



Jan 17 '83
1/17/83

Dear Wesley & Irene:

This started out to be
a combination birth
announcement & Christmas Card.
It's been a busy two months.

For the many friends and relatives I never find time to write to, I'm hoping to partially fill the gap with this sort of general letter highlighting the year past on an annual basis, and for this first attempt, I'll go back a year and a half. The biggest news is, of course, the birth of Ian Wesley Park, which you can read about at Nov. 15, 1982 in the chronology below.

July 11, 1981 - As most of you know, Barbara and I were married in an outdoor ceremony of our own devising witnessed by Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society of Madison to which we both belong. (We met at a Prairie fall retreat.) We thoroughly enjoy listening to our tape recording of the ceremony, which captured the sounds of children and dogs, five year old Robin announcing "it's raining", airplanes, birds and thunder as well as what the ceremony was intended to include. The rain actually restrained itself, but for a few sprinkles, until the closing words of the ceremony, when 50 people and a large upright piano scurried inside our modest house for a potluck luncheon we had hoped to hold outdoors.

July 12, 1981 - We held the first Park family reunion in many years the same weekend as the wedding. The reunion was planned and the wedding postponed to coincide with my father's July visit here in the year of his 80th birthday. All of his children, almost all his grandchildren and both of his great grandchildren were here from California, Minnesota, Wisconsin and New Brunswick, along with his older brother from Ontario. The occasion was dually recorded in official and candid photos by various family shutterbugs, and copies of the best were ordered by various family members. Some also made or ordered copies of a family "oral history tape" compiled from several interviews with Dad during the week he spent here following the reunion. Also distributed was an up-to-date family tree of Dad and his descendants which James Park put together from information collected at the reunion. We hope to have another family reunion at an as yet undecided location in 1985.

Sept. 12, 1981 - Prairie's annual fall RE retreat was held at our home for the second time. At this retreat the Religious Education Committee and the new Sunday School teachers get together to prepare for the next year's children's program at Prairie.

Dec. 1981 - We traveled to Minneapolis to celebrate a late Christmas and New Year's Eve with Warren and Patty and family, with James joining in.

Jan. & Feb. 1982 - A decent amount of snow for once made it possible for me to pack down a crosscountry ski trail with my snowshoes and skis. From our house it led through the woods and across a field to the wooded bluff overlooking the Wisconsin River where it flows into Lake Wisconsin. (We live on a high wedge of land between the river and the lake.)

April 10, 1982 - Just enough April snow arrived to give the boys and I one last chance to sled in the back yard.

July 1982 - Our first major family trip started with shopping for a vehicle large enough to carry two adults, two or three children plus camping gear and one small dog which we could afford. We managed to buy a 1972 Ford Gran Torino station wagon for \$400 a few days before departure. First stop was Minneapolis for the 4th of July weekend. Warren and Patty live just across the street from the Park where Minneapolis has its big fireworks display. While there we enjoyed the company of Evelyn and Eric Henderson (my mother's sister) who we hadn't seen in years. They were making their first visit to Warren's home, traveling with a little house trailer which they parked behind the house. They invited us to stop overnight at their house in Ottawa with their daughter Hildegard who was house sitting for them while they traveled. On the way to Ottawa we stopped to see the Mackinac Bridge connecting the upper and lower peninsulas of Michigan and spent a morning in Deep River, Ontario, where I showed Barb and the boys the home and town where I lived on the beautiful Ottawa River when I was 5 to 9 years old.

After a pleasant night in Ottawa with Hildegard we pressed on for my sister Betty's place in Fredericton New Brunswick by way of Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. Our several days in Fredericton gave us a chance to see not only Betty and her husband Charlie but Betty's daughter Linda, Tony, and their 5 month old son Jason. Other highlights were a day at King's Landing Historical Settlement with its authentically restored shops and homes, horse drawn wagons, etc.; swimming from the sand bars in the St. John River a short boat ride from Betty's home; and gorging ourselves on fresh strawberries from Betty's enormous patch.

