

CONNECTION

Sharing the day-to-day learning experience

at

Community Homes & Services

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Looking Back at Fifty Years

It is December so, as usual, I am writing a little something to reflect upon the past year at CH&S... and, as usual, I guess I'll just go right ahead and make it all about me. After all, 2024 is my Golden Anniversary, 50 years in the special education/developmental services biz!

I wish I could think of something profound or inspirational to say about that... but somehow my mind just keeps racing and going blank at the same time.

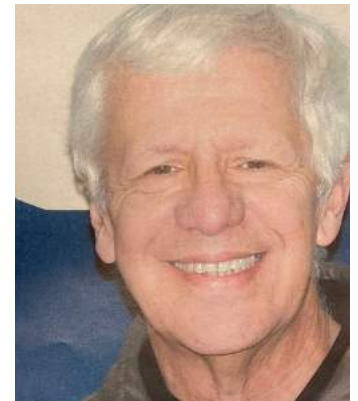
One thing I know for sure is that I did not get rich (oh well!) but hey, when it comes to RICHNESS, layers and layers of richness, I am rolling in it.

For sure, mistakes I made and embarrassments I've had are mixed in, but there is one very important thing I think I got right. It may sound a little corny, but the formula is lovability.

Our work is so much more than just a job! It must be a labor of love, and nothing less. Therefore, I realize that as "the boss," my job is mostly to make sure that people simply love their jobs, which means, in large part, making the job and the environment as unequivocally lovable as possible.

And for this to be the case, of course, we need lovable people bringing out the lovability in each other... so looking back at 2023, I see not only a beautiful curriculum, elegant program designs, and a sound clinical approach, but by far, the most lovable cast of characters (students, faculty, families, and friends) we have ever had.

Together, as a community, we are rolling in it, layers and layers of richness, layers and layers of lovability!



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Looking Back on a Year of Knowledge

with Joe's group

It's December and Bert, Mike, Phoebe, and Tyrone have just finished up the last round of knowledge classes for the year. These classes explore students' individual interests by giving them the opportunity to put together a packet that helps others learn about a topic near and dear to their hearts. A lot goes into this: much collaboration and discussion about finding and choosing relevant information, organizing it in a thoughtful way, picking out photos, and formatting. Oh the formatting. We've covered a lot of subjects. From Three Dog Night to Yosemite, from lions to professional wrestling, each knowledge class is special in its own way. In the following pages you'll find four excerpts from some of our favorites. We hope you'll enjoy reading them as much as we enjoyed putting them together.

Christmas Knowledge

Co-Researchers: Tyrone and Joe

In Japan, people eat KFC on Christmas. Orders must be placed two months in advance.

- "Jingle Bells" was the first song played in space.
- Queen Victoria sent the first "official" Christmas card, but the first commercially available Christmas card was offered by Sir Henry Cole. He only made 1,000 in the first run, and sold them for one shilling each. 12 of these cards have survived, and the last one sold for over \$36,000!

- Christmas trees take 15y to grow.

- Ham is the most popular dish served on Christmas.

Americans purchase an estimated 318,000,000 lbs of ham each Christmas season.

- What does the word "yule" mean, anyway? It comes from the Germanic jōl - which translates to "the feast of the winter solstice".

- Scientists calculated that for Santa to deliver presents to every home in the world, he would have to travel at a speed of 4,921,200 miles per hour!



Looking Back on a Year of Exploring Interests

What You Need to Know About Raccoons

Collaborators: Phoebe and Joe

There are six raccoon species that are native to North/South America. The most recognizable is the *Procyon lotor*, but there's also the *Procyon Cancrivorus*, the *Procyon Pygmaeus*, the *Procyon lotor salutus*, the *Procyon lotor maritimus*, and the *Procyon lotor elucus*.

● Traditionally, raccoons prefer heavily wooded areas with access to trees, water and abundant vegetation. There, they make their dens in the hollow parts of trees as well as abandoned burrows, traveling up to 18 miles to forage for food.

● Raccoons are nice!

● Raccoons have a large array of vocalizations. In fact, studies have determined that these animals can make over 51 different sounds that communicate different things! They hiss, purr and growl when competing for food. Younger raccoons often chirp and squeal, and raccoons with rabies often exhibit extremely high-pitched squeals.



