

And now for the News and what's been going on at the Chaotic Bertelson Household! WOW, where do I start??

Since it has now been *2* years since I did a Bertelson Bulletin Newsletter, there is a LOT to catch up on!!

I had every good intention on doing one a year ago, but didn't jump on it early enough and then we all went on a Christmas Cruise (courtesy of my wonderful MIL Joanie) So I figured we would take the Family photo ON the boat (which we DID - see below) and do the newsletter in early January and send out the newsletter & photo as a "Welcome to 2009" edition.

HA! Well as many of you know (those who have been recipients in past years of either a "real life" newsletter/photo card or even the electronic/online version) that "plan" DID NOT HAPPEN!!

Life and time got away with me and then I just decided to stop stressing about it and nix the whole idea :)

So THIS year, with finances being quite a bit squeakier, coupled with the every increasing numbers of our friends/family/co-workers now being 'socially connected' online with either Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, LinkedIn I have decided this year to do a "2 in 1" edition in electronic format only this is not only a \$ saver ... but a TREE SAVER!!! Printing out 200 of these newsletters - that's a lot of paper & ink!

BUT There is a link at the top of the page on the right to download both the 2008 and 2009 images (if you so desire to) and print it out (it is 4 x 8 inches) ... this is what *I* do with any electronic ones I get, I print it out and stick it up with the (decreasing each year) ones that arrive in the regular mail.

Also up at the top of the page you will see the family social network matrix - LOL - this is because all 6 of us are on Facebook, 4 of us on MySpace (although I rarely check mine much anymore) 4 of us are on Twitter, 4 of us have Flickr Photo account, 3 of us have blogs So if any of you want to connect to us or stay in touch more often through one of those social networks you can :) If you only pick one of those social networks, pick Facebook, we're ALL on it, post photos and stuff too!

Now onto the news for 2008 and 2009

It might be a bit jumbled and jump from one person to another, but I am just writing it all down as it comes to mind!

Not sure I can remember much of what happened in way of 2008 news now except for the Christmas Cruise, so we will start there.

Oh yeah, in thinking about the Cruise, I just remembered something important that happened before the cruise on August 26th, 2008 Joanie, my MIL went into the hospital to have her 2nd knee replacement surgery ... a fairly routine operation nowadays that turned unexpectedly REALLY serious VERY quickly. The actual KNEE replacement surgery went fine, BUT unfortunately her intestines did not 'jump start' back to life once the anesthesia (a brand new one, she'd never had before) wore off. They remained still, silent and non-functioning This was NOT a good thing.

They actually didn't find out this was happening right away Joanie was complaining of stomach pains post surgery, but they all thought it was 'routine gas' as it is common post surgery to have abdominal gas build-up that can be quite painful. BUT they were getting more and more concerned the longer she went (post surgery) without 'going to the bathroom' - of any sort.

Then her blood pressure dropped rapidly (24hrs after surgery) and she was whisked off to ICU for that. That was a blessing really because while treating and stabilizing her for that (and who knows, the blood pressure drop might have been a reaction to the dormant intestine thing) they discovered for sure that her intestines were inert.

They then 'inserted' a tube to try and stimulate things and kept taking X-rays at intervals to see if any progress had happened. When we visited her at the hospital, she was totally out of it and not looking good. Sometimes they have to do surgery to remove 'dead' intestine etc - worst case can be death - so we were all SUPER concerned. It didn't help that Joanie told Nils before she went IN for the surgery that she

had a premonition that she was going to check in but not check out again.

Instead of the normal situation. where it suddenly kick starts back into full working action ... Joanie instead sloooooowly recovered but the Dr's actually told Nils she almost died!!!!!!! She was then settled into the Cornell Rehabilitation Center (part of Bethesda Hospital) for her Knee Physical rehab, but the 2 weeks in ICU really put her behind as far as the Knee replacement rehab was concerned since the Dr's were really only focusing on the life threatening issue and not moving the knee etc.

BUT that said, we were all VERY thankful to have Joanie around to go on the cruise with us; we did take a wheel chair with us (thanks to the Kellers) because getting around was still not very easy for Joanie and well Cruise Ships, even HUGE ones have small corridors, LOTS of stairs, few lifts/elevators ... so it was much needed.

As far as the Cruise goes, though I would not recommend MCL cruise lines, I wanted to say we were ALL still thankful we went, we DID have good times and some lovely memories, including Tortola) but we've concluded that cruises just really aren't for our family.

We did have fun searching the whole ship, trying to look for a REALLY original place to take the photo (like in the boiler room) or on top of the smoke stack or something else outlandish, but every attempt to go 'out of the box' was met by locked doors, chain link and or frowning employees shoos us OUT of their restricted areas and back to where the passengers were allowed to be !! So we had to be boring and take it on the end of the boat !!! LOL I hope this years "Snuggie Spoof" makes up for it!

