



Dear family, friends, and colleagues,

Happy (belated) Year of the Fire Pig! As some of you may already know, we're starting a tradition of sending out an annual letter at the Chinese New Year instead of Christmas time.

2006 has been an eventful year for us. Matt finished his master's degree in human-computer interaction at Georgia Tech; as part of his thesis project, he built a "smart" conference room table that makes it easier for people to use their laptops in meetings. Currently Matt is working as a developer with IBM Research's Visual Communication Lab in Cambridge; his new project is Many Eyes, a website that enables people to share insights into quantitative data.

Alison is still a sociology PhD student at Harvard. She has been teaching classes to Harvard students on contemporary China and nonprofit organizations in the US, as well as writing related articles, one of which she presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association in August. Over the past few months, she has been reading for an oral exam that reviews sociological literature on Religion and Organizations, as well as preparing for her dissertation. She will be back in China for the 2007-08 academic year to conduct field work with Chinese Buddhist organizations, and has been busy applying for grants and developing her research plan.

We finally went on our honeymoon in the summer of 2006, as we didn't have time for a vacation after our wedding in 2005. Our itinerary included almost four weeks in Indonesia, with a brief stop-over in Taipei. We traveled around four of Indonesia's islands: Bali, Lombok, Flores, and Java. We brought back spices, sarongs, scuba certifications and only a little bit of travel sickness. Other highlights of the year included Matt's graduation in Atlanta, Alison's sister Gwyneth's wedding in Maine, and our hosting of Thanksgiving (14 people in our apartment!) for family and friends.

The year ahead looks to be just as exciting. Alison will spend the summer of 2007 in Beijing brushing up on her Chinese language skills; hopefully Matt will be able to join her there and collaborate on a project with IBM's Beijing research lab. Alison's looking forward to being back in China, and is very excited that she'll be able to catch up with old classmates at the 20th anniversary celebration for the Hopkins-Nanjing Center, where she studied in 1999-2000. Meanwhile, Matt is hoping to move a couple of interactive art projects back onto the front burner, ride his bike around Boston more, and continue his professional research into visualization and Internet communities.

We hope that the coming year will be peaceful, prosperous, and fulfilling for you and your family. This year, 4704, is the Year of the Fire Pig, when (if Chinese astrologers are to be believed) the strength, energy and passion of the fire element combines with the honesty, patience, and confidence of the boar. Since we're vegetarian, barbecue isn't on our menu, so we can't experimentally verify that combining fire and pigs leads to these admirable qualities. Regardless, may you find them in yourself as you greet the challenges and joys ahead with an open mind and a ready heart.



Posing in Goagaja, Bali, Indonesia

Alison, Gwyneth, The Other Matt, and Judith & Bill Jones at the wedding reception.



Thanksgiving Triptych!



Matt and John & Susan McKeon at graduation, Atlanta GA