Santa Cruz

Collaborators: Bert (a man of many interests) and Joe

The Beach Boardwalk has an interesting history: Fred W. Swanton formed the Santa Cruz Beach, Cottage, and Tent City Corporation in 1903 and the following year, the City of Santa Cruz granted permission for commercial buildings to be built. On 14 June 1904, the Neptune Casino opened with an arcade, grill and dining room, and a theater. The beach was a destination for railroads and trolleys from 1875.



Looking Back on a Year of Learning

- Santa Cruz's mission was the 12th of California's 21 missions. It is the only mission not named for or connected to a person. Instead, Santa Cruz is named for the Sacred Cross, an important symbol of the Roman Catholic Church.
- The Santa Cruz mountains are part of the California ranges, which cover most of the coast of southern and central California



Mission Santa Cruz

The Byrds

Collaborators: Mike and Joe

Cultural References / Related Topics

Musical impact: The Byrds were one of the most influential groups of the 1960s. They influenced the direction of their contemporaries as well as bands that came after. The Byrds are best known as one of the foundational groups of folk-rock. It's difficult to think of that genre and not hear the plangent chime of Roger McGuinn's Rickenbacker guitar. This blend of folk and rock combined with chiming guitars was hugely influential on a number of artists, including seminal power pop band Big Star, Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers, and Athens, Georgia's R.E.M.

The 1960s: A lot happened in the 1960s! The Civil Rights Movement, The Vietnam War (and the ensuing anti-war movement), the election and assassination of John F. Kennedy, second wave feminism, the space race, the invention of the measles vaccine, and the 8-track and the cassette tape were introduced to the consumer. Do you think any of these subjects would make a good knowledge class? If so, which one?

Related Vocabulary

- Tambourine
- Bluegrass
- Rickenbacker
- B Bender
- Folk-rock



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DECEMBER 2023 NATIONAL DAYS

Learn a Foreign Language Month
Universal Human Rights Month

with Jennifer



- 12/1 - Rosa Parks Day and World AIDS Day
- 12/2 - National Mutt Day
- 12/3 - International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- 12/4 - International Cheetah Day and Wildlife Conservation Day
- 12/5 - International Ninja Day
- 12/7 - Hanukkah Begins
- 12/8 - Pretend to be a Time Traveler Day
- 12/9 - Christmas Card Day and National Pastry Day
- 12/10 - Nobel Prize Day and Dewey Decimal System Day
- 12/11 - National App Day
- 12/12 - Gingerbread House Day and National Poinsettia Day
- 12/14 - Monkey Day
- 12/15 - International Tea Day and Cat Herders Day
- 12/16 - National Chocolate-Covered Anything Day
- 12/17 - Wright Brothers Day and National Maple Syrup Day
- 12/18 - National Twin Day and Answer the Phone like Buddy the Elf Day
- 12/21 - Winter Solstice
- 12/24 - Christmas Eve
- 12/25 - Christmas Day
- 12/26 - Boxing Day
- 12/27 - National Fruitcake Day
- 12/28 - National Card Playing Day
- 12/30 - Bacon Day
- 12/31 - New Years Eve and Leap Second Time Adjustment Day



O CHRISTMAS TREE

Amy and Thea were taking a walk down memory lane and got to talking about Christmases of the past. Amy said she sang in the choir at First Presbyterian Church in San Rafael, when she was a girl. Amy remembers singing "O Christmas Tree" with the choir.

So we listened to a couple of YouTube versions of "O Christmas Tree" and the original German version "O Tannenbaum." One of Amy's favorite German versions was the "Celtic Woman - O Tannenbaum, O Christmas Tree 2015" video (below left): <https://youtu.be/vZDGsmeRwgM?si=UVPQiFBbol-uvX1u> which she rated a 10 of 10.



Next was Nat King Cole's "O Tannenbaum," which he sang in German! Who knew? We love Nat King Cole, but Amy thought the delivery was so-so. Thea liked his voice, but not here with his over-enunciated German. Amy rated it 7 out of 10 and Thea rated it 5 out of 10. Check it out for yourself: Nat King Cole - O Tannenbaum https://youtu.be/9l_3ZOS9P34?si=PMb_Ylwmbak1LLlu

We also checked out George Strait's "O Christmas Tree" which was a bit twangy for Thea and although Strait has a good voice, Amy said it just didn't sound like Christmas. Amy rated it 5 out of 10.

"O Tannenbaum" (German: "O fir tree") is known in English as "O Christmas Tree." The original "O Tannenbaum" is a German Christmas song that was based on a traditional folk song that was unrelated to Christmas. It was only later that the song became associated with the traditional Christmas tree.

