

Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas, Frohe Weihnachten, God Jul, Joyeux Noel, Kung His Hsin Nien bing Chu Shen Tan, Buon Natale, Shalom, I'd Millad Said oua Sana Said, Io Saturnalia,

Another year has passed. Our living situation hasn't changed. Paul is still working in Boston, spending the work week there. Suzanne and Kyle are still living New Jersey, with Paul coming back Friday evening and returning to Boston on Sunday afternoon. It's not great, but it is what it is.



Kyle is really starting to grow up. (I think we say that every year.) It's hard to believe he'll be five years old in just a few weeks. The time really does pass quickly. He is still attending Little Treasures, where he has gone since he was an infant. This year, he's a Kind Kangaroo. Last year, they started learning to recognize letters. This year, they're doing a lot of work with writing letters and numbers, and Kyle is doing quite well. He's doing exceptionally well at knowing which letter words start with when we ask (aside from the obvious difficulties with hard and soft C, K, and S). We have also started having him sound out some words while reading, but he gets a bit frustrated at that as he wants to read through the book quickly.

In March, Suzanne and Paul spent 4 days in Istanbul, Turkey. We weren't planning on a trip there, but Suzanne had some extra vacation days carried from last year. She learned she had to use these by the end of March only at the end of January. We found a very good hotel and airfare package deal and decided we weren't likely to have another opportunity. Given that the most exotic place we had previously visited was Rome, we weren't sure what to expect. We ended up having a wonderful time. The weather was very

good, raining only for half of one of our three and half days there. We did all the big sights, including Hagia Sophia (6th century church/mosque/museum), the Blue Mosque (built in 1616), and the Grand Bazaar. The last was quite an experience, especially when the haunting call to prayer was played. We also can now say we've been to Asia, having taking the roughly 20 minute ferry ride across the Bosphorus Strait from the European side of Istanbul to the Asian side.

Later in the spring, Kyle started playing soccer. He did decently enough, though was more happy about playing some weekends than others. Aside from that, the spring was fairly quiet, with the normal share of birthday parties and other events. For Easter, we had a quiet time at home. Suzanne even set up an Easter egg hunt for Kyle in the backyard, much to his pleasure.

The summer started off with what has become an annual trip to Sesame Place, about 90 minutes south of us. Suzanne and Kyle had a great time. (Paul wasn't able to go as he was in Boston.) On the last weekend in June, we had something of a Drake family reunion in Westport, MA. This was a great weekend as nearly everyone was there, including Paul's grandfather who traveled up from Florida with Fran. For the weekend, we rented a house a 10-minute (or so) walk from the beach. Kyle absolutely loved playing in the sand and the surf, though he wasn't too sure about the salt water as this was his first experience in the ocean. Jack and Mary Lou came up for the week of July 4th, which was very nice.



We had been saying we were going to spend a day at the Jersey Shore for several years. In August, we finally managed to make it, heading to Point Pleasant Beach. The day was quite nice. Kyle loved the sand and eventually got used to the surf, which was quite a bit rougher than in Westport. Most of the waterfront in Point Pleasant Beach is owned by one family business, so it is kept up very nicely, though you do have to pay to access the beach. They also have a small amusement park, which Kyle thoroughly enjoyed.

The fall was quiet for the most part. Kyle played soccer again this season. We had a nice time at some of the local festivals, including ones at the Trailside Nature Center in Watchung, in Fanwood, and in Westfield. In early October, we did our annual apple picking trip to Terhune Orchards in Princeton. Kyle really enjoyed being able to actually help pick this year. He also managed to walk all around the orchard instead of riding in his stroller. Later that same week, Kyle and Suzanne went pumpkin picking with the Little Treasures field trip. As Halloween approached, there was no question what Kyle was going to be, a fireman. (This made it easy for us as we simply reused last year's costume.) Mary Lou was able to come up for the weekend, so Kyle enjoyed it very much. Paul also took Mon, Nov 1st off to be able to spend the evening with Kyle and Suzanne trick-or-treating and attending the Fanwood parade and party. Come late November, we celebrated Thanksgiving early on the Saturday before, having some friends over who had had us over for Ramadan. This proved a nice evening.



