

Dear Grandma,

Monday, July 2, 2007

I wrote you a postcard earlier today while we are still camping but thought I'd send you all the details too. Please feel free to share my letters with anyone you choose. I haven't been very good about keeping in touch with anyone else (grin). I would call you more on the phone but I am very hard of hearing and the last time we talked we couldn't hear each other... seemed kinda pointless (ha ha ha). So do you prefer LONG letters or shorter ones? Is the print large enough for you to read? I can make it larger if needed. Just tell Stacy or Andrea or Patsy and tell them to tell me.

While we were camping, Jeff pulled out his GPS (Global Position System) that he got for Christmas (from Santa (grin)) and he's never used it. He determined that we were 7295ft. (our house in mountains was higher). Wish he had gotten it out a few days ago when we were out driving around trying to FIND campgrounds to camp at (ha ha ha). I got car sick so we turned around. It's a good thing too because today we drove around to find the river and lake to fish at and we took that same road. I think I would have died if we had tried to go on those steep winding hairpin-turn dirt roads!!!! Actually there are two; one is about 10 miles longer and one has a 15% steep grade!

I told you that we were camped b/n Castle Rock and Colorado Springs... but after looking closer at the map; we are really due west of Castle Rock. Our house is about 6+ miles North of Castle Rock. We did a lot of driving around today and it was beautiful. We ended up in a town called Woodland Park which is about 15-20 miles north of Colorado Springs. We were definitely close because Pike's Peak was right there in plain view. While we were out, we surveyed several other campgrounds and found a couple other really nice ones. The only problem is that they were all on the OTHER side of that steep winding dirt road I mentioned (YIKES!). We'll have to see if we can get to them by going south from our house towards Colorado Springs and then cutting over. I hope so, that would be very convenient!

I think I mentioned in my last letter that Ashley was enrolled in a theater class last week. Her class had a couple of skits they performed on Friday night (06/29/07). Her group presented a cute version of Elves & the Shoemaker.

Also, several pieces of her art from the class a few weeks ago were on display. All around, I think she thoroughly enjoyed herself! She starts an actual drawing/painting course in a couple of weeks. That's the one where she will learn to draw and paint using different art pallets.

William had his second t-ball game last week and he played much better. He seems to enjoy talking to the opposing team members and sometimes forgets to pay attention to whether or not he is supposed to run the bases or go and fetch a batted ball!

Heather starts a basketball league this coming Saturday (07/07/07). They only play games on Saturdays and do not have any practices so hopefully that will not take up TOO much time (smirk). However, she starts up all day marching band practice on July 23 (I think).

Courtney and Ashley both start soccer sometime in August. Jeff can't wait; I think he's more excited than they are. He has been assistant coach of Courtney's soccer team for a few years now. He is attempting to be assistant coach of William's tball (I'm not sure coaching really describes what they do (smirk) It's more like chasing little kids around and convincing them not to be afraid of the ball). I think he said he was going to help out with Ashley's team too. That should be interesting.

As you have probably figured out, Jeff stays pretty busy. Right now he is on the School Advisory Council for both the elementary and middle schools. That's a small group of parents, teachers & community leaders that help develop future school policy (it is NOT a PTO (parent-teacher organization)). He is also president of our neighborhood HOA (all voluntary Home Owner's Association). A couple of months ago, he initiated the purchase of a carved stone sign for our neighborhood. This year is the 50th anniversary of when our neighborhood was established (we are the oldest in our county and one of the oldest in CO). Not that we get any credit for that... we've only lived here 3 1/2 years.

I am very active in our PTO's. I create the student directory (kinda like a phone book) for the elementary school. I also help with the yearbook and several other "committees." I "think" I am on the covenants committee for our HOA. Regardless, I re-typed all of our covenants this year so we would have

them in electronic form. We also created a website for our HOA a few years ago and I put the covenants up on website too. We are about to have our 50th year party for the HOA so I'll probably put some pictures up for that as well.

