

December 2000

Happy Holidays & Seasons Greetings to You from Doylestown, PA!

I'm taking this opportunity to recount how we survived the year 2000 without being disenfranchised (so far, anyway). We had a temperate year with only one major snowfall (12") with two days of school and business closings, plentiful rain in the spring, two 100-degree days during the summer, and a mild, beautiful autumn. The only environmentally threatening problem was the discovery of MTBE seeping from two service stations' underground storage tanks into the ground water about a mile from our home. The service stations were shut down and wells were tested in the immediate area. Our well hasn't been tested yet. Neighboring wells don't seem to be affected.

Jean and I celebrated our silver wedding anniversary this year. Her anniversary gift was a new red six-cylinder Camry with a rear spoiler to replace the rapidly deteriorating Volvo. We took the kids downtown Philadelphia on the train to see a production of "Les Miserables" and eat at an exotic Moroccan restaurant afterward.

Jean ended her tenure as a stay-at-home-mom and began using her librarian background working half time in the cataloguing department of the Bucks County Library System, which services 12 libraries, including the county jail. Now she's surrounded by books without having to deal with the general public, which suits her just fine. She would like to catalogue some of the books and materials straight into the trash bin, but then that would be censorship and someone might be disenfranchised.

The kids are growing up fast. Paul is a sophomore at Central Bucks East High



School and Gretchen is a ninth grader at Holicong Middle School. They both have been doing exceptionally well academically. Paul continues to play the viola in the school orchestra, take karate classes,

and was in the cast of “Babes in Toyland”. Gretchen continues to take flute lessons and is in two ensembles plus the band at school. She also was on her school’s varsity tennis squad after attending a tennis camp this summer. Our other “child”, Happy, the four-year old cocker spaniel (who looks like a pile of cow flop in all her photographs) keeps us amused and sometimes disgusted. She has been able to learn a few new simple commands this year despite her obvious intellectual handicap.

I am building knowledge and credentials for a second career in information systems. I survived my first year at Unisys even though the company is going through some reorganization, layoffs, cost containment, and a hiring freeze. I am working in a telephony software products support and development group where complex systems are produced for major foreign and domestic telephone companies. I have adjusted to the 40-mile daily commute each way. I also finished 16 course hours toward a Master of Science in Information Systems from Drexel University by taking online coursework from home; Unisys has helped pay for the courses. It will take me at least two more years to complete degree requirements at the rate I’m going—just in time to retire and raise cabbages! Outside of work and school, I continue to sing tenor in the Bucks County Choral Society. This year the Choral Society made a trip to Washington, D.C. to sing at the National Cathedral again. Another highlight of the choral season was performing Bach’s “St. John’s Passion”.

We made no extended trips out of Doylestown this year. In June Jean was able to fly down to Harlingen, Texas to spend a few days with her mother. In July Paul and I flew to Minneapolis and then drove to South Dakota to celebrate my mother’s 75th and stepfather’s 80th birthdays. We got to see all of my five brothers and two sisters together for the first time in at least 10 years! We also saw lots of nieces, nephews, cousins, and old neighbors. We stopped for an afternoon at the Mall of America before flying back to Newark, NJ the next morning. Although we saw brother David (Salt Lake City) while in South Dakota, we also got to spend time with him when he visited us in Doylestown.

We have been church shopping again this year after the small startup church that we have participated in for the past three years disbanded after the pastor decided to call it quits. We have attended services at a number of different types of churches. We tend to avoid big established mainline denominational churches that seem too comfortable with the status quo. The past three months we have been attending a small, three-year-old Presbyterian congregation meeting in the auditorium of one of the high schools. The kids seem to fit into the Sunday school classes there and the services are held less than three miles from our home. So—that is where we've decided to attend (although we heard that the pastor was planning to resign soon!) It's enough to make us paranoid; are we "church killers"?

The only other big event of the year was the volunteer pumpkin vine that took over the small garden patch in the dog run behind the house. The leaves were three feet across and grew so much one night that the dog was afraid to go outside and do her business! The plant produced one crook-necked squash and lots of flowers, but no pumpkins. Before killing the vine and clearing it from the garden, I bought three Halloween pumpkins and put them under the leaves for the kids to discover. They were only slightly amused by that lame joke. No pumpkin vines next year!

It has been an interesting year starting with the impending doom from the Y2K bug and ending with the impending doom from the dimpled chads. Despite the chaos in the world, we can count and recount the blessings God has bestowed on us this year and we know we can trust in him for all our future needs. We hope that 2000 has been a good year for you too and that you will be abundantly blessed in 2001.