



2015

Steven:

It is funny really; the picture accurately represents what happened this year. In the picture it is snowing in the middle of summer. That is how messed up this year has been. I finally made it to West Point after a full year at the Citadel, but I am a freshman again. You cannot transfer into The United States Military Academy - you must start over. I'm very happy that I made it in, but it is a challenge. Most of my difficulties came from areas that I did not really expect. So, once again, it felt like it was snowing in the summer. All in all, I would still do it again. It definitely has been worth it. I'm just hoping that I have summer this coming year. I have at least one wedding to go to (Scott, I still think you are nuts).

Ed:

After the frantic pace of last year, I was hoping this year would be more sedate. It was not to be. On the good side, Steven was accepted at West Point on his second attempt, and is now comfortably ensconced there, and for the first time in my career I was able to take all the vacation time I earned for the year as vacations. The down side has been the continuing deterioration of my Dad's health. Eighty four years of life have taken their toll on him and he has been bedridden since February of 2004. He has been in and out of Walter Reed this year. All of his body's systems are wearing out and shutting down.

We received notification of Steven's acceptance to West Point January 19th. As a result Steven developed a severe case of senioritis a year later than normal. He finished the year, but it was a struggle. During Spring Break, the DC West Point Parents Club held a reception for admitted candidates to meet current cadets and ask questions of them. It was a coat and tie affair. After 5½ years of military school, Steven didn't have any appropriate civilian clothes that fit, so he went in his Citadel uniform. The reception was unique: scattered throughout the room were individual cadets, each with a couple of candidates asking questions. Then there was the candidate who had half a dozen cadets surrounding him and it was the cadets who were asking the questions. They wanted to know what life was like as a Citadel knob

With Dad's declining health, I started a project this year to scan, repair, enhance and review the old family pictures with him, thereby capturing his memories. My plan is to develop CDs which could be either web sites or electronic albums, including commentary for each picture. In March Steven and I went to see my brother Pete in Houston. I spent a week scanning in the family albums Dad had given him. The pictures went back to my parent's wedding. Dad provided the stories about them. We reviewed to the time where my memories about the pictures were as good as his. Unfortunately I have not been able to complete the project - my Aunt requested to see the family album covering the war years and has refused to return it or even allow me access to it so I could finish the scanning.

(over)

Out in California, Scott purchased a newer BMW early in the year. He and Steven then connived to transfer his old BMW to Steven. Steven and I took 10 days in June to fly out and drive it back. We came back via Yellowstone, Mt Rushmore, and went over the top of Lake Huron to visit friends at Robert Land Academy in Ontario.

At the end of June I took Steven to "Reporting Day" at West Point. It was a very long day. The parents passed the time site seeing while their new cadets were checked in and taught the basics of drill for the oath taking ceremony 6pm that evening. That started six weeks of Cadet Basic Training, AKA "Beast Barracks". Training culminated with a 12 mile night march back to the post from their encampment at Lake Frederick. I took my third vacation of the year going up to watch "March Back", catching Steven's eye as he marched by. The cadets spent the next week getting ready for the school year and the formal Acceptance Day parade. That parade was the most impressive cadet parade I have ever seen. The new cadets formed up on one side of the grounds backs to the stands, facing the remaining Corps who had formed up in their normal positions. On command the new cadets marched forward and fell in at their appropriate positions within the Corps, symbolizing their acceptance into the Corps. They then passed in review. Steven is in "H" company, 4th Regiment, the last unit to march off. I'm not sure there is any connection, but he has since joined the Drill Team - they perform before parades and are the first to leave the grounds.

Between March Back and Acceptance Day I drove to the Niagara area of Canada. There I did the typical site seeing thing around the falls and went to three shows at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Shaw Festival. Going to the Shaw Festival has been something I have wanted to do for at least the last decade. That trip epitomizes my new life philosophy. After decades of noting things that I would like to do "someday" but couldn't because of parental responsibilities, I have decided that "Now is someday". Other examples include a birthday weekend trip to West Virginia to see the New River Gorge Bridge, the trip over the top of Lake Huron, and going to many plays here in DC, frequently at very short notice.

Highlights of the fall included two trips home by Steven (Labor Day and Christmas), West Point's Plebe-Parent Weekend including a very nice banquet and formal ball, and a visit by Pete and my nephew Travis to see Dad. When I add in other visits from friends, for a while there it felt like I was running the Cragg Bed and Breakfast.

And with that the old year passes on and I am looking forward to the new, give or take the one shadow of my father's health. I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

SEASON'S
GREETINGS



Steven