

Castleberry Family Letter, December 2008

Dear Family and Friends,

Many blessings to you all in the name of Jesus our Savior. We are rejoicing in His goodness and mercy, and hope the same is true for you and your family. How good and gracious He is to us all, and how we thank Him for the gift of His Son, whose birth we celebrate this time of year. May we all take time to reflect on Him, who is the true reason for celebration.

Steve's mom went Home to be with her Lord on September 6, 2008, just a day before her 80th birthday. She began to feel much worse last summer, and then by the end of summer, she was ready to go. We miss her so much, but we are truly glad that she is in the presence of Jesus, worshiping Him with the loved ones that were Home before her. We will see her there, and rejoice together at the foot of His throne.

Life here on the farm is busy, busy, busy and sooo much fun. I can't imagine a better life, and I'm so grateful to the Lord for allowing us to have this place and these children. I'm even grateful for the animals (which is more than Steve can say some days!). To think that heaven will be infinitely more wonderful is hard to comprehend, but I know our God has promised it. Until we arrive there, we are treasuring every day together.

Time now to hear from the younger generation:

Merry Christmas! I enjoy taking care of the calf that D. and I own. I give him a bucket of milk every evening, and D. gives him a bucket of milk every morning. He lets me pet him, and I like to. I helped plant the older kids' potato patch, and they paid me some money. In school, I like art and piano and science and geography best. I'm looking forward to Christmas, and I hope you are, too. I'm making a gingerbread house with Betsy. I lost my two front teeth, and my two bottom teeth. A., age 8

Hi everybody, and Merry Christmas. A. and I finished the cabin we were building, and made a barn for goat kids. I'm looking forward to flying on an airplane with my family to see Grandma and Grandpa this year. A. and I sold a calf that we had been raising for almost 2 years, and now we are raising a new one. Our new calf is named Elmer, and he was going to be in our picture, but he laid down, and you can just see me holding the rope. He's a nice calf, and is mostly black, with some white spots. He's a Holstein. Living on a farm is just great. Have a happy Christmas. D. (age 12)

Hey everyone! This year was great. I went hunting and got my first deer, it was only a doe but still fun to get. I am building my own herd now, I have one Hereford heifer and two Holstein bull calves (one of them is in our picture, his name is Blan after Blan Dougherty). This summer I got braces - ouch! I am learning the dobro on a homemade one, I hope to buy a real one soon as my homemade is falling apart! Hope you have a great year! Elijah (15)

Hello! I hope that you all had as wonderful of a year as us. This year found us making over a hundred acres of hay, and raising eleven acres of oats. We faced our share of equipment breakdowns and spoiled hay, but God is good, and we didn't have to buy hay this year. We were very blessed to have plenty of rain throughout the summer, unlike the last few year's droughts. My beef herd is growing and healthy, and I will be selling beef for the first time next fall. My interests/hobbies include playing the banjo, bowhunting whitetails, and playing softball with my brothers. Right now I have my permit and am enjoying driving lessons with ever-patient Mom. I wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year, Ben (18)

Hello friends! Wow, this was really a year of trying things for the first time, which always makes life pretty interesting. To start at the beginning of the year, Katie and I got our GEDs. (glad that's over!) In the spring, our family went to the first homeschool convention we've ever been to. In true Castleberry fashion, we jumped in with both feet and set up as a vendor for our book business. We still have a lot to learn, but it was fun, and I enjoyed getting to meet so many great people. This summer we older ones raised 2000 lbs. of potatoes. It was hot, hard work, but we enjoyed the time together...and the cash after selling them. :) Then this fall I got my permit...driving is awesome! Right now we girls are practicing for a Christmas Cantata that our church is doing.

It's fun, but it takes a lot of practice! I guess that brings us to now. This year did have some hard things...I miss Granny so much. Yet God is faithful. He never changes, never leaves us. May He give you all much joy. Betsy (20)

Greetings everyone! Wow, were did the year go? This spring we attended a Grazing Conference and learned a lot. We really enjoyed meeting Todd Churchill(owner of a beef company). It always amazes me how much there is to learn! Dad took us girls to U.M.D opening night for a play by Agatha Christie, "The Mouse Trap." It was an excellent play. In November, Betsy, Mom and I drove down to Iowa for my friend's wedding. The night before was setting up for the after-party they had at their home. It was so special to be there for the wedding, and we enjoyed catching up (after six years of not seeing each other). Learning to drive has been a lot of fun, and Mom is a very calm teacher. I am not sure how she does it! :) The hardest thing this year was Granny's passing. Even though I miss her, God good and I am just thankful that she is no longer suffering. Praying you have a blessed year. Katie (22)

Another busy year is coming to an end. Many things happened in my life this year. I lost my job at Krech Ojard, due to the downturn in the housing and building industry. I applied for many positions, and was nearly hired as a Border Patrol Agent. However, due to the back surgery I had three years ago, I was washed out. I got a position as summer help at a manufacturing plant in Duluth, and enjoyed working there. A possibility of full time work opened up, as a forklift driver. I applied for the position, and was hired. God has really provided for me with this job, I am getting better pay and benefits than I did as a CAD drafter, and I'm really enjoying not being stuck behind a desk. I still volunteer with the Lakeside Volunteer Fire Department, and the Douglas County Sheriff's Rescue Squad. I played softball on the church team again this year, and had a great time. We didn't do so well winning, but our goal is to have a good time and fellowship with other believers from around the area. Yet another deer season went by without my being able to harvest a deer, but I enjoyed being out in the woods. Stephen (25)

Greetings to all our friends! God has once again blessed us with a happy year. In addition to everything mentioned above, I enjoyed traveling to WA state for a dear friend's wedding, selling extra produce at our local farmer's market, going whitewater canoeing, and making music with my siblings. After dreaming of it for 20 years, I bought a violin and am attempting to teach myself fiddling (Mary Had a Little Lamb, anyone?). Church involvement continues to be a blessing, and I'm leading a Bible study for high school girls this year. Most of the girls are not from Christian backgrounds, so it's a challenge, but they are like sponges soaking up the Word. I'm learning a lot, too! I'm so thankful for God's grace in my life, and that He is worthy of our trust. May you come to know His love more fully in the coming year. Jeannie (27)

May God bless you all and draw you ever closer to Himself! The Castleberry Family