OK so what happened in 2009

We went up as a family to Bertsnest in the Summer (minus Matthew who was up North working for our neighbour James) and had another lovely memorable holiday. For the first time Kenzie got to take one of her friends (Victoria) with her. That was fun for her, they had lots of fun (jumping off waterfalls and go-karting) and being 12yr olds, but since they are both very opinionated 'leaders' there were also quite a few fireworks and disputes!!

One of the BEST parts of it was that there were NEW neighbours in the house right down the hill from Bertsnest. Another family of 6, with the opposite to us they have 3 boys (14 and twin 12yr old boys) and 1 girl (9yrs.) We all hit it off immediately and basically spent a large part of every day with them! Since they were VERY new to the area (moved in from Texas about 2 weeks before we got there) we were able to show them around.

Matthew's girlfriend at the time was a graduate of Appalachian State University, which is right there in Boone, so SHE had told us about a bunch of COOL fun things to do which we knew nothing about.

One was this incredible hike STRAIGHT down to a waterfall that you could jump off - it was amazing - the kids all had a BLAST and ALL did it (except little Katie) ... if I hadn't been such a (fat) wally with bum knees, I would have done it too!!

Speaking of my knees - when we were LEAVING the waterfall and getting ready to go back UP the almost 90 degree incline, I 'locked' up my right knee - OUCH - I managed to unlock it (VERY painful process, where everyone is trying to help and I want NO-ONE to TOUCH me!!) Nils said he'd carry me back up - HA - I would have sat there and waited for a trauma hawk before allowing that, we would have BOTH broken our necks!!

I managed to get myself back up the climb by basically pulling myself up (on trees) with my arms and using one leg - BOY was I tired by the time I got to the top!!

But that incident was when I decided I wasn't going to put it off any longer and would go see the Orthopedic Dr right when I got back and just schedule the arthroscopic surgery on my right knee (like I had on my left knee several years back) to fix and trim away all this shredded cartilage/meniscus that kept getting caught behind my knee cap and locking up my knee. I was sick of it!!

So since Nils and I had a trip already planned to Nicaragua in October (to celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary, actual date in June) and I needed least 6-8 weeks post surgery for rehab before we went, I

pretty much went to the Dr 2 days after we got back, had the MRI, scheduled the surgery and set it up for Sept 2nd, right after I got back from the Women of Faith conference I went to in Atlanta.

That was SO much fun, the WOF conference. My friend Annie (Keller) and I drove up from Florida to Dublin, Georgia (which is right in the middle of the line that connects Atlanta - Macon & Savannah, GA) where my friend Jenn Shaffer and her family moved to in the Summer of 2008. We stayed the night there with her, then the 3 of us drove up to Atlanta to our hotel. Jenn's sister Regina flew in from New York and another friend (used to live in Palm Beach County too) Angela flew in from Nebraska. So the 5 of us had a blast in Atlanta, playing musical hotels, staying one night at one (cheaper) one night at the WOF hotel (who would NOT let us cancel the reservation for Friday night), then back to the 1st hotel for the 3rd night!

My surgery went well, no complications, routine rehab and although it is BETTER, it still catches a bit when I do certain movements, so I still don't feel the freedom to do anything (sport wise) and am always wary.

Our Nicaragua trip was MEANT to be an Anniversary celebration trip - Hmmm yeah, note to self, don't ever allow an anniversary trip to entail ANY sort of surfing location EVER!!! Thank GOODNESS I had my friend Annie there with me ... so that while our husbands Nils and Randy were off surfing or fishing, we at least had each other and we're 2 peas in a pod, both love to read, love movies. We were VERY thankful for have a friend (living there now) at our disposal as our own personal tour guide (and translator)

In 2009 Melanie graduated High School, turned 18, officially became an adult, got her first car (2nd hand Toyota Camry - GREAT deal from a lovely lady at my church who's Mum has passed away earlier that year) AND got her first (real) job all that procrastinating on her part, due to the unknown of having to deal with the public was squelched in a matter of a couple of shifts. She is now one of Rita's Italian Ice's most appreciated employees, having received *3* raises in the 8

months she has been there (all initiated by her boss) AND making shift leader as well. She is obviously a great employee, who works diligently, doesn't slack off and goes above and beyond, noticing what needs to be done without having to be told as well as anticipating things, which helps her boss. We are SO proud of her :)

She was going to start college in the Fall term, but we came home from North Carolina so late, that by the time she had taken/completed her mandatory orientation class, all the courses she wanted/needed to take were already full up, So since her scholarship would not be 'lost' if she took as semester off, it was decided that she would wait, work and save money and start in January.

