



Fröhliche Weihnachten

“Holiday Greetings from the Zweibohmers” Travis, Britta, Matthew and Kelsey 2014

Kelsey is finally a teenager, however her maturity level and appearance is that of an adult. Wherever we go, people tend to assume she will soon be entering college, when in fact she still has more than a year and a half ahead of her before attending high school. That hasn't stopped her from taking high school classes though. Kelsey is a member of the National Junior Honor Society and is currently taking a high school algebra class while in seventh grade. She has become very involved in school activities and has done a wonderful job of juggling them all from playing clarinet in the school band to landing a part in the school play. She helped teachers form Liberty Pines Academy's first ever history club, she assisted with photography for the year book and is the school's mascot, "Wolfie" during special events. Her greatest joy though, was being nominated to attend a National Leadership Ambassadors Conference in Washington D.C. and Philadelphia for a week over the Fourth of July. She flew and traveled alone for the first time this past summer. The traveling bug seems to have bitten Kelsey and she was overjoyed with a family vacation in Germany as well. We visited Munich, Frankfurt and Neuschwanstein Castle in Bavaria. It was a truly magical experience visiting locations special to our family heritage and important to her Oma and Opa Mueller. We are excited to be traveling back to Europe this summer and will be visiting London and Paris in 2015 to create more family memories!

Matthew is a freshman in high school and was equally as thrilled about traveling this year. A lifelong dream was realized when he and Travis attended a Bayern Munich professional soccer match at Allianz Stadium. Making it even more memorable, they met new German friends that they have remained in contact with. Matthew traveled to Washington D.C. for a weeklong trip while in middle school as well, and will be traveling to Nashville with his high school marching band over spring break. Band has been an important part of Matthew's life in both middle school and high school over the past year. He volunteered to play three different instruments, depending upon the needs of concert band and marching band. He enjoyed playing alto saxophone, baritone sax, and the clarinet. He was voted "Funniest Person in the Eighth Grade" by his graduating class, but was still serious enough about his studies to take a high school class over the summer, so that he would be one class ahead before ever stepping inside Creekside High School's doors. He is currently placed in all gifted classes and is taking one college course. It appears both our children are always thinking one step ahead! Matthew also obtained the highest level of Jiu-Jitsu possible for his age group, and is eligible to test for his blue belt when turning sixteen. The new year will begin with a classroom driver's education course which is the first step prior to taking it on the road. It's hard to believe we have two very busy teens under our roof now, with one about to get a driver's license. Where has the time gone?

Britta's year has been focused on putting a series of unfortunate circumstances to rest and beginning anew. As most of you know, the house we had built in 2012 was riddled with what experts in the industry referred to as "catastrophic construction defects." We absolutely love our Florida home, but it was not built properly. We struggled while working with attorneys, the original construction company, and a new company specializing in construction defects. It was a year and a half of heartache and extreme stress. On the interior we had four rooms we were unable to use while the exterior stucco had to be removed and reapplied. We lived in a construction zone for most of the year with a huge dumpster and porta potty in our driveway. Somehow, we found the humor in it all and now live in a well-built beautiful home that we absolutely adore! This house, like no other, reflects who we are and we feel at home here far more than our previous Iowa house. Britta has found great joy in decorating our home a second time and we are pleased to put the whole experience behind us. She also quite literally laid to rest the seven long years of caring for her now deceased parents. It was their final wishes that Britta bring her parents' ashes to the Main River in Frankfurt, and all four of us found it bittersweet to do so. The last time Britta was in Frankfurt was with her parents, and now the circle-of-life brought her back with her own children depositing Ted and Martha's remains. With the repairs completed on our home and extended family commitments met, it's time to move on. And, move on we have! It's the first time in years that we feel as if we are in control of our own destiny again and not tied down by family obligations or unforeseen circumstances. We relish in the fact that life is back on track and we welcome all the new experiences ahead of us. Britta is excited to be going back to England for the second time in five years. She very much enjoys the English lifestyle, taking tea with friends, and is looking forward to having high tea with Kelsey at The Ritz in London in June. It is after all the most famous tea room in the world! But, for now, Britta is a taxi service for Matthew and Kelsey's numerous activities and a delivery service for her china rental business.

Travis accepted an offer to work for Medtronic as a Program Manager in their New Product Development group. Medtronic is the world's largest manufacturer of medical devices, surgical tools and implantables. Chances are if you or your loved one recently had surgery (or required a pace maker, stint or an insulin pump), the tools used during surgery and the equipment implanted within you is from Travis' workplace. He has worked as a Program Manager in the aviation, railway, printing press, and energy storage industries through the years, but nothing has been nearly as exciting and rewarding as being part of a dedicated team of individuals who help save lives and restore health! Within his first week of employment, Travis found himself in a surgical center surrounded by the nation's best surgeons, testing new surgical tools and drills on severed heads. Yes, you read that correctly! He often works with skilled surgeons as they test newly designed equipment on bodies donated to science. He also works closely with the FDA to get new medical devices and tools passed through our nation's regulatory commissions. He loves it, and we're happy he is now part of a fabulous company dedicated to improving health. Back at home, we're also happy to have his den back, as it was one of the rooms most affected by construction defects. Water literally poured into his home office two years ago and we just recently completed decorating it. In Travis' spare time he continues to ride the Harley Davidson he built, tries to get to the beach often and most recently earned his first stripe as a blue belt in Gracie Jiu-Jitsu. He and Matthew enjoy their time together in Jiu-Jitsu and the entire family spent a week in Destin, Florida for the World Jiu-Jitsu Immersion Camp. It has been a year of much travel for both work and for our family.

As the year comes to a close, we find ourselves much happier than in years past. From several months of reconstruction on our home to fulfilling the dream of our Germany trip, we have weathered life's storms and come out stronger than ever before. Our hopes are that you too find joy this holiday and that life is good to you in 2015!