

BOB & MONIKA MARKS

CHRISTMAS LETTER, 2011

Merry Christmas All Ya'all for 2011

The Marks family has been very busy this year and we have had many changes in our lives..

Grandpa Charley: The first big change was taking my Dad, Charley to my Brother Rick's home in Farmersburg, Indiana. Grandpa Charley has had major health concerns. Last December he had a pacemaker put in. Grandpa had lived with us or in Corpus Christi for over 8 years. I hoped he would fair better and be happier with a new set of doctors (the old ones ruined his health with carelessly prescribed medicine) and with having a chance to visit with his son Rick and wife Tami and their daughter Jamie and husband Randy and their kids (Charley's great grandchildren) Lane and Reese. They placed him in a very nice assisted living home, in Terre Haute, Indiana, where he is enjoying playing poker and being reacquainted with old friends, some of which he even knew in grade school. He is on dialysis 3 times per week. Just this last week Grandpa Charley just survived a major car wreck which resulted in a ruptured spleen. He is already planning to get a new car even though he has been out of the hospital for only one day. Charley amazes us with how much he is able to overcome and keep on going even with going blind in one eye.

Podman: Bob was interviewed for an hour about his work in evolutionary informatics on Tom Woodward's radio program. There is an online podcast if you want to listen.ⁱ

In February, while Bob was at a conference in Washington D.C., I suffered with a kidney stone. I was very grateful Ray took me to the hospital in the middle of the night.

Cake Walk: In March we celebrated Jeremiah, Josh, and Marilee's birthday and now we are adding Kris, Marilee's boyfriend, to the list. At least for now I have Marilee to help with the cakes and she is quite amazing since we have

taken some more advanced cake decorating classes. I think her soccer ball cake for Kris's birthday was amazing.

Bob enjoyed another Discovery Institute Conference in Santa Barbara at the first of March.

Master Garden: In April, I enjoyed various field trips with the *McGregor Garden Club* especially the one to the *Iris Farm*. It is such a challenge to grow things here with the very hot summers that I decided I needed a lot of help. I am learning a lot through the Garden Club as well as making new gardening friends.



TOP ROW: Jeremiah, Ray, Monika, Bob, Ringo.

MIDDLE: Leslie, Joshua, Marilee.

BOTTOM LAP ROW: Tristan, Sweetie.

ReMax: Marilee has a new part time business job with a local pool, company. She took some extra computer classes at the tech school TSTC. She recently got her Real Estate License and passed the test on the first try! She is now working as an independent agent through ReMax.

This spring Marilee went on a cruise to Cozumel, Mexico and had a blast.

Josh is plugging away at Baylor and he is being challenged with many Latin classes. He amazes us with how much he studies Latin.

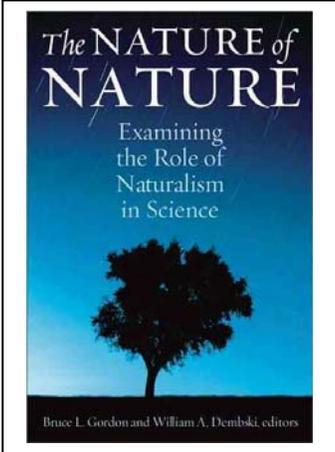
Baby Shower: On April 28, Marilee and I flew to Seattle to visit friends and to go to daughter in law Leslie's baby shower hosted by her sisters. It was great to see her and family friend Tami Ferrell pregnant at the same time. We also got to celebrate with Tami at her baby shower. Baby talk was in the air. Tami now has a sweet baby girl named Abigail.



Tristan Robert Marks: Our first grandson!

Tristan! Then on May 24 Tristan Robert Marks was born early but still big enough at 7lbs and 7 oz.!!! We are now grandparents for the very first time. Tristan Robert Marks was named after Bob and Leslie's Uncle Bob. Bob immediately wrote Tristan a baby song which was appropriate since "*Tristan und Isolde*" is a composition by Richard Wagner. If you want to listen to Bob's Tristan song, its online at Bob's web site.ⁱⁱ Jeremiah and Leslie are doing very well enjoying their son even

Lunch), Michael Behe (*Darwin's Black Box and The Edge of Evolution*), John Sanford (*Genetic Entropy & the Mystery of the Genome*) and Bruce Gordon (*The Nature of Nature*). The proceedings of the conference will be published in 2012. Bob thought the conference was a grand success. Bob's Ph.D. advisor, John Walkup, also came. John and his wife Pat are full time with Campus Crusade's professor ministry in the Bay Area focusing on Stanford, Berkeley and San Jose State. Two of Bob's graduate students, Winston Ewert and George Montañez, were also there so we got a wonderful three generation picture.



