



# Christmas greetings from Pennsylvania!

We hope that 2001 has been good to you despite all that's happened this year. Here tropical storm Allison blew through the area, Mike spent a night snowbound at the office, the dog died, Gretchen dyed her hair blue, carpenter bees invaded our house again, a car thief caused an accident resulting in \$3,500 damage to Mike's car while it was stuck in rush hour traffic, and the high school banned all out-of-town trips following the September 11 terrorist attacks. However, we were able to take a short family vacation at a lodge in the Poconos, visit with the Jain family from India, say farewell to the Collison family on their way to Toronto, and watch bluebirds investigate backyard bluebird houses inhabited by titmouse and sparrow families.

Paul turned 16 in February and is a high school junior. Mike took him on a birthday ski trip to the Poconos. Paul excels in math, science, and languages (Latin and Spanish), although Jean has to stay on his case so that he gets his homework done. He enjoys musicals, the Marx Brothers, the Iron Chef, and Scooby Doo. He saw "Annie Get Your Gun" on a class trip to Broadway and was in the casts of "The Sound of Music" and "Cinderella" at school. His real passion is role-playing type computer and video games such as "Sims" and "Final Fantasy". Last spring he went with five busloads of choir and orchestra kids (he played the viola) to a weekend music competition in Washington, D.C.; Mike went along as a chaperone. In July he accompanied Mike on a trip to South Dakota to visit grandparents and relatives and to attend the reunion of the descendants of Ernst and Clara Mueller.

Gretchen turned 15 in May and is a sophomore. She is a super student, although her advanced placement history class has challenged her. She continues to write stories, song lyrics, poems, and cartoons that we think are very funny and wonderful but we can't persuade her to submit them to a publisher. She is a fan of the band, No Doubt. She can recite from memory many of the skits from Monty Python's Flying Circus and Saturday Night Live reruns. She is our resident computer geek and has her own domain name. She already is a talented flutist and is rapidly improving; it is fun to listen to her practice. Last spring she saw "The Music Man" on Broadway during a class trip. She is a good tennis player and was on the junior high squad in the spring. Although she took lessons in the summer, she was very disappointed when she somehow missed the tryout dates for the high school tennis squad. Other downers were having her wisdom teeth removed and finding out that she had inherited her parents' myopic vision. This summer it took her three tries before she got her hair dyed the right shade of blue; Mike told her that she looked like the Christmas angel.

Jean continues to work half-time as a cataloguer for the Bucks County Library System. She loves books and is a voracious reader of mysteries. She has become an email devotee and keeps in touch with friends and several special interest groups. This spring a long-time friend, Jean Mitchell, paid Jean a visit and together they explored craft fairs, art galleries, and antique shops. In July she made a trip to Harlingen, Texas to visit her mother. Jean keeps our family operation running smoothly by taking care of finances, repairmen, healthcare appointments, rehearsals, lessons, kid and dog grooming, etc. Since fall she has been working steadfastly with a personal trainer to gain more stamina and lose some weight.

Mike held on for his second year at Unisys despite three layoffs. He continues online work toward an MSIS degree from Drexel University and has about another year left to go. He sang tenor with the Bucks County Choral Society which performed two community concerts, five Christmas concerts, Brahms's "Requiem" (three concerts in German), Orff's "Carmina Burana" (in German/Latin), and Rachmaninoff's "All-Night Vigil" (two concerts in Russian). Following Labor Day, he spent a week at Federal District Court in downtown Philadelphia as a juror in a crack cocaine trafficking trial. The following week he drove 1000 miles to niece Sarah's wedding in Cedar Rapids, Iowa after the planes were grounded on September 11.

In May we were saddened by the loss of our five-year-old English cocker spaniel, Happy, after she contracted lymphoma. Although, we made a valiant effort to save her, the cancer was too strong.

Liz, the breeder Happy, took pity have one of and blonde male Rupert has turned and dignified than gentleman spaniel, he a darkly paneled reading a



from whom we obtained on us and offered to let us Happy's littermates, a red housedog named Rupert. out to be much more sedate Happy. If he were an English instead of an English cocker probably would be sitting in clubroom smoking a pipe and newspaper. In an amazing



coincidence, when Jean decided to start needlepointing again (after years of not doing any), she found a portrait of Rupert in her collection of untouched canvases. She had purchased the canvas at a shop in London 18 years ago before she even knew what an English cocker spaniel looked like!

It is certain that the coming year will bring new challenges and delights. We know that God has a plan for each of us and that we have nothing to fear as long as we place our trust in him. We hope that you feel the same way too. We wish you a joyous Christmas and a happy New Year.