The modern lyrics were written in 1824 by organist, teacher and composer Ernst Anschütz. A tannenbaum is a fir tree and the lyrics do not actually refer to a decorated Christmas tree. The song refers to the tree's evergreen quality as a symbol of constancy and faithfulness.



O CHRISTMAS TREES

Speaking of Christmas trees, we explored some Christmas tree traditions throughout the world. Did you know that in Ukraine, it is common to decorate Christmas trees with spiderwebs and spiders. This tradition is said to have originated from a folktale about a poor widow who could not afford to decorate her tree:

A poor, hardworking widow once lived in a small hut with her children. One summer day, a pine cone fell on the dirt floor of the hut and started to grow. The widow's children watered the sapling, excited at the prospect of having a Christmas tree by winter. The tree grew, but when Christmas Eve arrived, they realized that they could not afford to decorate it.



The children sadly went to bed and fell asleep. Early the next morning, they woke up and saw the tree covered with cobwebs. When they opened the windows, the first rays of sunlight touched the webs and turned them into gold and silver. The widow and her children were overjoyed—and rich!

Spiders are considered to be lucky in Ukrainian culture, so spiderwebs and spider decorations are a symbol of good luck and prosperity. "The spider web ornament is really gorgeous," said Amy, "but I'm not a big fan of spiders!"

Why do we put Christmas trees in our houses? According to Britannica.com, the use of evergreen trees, wreaths, and garlands to symbolize eternal life was a custom of the ancient Egyptians, Chinese, and Hebrews. Tree worship was common among the pagan Europeans.

Scandinavians had customs of decorating the house with evergreens at the New Year to scare away the Devil. They also set up a tree for the birds during Christmastime. The evergreen tree tradition continued with the German custom of placing a Yule tree at an entrance or inside the house during the midwinter holidays.

***"O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,
Much pleasure dost thou bring me!"***



By Erika Smith - MSI Chicago - Christmas Around the World 2007 - Ukraine - spider web ornament, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=37156527>

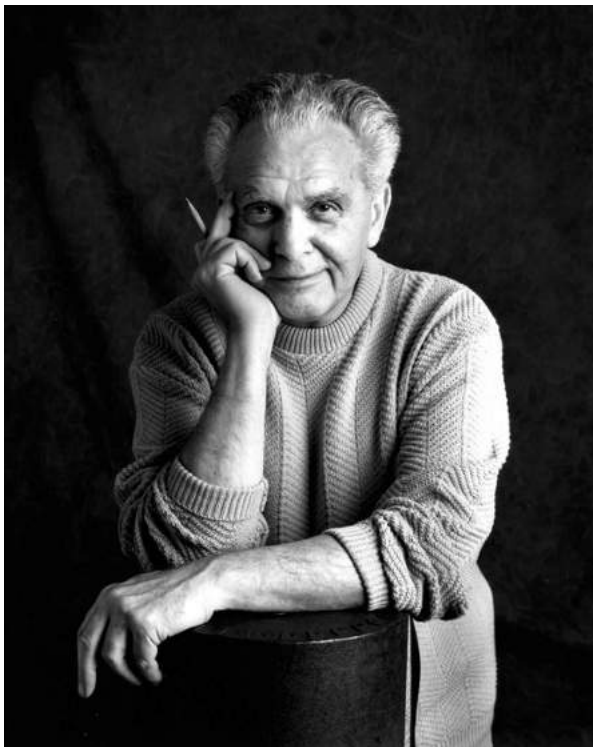


Andrew's Corner

Jack Kirby



I am writing a report on Jack Kirby because I like his art style. Jack Kirby was born under the name Jacob Kurtzberg in New York City on 28th August, 1917. The son of Austrian Jewish immigrants, fleeing the growing antisemitic hostilities in Europe, Kirby was drafted and served on the ground during WWII, finishing basic training and landing in Normandy, France, just after D-Day, 1944, to draw European towns and targets for US military spies.



Prior to joining the US military to fight in WWII, Kirby's ideals about truth, justice, and inclusivity were present in his work as a comic book artist and writer. In 1941, Kirby's first and most iconic comic book character made his premier: Captain America. Personally, my favorite Kirby superhero is Thor, debuting in comic book Journey Into Mystery, August, 1962. I like Thor because he is based on an actual Norse god. My favorite thing about Kirby's Thor, is that it puts a superhero spin on old Norse legends. Kirby also created The Eternals, a team of superheros and immortals whose stories span ancient history and, like Thor, pull on ancient mythology to offer creative explanations of the origins of Gilgamesh, Athena, etc. The Eternals was made into a movie in 2021, bringing the characters into the MCU. I saw the movie in theaters and liked it. I would recommend others see it, too.