Tuesday, July 3, 2007

We still didn't get a chance to mail your postcard. Today we took the kids to the lake we found yesterday. Whenever we go very far from home (or in this case, far from the camper), I take a complete change of clothes for everyone. We only brought 2 fishing poles (one a little kid one) so everyone had to take turns. They are used to that though. They didn't catch anything, or even get any bites so not sure we were doing it correctly. Trout fishing in a river or lake is a lot different than large mouth bass fishing. It was BEAUTIFUL. I took lots of pictures, hopefully when I get home I can print some out for you (for this letter). William promptly fell in the lake (grin)... then we realized that his were the ONLY clothes that didn't get packed!!! But we had a bag of dirty laundry in the back of the truck so we were able to get him changed. It was really funny because the people next to us had a little boy fall in the lake too. After a few hours, we left the lake and headed down to the river we are camping near. The area between the lake and our campground is the area that was on fire about 5 years ago. It was called the Hayman Fire near Deckers, CO. MANY thousands of acres burned (around 135-140 thousand, but I don't know exactly). So there are MILES of burned trees. Then a couple years ago it rained a lot and caused LOTS of terrible mud slides. They had a big volunteer effort last year to plant grass seed and it's starting to grow now. I took a few pictures but I have no idea if the camera will capture the true devastation.

We made it back to the river and pulled over into one of the many parking areas they have alongside. Jeff cast his fishing line and it "snagged" only really he had caught a fish (smirk). He threw it back but we plan to go again another day this week. We drove up a few miles, pulled over and fished again. The kids were BEGGING to wade in the water but it's a pretty swift current so I wouldn't let them (I'm a mean ole' mommy). We kept driving & pulling over and after a while found a GREAT place with sand bars. So we all climbed down the embankment near the parking area and waded across. Again, it was lovely here and I took lots of pictures. We are just thrilled that

we have found a fishing area that is about 35-40 minutes from our house!!! A storm started blowing in so we decided to head back to the camper because the road is dirt and steep and we are chicken of trying to drive it in the mud.

We made it to the camper and Jeff asked me to get out and guide his parking between the ditches on either side of the driveway. I opened the door but when the door swung open, the ground was sandy, I disappeared!!! I was still holding the door but I was dangling in mid-air over the ditch!!! Wouldn't you know it, my fingernails broke and my hand slipped off the door grip and I slid down the ditch. Surprisingly, I wasn't severely hurt. My side hurts from where I landed and slid down the embankment (that hurt my pride more I bet). I did manage to scrape the back of my calf pretty good because I was in shorts but other than some minor scrapes and sore muscles (and wounded ego), I'm fine. Well, I say that... ask me again tomorrow!!! It promptly started raining at the camper. We are fixing chili in the camper tonight instead of cooking steaks or shish-kabobs over the fire.

Wednesday, July 4, 2007

Believe it or not, I'm not as sore as I thought I'd be... I am sore but nothing that's preventing me from functioning (grin). I found a blister scrape on my finger and that hurts more than anything else... and I'm gonna whine about it too (grin). My leg is still pretty banged up, that'll probably take a bit to heal.

Today we went back to the river but a different spot. This spot was not as nice as the sand bars we went to yesterday. That place was full of other people for July 4th. The kids found that there were places that they could wade along the shore and stay out of the current. Not far along the shore was a shallow pooled area where we could fish as well. No fish or bites today. The water was pretty murky from all the people playing in the water up and down the river. There were also several groups tubing and rafting or kayaking down the river. Ashley had to talk to each and every one of them (grin).

