



JANUARY



FEBRUARY



MARCH



APRIL



MAY



JUNE



JULY



# Happy Holidays 2012

Another year has *flown* by!

Angela starts her first job as associate pastor at Mount Baker Park Presbyterian Church. She serves there part-time, focusing on ministry to children and their families. She enjoys working with the small staff and getting to know the church members (and their children!) better.

Angela's brother Johnny and his family visit in time for a big snowstorm to close down Seattle for a week. The girls' cousins, Anthony and Brian, enjoy their first snowfall (and first snowball fight). The kids sled down the hill at Madison Park beach, where Johnny plays "catcher" to make sure nobody sleds into the lake.

We drive up to Big White, a British Columbia ski area, for midwinter break. Anya and Liya ski with Jan and Angela. Bree starts at the ski school, and by week's end advances to the "Speedy Squirrel" level. This makes her *very* happy. When Jan tries to help her up from a fall, she says, "No! I'm a Speedy Squirrel!" She picks herself up and zooms off.

Bree begins cello lessons on a Bree-size cello. Her first lessons are to practice rhythm, playing a one-note song with words we write: "Pomegranate smoothie, tastes so good to me." Bree also sings in a young girls' choir. Speaking of singing: Jan has now been singing bedtime songs every night for 10 years, and is trying to enjoy it while it lasts.

Jan's brother, mother, sister, and brother-in-law join us for a trip to Moab, Utah, to visit Jan's aunt Chuckie and her husband Ber. They're both long-time off-road explorers, and take us on wonderful tours of Arches and Canyonlands National Park. We do some river rafting down the Colorado River. The highlight of the trip is a hot air balloon ride over the desert at dawn.

Anya and her friends teach themselves Morse code to communicate secretly in class, so Jan and Liya learn Morse code too. New technology helps: Jan and Anya practice with an app that plays today's news headlines in Morse. Jan buys old railroad telegraph senders and receivers off eBay, and wires them up through our house's unused telephone wiring so we can send messages between two rooms. Anya's first lengthy conversation in Morse pertains to the existence of a spider nearby and her urgent request that Jan eliminate it.

Liya participates again in the annual Bike to School Day. Jan maps out a route that lets Liya bike safely with him all the way from our house to the school, a distance of about 6½ miles. (They do push their bikes up the final, incredibly steep Queen Anne hill on which the school sits.)

Towards the end of the school year, Anya manages to get all the way to school one morning before realizing she is not wearing shoes.

A sleepy Liya and exhausted Anya melt down one evening in a huge shouting match over whether Anya ate a piece of Liya's candy. Liya repeatedly wails, "But she ate my CANDY!" The next morning, both girls are bright-eyed and happy. Jan: "Isn't it a lot easier to talk these things over when you're rested?" Anya: "Yes! Liya, I'm sorry I ate some of your candy." Liya: "That's okay. I ate one of your butterscotches."

The end of spring brings with it several other endings. Bree finishes her last year at a Montessori preschool, as well as her last year at Seattle Chinese School. Liya and Bree finish up a year of ballet and tap at their dance school's year-end performances. Anya finishes off a season of spring soccer. She's decided not to keep going in the fall, and so concludes five years of soccer.

After dinner, we have a system to randomly determine who must do which cleanup chore. Unfortunately, each girl feels they always get their least favorite chore. We replace the random system with a chore wheel to ensure a consistent chore rotation. After dinner the girls shout, "It's time for Wheel! Of! Chores!"

We enjoy a great week-long visit from our East Coast friends Owen and Nicole Snyder. We do a Seattle tourist circuit, including some spots even we haven't seen yet, like the cool Theo Chocolate factory. We make a nice two-night side-trip to Victoria, BC, including a perfect sunny day at the beautiful Butchart Gardens.

Sabriya turns five! We celebrate with a Hawaiian-themed party that includes seven of Bree's friends, plus her Aunt Skye and Uncle Jared up from Salem, OR.

Our house is always covered with craft projects. One week, Liya creates a series of teeny tiny bound paper books containing teeny tiny stories, which she places in a teeny tiny paper mantelpiece bookshelf for her baseball-sized raccoon.



