

*“Holiday Greetings from the Zweibohmers”
Travis, Britta, Matthew, and Kelsey
2008*

Kelsey is looking forward to singing “All I Want For Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth” this holiday season. Her toothless grin is adorable and her fascination with the tooth fairy is never ending. She must be the only child on earth who actually looked forward to a required dental surgery earlier this year in which four bottom teeth were removed. The world is one big happy place to her, and Kelsey’s enthusiasm and constant cheerfulness was a bright spot in an otherwise dismal year. Each day she came home from the first grade bubbling with good news and happy thoughts. We were so proud of her when she recently rated very high in standardized academic testing and again when she earned the role of Little Bo Peep in the school play.

Matthew is very much like the Superman character he dressed as on Halloween. He appears to be a mild mannered nine year old, but behind that good looking grin is a young man ready to take on the world. He may not wear a cape or travel to distant galaxies, but he certainly does find history and travel books fascinating. His continued thirst for knowledge paid off as he participated in an accelerated student program and was narrator in the school play.

Britta continues to care for her elderly parents. Her father had a stroke in July and spent several months in hospitals, doctor’s offices and therapy centers. Sadly, he is now in a nursing home and is terminally ill in three different capacities. Britta has drastically cut back on the number of tea parties she hosts and is no longer writing press releases and news stories for national companies. Her pen is instead now used to fill out endless social security, medicare and insurance forms. She has a few insurance papers of her own to fill out as we recently learned she has a large abscess and two small cysts which will require medical attention.

Travis lost both of his grandfathers this year. Gus Zweibohmer and Leonard Schroeder were born the same year, went to school together, shared many of the same grandchildren and died peacefully just months apart. With two recent funerals and Britta’s dad in poor health, we made the difficult decision of canceling our ten year wedding anniversary party. We had rented the community center, purchased the supplies and had two hundred invitations ready to be mailed when Ted had his stroke. Proving the old saying that “Life is what happens while you were planning something else”....

To say it was a troublesome year would be an understatement. We also experienced identity theft and major contractor issues. Our holiday letter sounds more like an organized list of complaints. But, despite it all, we have learned that there are people in the world with problems far greater than our own. One needn’t travel too far either. Cedar Rapids was hit by a historic flood that devastated 1,300 city blocks and forced the evacuation of 25-thousand people. Downtown businesses and city services were destroyed. Thousands of hard working people lost their homes and many more lost their jobs. It has been deemed “The Midwest’s Katrina” and rightfully so-- it is now six months later and we still have residents living in tents and unheated campers. It makes our challenges seem small and insignificant. We are blessed to have a warm roof over our heads and loving family members to hold. It is our wish that 2009 bring brighter days for not only our family, but so many people in the world faced with poor economic conditions and international military unrest!