By Susan Skaar - Kirby Museum website, see website for licensing information, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=28809659>



Kirby also did a graphic novel adaptation of the novel by Arthur C. Clark and film by Stanley Kubrick: 2001: A Space Odyssey. Kirby's adaptation was completed and released in December, 1976, which included the introduction of a character named Machine Man, who continues to appear in Marvel comics to this day.

Bio: Andrew Newson is a student at Life College and is 25 years old. He likes comic books, video games, hiking, exploring new places with his mom.... and babies. He is an authority in all things Star Wars, Star Trek and great places to go in the Bay Area. He is currently learning Mandarin and loves to research and learn new things.

C S V R N H W O
N O L L O T R D
G J O L Z U E D
C V L K E K A D
W Y N V I B T Y
Y L L O J E H P
X Y D S U X S O
R K P Z I G G X

Holly Jolly Bells
Cookies Wreath



Iter Facit! (“She makes a journey” in Latin)

Goodbye Yvette!

by Matthew

To say that she will be missed would be to make an egregious understatement. The loss of her energy and engagement will leave our classrooms ever so much quieter, but we rally behind her choice and wish her the very best along her path and may her story ever be a good one to tell. I am positive that Yvette will stay in touch, so be sure to tune in when she joins us on Zoom to regale us with news of her new life, but, until then, until we hear of her safe landing in distant lands, let us all join in wishing her a very fond farewell. The great epics are never about those who stayed in one place or played it safe. Strong sailors are not made through easy waters. Good fortune along your own Odyssey, Yvette. May your adventures bring wisdom, courage, justice, and temperance.

Yvette has demonstrated an awe inspiring thirst for knowledge, attending classes on Spanish, Latin, history, philosophy, algebra, and creative writing while filling notebook after notebook with her studies and poetry. There has not been a single class that Yvette has shied away from, facing each new subject with courage and enthusiasm, the same courage and enthusiasm she takes with her along this new chapter, journey, adventure.



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DECEMBER 1ST IS ANTARCTICA DAY

Antarctica is an intriguing and interesting place! It's a huge, icy continent at the bottom of the Earth. In this article, we'll learn 5 cool (cold) facts about Antarctica:

Fact 1: Cold, Cold, Cold!

Antarctica is the coldest place on Earth. The lowest temperature ever recorded on our planet was in Antarctica, at -128.6 degrees Fahrenheit ! Brrrr!

Question 1: What is the coldest temperature ever recorded in Antarctica, and why is it so cold there? Where is the coldest place you have ever been?



Fact 2: Ice, Ice Baby!

Antarctica is covered in ice and snow. In fact, it holds about 90% of the world's ice! That's a lot of frozen water! The ice is so thick that it can be over two miles deep in some places.

Question 2: How deep can the ice be in some areas of Antarctica?

Fact 3: Penguins, Seals and Lots of Birds!

Antarctica is home to some incredible animals, like penguins and seals. Penguins are expert swimmers, and they waddle on the ice. Seals spend most of their time in the water but come on land to rest and have their babies. The rocky shores provide nesting space for over 100 million birds every spring. These nesters include albatrosses, petrels, gulls and terns.

Question 3: What kind of animals live in Antarctica?

Fact 4: The Midnight Sun!

On Antarctica's coast, where research stations are located, there are usually a couple of weeks in mid-winter (around June 21) when the sun does not rise, and a couple of weeks in summer around Christmas when the sun does not set this is called the "midnight sun."

Question 4: What is the "midnight sun" and when is summer in Antarctica?

ANTARCTICA IS THE FIFTH-LARGEST CONTINENT

Fact 5: No Native Residents!

Antarctica doesn't have any permanent residents, nor cities or towns. People who visit Antarctica are scientists and researchers who study the continent's unique environment. They live there for a short time in special research stations. McMurdo is the largest station in Antarctica and it is capable of supporting 1,250 residents.

Question 5: Who lives in Antarctica and why do they go there?

The Heroic Ernest Shackleton

Captain Ernest Shackleton (right) was a brave explorer who led an expedition to Antarctica in the early 1900s. His ship, the Endurance, got stuck in ice, and they couldn't go anywhere for months. It was super cold, and they had to camp on the ice.

Amy asked her dad about his trip to Antarctica earlier this year—she got the low down so that we could share about it here.

