

Dear Family and Friends,

It's that time of year, and we're late again. Our only excuse is that "The White House" has moved once more (that's #18 in 18 yrs!). The how and the why we arrived in San Diego CA, just before Thanksgiving is a l-o-n-g story. You should know before we go any further, that there are two sayings that have become household phrases and we've clung to this past year. "Where God Guides He Provides" and "It's a God Thing!" An abbreviated version of "The Grand Adventure" story goes something like this:

During Christmas of last year, in the midst of the season's usual hustle and bustle, "The White girls", as part of a school project, planned, decorated, baked (and Mom made authentic costumes) for a Colonial Christmas Tea. We started planning in July, with a full time daily schedule beginning in Nov. We attempted to be as authentic as possible which required hours of research (including areas of fashion (surprise, surprise"), entertainment, food and food preparation of the period, ... (sort of ... "life as it was"), as well as history and lots of hands on experiences. (We were able to really put our season passes to Williamsburg to good use) The response to the girls using computer graphics, a slide show, as well as an oral presentation followed by a formal sit down tea was well received, and was a highlight in our school year. Jenny-Rose and Bridget did a Grand job on a Grand scale (52 R.S.V.P. s). As a homeschooling Mom and Dad we couldn't have been prouder. Nevertheless, a project of this size does take its toll. After the Dec 15 tea we were drained and the season was just getting started. We had friends from CA visit, my Dad (Bill Blair) had surgery to remove skin cancer lesions, we spent New Years Eve in Chesapeake with friends (2 ½ hour drive), friends from RI stopped by New Years day on their way to vacation in FL. After they left we laid down for a nap... Jenny-Rose and I didn't get up for a week—we had the flu. *Thank you* for your "sympathy", but the real reason I share all this with you is, to allow you to see how much it takes sometimes, for the Lord to get our attention. "Yeah! Well He had all of mine." Where was I gonna go?

There were areas of our "The White's" lives, both individually and collectively that the Lord wanted to deal with, mostly in the area of discipline and self-control. In my own life, these areas included my eating, spending, my priorities and time management, as well as daily personal time alone with the Lord in bible study-(not unlike spending quality time with a friend or loved one). Suffice it to say, discipline affects every aspect of our lives The most amazing thing was, as I talked about my struggles in these sensitive areas with the girls and Den, it was apparent God was saying the same thing to us all, in one way or another.

We decided as a family to begin with a diet...there's a story about how we found it, but let's just say "It was a God thing"... We said nothing to those around us, except the one or two we asked to support us in prayer through the various phases of our program. As a family agreed on some ground rules: 1.) No one cheated without all of us in agreement. This was very effective. 2.) Life would not center a round food. (this met with mixed success).

God honored this commitment, not only with weight loss, but also by restoring a *Joy* in Him, lost in our busy lives. Inches off the waist and closer relationships were not the only changes in our lives. Again collectively and individually; we began to see more clearly areas we each needed to be less busy: Like becoming less involved in church leadership, various projects and ministry ... just less busy period. We had reached a point that we had to schedule a nite for family -time and a date night just to spend any quality time together. I needed time to be in His word, to study I thought in my own life it was to begin to prepare for the time when I would be out of a job, as a home-school Mom—indeed there were reasons!(and I believe the Lord will use my experiences as a Homeschool Mom even yet,... just in a different state of the union.) In late March an invitation to consider helping start a church in Newport Beach, CA changed the direction of our lives...our family had to STOP! mid stream, and ponder if the Lord was leading us toward our unfulfilled dream of full time ministry. Change seemed to be in the air for the White House (Man, it sounds so easy put like that, in hind sight).

The powerful emotions, changes and growth going on in our family as all this was going on was sometimes overwhelming. The most dramatic change was our decision to leave our church home in Fredericksburg. Few things we learned to our sorrow, are more devastation than leaving friends, some of which who were like family...but it was clear that it was time to go. As quietly as possible, we prayerfully left. Doors were closing behind us and new doors were opening in front of us.

