

## Christmas 1992

From: The Ritchey Family of Swanton, Ohio

Again, we can say "the Lord has been good to us this year". We have experienced joy and sorrow this year like none before. And yet through it all God has been faithful. He has proven to us that as we trust and depend on Him, He will meet our needs. So first we will fill you in on some of the high-lights of 1992 and then we will tell you about the vision we have for 1993. Just in case you are wondering, yes, we are still in Toledo!

For a week in January we traveled as a family by train (Amtrak) to New Orleans, LA so Joe could attend some meetings with the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM). Joe's mom flew down to New Orleans and met us. While Joe was in meetings, the rest of the family hit the sights. Following the meetings we drove to Biloxi, MS and Mobile, AL. In all we had a great time.

The spring was uneventful. Jamie was finishing 4th. grade and Tim 2nd grade. John was going to school once a week for speech lessons to help him overcome some pronunciation problems. Right after school was out in early June we went for five days to a Christian music festival held at a campground near Akron, OH. It was a tremendous family time. There were lots of activities during the day and concerts each evening. It was during this time that our faith was challenged. It began when Joe found out that his biggest client was dropping him to us a local consulting firm in New Jersey. While still camping we got a call from Joe's dad that his mom had lost her appetite to the point where she had to be hospitalized. Though this was quite a shock we kept our plans at the time to go to Louisville, KY for some more ASTM meetings. This again was a super time and we got to take a tour of Mammoth Cave before going to Darlene's Aunt Sella, in White Sulphur Springs, WV. While at Dar's aunt's Joe's dad told us that Joe's mom's cancer had returned. When we returned to Toledo we also found that one of Joe's closest friends (Joe Kalmut) had fallen in a plant accident and broken both arms and wrists and many bones in his face and jaw. So you see by the end of June we knew that this was going to be a summer to remember.

Joe's mom died near the end of August. In June though we knew here situation was serious, we had comprehension of how fast Joe's mom went from an intelligent vibrant active woman to completely helpless. To add to the sorrow, Joe's Aunt Helen (wife of his dad's closest brother) died three days before his mom of a sudden heart attack.

Joe's friend, Joe has made a tremendous recovery, though he has had a number of surgeries and has still not returned to work. God has done a wonder in Joe Klamut's body, for which we are thankful.

Until the past few months, Joe's work at Heritage Remediation/Engineering, Inc. had slowed considerably. It was sad to watch some of his co-workers move on to greener pastures.

Through all of this Dar's mom and dad remained healthy. This still seems hard to believe, since her dad is taking regular chemotherapy for adrenal cancer that about killed him in January of 1991.

As the fall started, we tried to get back into a routine. Jamie was in 5th grade now and a new school (Fallen Timbers Middle School) and Tim (3rd grade) and now John (Kindergarden) were in Whitehouse Primary School. John had made great progress in his speech. Tim was doing fine in school, but Jamie was having a tough time for the first time in his schooling. A combination of a difficult teacher and a long and early bus ride each morning (he would get on the bus at about 7:00 am and arrive at school at about 7:45) made him quite discouraged. He would consistently have two or more hours of homework each night. Finally, in the begining of November, after trying everything we could to improve the situation we decided to begin home education. This was a difficult decision for us and it was one made after we had done a great deal of research. So far, it working great. There was an imeadiate improvement in Jamie's attitude. If you are not familiar with home education, it is legal Ohio, as long as you prepare a statement of your purpose and cirriculum to the county school board. There are a number of requirments all of which we could meet, fairly easily. Jamie still likes it, and we are convinced that he is getting a better education, for right now, than he would at school. Next year we will reevaluate the situation.

Also in November, Tim was baptized. This was an exciting time for us as a family to see him publically acknowledge Jesus as his savior.

It is now December, many of you know that we sing in the Emmanuel Baptist Church choir. We are in the midst of our annual Christmas musicale. There are six performances and we have been rehearsing since September. Even all three boys are in the childrens choir that sings two songs. We have also added hand bells to our list of mediocre musical instruments. We play for an hour before each of the musicale performances.

We have great expectations for 1993. Lord willing Dar and Joe will travel to Joao Pessoa, Brazil for a short term mission project in January. We will be traveling with about 30 from our church from January 17 through the 30th. We will be doing brick work, tiling roofs and other hard labor. We will get to have a brief tour of Rio and have a couple trips to the Atlantic Ocean. We are excited about the trip and we are expecting to return changed. Though the people we will be working with are not starving, they are not at the poverty level according to US standards.

We rejoice in what has happened to us this year, because we have seen ourselves grow. Our losses have sensetized us to the value of friends and family. We will be more fervrent in our prayers for you this year. Please pray for us.

The Ritchey Family