

April **Uni Agrees to Take Another Bruce**

Stephen joined Emily at the University Laboratory High School this fall, and enjoys being a "subbie"---subfreshman, or 7-8 grader---as much as she did. Both suffer commitment problems (as in over-commitment) with orchestra, chorus, auditioning for plays, piano, sports. Emily joined the Engineering Club so that she could build a contraption to catch a raw egg dropped from on high without creating an eggy mess. Our raccoons enjoyed cleaning up the detritus from this experiment that was left in the back yard. Their device won third place in a state contest. Stephen has joined the Geography Bee group and is memorizing the names of foreign capitals, the like of which would stump even Al Gore.

May **News of Early Retirement Stuns UIUC**

Susan, otherwise known as The Editor, left her position in the College of Education, to pursue other interests, like writing holiday

form letters. I was ready for a change and a slow-down. The kids are moving up and out, and I needed more time to enjoy these last few years, with an abbreviated *To Do* list. I've been catching up on family history projects, writing a book chapter with Chip, serving on the Conservatory Board, helping the library with an expansion referendum, and attending the occasional seminar on campus. Eventually I'll work my way through the backlog and figure out what sort of contribution I want to make next. Meanwhile I'm working on some better answers to the perennial American question, "and what line of work are you in?" I usually mumble something about counterintelligence, but then indicate that I'm not really at liberty to say.

July **Grandma Breaks Her Ankle...Two Days Later, Her Wrist**

Just a few days before her 82nd birthday, my mother was disposing of some garden debris with too much vigor and broke her ankle. Not happy with the sympathy this was garnering, she hopped to the loo one night, fell and broke her wrist. This

was on the eve of our departure to France, but recovery was slower than hoped, so I was able to spend a week in California in September and still be of use. She's on the mend, finally, after learning more than she wanted to know about wheelchairs and walkers. My dad came through some serious surgery for an aneurysm just fine and is back at work with the usual construction projects. They hosted a wedding reception in their patio for about 100 guests, for their tenant, Cathy, and her Venezuelan groom, Carlos. Had my mother been ambulatory, she would have taken salsa dance lessons in preparation. And Spanish, too, to communicate with the groom's parents, who moved into their back bedroom for a month. As you may gather, they are active and rather generous octogenarians.

July Les Texans Take Paris by Storm

We spent the first week of a month in France with Chip's parents, on the Ile St Louis in the heart of Paris. We took up residence in a wonderful small apartment and the Todds stayed in a hotel down the street. There was just enough time to hit all the hot spots and a few new places, to get to know the neighborhood, and to eat well. The Todds wanted to see the Palais Garnier, the Opera, so we took an enlightening tour, something we'd never done before and would commend to others.

August Bruces Reach the Summit of Port de Salau

In January, even before retirement, I'd begun to waste a lot of time booking the perfect trip to France on the Web. And it worked. Unlike previous trips, we knew where we were going to sleep every night, very

useful since this was the high-high season. Near Lourdes in the Western Pyrenees, we took some muddy hikes, watched the St Bernadette pilgrims with considerable awe, and crossed into Spain for dinner to see if perhaps our Spanish was better than our French. It might have been, but we couldn't wait until 9PM for dinner and a proper conversation, so we had a few tapas and headed back down the mountains. But later we had the adventure we will never forget, with which we will bore the kids until we're long gone: "You're not going to tell about the *Pujada* again, are you?" Yes, in a nutshell:

When we arrived in the tiny village of Salau, at the end of the road, the Dutch owners of our small hotel suggested we might want to join a group of locals climbing the mountain to meet up with a group ascending from the Spanish side. We weren't sure what we were getting into. But it turned out to be the annual reunion of Occitan and Catalan speakers, who have gathered each August 1 for ten years to announce to the world and each other that the Pyrennean border is an arbitrary division of their two peoples. Four hours of hiking later, straight up, we found the most spectacular party we're ever likely to attend. There were about 200 people, many bottles of local wine, huge rounds of sheep cheese, accordions, dancing, singing--once they'd worked out how to alternate languages. We were interviewed by a Chilean-French filmmaker about his proposal to produce a movie about the heroes of the Resistance, who climbed this way guiding refugees in WWII. You won't see us above in the slightly fuzzy photo extracted from our video, but you

can get the general idea of the setting.

September Professor Plans Move Across Campus

For a while Chip has been forwarding me email job announcements, indicating that he was ready for a change. I declined to look into Houghton, on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, which is 2 miles beyond the End of the World according to local postcards. But an opportunity arose right here, in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, much more in line with what he's interested in right now. He'll regret leaving colleagues and friends in Education, but this is an interesting group, and there are many closer lunch possibilities in what's called Campustown. We now have the first Hawaiian Chocolate Café outside of Hawaii, serving the only chocolate grown in the US!

November Emily Commits First Foul. Learns Not to Say "I'm sorry." In related news, Coach Murphy tells parents: Stephen is too nice.
Both are playing basketball, Emily on the Junior Varsity, and Stephen on the subbie team. We have yet to see them sink a shot in a game but are ever hopeful. Each gets to play a bit, not least because they're relatively tall, now nose-to-nose with their mother.

December Coastal California Enjoys First White Christmas in 50 years

That's where we're heading for the holidays, and we'd like a little snow, just on Christmas day, so it feels right. But, in any case, we'll have good company, with all of my family gathered around at one time or

another. We'll miss seeing Chip's family, but we'll catch them in Austin in March, for the first wedding of the next generation, when our niece Jennifer marries her high school sweetheart.

Looking ahead: Next summer we're thinking maybe we'll take the grand tour of the East Coast, if our VW Camper holds out. The kids have to see Washington before we're all too old, and go canoeing with us somewhere like Maine so we can recapture some of our lost youth. With luck, we'll intersect with some of you then.

We didn't get organized to do an acceptable photo of the family this year, but we look pretty much the same, just taller (some of us) and older (the rest of us.)

Apologies for the length of this. Chip insisted I use a larger font, since he's going in for his fourth cataract surgery next week and appreciates more than ever the needs of those with less than perfect vision.

Our best wishes for a Happy New Year to all scattered friends and family.