Amy's dad, Mike, was especially excited about seeing parts of Antarctica that sea captain Sir Ernest Shackleton crossed. Shackleton has been voted as the greatest leader of all time even though his expedition and goal to be the first to walk across the Antarctic continent (starting from the coast of the Weddell Sea, traversing the South Pole and ending up at the Ross Sea) was ultimately a *failure*.

Wait a minute—failure leads to greatness? How can that be?

Mike was excited to see ice-covered Elephant Island where Shackleton and his crew landed on their lifeboats. Some say Elephant Island got its name from the sighting of elephant seals along its shores; others say it looks like an elephant head.

Shackleton was determined not to fail his crew. He and five men took a lifeboat and finally landed on South Georgia Island on May 10, 1916. There, Shackleton and his two strongest men hiked over some very treacherous mountains before reaching a whaling station.

From there, they rescued the three others on the other side of South Georgia. Finally, on August 30, 1916, Shackleton's rescue ship — the Yelcho — arrived at Elephant Island. Shackleton's ENTIRE CREW survived, and that is why Sir Ernest Shackleton is recognized as the best sea captain and greatest leader of all time!



WELCOME NEW INSTRUCTOR MAGGIE!



Maggie Fry is a new instructor at the CH&S Enterprise campus. Maggie says she always wanted a job like this—where her passions for teaching, writing, and supporting people who have special developmental needs are combined. She says that every day here so far, “the insights and the dedication level among the students affirm that (passion) and teach me new forms of gratitude.”



- Maggie’s favorite cartoon character: “Probably, Littlefoot,” the apatosaurus from *A Land Before Time*.
- Fruit or vegetable she would be: “I think blueberries.”
- Favorite color: “Changes every other day.” (November 27, 2023, it was **green**.)
- Favorite time of day: “Sunrise and sunset... many shades and colors moving through the sky and across the Bay.”

Welcome, Maggie! We’re happy to have you here!

JOKES!

Q: What did Adam say on the day before Christmas?

A: It's Christmas, Eve!

Q: How do sheep say Merry Christmas to each other?

A: Fleece Navidad.

Q: What do you call an obnoxious reindeer?

A: Rude-olph.

Q: What did Luke Skywalker say after he planted a Christmas tree farm?

A: May the forest be with you!



"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"

by Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think the person in the poem is doing in the snowy woods?
2. How does the poem make you feel? Does it remind you of any special winter places or experiences?
3. The person in the poem mentions "promises to keep." What are some promises you think they have to keep?
4. Can you describe what the snowy woods might look like in your imagination?



Katie and Jason's Vow Renewal

Congratulations to Katie and Jason Church on their five-year anniversary and vow renewal! They were married on November 11, 2018, in Mill Valley, and renewed their vows last month at the lovely Stafford Lake.

Why did you decide to renew your vows?

"Jason and I are in a unique situation," said Katie, as she went on to explain that she never thought she'd be able to get married. And Katie wants you to know that when she comes home from her day, she still feels giddy over her hubby *after five years!*



Katie says that marriage has humbled her and helped he become a better person. For example, the Katie of old is gone and now she is a lot less quick-tempered. (Thank you, Jason!)

Katie went on to say that Jason models patience and that he is the most kind-hearted person. In fact, Katie says that Jason is "a true gentleman"

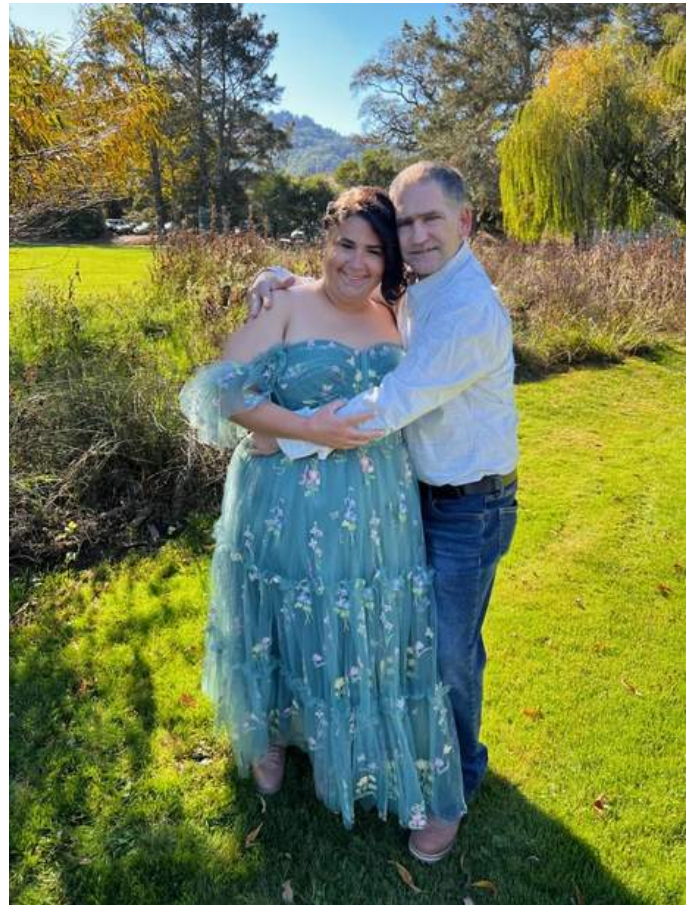
who still opens doors for her! He also walks with Katie to the bus stop and kisses her goodbye before she hops on the bus. And when Katie returns, Jason will stop what he's doing to walk to the bus stop to greet her.