AUGUST



Anya heads off to YMCA's Camp Colman on the Kitsap Peninsula. Last year she was there for half a week, but this year she wants a full two weeks. We send some letters from home; Jan's includes a message in Morse code. Anya, it turns out, has *already* sent Jan a message in Morse — deviously encoded in the “hugs and kisses” Xs and Os at the end of the letter. Jan completely missed it.

Jan takes Liya camping at a state park on Lopez Island in the San Juans. They explore the cozy local village, build driftwood shelters on the beach, and paddle kayaks out to watch seals. Liya then joins up with Anya at Camp Colman, where the counselors give Liya an award for best embodying the YMCA value of “Respect”. Both girls return with an endless repertoire of camp songs.

We drive to Mount Rainier for family camping amidst the giant, old growth trees at Ohanapecosh Campground. The girls are entranced by a small stream that runs by our campsite. We head up to the park's Sunrise area for a short hike — very short, in fact. Angela wisely picks the shortest hike loop there, and we've barely started when the girls start asking how far it is to the end.

When we walk past a new neighborhood business, Jan wonders whether to try it. Bree advises: “First we have to find out how many stars it is.”



For her ninth birthday party, Liya asks Jan to create another puzzle/game event for her guests. By mutual agreement, the event features Professor Pete, Liya's large and extremely round stuffed polar bear. Professor Pete, it turns out, runs a school for youngsters with exceptional sensory abilities, and our girls and their guests spend an afternoon learning about eight different senses (and the fact we have more than five senses). A taste event called Jelly Belly Bingo kicks off a sequence of unusual trials that culminates in each girl taking turns “driving” a friend who has been blindfolded but equipped with a head-mounted web cam. When they've completed the challenges, the girls end the evening their favorite way: a long, after-dark game of Flashlight Tag at the neighborhood park.



For a number of years, Angela's been trying to get us a spot at Stanford Sierra Camp, a family camp in the Sierra Nevada run by Stanford's alumni association. Our number finally comes up, and the camp turns out to be great fun. Each of the girls spends the day in different age-based groups doing classic summer camp activities like canoeing, archery, Capture the Flag, singing songs around a campfire, and fishing for crawdads off the end of a dock. The adults enjoy their own classic summer activities like reading a book and taking a nap.

Liya decides she's shared a room with Anya long enough, and wants a room of her own. We free up a cozy basement room for Liya, who couldn't be happier.

Back to school: Anya starts 5<sup>th</sup> grade; Liya, 4<sup>th</sup>. Sabriya is just a week too young for kindergarten, so she begins a pre-K program at a new school. Each week the school has plenty of art projects, which Bree adores. Anya continues rock climbing at an indoor gym, Liya continues ballet, and Bree tries soccer. All three girls continue piano; Anya starts cello as well. Angela continues spending a fair portion of her week coordinating all these continuing activities.

This year, Jan's worked on an independent software project as well as consulting for various associates. He spends the fall on a fun project for a video game studio founded by some good old friends from his Microsoft days.



In mid-October, it's surprisingly still sunny and warm enough to spend an afternoon kayaking on Lake Union. On another weekend, Liya, Jan, and Jan's mom Lyn travel to Leavenworth, WA, for horseback riding in Lake Wenatchee State Park. They couldn't decide between a full-day and a half-day ride; their legs confirm that the half-day ride was the correct answer.



Anya turns 11. Her sleepover birthday party includes a large amount of chocolate fondue plus, of course, a long game of Flashlight Tag.

We spend a quiet Thanksgiving at home, and are indeed thankful for all we have. The following day, we take advantage of the King Tut exhibit that's touring through Seattle. Jan enjoys sharing a museum experience with the girls that he remembers doing as a boy when the first King Tut tour came through NYC.



For Jan's birthday, Anya and Liya concoct their own treasure hunt for *him* to solve. Jan follows twenty clever clues all over (and outside) the house, including some clues in Morse code. Best clue location: the clue taped to the cat.



We'll be spending Christmas here in Seattle with Jan's family, then heading down to see Angela's family in Southern California. We hope to see *you* in 2013!