

THE JOE RITCHEY FAMILY 1999 A DREAM YEAR TO REMEMBER

Looking back to the beginning of this year, what sticks out first was the uncertainty of Y2K. In January 1999, readiness was low and talk of crisis was high. Now that the hour is almost upon us, it seems that most will let the year change over without fear of great disturbance. As a family we can't help but look back and say that the year has gone by quickly and with great activity. Darlene calls it the year of separate activities because everyone's most memorable events occurred apart from the entire family. I guess that goes with the territory of three teenagers "in the house". Before we let each of the boys tell you something special to them, we'll give you the broad brush and then follow up with a wrap-up.

We know that most of you are well aware of our desire to seek God and be the best Christian's that we can be. Consequently we have spent a lot of time doing "church" things. With James playing guitar in the youth praise band, Tim running the sound board for the youth praise band, John having roles in no less than three dramas, Joe running the church's sound board for regular services, and Darlene teaching in Children's Church, we are benefactors of joy. Surprisingly enough we have time for other activities. Joe's volunteer work with ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) took the family to Memphis, the two of us to Miami, and Joe to Seattle. The company Joe works for ARCADIS Geraghty & Miller (four years now) allowed him (and Darlene) to travel to Europe (Darlene was his coordinator). Darlene was able to make two trips to Kansas City to visit Charlotte Crosley. Many may remember that we lived there (John was born there) in 1986 (I think). Joe says that Charlotte is training Darlene in mentoring and counseling younger women. Another event of the year was Joe's dad being diagnosed with bladder cancer. Although it is very difficult to tell what the long-term prognosis will be, he is doing well and has not needed to curtail his busy schedule too much. Darlene's mom moved this fall from Jefferson to Ashtabula. Darlene and Tim went for a week to help with moving and unpacking. Now here is the kid's report:

JOHN

This year has been a good year; school is okay and this summer was a fun summer. I went to a three-day Christian music festival held outdoors that is called Alive 99. They change the name ever year, next year it will be Alive 2000. I went to Alive with our church youth group, but only the 9 to 12 graders were allowed to go. But what happen was they were one adult short so my mom went and I had to go. Another camp I went to was a junior-high church summer camp called Kirkwood. I had a great time; it was a very good camp. Since I have become a teenager, life has become fun. I have been getting in more trouble lately, but it is still fun.

TIM

The best activity that I did this year was going to Philmont Boy Scout Ranch in New Mexico. It was fun hiking through the woods. The good thing was that it was the most time I spent with my dad. The only thing I didn't like was cleaning dishes. But all in all I had a lot of fun. You can find pictures of the trip on our family web page, listed below.

JAMES

How can I fit all memories of this year into a short paragraph? Many things happened this year. I went to Japan in the summer. My music career has started to unfold. A million things have happened. One of the biggest changes of the year is hanging out with friends. As a homeschooler and traveler, it is quite difficult to make friends. The only place I even spend time with my peers is at church. I tried to get as involved as I could and everything worked out great. I spend so much time with friends now that Mom has been begging me to stay home. I had the best year of my life because of all the friends that I have made. I have had so many new experiences. I got to go to prom early this year and had a great time. I went toilet papering houses and forking lawns for the first time. It has been a great year and I'm looking for more like it in years to come. And I hope that the New Year brings you joy as well. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays.

FINALE

We will close with a regret and a couple of final special memories. There are many of you that we would like to visit. Time, location, or something has prevented that. Hopefully 2000 will give us that opportunity to see you again. We were able to have a special time canoeing and camping with Joe's brother (Mark), Gail and their twins Joshua and Cortney. The twins appear to be "Ritchey's" through and through. You know what we mean. Tim was able to spend a week with Joe's brother Steve (and Carlynn) in Utah mountain biking. Also, Tim mentioned Philmont. A very special time for Joe was not only being with Tim but, being with fraternity friend Mark Stiller and his son Adam. After 20 years apart, backpacking together for two weeks was awesome experience. And, YES James completed his Eagle award, which brought a lot of family and friends down to Chillicothe over Memorial Day weekend.

I guess that's it for this year. Join us at our web page for more information including past letters and Darlene's recipe book. Best wishes for a great New Year.

<http://www.zoomnet.net/~jritchey/Index.html>