

## Our Family Christmas Letter ~ 2017



**Curly Cook (8):** I have had so much fun this year. I had to say good-bye to a very good friend, Audrey. Me and Joy Boy and mom and dad went to a beach, just us. We got two cutie, little love birds. They bite us so bad but we love them very much! Their names are Chavito and Peaches. My dad gave me, my mom, and Joy Boy a challenge to stop biting our nails and on January 1st we can get 50 dollars. I have learned to read, swim, sing and bike much better. I got baptized by El Gringo. I am the only one in the family that gets to be baptized by El Gringo. Merry Christmas to all! Love, Curly Cook

**Joy Boy (10):** The highlights of the year are these: grandmas and grandpa came for Curly Cook's 8<sup>th</sup> birthday and baptism. We had play dates with a family. Said good-bye to my friend, Spencer. Went to Jaco with Curly Cook, mom, dad, and me. Got a hamster for my birthday. Got birds. Stayed at a family friend's house. Started third year of homeschool. We had plenty of field trips that were fun. And we gave bags of bread and jam to the whole ward for Christmas. The stake also got split into two stakes. Ward got split before the Stake. Dad was bishop and now is first counselor in the Stake. So this year was amazing and will be more amazing after Christmas.

**GingerSnap (13):** This year I got to go to Utah with El Gringo, all by ourselves. We went to Idaho for a fun family retreat for my Dad's side of the family. I also got to go to Brighton Girl's Camp for my second time. I had a BLAST! I have been working on my Personal Progress values from our church this year. I completed Virtue and Faith and I am almost done with Divine Nature. I love homeschooling and serving; especially little kids and babies. My mom says that I have been a HUGE help to her as well. I teach Joy Boy and Curly Cook their Science lesson each week, as well as reading out loud to Curly Cook. I am also progressing in my guitar playing. I can figure out how to play almost any song I want. I hope to get even better at playing the guitar. I love to style my hair, especially braids, and paint my fingernails. I am a fast reader and I have devoured almost every book on our book shelves. I also LOVE to train our pet birds, Chavito and Peaches, my little "chickens." I have taught them to fly to my arm and step up (or down) as I move my arms in front of them. I was called as the Beehive President in October and I love to cook, especially Key Lime Pie and pancakes. I also still like to sew and craft, and I love to eat junk food.



**El Gringo (17):** Opa! This year is like an overflowing glass; too full to contain the many exciting drops of life. I don't think a year has flown by as quickly as this one. I have done so much, and I don't think this page could hold all of it. I just can't believe that this year is almost over. It is just crazy! I have thoroughly enjoyed 2017. It truly was a year full of exciting things; and yet it is coming to an end. Like I said before, this year has flown by too fast. I have learned a lot this year; about myself, my Savior and much, much more. Too many things! I have almost mastered the Frederick's method, a speed solving method for the 3x3 Rubik's Cube. Because of this new method, I have finally accomplished a goal of mine. To solve the 3x3 under 20 seconds. My new PB (personal best) is 13.358! Yes people, 13 seconds! I have also, finally, gotten my 2x2 record down to under 2 seconds. That one isn't as important, cause it's a 2x2. But still, I'm pretty proud it. I am learning something else that seems almost as impossible as the Rubik's Cube. I am learning how to memorize an entire deck of cards. So, yeah. 52 cards. It isn't as hard as you think, but the whole point of it is to convince people to think that you are impossibly amazing. I went to SOY (an LDS youth conference for all of Costa Rica), January 2017 and will be going this January 2018. I also got to participate in a Mini-SOY, for my Stake, as a Youth Leader. So, I basically got to "boss" around a bunch of 12-15 year olds. But, I really didn't "boss" them around, I just got to teach them. Hehehe! It was pretty fun though. I went to EFY when GingerSnap and I visited Utah in June. That was an amazing trip. Being alone on a plane is quite extraordinary. Thanks to all those who helped make that trip fantastic! I was given the privilege to baptize 3 girls this year, the first being Curly Cook. Those were eye-opening experiences. Can't wait until January 2018. I look forward to baptizing in the temple. I read a mountainous book named *The Count of Monte Cristo*, by Alexandre Dumas. It took me from March 15th to June 1st to read this whopping 1243-page book. Thank You Spencer! I have been teaching Curly Cook how to read for the past 2 and a half years, and I have seen her progress grow rapidly. My Dad, GingerSnap and I had studied the art of Scuba Diving and have gone diving on multiple occasions. On one of these occasions I found a friend that I never thought I could have. Sadly, I had to say good-bye because she has left Costa Rica to follow her dreams. I hope she can fulfill them. I have taken the ACT twice. The first test I got a 21, and the second is still pending. I have learned how to surf, well, sort of. I like trying to get up, but sometimes I just can't do it. The only bummer is that our car is still being tinkered on, so we haven't gone for 4 months. I am almost fluent in Spanish, though I still need to learn a lot more. I also have learned a lot of songs on the piano. *River Flows in You* by Yiruma, *Sunset* by Arny's Army, *The Last Rose* by Aaron Garner, *Somewhere* by July, *All of Me* by John Legend, and *Peace in Christ* by Nik Day. I am learning a bunch of other ones as well. I am so grateful for the opportunity to be homeschooled. When I first thought of homeschooling, I thought I was going to be the strangest person on earth. Well, I found out that I already was. I met a family that came down to Costa Rica to do the "90 Day Experience". They homeschooled as well but they weren't weird at all. I actually really liked them, all 10 of them. I felt like the teenager around my age, was smarter than me. And she was 15 then! It goes to show that homeschooling wasn't what I thought it was. It has taught me so much. I guess I better stop, or else I will not! There is so much more that I could tell, but it would take at least a year to explain. Wouldn't that be sweet though?