In the meantime work went on to get the house ready to sell. It took us 5-6 weeks to paint and spruce up the house. After a particularly disastrous week, (maybe it was too many paint fumes), I was clinging *calmly* to the knowledge that a weekend retreat with Terry and Nancy Clark at YDI's (Youth Development International) Headwaters Lodge, in the VA mountains, would give me a chance to get quiet and find God's face. The night before I was to leave—Den and I stepped out in faith that the money would be there to send Jenny-Rose as well. We called to make sure there would be space and Director Roger Vaus said, "Sure, no problem!". About five minutes later the phone rang and Roger asked Den if he and the other daughter would be interested in coming as well—the long and the short of it was we all went that weekend. The Lord had a *purpose* and a *reason*. Roger said to us Friday night, "**If you are here this weekend, it is by divine invitation of the Creator**". I can't forget those words and the words of Terry about relationships in the Bible...they were for us... our joy and peace were restored. The major decisions we'd struggled over, became small in the

light of His presence. Again the Lord confirmed to us our direction; His love, and that *He was there beside us each step*. We shared that weekend, those moments spent with old friends and new, the awesome music, the fellowship and the joy with friends and family in the summer months that followed ...sometimes remembering back is what kept us going forward.

One of those decisions I mentioned earlier had to do with Den's job. Our dilemma was: should Den keep his government job, with all the benefits and security ...OR ... take a new job that was offered to him as an independent contractor to the government, as a consultant? This new job started immediately in the area; lasted until whenever we moved; and moved with us to CA with Den telecommuting at home. Oh yeah, with a raise! Sounds too good to be true huh? ...Ah, but we believe "*Where God guides He provides*".

Den gave two weeks notice the week following the retreat, we put the house up for sale by owner, had a very successful yard sale, continued with school and got into the routine of cleaning the house everyday, "*well sort-of*". We'd heard wonderful stories of houses selling **the first day!!! the first week!!** within **the first month!** then **two months** went by, **then two and a half**. Actually, our original intent was to use the selling of the house as a gauge as to whether we should go to CA. or not. It seemed a good "fleece" to allow the Lord to open the door or close it. When God provided a **job over and above anything we would have thought to ask for** (had we thought of it) we knew "It was a God Thing" We were then committed to moving to California. The question now was, when? Still using the house as our gauge, we decided to rent our home instead of sell it. Several of the homes on our street had rented quickly and reasonably, and the summer is the best possible time to find tenants, as families are anxious to get settled before school starts. Our disappointment and frustration that the house didn't sell quickly was nothing compared to the renting process.

Patience is not a lesson we've learned all that well. I guess we needed a little more practice. Week after week we cleaned everyday, every time we went out we cleaned...we never knew when someone would call to look at the house. It was an interesting life, not one that I'd necessarily recommend. Some agents we got to know by face as well as by business card. Actually we even began the moving process once, when the contract fell through. We took deep breaths, put the boxes away and began school again (though not very productively, as you can imagine). At last, news came that a young British family wanted the house and we had nearly 4 weeks to move out—no problem. With the 2nd yard sale done, it was just a matter of sorting, packing and cleaning, right? Yeah, *right* !

We had struggled for several months as to our final destination. Plans for the new church were in Newport Beach were held up and delayed We weren't sure if San Diego or Orange County was where the Lord wanted us...we needed to make a decision, knowing we had come this far and didn't want to make a detour. We called friends from all over the country for council and prayer - God answers prayer. Thanks!