A Nobel Cause: Bob has a chapter in Bruce Gordon and William Dembski's book, *The Nature of Nature*. It was collection of papers from another conference. Bob's paper was with William Dembski. There are other chapters in the book by three Nobel prize winners! And there is a chapter by Roger Penrose who discovered black holes with Stephen Hawking. Bob is really in good company!

Back in Seattle Again: In early June Marilee and I flew to Seattle to see Tristan and to help Leslie and Jeremiah with their new baby. I love being a Grandma.! There really is such a thing as love at first sight. He is so adorable and he has amazing long brown hair. While we were there, Bob flew in next to see Tristan as well as to teach classes at the Discovery Institute. Bob has not lost his great touch to entertain babies as well as rock them to sleep. It is wonderful to see your son love his own son. We had some special dinners with the our old friends, the Ferrell's and the Newhouse's. We also got to take Tristan out for his 4th of July Dinner along with Jeremiah and Leslie. Tristan was so very alert, sweet and calm. I also got to see my



Monika & Ann Bradley in New York City at the Disney Store.

though they are a little exhausted.

New York: On May 28, Bob and I flew to New York along with our good friends, Walter and Anne Bradley. We

good friend, Signa. Of course lunch with other good friends, such as Alice and Lucy. Marilee and Bob had to fly home but I stayed longer and was glad about that as I got to help take Tristan on his first stroller ride in his new stroller. It was wonderful to see Leslie's mom Ann and to help her celebrate her birthday with her family.

Water Girl: It was very hard to leave Seattle, but I needed to get back to my River Ranch because a severe

more fruit trees. The digging in our rock quarry soil is going very slow. Someday we hope to enjoy more pomegranates, pears, peaches, figs, and pecans. Last year we planted pears, pomegranates, fig, apple, and plum trees. The grasshoppers were so horrendous that I lost a pomegranate tree and had to cover the other one with special fiber wrap to keep the grasshoppers off. Everything was so dry that they were really delighted to feast on the

only green leaves in sight. This year I hope to start bee keeping. My other new farm venture is vermi-composting with my own red worms. It's great because they eat extra waste like coffee grounds and eggshells. However, last week, I may have frozen them out as I didn't heat them up when we had a freeze. I didn't realize that they would need heat and air conditioning. All the fishermen are happy to have the worms so available and I plan on making wonderful fertilizer from them. If I change my mind about



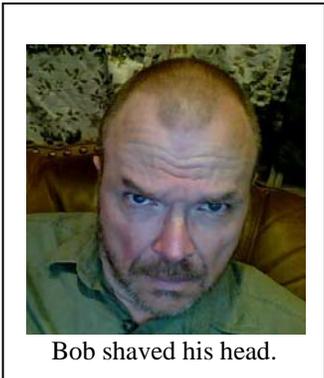
Three generations. At the Cornell conference with Bob's graduate students, Winston Ewert and George Montañez. Next to Bob is John Walkup, Bob's Ph.D. advisor. Walter Bradley is on the right.

drought was on and Ray was getting tired of watering every day. My new name became "Water Girl" since I watered 6 – 8 hours by hand every day. I started a new thorn less blackberry garden. My raised up garden is prospering with a lot of water but it has suffered from intense summer heat and an early winter freeze. On cold nights Ray and I cover all of the bins with flannel sheets to keep my plants from freezing. Right now we are in the process of planting 11

raising worms, it is not a lost cause as the chickens will have a feast. Esperanza, my wonderful paso fino horse is still a delight. I am continuing my daily collecting of our own fresh eggs from the chickens we raise, as well as taking care of my meat rabbits.

We were delighted to be blessed with another litter of beautiful Dalmatian puppies. We quickly found good homes for all of them and even have a waiting list for more families who are ready for the next litter.

Bob shaved his head this summer. Men can be weird.



Bob shaved his head.



Jeremiah, Leslie and me with Tristan in Seattle

Tuscany: Bob went on an incredible trip to Tuscany, Italy on June 11. A limo with a hot lady driver came to our ranch to pick him up. He felt funny when she insisted that she carry his bag.

Winston Ewert went to Italy with Bob. (I wish I could have gone, but I wanted to see Tristan more than Italy.) In Italy, Bob met Greg Chaitin who is a founder of

algorithmic information theory and *Chaitin's number*. Bob and Winston were both very excited to meet him. David Berlinski (*The Devil's Delusion*) and Steve Myer (*Signature in the Cell*) were also there. After the conference, Bob was interviewed by Berlinski's daughter for the Ricochet blog. The interview is on YouTube.ⁱⁱⁱ

Tristan in Waco: At the end of August, Jeremiah, Leslie and baby Tristan flew to Waco to see all of us before Jeremiah started back to school at the University of Washington, where he is still working on his M.B.A. We had a great time celebrating Bob and Leslie's Birthday since they are on the same day.