**Wendi (41):** I officially entered my 40's. It has been a busy year but one that I am grateful to have been able to experience. I started the year as the Stake Primary Secretary where I was blessed to be challenged by our Stake Primary President to learn to play the piano, with the goal to play for our Primaries. It took me 7 months, but I DID accomplish this goal and played several times for our ward Primary, as well as for Sacrament meeting and several convert baptisms. After Paul was called as Bishop, I was released and given several smaller callings: 5 a.m. early-morning Seminary carpool driver, Ward Music Director, and the Relief Society Secretary. As well as homeschooling our 4 children (something I do love to do each day!), I have been developing my talents for drawing and painting, as well as completing 2 cross-stitch projects. I love to sing in church (it is the one time I can actually speak Spanish correctly, while sounding like an adult), as well as learning to be a bit more social. I have found that it is quite easy to just sit back and let everyone else do the chatting. That is not usually my style, but not being able to communicate makes it easy to be this way. So I have been pushing myself to be a bit more uncomfortable and reach out socially, even if it requires me to make a lot of mistakes. I have been cooking A LOT (again) this year and learning to make many new foods, such as: Key Lime Pie, Peppermint Dessert, Chinese foods (boy do we miss a good Chinese restaurant), homemade rolls, and my first Turkey for Christmas Eve dinner. The kids are progressing in leaps and bounds and I feel so blessed to be able to see this happen, right before my very eyes. I am grateful for the few friendships that I still have across the world, as well as new friendships I have made in Costa Rica. Now, no matter where I live in the world, I know that friendships can remain, even if they are long distance. May your next year bring you the peace and knowledge that you have been seeking. Merry Christmas!

**Paul (43):** I have lived another year! I am still on the board of directors for the Central Gate Association, as well as General Manager for Dialogue Direct Costa Rica. Dialogue Direct was acquired by Qualfon in December of 2017. Over April Conference weekend, I took my family on a dream vacation to Guanacaste, Costa Rica. We spent the week on an African Safari Reserve, enjoying all that the park had to offer, as well as taking El Gringo and GingerSnap scuba diving. It was the PERFECT recharge before our lives took on some major changes. The first of the changes came when our ward was split and I was called to be the Bishop of the Belen, Heredia ward. Our entire family thoroughly enjoyed this calling until the Lord continued his plans for our Stake. Our Stake was split in November and I was called to be the 1<sup>st</sup> Counselor in the Stake Presidency of the newly formed Heredia, Costa Rica, Belen Stake and finishing out the year as both Stake Counselor and Bishop. In July, Wendi and I felt prompted to sell our home in Utah. My parent's 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary celebration in September led to an impromptu visit for me to celebrate with them, as well as empty our home to prepare it to be sold. For my 43<sup>rd</sup> birthday, later that same month, I took an adventure of a lifetime. My friend Dave and I met up in Roatan, Honduras for a week long scuba diving trip, on the second largest reef in the world! We completed 10 of the 14 dives we were scheduled to do, but Hurricane Hugo stopped us from doing the last 4. That's okay, "WE WILL BE BACK!" (insert Schwarzenegger voice). As you can see, it has been a busy year. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



May you have a VERY Merry Christmas and an INCREDIBLE New Year!!