

Merry Christmas to our beloved friends and family,

Christmas 2008



We pray that this letter finds you all healthy and at peace in this blessed season!



Enjoying a waterfall near Hanging Lake in Colorado



"The stockings were hung by the chimney with care..."

Emma is growing up way too fast—she turned 9 in May. We have been frantically calculating her time with us since early on, but we were in shock when it hit us this year that Emma is halfway to going off to college. Where has the time gone? We are in our second year of home schooling, and



Emma, age 9

petitively, and keeps the slopes. This year the kids up for Nascar should add some ad-our ski trips. She got summer due to her ad- was allowed to stay boys on some nights Mom and Dad around the campfire, a special memory for all of us. We took all the kids on a rafting trip on the Colorado River on the 4th of July, which ended up being a lot of fun, but was rather scary while it was happening. Emma was a superstar, paddling and keeping us going! She is a loving and nurturing big sister to her three little brothers...most of the time, and has been an especially caring nursemaid to Eragon during his convalescence. She's our precious girl!

Emma is still excelling as a student. She is an avid

reader, and has added Gail Carson Levine to her list of favorite authors (along with J.K. Rowling, Carolyn Keene and the various authors of the American Girl books). She loves to draw and play the piano – we have enjoyed playing Christ-

mas duets together this season. She still plays soccer and swims com-up with Dave on we have signed ditional fun to a special perk this vanced age...she up later than the and chat with



Flowers and Flames!



Fishing at the grandparents' house in Missouri





Atticus has officially become a reader, and enjoys the benefits of being able to go off and read by himself, but still prefers math and science as his favorite subjects. He'll get a page of math problems and when he finishes them on paper, he'll calculate their total sum in his head, just for "fun." This is the sense of fun he inherited from his father. He has started losing teeth this year, and is especially excited about the source of revenue this provides. He has already figured out how much his mouthful of teeth will bring in. He's enjoying his second year in Cub Scouts, where he shot off rockets and sold popcorn, and his Pinewood Derby car won "Best of Show" in his age



Tide pools at Moss Beach

group. He joined the baseball, and played this time having more of a church league. era for his 7th birthday an enthusiastic amateur. When we camped in Northern California he was particularly interested in exploring the tidepools.



Derby car won "Best of Show" in his age swim team, tried out soccer again, this fun in a less competitive. He asked for a camera and has become a photographer. along the coast in near Half Moon Bay,

All the kids were in a Christmas play at our church this year. Atticus and Emma both sang in the choir and had speaking parts, Aramis was in the choir, and Eragon sang with the 2-5 year olds before the show. It was our family's first foray into show business, and the whole experience was a lot of fun, although Atticus insists that he really only enjoyed the speaking



part and not the singing and dancing.

He'd really like to do more acting. Atticus remains thoughtful and philosophical and a wonderful, caring big brother...most of the time. He's our little man!



Atticus, age 7



Aramis is as enthusiastic as ever, happy and full of smiles. He started Kindergarten this year, going to the local public school two days a week and home schooling with us the other three days, and he loves it! He joined a chess club for “big kids” and began competing in chess tournaments with Emma and Atticus, and he loves it! He got to play soccer for his first season ever after watching older siblings play since he was a newborn, and guess what? He loved it! He learned to ski at the beginning of the year, and by the end of last season he was riding the lifts with the rest of the family. He was highly motivated to learn to swim without a life vest this summer because he wants to be on the swim team next year. We can always count



on Aramis to say something funny, even unintentionally, like when he greeted his great-aunt Wilma and Andy at last summer’s family re-saying, “I thought you were dead!” little comedian! Sadly, this year our dear cousin Evelyn, who was grandmother to our kids, to a sud-unexpected illness. She will be In the Christmas pageant, along



great-uncle union by He is our we did lose like another den and missed.

ing in the choir, Aramis portrayed three wise men. He provided some comic relief by making sure the wise man gifts laid before the manger were perfectly stacked atop one another. He also spent most of the pageant singing with his eyes shut tight. When we asked him about this later, he said he knew the words and motions, so he didn’t need to watch the director. He continues to go around singing the songs and doing the motions from the Christmas play with gusto. He’s a one-man show!



Aramis, age 5





Eragon, age 3



Eragon, our little baby, has turned into a big boy, how did that happen? He was all ready to hit the slopes this year with the rest of the family, but he broke his leg in early December and will be in a spica (half-body) cast until mid-January, so he may have to put off catching air until next season. He is talking and singing and insists on doing whatever his older siblings are doing, or did before he got sidelined. Our major summer project was putting in a playground, and Eragon is by far the biggest fan—he waves to it as we pass coming and going, “Hi play set!” He loves Dora and counting everything in sight, but he has a few favorite numbers and tends to leave out the rest. He persists in belting out the songs “Sing we all Noel” and “Goy to the Woyle (Joy to the World)” from the play, always at his highest volume. He has taken quite an interest in music this year, and enjoys banging on the piano with Emma and strumming on Atticus’ guitar, usually while singing along very loudly. He couldn’t be sweeter!



