

March 17, 2007



Happy New Year, Valentine's Day, and Saint Patrick's Day everyone,

"Jaws," the true story: t'was the start of summer and what better way to kick things off than to relive a favorite Minnesota childhood memory. So, it was off to Saint Peter's artesian-fed Mill Pond with my boys, their grandpa, fishing poles, and canvas bucket in hand. A collapsible canvas bucket has the very useful characteristic of becoming a hookless fishing trap. Tie a rope to the handle, collapse it, submerge it, and drop some interesting fish food in the middle. Wait for the curious and then pull up the walls of the pail. Our Jaws (a sunny) spent his summer in our garage gulping down a variety of yard insects. His favorite meal was grasshoppers with crickets a close second. He seemed to adapt well to his white pail with an eventual return to the pond (slightly bleached by his temporary surroundings).

As always, Laurie and the boys have been very tolerant of my windsurfing fire drills. It all starts with my pretending to be a weatherman and anticipating wind near water and within driving distance. Then I get excited and try to get everyone else excited and off we go. We had two notable outings starting with the Worthington Windsurfing Regatta and Unvarnished Music Festival at Lake Okabena. Worthington was host to the 2003 windsurfing nationals, so you know it can be windy there. There's further evidence of wind in the wind turbines visible from Lake Okabena. We stayed with friends of my parents (my mother's college roommate) and heard some very interesting stories about my mother and her shenanigans at Saint Olaf. Apparently, in addition to being a good girl and taking some physics there 60+ years ago, Mom was involved in a prank with a long string of cans and a corresponding long stair well in the administration (and dorm) building. Hmmm, must be some physics in there somewhere (collisions and acoustics). Later in the summer we made it up to Mille Lacs for the "Gathering" near Malmo. This event is a mix of windsurfers and kite boarders. The lake and wind cooperated and provided some of my longest fresh-water rides ever. Wind was strengthened and smoothed by its path over 17 miles of lake; way too much fun.

(I must plug this.) It's a given that you can never have too much data to justify a windsurfing outing. And so, I've re-launched a wind-charting site developed during our years in Washington. It's now running on the Physics Department's web server and has a Minnesota twist, collecting data from airports across our state.

Laurie has been getting to know our Saint Peter realtor. Probably more the other way around (she's been very patient with us!). But we're all getting a little tired of the house hunting job. Laurie's volunteering with the soccer folks in town. She misses her old chess organization buddies back in Richland... Laurie's dad, Jack, had a very close call with E. coli and a few weeks later had bypass surgery; at times like that we're very grateful to be close to home again.

And we're still looking for a church. The three Lutheran churches in town all seem to be headed in various directions we're not sure we can follow. Laurie and I are both conservative in our faith but without being separatist. Maybe we'll find a Missouri Synod church in Mankato. We really had hoped to combine church and community here in St. Peter.

Our oldest, **Joe**, graduated and is off to La Crosse, Wisconsin (my birth town) to study nursing at Viterbo University. Joe's first semester was a bit of a trial run; made lots of friends, had some good fun along the way, but this semester he's determined to work on that college side-line called studying. Joe built a Thompson ring jumping apparatus as a senior project. Joe has donated his efforts to the Gustavus Physics Department; stop in at 2nd floor Olin Hall and try it out (it's made two nice ceiling-tile dents that I'm quite proud of). **Carl** (13) is riding the middle-school roller coaster. He's not too fond of the public-school landscape and the grossness and meanness of adolescence. Laurie and I often wish we could just fix all this. Not many options in Saint Peter. Carl has a few true-blue friends here and has made some good internet friends (via the on-line game RuneScape) including one we visited up in the Twin Cities. He misses his old WA friends, especially Ezra. **David** (11) thinks his 5th grade teacher is the best yet (except of course Miss Wintrobe back in WA, deep sigh). A good sense of humor and very little homework, what else can you ask for?

We took a hodgepodge of trips during the summer including time in the Twin Cities, southern MN, and western WI. Our last outing included a path touching some of our favorite MN lake spots: Mille Lacs, Duluth, Two Harbors, Grand Marais, and Sea Gull Lake at the end of the Gunflint Trail. We timed our trip to Duluth to see a northeaster coming across Superior. The strong wind made for huge waves at Park Point and fun swimming and body surfing (no the water wasn't cold, but the 63°F air temperature was motivation to stay in the water). We saw undertow and rip tide, just like in the ocean. We spent one night near Two Harbors in an unusual but nice hotel constructed out of train cars. Do stay here if you like trains; don't stay here if you have any phobias relating to sleeping in long hallways. The natural acoustic separation of the cars and the distance off the main road made for restful sleeping. Our final stretch was to canoe Sea Gull Lake at the end of the Gunflint Trail. It was interesting to see both the blowdown areas from 1999 and the burn areas from the fires during the summer. Still pretty up there!

This year's picture is looking out over Mille Lacs Lake as seen from the 100-foot fire tower at Katio State Park.

Thanks for your Christmas cards, your e-mail and your visits to Saint Peter; we really enjoy them! Take good care, and may you be blessed this new year.

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see..."
Hebrews 11:1-40