

Dear friends and family,

Merry Christmas from the Potts' family! At this special time of year it's good to stop and look back at all the wonderful blessings we've known this past year. Some of them really stand out and we'd like to share them with you. As usual, most of them occur outdoors. So grab your cup of hot cocoa, find a comfortable chair, and share our adventures.

One of the first highlights this past year was a road trip to Moab, Utah to mountain bike the 100-mile White Rim Trail around Canyonlands National Park. This trail is mostly unimproved dirt roads and slick rock that winds around a sandstone rim high above the Colorado and Green rivers in the Park. We met Bob's parents in an RV park in Moab to visit, sightsee, and have them watch our kids for the three



Our Family in Yosemite National Park

days we would be biking. Two of our adventuresome friends, Kim Kelsey from Montana and Alex Heindl from Las Vegas joined us for the ride. I signed up to be cook for the trip which I always enjoy. We checked the weather report and were a bit discouraged by impending thunderstorms. Not only did we need to consider being caught in desert storms on our mountain bikes, but also our support vehicle getting stuck on muddy roads. Being the "bold adventurers" that we are, we decided to go for it! We loaded up our bikes, tents, food and ourselves and headed out. I thought I was going to be cooking and driving the "swag" wagon (bike jargon for the support vehicle), but it turned out that I got to ride almost all of the hundred miles. And what a great ride it was! The trail follows the rim of the river canyons on a formation called the Permian White Rim Sandstone - thus the name "White Rim Trail". It is so scenic that after a while you have to stop taking pictures because you'll never make it to your evening's designated campsite. The trail winds through red sandstone towers and pristine desert filled with wildflowers and spectacular canyon views. It was great to go with Alex as he is a biologist, herpetologist (reptile expert) and archeologist all rolled into one (besides just being a really great guy). I was



Lisa Biking the White Rim Trail

always asking him about the rocks and plants along the way. Luckily we didn't need his "snake" expertise on this trip! All the campsites were pristine and well maintained. The second night, for example, we camped at Candlestick Camp which is an unimproved campsite (a stake marks it) and a beautifully clean and sweet-smelling outhouse. The outhouses in the park are unbelievably spotless - and that includes inside the toilet bowl! Kim also outdid himself by bringing along his portable shower. You just couldn't beat it - a hot dinner, a shower with a view, and a cold beer! This is the life. It felt especially great after a thirty-mile mountain bike ride and we slept well. The last day of the ride included a 1,500 foot climb out of the canyon to



Bob far above the Green river on the White Rim Trail

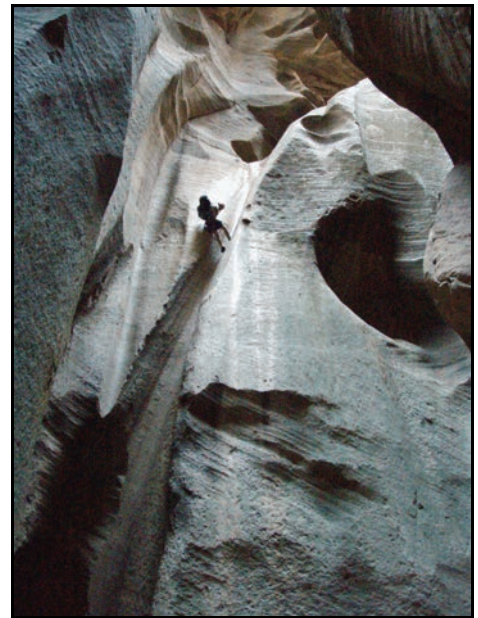


Bob's Mom and Lisa in Arches National Park

gain the elevation we had lost going down the 12 or so Schaffer switchbacks we cruised down the first day. We had a great ride out, and Kim and Bob (amazing guys that they are) even had energy left to ride another 14-mile trail back to Moab! It was an incredible time with great friends! We followed up our ride with a few more days spent with Bob's Dad and Mom and good friends Jim and Mari Germain who own a bed and breakfast outside of Moab. We had a great time and the only thing I have to say is – "When are we going to do it again?"