Den was on travel for most of our prep time. When Den's business was finished, He took two extra days and a weekend to go house hunting. It wasn't very promising. When he called us the 2nd night and said "Well girls, the pressure's off; you won't like anything I find." (after we moved Dens showed me some of the houses he was *considering*, I'd have been a little discouraged too!) "I have one more house in Spring Valley ", Den told us. We (the girls and I) prayed (you see, we knew Spring Valley is hot, dusty and mostly built on hills. We're talkin' earthquake country here!). Den drove by and talked to the family that was moving out (*happened* to be a Navy Helo pilot, Den and he had mutual friends). He called the owners and left a message, "I'll take it!"(short version). We discovered later, some of the girls closest friends live only **6mins** away. Trust me - "**It's a God Thing!**"

There are 4 bedrooms, one downstairs that is perfect for Den's office, **3 baths**, (*one for every female, I don't mind sharing, like some I could name!*) **a Garage**, a **Living room** with cathedral ceilings, fireplace and loft, *perfect for bookshelves* (a home-schoolers best friend), **a Family room, Dining room**, and **AIR CONDITIONING!** Oh yeah, I almost forgot, **a pool and jacuzzi** with a maintenance man included. It's so cool, "**Where God guides He provides**". *A home far and above any of our expectations.*

The shock of the move, (*I'm really goin' ta' write a book this time!*) has kept us from settling as quickly as we have in the past. We *are* out of boxes, *most* pictures are hung and *most things* have a place (*the garage doesn't count*) The girls and I have painted three bedrooms and two bathrooms, while Den was back east on business. We've unpacked Christmas and the tree is up. I need to go on record as saying, "I could never have done ½ of all this without the girls help". What a team!!

We have renewed old acquaintances, found a home-fellowship and a church home at a Calvary Chapel affiliate in Mission Valley where we attended before we left S.D. nearly 3 years ago. We've been to Old Town (several times) for the Christmas Celebrations and we've looked into the volunteer program in Living History again. (we are praying about this one) We've visited "*a bunch*" of old haunts, including Sea World with a homeschool education tour. It's been grand! .

Not all of our short stay has been "fun". Ask Den about getting the extra phone lines installed. (hee, hee) Also we'd forgotten how sensual it is here. I hadn't realized how protected we'd felt in VA against the blatant immorality and sin. Oh, it's there too, don't get me wrong, just not so "**in your face**" everywhere you turn. It's easy to become desensitized to it, we have noticed, just in the short period we've been here. (*And we are looking for it!*). We've experienced some of the *el*

nino, rains ,the furnence has been fixed, so we have heat and we ordered wood for the fireplace. **Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow!** Oh sorry, I forgot where I was for a moment. Still if we did want to go sledding , snow's only an hour away. Deck the halls with balls of holly ...I'm the one who misses the boxwood, the holly and magnolia leaves for decorating. Well when in Southern California do as the californians do. Put lights on the palm tree and go to the beach.

All joking aside this holiday *is* a special one for us. If anyone had said to us last year "**This time next year you will be in San Diego CA**" we would have laughed ourselves silly. The *most amazing thing* about our story *is this is just a beginning!* God's purpose for bringing us back to Southern CA is not all that clear as yet, but as we look back *at what it took* to get us to let go of our *comfort zone*, **in faith believe** we should *leave VA*, allowing **The Holy Spirit** to *guide* us, though *it cost* us , job security, being close to family and friends, 4 seasons, being surrounded richly American history, a dentist even I could trust ,as well as our first home with roots in 19 years of marriage...Not one of us at "The Southern Calif White House" would trade this GRAND ADVENTURE *for any earthy possession*. I wish I could say that *we've learned to give* our lives wholly to Him, but we *still* fail miserably...**Thank You Lord that You are Gracious and Merciful**...to us all. *Remembering the milestones* in the road **that brought us back home to San Diego**,... being able to *share our joy and frustration* of each step along the way with you, *has encouraged* us yet again, *just in the re-telling*.

Our wish as you celebrate the birth of the Christ child, this wonderful Christmas season is, ... to encourage you that no matter where you are, ... if, ... or how ... **you serve Jesus Christ today ... giving your whole life to Him, He'll love you** into the changes that are the best this life can give. **His is faithful, He is merciful, He is forgiving and He is the awesome Creator of all that is good in us...and for us.**

God Bless you and yours today and everyday this New Year,