Katie said that she has also changed Jason's life for the better because of her loving nature—she's very affectionate (*bisou bisou*) and she's extremely supportive and dedicated to Jason and his journey through life.

The couple chose Stafford Lake as the venue for their vow renewal because they love the outdoors, and being in nature's beauty is perfect for any celebration.

And let's not forget the food!

Katie's used a fall festival theme and pins from Pinterest to plan the autumn celebration. The buffet had had a cornucopia of deliciousness! There was a popcorn bar, hot cocoa, hot apple cider, and coffee.



Katie and Jason's Vow Renewal

The buffet meal offered BBQ chicken, tri-tip, mac and cheese, salad, and rolls. Katie and Jason made homemade sea salt, chocolate chip, and caramel cookies were so yummy that Jennifer copped to eating four of them. And let's not forget the apple pie and pumpkin pie! Yum! Plus there was fun 70s rock music, lawn games (corn hole, horseshoes, and croquet), and a crafts table with bracelet making, paint-an-ornament, and bubbles.

Katie wants it to be known that she is so grateful for the opportunity to come to Life College—the people are like a second family to her and she wanted to share her vow renewal with all of you! The mood was festive and full of love. Jason cried happy tears during the ceremony and they both enjoyed being with family and friends.

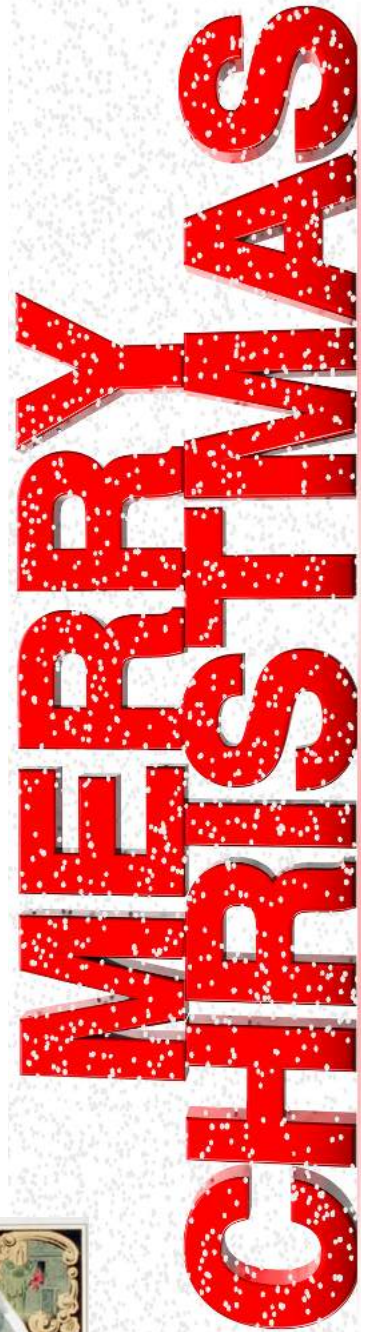
Who were you wearing, Katie?

I got my dress from Amazon! (Check out the Fivsole store because people keep asking about The Dress!) Katie thanks her generous Aunt Sue, for the lovely dress! Katie also thanks Jason's parents for paying for the delicious food. ("Leftovers for days LOL!" said Katie.)

Do you want more details? Too bad because this is all Katie remembers. "I was too busy working the crowd!" she explained.



HOLIDAY CARD CLIP ART



Happy New Year



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