We also enjoyed a number of fun camping trips this past year. In May, we camped with neighbors, the Sigler family, in Pine Valley, Utah. Pine Valley is the perfect campground for kids. There is a pretty stream running right through the center of it. Hannah, Caleb, and the Sigler kids had a wonderful time playing in the water, roasting marshmallows, and getting really grubby. It gave us moms a chance to sit and visit (something that doesn't happen too often with little ones) while the dads went to nearby Zion National Park for a little canyoneering. It's always a good thing when you get to spend time in the woods.

Speaking of canyons, Bob and I did spend some time in a few canyons this past year. We continue to enjoy this sport, which is obvious when you are willing to get up at 3 a.m., drive four hours to Zion, descend a canyon for 10 hours and then hop in the car and drive back home - and call it fun! Bob and our friend Mike Brunson took on a couple of bigger canyons this year. On Father's Day they did a beautiful canyon called Engelstead which has a 300-foot rappel just to get to the floor of the canyon and another dozen or so to get through it. They also went to their first American Canyoneering Association Rendezvous held in Zion National Park. There they enjoyed doing a number of other canyons and meeting canyoneering enthusiasts from all over the world. There were even a couple of guys from Nepal. Now that is place that would have some huge canyons!



Bob on Rappel in Englestead Canyon



Lisa and the Kids Hiking in Yosemite

Our family vacation this year was a camping trip to Tuolumne Meadows in Yosemite National Park. It was fun being outdoors for a week in such a beautiful and special place. It also brought back great memories - the last time we camped there was in 2002 when Hannah was just two years old. We had fun hiking, canoeing on Tenaya Lake, and playing in the Tuolumne River. Hannah also had a special time on her first backpacking trip with Dad. They hiked to beautiful May Lake and camped overnight. Hannah had a great time beating Dad at card games, having a "tickle fest" before bedtime, and sipping hot cocoa on a cold morning. It was a special time for both of them. Caleb and I also enjoyed some time together playing in the river with Caleb's "go gos" (cars). On the last full day of our trip Bob hiked a

15-mile section of the John Muir trail from our campground to Tenaya Lake where we picked him up and went canoeing. Ever since we'd camped there in 2002 I had been wanting to return. It is truly a spot where earth touches heaven.

In August, Bob joined his Dad, brothers, and older nephews for a wonderful Canadian fishing trip. They flew into an outpost camp on a large lake in the Northwest Territories called Wignes Lake. When they arrived, they were met by wonderful camp hosts, Shawn and Danielle, who became great friends. In all they caught 203 fish but that was only part of the terrific time they had. Just spending time together playing games, watching the Northern Lights, going on hikes, and getting away to a place where there was a lot of peace, quiet, fun, love, and God made it the best.



Hannah's First Backpacking Trip with Dad



Bob Having a Great Time in Canada

Bob remains a vital part of the Center for Business & Economic Research at University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where he has been working for almost 15 years. Way to go Bob! There have been big changes for the rest of our family now that Hannah is in the first grade. We are sending her to Lake Mead Christian Academy. I work there part-time in the events/fundraising department while Caleb attends preschool. The school is really great and the kids are thriving. I've been telling people that we are all in school now - from the university to preschool!

In closing, we want to say how much we appreciate you. My college youth pastor, Dick Schroeder, always used to say "relationships are the currency of heaven". With you as friends and family, we truly are rich people.

Have a wonderful Christmas and may God bless you with a New Year of adventures!

The Potts' Family

P.S. For the latest update on our adventures and family - check out our website at [www.nevada.edu/~potts](http://www.nevada.edu/~potts)



Bob and Lisa in Zion National Park

A Christmas poem to ponder:

There will be less someday -  
Much less, and there will be more:  
Less to distract and amuse;  
More to adore;  
Less to burden and confuse;  
More to undo the cluttering of centuries,  
That we might view again  
That which star and angels point to:  
We shall be poorer and richer;  
Stripped and free;  
For always there will be a Gift,  
Always a tree!

*Ruth Bell Graham*