When we came back to the camper we realized that our refrigerator had accidentally gotten switched OFF and all the meat had gone bad. We were pretty DEPRESSED about that because we had planned on shish-kabobs one meal and steak the other. We had to settle for corn on the cob and baked potatoes for dinner tonight... so we doubled up on s'mores for dessert

(smirk). And in typical Murphy's Law fashion, one of our knobs to the sink started leaking. This isn't too big of a deal because we just turn the pump off and no water comes into the hoses. It means we'll have to be creative on our water usage but we were already at that point (grin). I personally do not like all the fancy stuff in our camper; it's not really like camping if you have a microwave! We cannot use it when we are running on batteries anyway but I wish it wasn't even there, I'd rather have the cabinet space.

Another Murphy's Law snafu that is Courtney is feeling pretty yucky. She had a stuffy nose yesterday but today she feels worse. It's possible she has the terrible cold I had a couple of weeks ago and it lasted SEVERAL days. I hope not, maybe she just has a plain cold.

There are still no campers in any of the sites around us although the horse campground near us is totally booked. It was neat to see all the horses come in today (we cannot see the campsites from ours; we saw them on the trails).

From where we are at, we can kinda see the colors from fireworks in towns down the mountain. I imagine that maybe the Aurora Borealis (lights in Alaska) look similar with streaks of colors across the sky. We can't really hear the fireworks though (but the thunder from the approaching storm is keeping pretty good time (smirk)).

Well we are down to playing cards by flashlight so I am not sure we will make it to our last day with all that going wrong... wish us luck!

Thursday, July 5, 2007

Well, today Courtney woke up and felt like she'd been hit by a Mac Truck! She was pretty miserable and didn't want to go anywhere or do anything, a very good poster child for a Nyquil commercial. I felt like I should pack her up and bring her back home just in case we need to take her to the doctor. But she is more stubborn than I am and didn't want to have anything to do with leaving. So Plan B was to give her cold medicine and see how she felt in a bit. We ate lunch and played some cards. She was feeling better but didn't want to go to the river again so Jeff decided he would take the others fishing in late afternoon. Wouldn't you know it... It started raining! Well, now we are stuck in the camper with very little food, with a sick kid and in the rain. We

have certainly been in this situation before. So we had oatmeal and pop-tarts for dinner (smirk). The cold medicine made Courtney kinda loopy, she was sooo FUNNY, good thing she can't drive because she wouldn't have been able to do it. We decided to play more cards. Heather taught everyone how to play Chinese Rummy (or Chinese War, not sure what it was called). It's kinda like a cross between War and Slap Jack and even if you get "out" you can slap your way back in. Well I changed the name to "eXtreme Cards" because you could get seriously injured playing!!! I think some of the ground rules should include cutting your fingernails before you can play!!! Several times blood was drawn and fingers were jammed, but I highly suspect no one would complain for all the fun we were having. Then right before bed Jeff and Heather started feeling yucky. Figures, they waited until it was dark and we couldn't leave (smirk).

Friday, July 06, 2007

Well now everyone else but William feels yucky and my cough is back! It got a bit chillier last night with all that rain and I guess my cough wasn't completely gone. At least I don't feel YUCKY. Jeff doesn't have a voice, which is kinda funny because last night while we were playing cards we were whispering LOUDLY so we wouldn't wake up Courtney and William. Fortunately for us we packed plenty of breakfast foods and we had frozen butter braids. We set them out in the oven last night and this morning turned on the oven and viola... breakfast! My mom makes cream cheese braids and used to spoil us at Christmas... but we don't live near them anymore so we had to find a substitute. Our school has a fundraiser that sells butter braids and some are cream cheese braids. YEAH!

It took us about 2 hours too get packed up and out of the campground. We found an RV dump station not far from our house so we drove there first. We were home by noon and we all fought over who got to take a "REAL" shower first. THAT HELPED! I guess I never mentioned that our battery was practically dead by Wednesday night (ha ha ha). That's what runs the water pump... so it didn't really matter that the sink was leaking because we couldn't really run the water anyway! SOOOOO, no more showers... some of "us" were stinky and it wasn't ME! I didn't play in the river.

Love you and miss you, Theresa