Minding our own business. We are in the process of seriously considering opening our *River Ranch Retreat* which will be available for rent for Weddings, Sorority parties, family reunions, quinsinerea and various other parties. We have a lot of work to do! We hope to have the *Bed and Breakfast* up and running as well as extra benefits such as a Bridal massage. I hope to be able to increase my photography skills and consider becoming the resident wedding photographer. Ray plans to be the resident Disk Jockey and Marilee will be using her business skills to promote and manage the business. Bob is going to help with the Web sight. Jobs are filling up fast, so if you want to get involved, call and put in your name for what you are interested in. Cleaning out the barn and horse stall is still available.

Swim: We got to take Tristan for his first swim. I loved babysitting him and he loved watching me water the garden, while Jeremiah and Leslie took Marilee out for dinner.

Ray: On Sept. 26, Ray flew to Ohio to visit friends and then off to our West Virginia property to shoot guns, and four wheel with even more friends who came in shifts to visit. He was able to do some much needed repairs to the cabin. He was able to visit some family too. Ray really looked forward to this trip. I wanted to go, but some one had to stay home and water and water and water.

Debate: On Oct. 27, Bob participated in a debate with 2 Atheists and 2 Muslims at Texas A & M at College Station. The debate, hosted by Ratio Christi, was called *The God Dialogues II*. The large room was packed and many students were turned away. I went with Marilee. I was very proud of how well Bob debated and how bold Bob was

with his Christian testimony. He was definitely needed at the debate. Afterwards students kept him talking with many questions for several hours at the after glow.

Tristan Back to Seattle: Around Thanksgiving Jeremiah, Leslie, and Tristan flew back to Waco. Jeremiah along with 3 other UW Masters Students were competing in an Ethics Business Competition. They won the BRONZE! (3rd place.) We were thrilled as he got his trip paid for as well as time off from school and they got paid some prize money. When he was here he was a little down about not



hearing anything about a job he applied for with the Seattle Opera as a business comptroller. We decided to pray about it and just a little while after he got back to Seattle, they called him up for an interview. They offered him the job on the spot! Many of you are aware that he has wanted this position since he was a sophomore in High School. God does answer prayers! The only draw back is that he will be exhausted working

at this new demanding job and continuing going to graduate school along with rocking baby Tristan all night long. Leslie is happy to stay in Seattle area to be near her family. Leslie is having great opera singing success! She is practicing a lot now as she will be the lead female vocalist in the Opera, *La Boehme* which will perform in March. I plan to fly back to Seattle again for this great event. Leslie is expecting to be singing in the Seattle Opera Chorus this summer and she has other professional singing opportunities in the Seattle Area..

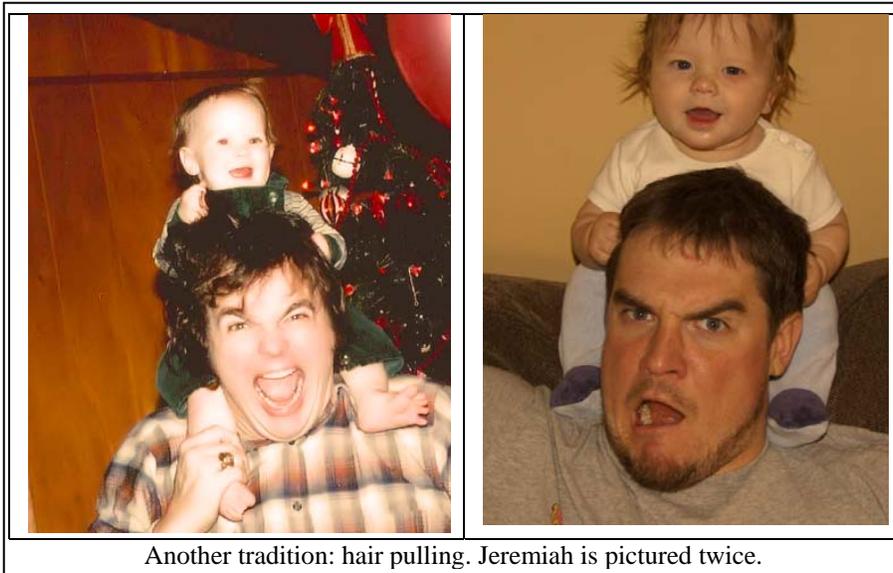
Joshua is really enjoying the Baylor Experience especially watching the football games. Baylor doesn't usually do so well, but he was excited to see quarterback Robert Griffin III win the Heisman trophy this year. Josh plans to go to the big game in San Antonia with Baylor playing against University of Washington in the playoffs. We were also thrilled to see that University of West Virginia has joined our big 12 conference. Baylor plans on adding a giant new stadium just across the Bosque River in the near future.