The reason for having Thanksgiving early was that on Thanksgiving Day, we flew to Frankfurt to spend just short of two weeks visiting friends and Christmas Markets in Germany. We had a very nice time. The weather was unseasonably cold for all but the last day and half of the trip. Frankfurt had received it's first snowfall the day before we arrived and it snowed for much of the trip, until it rained all day the Monday before we left. Our first stop, Frankfurt, was mostly to visit friends. We were able to have coffee with Katrin Silber, another former Klebe group member. This was especially nice as we hadn't seen her since we left in 2004. We also spent a couple of dinners and a day in Heidelberg with Joanna and Job. It was great to be able to spend so much time with them. On Sunday, we had an excellent brunch with Christoph Sottriffer, also a former Klebe group member and Paul's office mate in Marburg, and his family. Kyle had a fun time playing with Mathilde, who is just seven months younger than him. On Monday morning, we hopped the high-speed ICE train to Nürnberg (Nuremberg), home to one of the largest and most famous Christmas markets. We spent a day and half or so visiting the town and their excellent market. The old town has a very historic and medieval feel. They also have a separate children's market with a few rides and, especially loved by Kyle, a "hut" with

some Playmobil set up for the kids to play with. For our last day in Nürnberg, we hopped the train for the 45-minute ride to Bamberg. We had heard very positive things about this town. While it was nice, the market was small and it was pretty quiet for much of the day. The fact that it was cold didn't help a lot. We might head back in the future, but wouldn't make a special trip.

Once done in Nürnberg, we hopped another ICE train on Thursday morning to head to Munich. Suzanne and Paul had visited here for a day and half in 2000, but never made it back during their time in Marburg. For this trip, we had four full days plus the afternoon of the day we arrived. Since we were going to be here so long, we elected to rent an apartment, which worked out very well. We weren't right in the center of things, but were across the street from a tram stop which, in 5 stops, would drop us at the start of the main pedestrian zone and shopping street. We spent Thursday afternoon visiting the Christmas market and doing some other shopping. Friday, we spent most of the day at the very large Deutsches Museum (science and technology). Kyle loved the special kids area, which had a fullsize firetruck to play on. We spent some time on Saturday visiting the middle-ages Christmas Market. This was great as they had lots of entertainment and it had a very festive feel. It would have been even better if it hadn't been so cold. On Sunday morning, Paul headed off to visit the Dachau concentration camp museum and memorial while Suzanne and Kyle had a good time at the Deutsches Museum's transport center. For our last full day, the temperature finally warmed up above freezing, but the warmth was accompanied by a steady rain for the whole day. We visited the main Christmas market and did some last minute shopping. Of course Tuesday, our day to leave, dawned sunny and in the upper 40s. At least we didn't have to drag our luggage through the rain to the airport. We arrived for our flight quite early, but the airport has yet another Christmas market so we picked up a last cup of glühwein (mulled wine) and a few other things. All in all, we had a very nice trip. While it was cold, the snow made the Christmas markets very festive. (Overall, we ended up visiting a total of nine Christmas markets, five of them in Munich.)

Once home from our trip, Christmas was only a short time away. Suzanne's sister Beth came to visit the weekend after we returned. (Paul spent the weekend in Boston, having driven up Wednesday and not wanting to spend all that time driving for two days of work.) She had a very nice visit. For Christmas Day, it will be just us, but Jack and Mary Lou will be coming up Dec 26th and spending most of the week. Paul has the week between Christmas and New Year's off, so it will be nice to be together for a stretch. Once Christmas is done, we'll likely have Kyle's birthday party at the park as we did last year, probably near the end of January. Suzanne and Kyle may be coming up to Boston the weekend of Presidents Day, but that is still to be determined. We don't have any travel plans yet, but it's likely we'll go somewhere. As always, you can check out our latest news and photos at <http://www.sanschagrin.com>.



We wish all of you a joyous Christmas, happy holidays, and a wonderful New Year.

Paul, Suzanne, & Kyle Sanschagrin