Heading down the coast from Fredericton, we camped two nights along the coast of Maine and visited Camden Hills State Park with its exceptionally picturesque view of Camden Maine and its harbor from the top of Mt. Battie, and toured Fort Knox (a cannon era river fort with no gold) where Mischa smashed his toe on a rock while running barefoot to catch up with Robin.

Next we spent a night in Boston in the small but accomodating apartment of Holly Loring, former Prairie member and R.E. Director whos folk singing we have enjoyed at Prairie, at our home and at the Wild Hog in the Woods Coffeehouse in Madison. She took us to see the U.S.S. Constitution, an old square rigged sailing ship which the U.S. Navy maintains in the Boston Harbor.

Then on to North Branford, Connecticut (near New Haven) where Barb's 14 year old daughter Casey was visiting her grandparents. Casey missed out on the first part of our trip because at the end of the school year she went directly from Chicago, where she goes to school, to a Unitarian Universalist youth conference in Maine. A day at the country place of Casey's great grandfather with her great grandfather and numerous other relatives, spent mostly in the swimming pond on a very hot July day, highlighted our stay in Connecticut.

Having gained Casey we next lost Robin and Mischa for the remainder of our trip, delivering them to the country home of their mother's aunt and uncle near Shirley, Massachusetts, where their mother was visiting. Then on to Barb's parents home in Syracuse, New York where I met her stepfather for the first time along with various old friends of Barb and her family. After a relaxing week in Syracuse it was on to brief visits with my uncles Clifford Park and Wesley Leonard and their families in southern Ontario, with a stop at Niagara Falls on the way. Our time in southern Ontario included visits to the town and house where my brother James and I were born, to the town where my father and Clifford were born and where my mother lived until the parsonage burned down (we talked to a town employee who remembered the fire), to the town and house where I remember my maternal grandparents living when I was a boy, and to a small rural schoolhouse no longer in use where my mother once taught before marrying my father. We also had a gathering of local relatives on the Park side of the family with Wesley and his wife and son at the Sand Hills, a traditional Park family gathering place not far from my father's birthplace. Casey missed the Sand Hills picnic because she had to fly to California, poor kid. She went along to a conference with her father, and got to represent us at the wedding and reception of my older brother Doug's daughter Renee.

From Ontario, one long day's drive got Barb and me and the dog back to our Lake Wisconsin home with its uncut lawn and a thriving garden which Barb had thoroughly mulched before we left.

I must say I felt much more at home with your life style than I did staying in Clifford's luxurious apartment. I hope you all had a good Christmas. Robert Park

Aug. 1, 1982 - Two days after our return, when rain cut short a Prairie Society outing before we had a chance to bicycle, we invited everyone here to our home. The rain soon stopped and we had our bicycle outing along the lakeshore here.

Aug. 7, 1982 - My brother James and his friend Rita paid us a visit from Minneapolis. James stayed a week and washed all the dishes. When are you coming again James?

Aug. 12, 1982 - Barb's sister Maureen and her husband from Denver stopped in for a brief visit. (Barb first met Maureen when they were 32, but that's too long a story to tell here.)

Aug. 28, 1982 - We hosted the Prairie fall R. E. retreat for the third year.

Nov. 15, 1982 - Though the signs had led the doctor to predict that our new arrival would come a bit ahead of schedule, he waited to put in his appearance until his official due date. It was a Monday, and Barb and I had both arranged to have the day off from work. The 50 minute drive into Madison seemed to slow down the contractions, so we stopped for some University of Wisconsin Dairy Science Dept. ice cream. We got to the hospital about 2:30 pm and went to the delivery room about 5:30. Our doctor arrived about 15 minutes later and (as you can see from the portion of the hospital birth certificate we are using as a birth announcement), Ian Wesley arrived at 6:12 pm. It was a relatively easy, rapid delivery. The doctor commented that you could have heard a pin drop in the delivery room. I was there for moral support and to meet our son for the first time.

The next day Robin and Mischa came to the hospital to meet their baby brother, and had a chance to hold him as shown in the photos in the top row, when Ian was one day old. Mischa came to the hospital with me again the following day, when I took the picture in the lower left corner. The other pictures were taken during and after Ian's first sponge bath at home when he was one week old.