Politics: Bob and I enjoy watching all of the political debates even though I seem to get so mad at the liberal news media. I am involved in the *Waco Republican Women's* group. One of my best friends, Anne Bradley, just became the new president and I am her cheerleader. Please remember to pray for our country for this election is crucial.

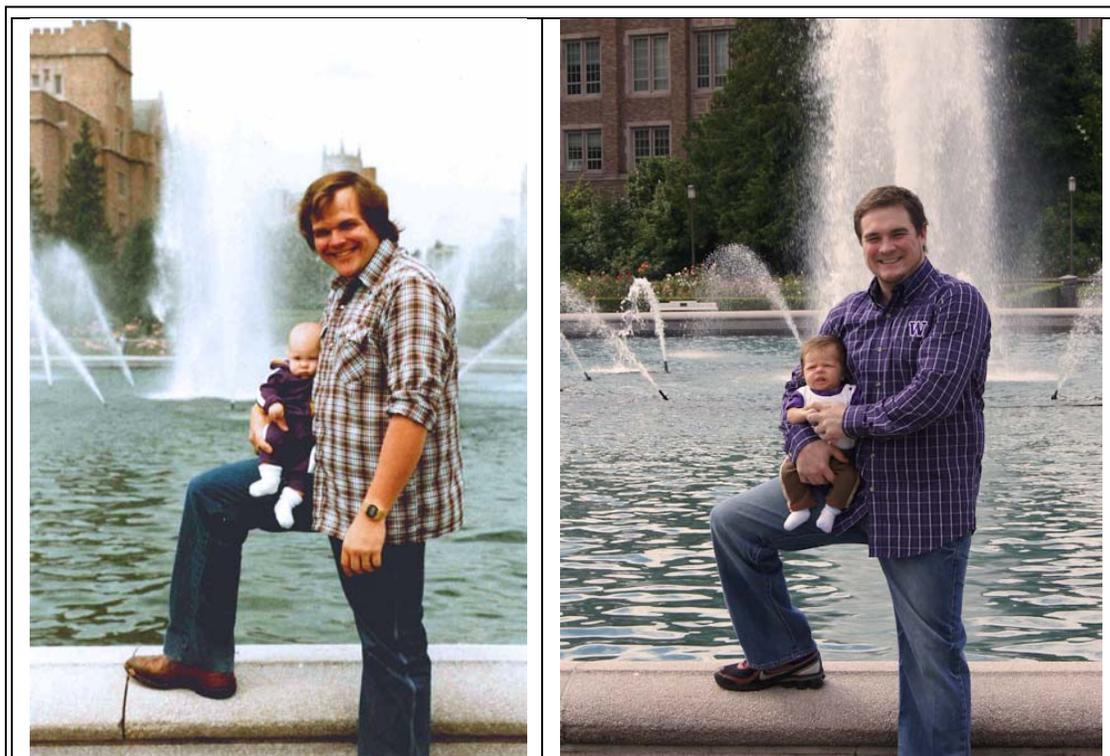
Back in Seattle again: On Dec. 27, Marilee and I will fly back to Seattle to see all of our friends as well as to hold my grandson. I have to have a little Christmas with him.

We are also planning on shopping! And speaking of weddings, we are very excited to celebrate with Christiana Charles at her wedding on New Year's Eve.

Final Thoughts. This has been a great year with lots of baby talk and lots of anticipation for 2012. I wish you all a *Happy New Year!* I would write more endless details, but you would fall asleep and I need my beauty sleep as I am getting up very early to take Joshua Christmas shopping at the outlet Malls in Austin. Bob would rather stay home and sleeeeeeep. (or, as he says, even get paper cuts)



Another tradition: hair pulling. Jeremiah is pictured twice.



On the left is Bob with Jeremiah in 1982. Jeremiah with Tristan is on the right. Both pictures were taken at the big fountain on the campus of the University of Washington in Seattle.

Endnotes

- ⁱ Go to RobertMarks.org and click on In The News.
- ⁱⁱ SaberToothDuck.com
- ⁱⁱⁱ Google these words: bob marks youtube berlinski