Christy couldn't be happier, spending most of her time schooling the kids. She is coordinating a co-op for about 30 families schooling with the same curriculum. This has helped the kids make more friends who do school like them, and filled Christy's pathological need to organize something outside the house. Dave continues to work from home for Adobe and is looking forward to lots of winter skiing and summer camping.

We have been blessed beyond measure in 2008, and we pray that our letter finds you and yours the same. Among those blessings was the birth last May of a beautiful and healthy baby boy, Owen Gustin Russell, to Christy's sister Cathy and her husband Ryan in Oklahoma City.

If you happen to find yourself in Colorado at any time, please don't hesitate to contact us. We'd love to hike or camp with you in summer, ski with you in winter, or just hang out and share the beauty of our Lord's creation at any time of year...May God bless you and keep you in 2009!

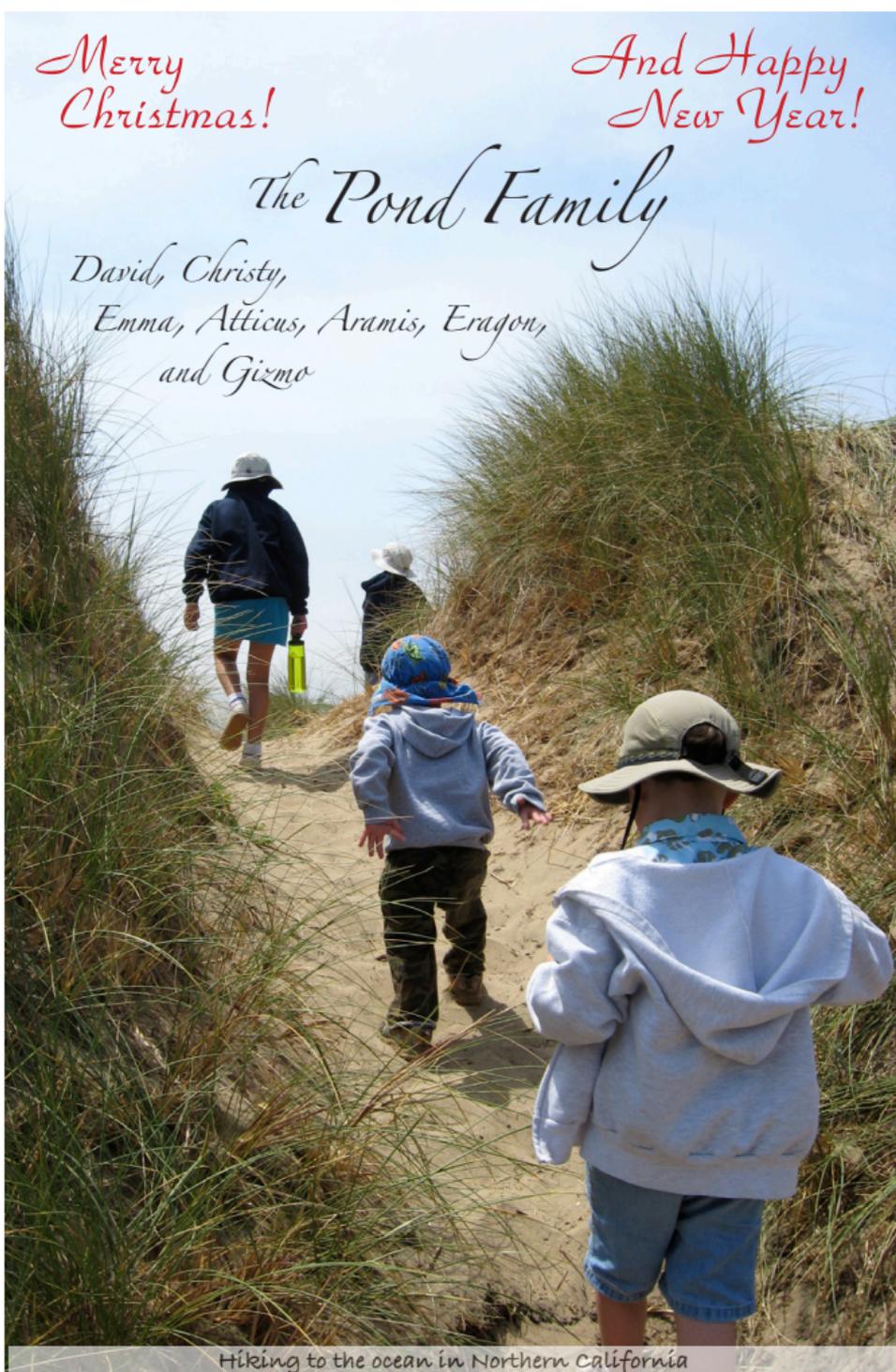
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To follow our adventures throughout the year, go to <http://blog.pondfamily.net>

*Merry
Christmas!*

*And Happy
New Year!*

The Pond Family

*David, Christy,
Emma, Atticus, Aramis, Eragon,
and Gizmo*



Hiking to the ocean in Northern California