Barb and I both liked Wesley for a middle name because we have Wesleys on both sides of the family, my mother's brother and Barb's grandfather, John Wesley Smith, who lived with her and her mother when she was growing up. We decided on a first name of Ian after we got to know him for a couple of days. It reminds us of his Canadian ancestry, though it is actually a Scottish form of John.

Ian is a very alert, bright-eyed healthy baby who generally sleeps 5 to 7 hours at night. His dark blue-gray eyes look like they may yet change color. He first smiled at 2 1/2 weeks and now smiles and coos when he is happy, with even an occasional little laugh when his parents are especially silly. He likes to study faces and take in all the new sights around him. He is increasingly entertained by the attention of his sister and brothers, and even seems at times to be struggling to talk.

When introduced to the members of Prairie Society, where Barb had served as lay minister while she was pregnant, six-day old Ian received a resounding ovation which was even a little embarrassing to his parents but it didn't phase him a bit.

After buttering the doctor at his one month check up with smiles and coos, he has weighed in at 8 pounds 2 ounces, measured 21 inches and been pronounced perfect. He is now busy outgrowing his smallest clothes. *He was a well proportioned 10 pounds at 2 months, and is reaching out for things now.*

Dec. 19, 1982 - Warren, Patty, Catherine, Jonathan and Daniel arrived to celebrate Christmas with us a few days early, returning to Minneapolis Dec. 22. Two and a half year old Daniel has already caught up to Mischa in size, despite the fact that Mischa grew 8 inches over the last two years. Casey's school kept her in Chicago until after our company left, but she arrived in time to celebrate Christmas on the 25th with the three boys and us.

Best Wishes for the New Year to all of you. For those of you we don't see, we hope to hear from you during the coming year.

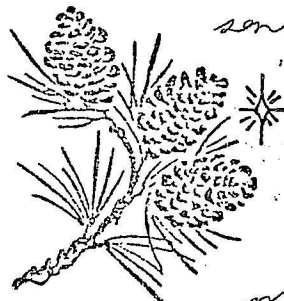
I've enclosed a photo which Clifford sent us, along with the negative.

I made a smaller print from the negative to fit our album).

Thank you again for putting us up. (Casey would like to come again).

We all enjoyed it, and hope to see you again sometime, perhaps with our 3 boys.

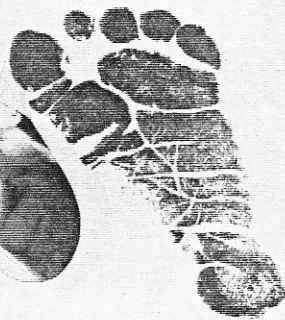
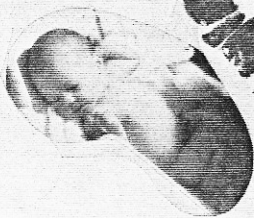
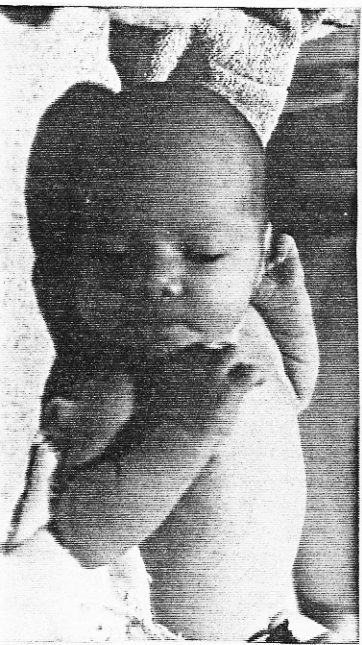
I must say I felt much more at home with your life style than I did staying in Clifford's luxurious apartment. I hope you all had a good Christmas. Robert Park





Certificate of Birth

This Certifies that Ian Wesley Park
was born to Robert and Barbara Park
at 6:12 P. m. on Monday the 15th day of November 1982 at
Madison, Wisconsin



Weight birth 7 pounds 6 ounces. Length 19 1/2 inches

