

Merry Christmas! Happy Chanukah!

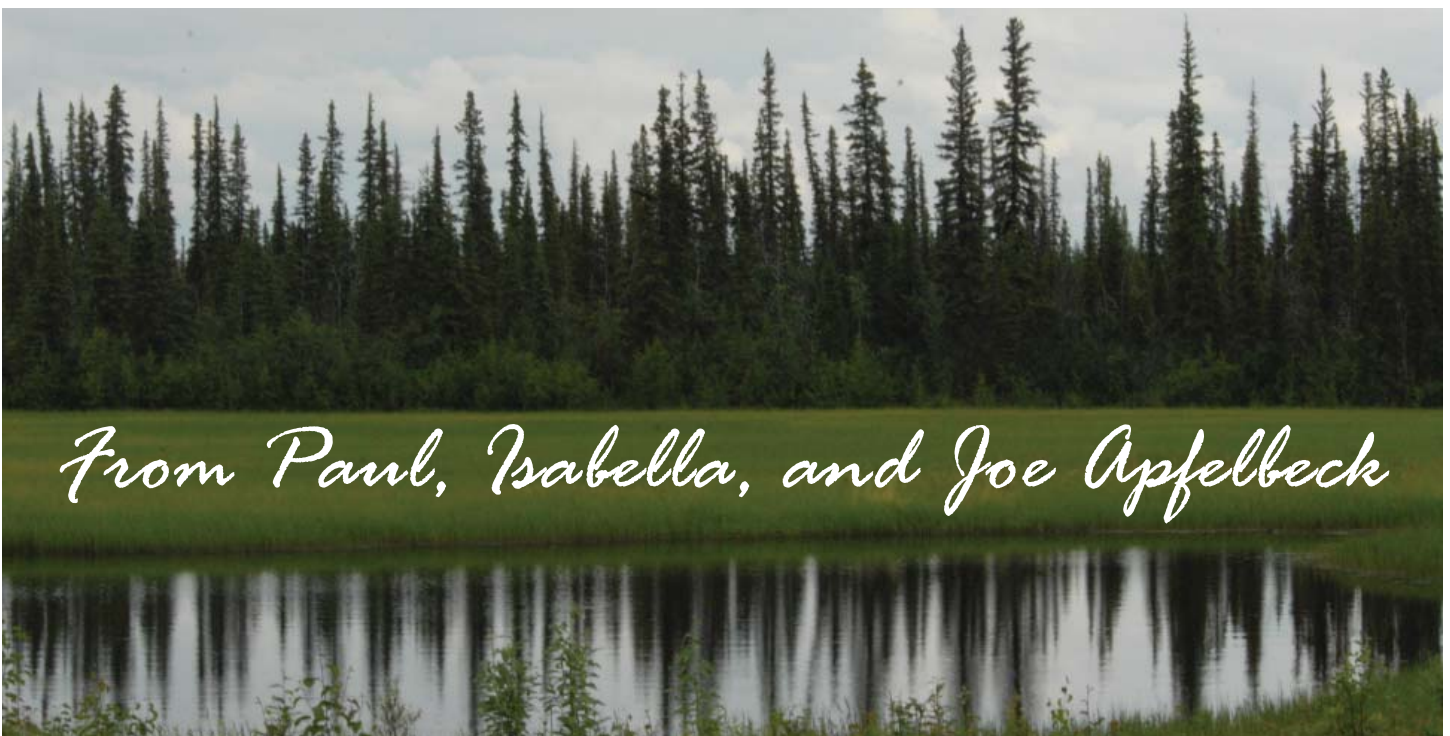


Greetings from the Apfelbeck family. We hope that you are having a Merry Christmas, Happy Chanukah, and a great holiday season. We're glad to share the annual end of the year winter solstice blab letter for 2011.

It's been a nice year up here. Joe's in the eighth grade. Isa is still holding up the business office at the school. I jumped through several layers of academic hoops and got a master's degree. The school and community seem to be doing all right, too.

So I went around the house and asked everyone to describe the highlights of the year. Isa has had a pleasant year. She won the first prize at the agriculture fair for her quilt. Isa made the most killer pesto from the basil we grew this year – we cultivated six varieties this year to see which

*Joe watching the Packers play in January; Isabella at the Yukon Jamboe in October; me fishing for pike at one of the local sloughs; the orange flower is a cultivar of normally yellow *Papaver lapponicum* (Lapland poppy) that I'm developing.*



From Paul, Isabella, and Joe Apfelbeck



Ptarmigan roosted off and on throughout town last winter; this clivia emerged in the early spring; Isa made me an angel food cake for my birthday - I guess you run out of candle room when you're past the half century mark,

came out best. They were all good. It's quite a quandary. Isa's also serving on the school district's insurance committee, and it's amazing (in a flattering way) how many people see her as the go-to person to get stuff done. We also took part in a progressive dinner for the boarding school kids, and we served snails, much to the surprise of the kids. So it's like a frigid Norman Rockwell hallucination up here. The amount of canning and putting up she does makes me think sometimes Pa Ingalls is going to walk in the door. And as a result we are doing well.

Joe's highlights of the year were his games against the Barrow Whalers and wrestling against the best kid in his weight class in the state. He really took to wrestling and traveled to tournaments in Nome and Kotzebue. When he was in Nome, he went up but sadly lost against the top-ranking kid in the state (named improbably enough



Winter scenics from 2011 along the road.



