a line of people behind us waiting to get a site.

We spent a few days at Ft. Stevens, Ft. Clatsop, and the Astoria area. Sharon joined us at Ft. Clatsop where we enjoyed the historical reenactments and replicas. Unfortunately, Ft. Clatsop burned down this fall, but they are going to rebuild. The Maritime Museum and Astoria Tower were very interesting. Couldn't quite get Kristin to go up the tower. Our five day adventure with Colton ended here.

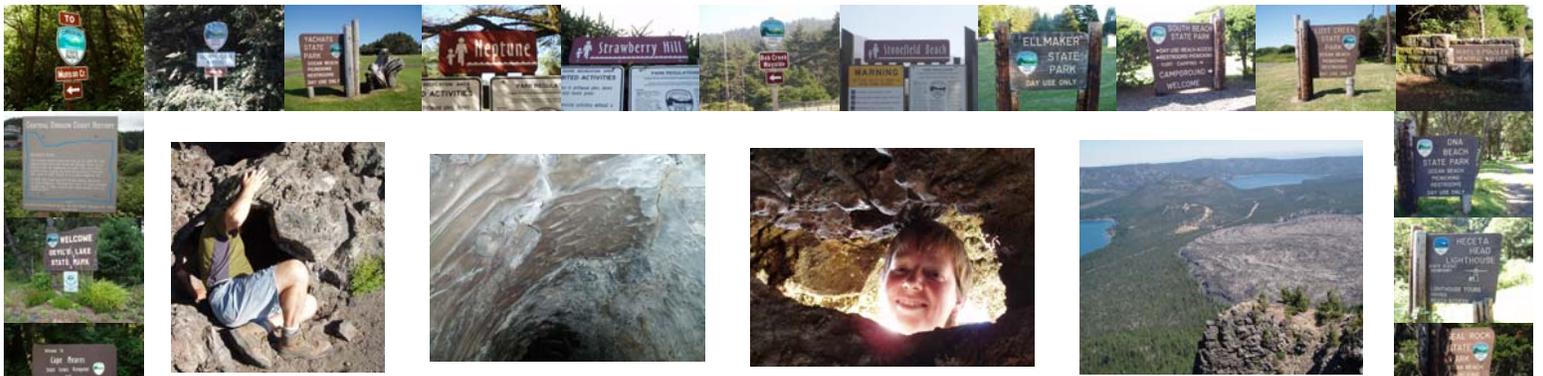


After making it to ALL of the parks on the coast (more than 90), we realized we were not going to make it to every State Park and decided to go meet Jerry's parents and uncle Frank at the Willowa Mountains in northeastern Oregon.



Our summer camping trips with Gerald and Audrey were becoming a tradition. Jerry, Gerald, and Frank did a fair amount of fishing while Kristin and Audrey relaxed, read, and took short walks. Audrey especially liked how close all of the deer got to her camper! The squirrels were also quite demanding. We took drives around the area and forced Gerald to go out to eat once in awhile. Jerry and Kristin really enjoyed the artsy town of Joseph, but Willowa State Park was huge and full of commercial touristy stuff.





Our month long trip was coming to a close, but we decided to explore on our way home. We had been wanting to visit the Newbury Crater National Monument, which is a volcano with two lakes in the caldera as well as glass obsidian flows and other cool geologic features. Jerry really enjoyed crawling into the smaller lava tubes to look at the re-melted basalt interiors. We both really liked the hike through the Big Obsidian Flow, a source for obsidian tools for native Americans that have been found all over the western US. We even got to watch a volunteer flint knapper use the local obsidian to make arrow heads. We made it home (with a coating of dirt on the van) after having many memorable adventures.



Kristin continues to be active raising Guide Dog puppies. We finally had one of the pups we helped raise, the golden retriever Finesse, graduate in July as a Seeing Eye dog. Our current Guide Dog puppy, the black lab Countess, went back for professional training in September. So far she is doing well. Kristin and Yvette dressed up as a scarecrow and a "corn dog" for Halloween this year. We plan on getting our sixth puppy around March 2006.



We helped move Kristin's mom and grandmother, Bunny and Ruby, down to Corvallis in November. They now live less than a mile from us. We are enjoying having them closer.



We went to Jerry's folks place in Yakima for Thanksgiving. We had lots to eat and the guys went on their annual "No Shopping Allowed Day After Thanksgiving Hike" while everyone else went shopping. Jerry Jr, Bob, Chris, and Jerry Sr saw elk, deer, and sheep, but Chris wasn't quite looking in the right direction all the time (notice the elk in the red circle).

We send you all our warmest wishes!

**Jerry and Kristin
Dog Yvette; Cats Sassy, Tiggy, and Sunshine;
Turtles Scooter, George, and Evyrude**