Well she worked, but she wasn't as good on the actual saving money part ;) She likes her Chipotle food, Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts Coffee and having her own money a little bit too much !!!! Hopefully in 2010 she will be a bit more disciplined in actually saving money to give herself a cushion which was NOT there when her car broke down and needed \$100's worth of repairs. So now she is now paying us back VERY gradually!!

So she is now enrolled to start college in January the day after we get back from North Carolina.

We are going back up to Bertsnest for the Christmas through New Year holiday with another family of friends (the Kellers) and will no doubt spend OODLES of time with our new found friends and neighbours up there the Williams. One of Melanie's friends Hillary is coming with us this time too, this is her first time coming with us.

Maddie in in her last year of Middle School and has applied this year to go to a magnet High School called Dreyfoos School of the Arts (Matt went there for his Freshman year) and she wants to be in the Digital Media program (this includes photography, movies, video, design etc) and she has picked Drama/Theatre Arts as her second choice and we are all hoping and praying she gets in.

The Digital Media program only accepts 27 kids (out of the approx 250+ that apply!) ... her audition for that program is January 16th, so those of you that pray, PRAY on that day!!!! (Theatre audition is Jan 12th) she will not find out until April if she got it!! Nerve wracking waiting period for us all!! Her friend Reid, who has been her friends since pre-school at Trinity has applied for Digital Media there as well.

Maddie and I went to the Open House a week ago, to hear all about each program (that she chose) and were shown around by a very exuberant girl who was a junior (3rd year) ... very informative she was, NEVER stopped talking or drew breath while showing us ALL around the Digital Media, well really the Visual Arts building (of which Digital Media is part of, this year is the FIRST year of graduating students in the Digital Media program, it's that new)

By the time we left (and had seen the Theatre/Drama program too) ... *I* was almost ready to sign up for High School there!

Nils did a couple of boys trips again this year with his Firefighter buddies. I forgot now if it as NC or Colorado this year ... OK so I just rang him up to ask which one it was - it was BOTH of them!

The NC trip (Nils, RJ & Brett) - all firefighters) actually turned into a working Snowboarding trip ... as there was a major water leak in the WALLS up at Bertsnest ... caused by someone (we are pretty sure we know who, they deny it!) not fully draining the pipes, so they froze, expanded and cracked. So the boys had to FIND the leaking/split pipes by cutting out parts of the drywall to expose the pipes behind, fix the cracked leaking pipes and fix/patch up the drywall etc... they were hard working boys and saved Joanie & Bob MUCHO \$\$ by doing all the work/labour themselves.

This year we also celebrated with a DOUBLE DUTY party in October for Joan and Bob's 50th Wedding Anniversary and Joanie's 80th birthday - both great accomplishments one of the guests gave Joanie a lovely collage photo frame and so I created the photos to fit ... this is an image of it (click on it for a larger version)

A preview on NEXT year I already have TWO trips planned for sure!!

The first (basic 1st three weeks in April) is a wonderful present from my Mum. My sister Melanie and I are going to go to the Seychelles (check it out, <http://seychelles.com> - it's paradise!) for 10 days. It's a cluster of teeny islands (compared to Madagascar & Africa!) off the East Coast of Africa. My Mum's (Dad's) family came from there, there is even a Mount Dauban on one of the islands (Silhouette) ... we (my sister and I) are SO excited about it. We co-ordinated our visit with our cousin Mark (whose Dad is our Mum's brother) his wife and children. Mark's niece Laura JUST moved there to work (lawyer) so will be setting up the house/cars and stuff for us, our OWN personal tour guide. Another niece Chelle is hoping to come over then too - it will be quite the party :)

During that trip, I will also be spending a week with Mum up in Cheshire (and see my good friend Peanut who lives close) before we leave for the Seychelles and a couple or so days at my sisters AFTER the Seychelles (and hopefully see other friends/people near her) ... I just need to pack light and smart!!!

My 2nd trip will be to the Women of Faith 2010 conference. It's become a tradion for us (Jenn, Regina and I, now Annie and Angela are joining us!) ... so this time we are going to go to Omaha, Nebraska Why there you ask? well because Angela LIVES there, so we will have start everything, tour guide, accommodation, etc :) We like to pick a different place, city each time (I missed the Boston one when we were in NC with my sister's family)

Nils has a boys Colorado trip planned in March sometime with his Firefighter buddies (Gary has a house there) and I am sure we will go up to North Carolina for some part of the summer as well.

If you are still reading, well done, I think I've rambled enough!!

Lots of love Alice (<http://alicethebrit.com>) and the rest of the Bertelson family (<http://bertelsonfamily.com>)