Beautiful geraniums from Swallowtail Nursery in Santa Rose, CA - some of the best flowers I've ever grown.; Isa holds one of the hybrid joi choi from the raised beds in July.



Clivia from another cultivar blooming in the summer; a slough on 22 May, just as spring is emerging from the snow.



Isa at her birthday party in July. Joe baked the cake! As was typical of this year, we dodged raindrops amid the barbecue.

Leif Erickson). Joe also played a lot in the games against Barrow when they came down to see trees and sunlight; he made a real sweet three-pointer during a Barrow surge that turned the momentum toward Galena. Like every male of his era, his favorite games are Assassin's Creed (set in renaissance Italy, so he gets to see the homies as they were back in the day) and Modern Warfare 3 (along with much of the gaming world). Must be quite the life when all your memories are games.



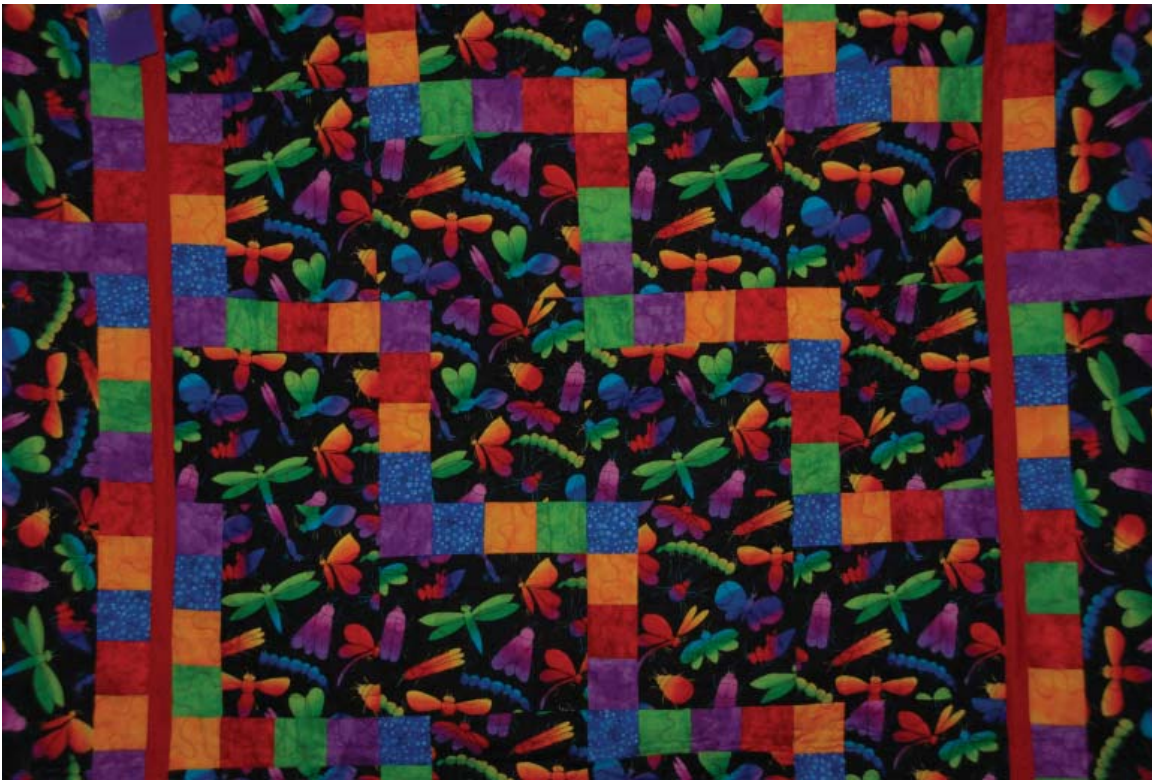
My large greenhouse went up in the back yard in time for the last month of the gardening season. The summer outside the greenhouse started with promise, with rain coming in



The longest day of the year around midnight along the Yukon River.



Joe eats some of the honey from our beehives; he took this photo of me with the bees when they came in late April. Sadly, the bees swarmed and left in July, where they lived in the wilderness until discovering way too late they were just south of the Arctic Circle.



This is the quilt that earned Isabella the first prize at the agriculture fair.



Isa with a small king; she's holding some lovely little yellow cherry tomatoes.



The new greenhouse in the backyard; Isa and Joe on the boat fishing at Jack Slough.



Isa holding up Yukon Gold potatoes; a double rainbow with a polarized layer in June; catching a king along the river; Joe out hunting moose.



the first week of July and remaining until it turned to snow, and then it kept snowing. There's about four feet on the ground right now. Hopefully the snow won't crush the large greenhouse. Next year I'm hoping to grow corn and pumpkins under there.

We are very much looking forward to Mom's eightieth birthday (wow), which Leanne and I are putting on at her former haunt in Florida at King's Ridge. I'm busy rearranging the web page so I can start scanning and putting up photos. I'm also planning on putting on a slide show for the party. It'll be fun.

Hope you have had a good year and a better one is around the corner. I mean, until Dec. 21. Just joking.

Paul, Isabella, and Joe





Mom during her visit at Joe's birthday in March - even braving the ice with a foot cast; a January king cabbage; the large greenhouse in December, with the snow enveloping it (the fence is four feet high); Joe playing during a junior high tournament.