

Joe Ritchey Family Christmas 2000

Another Year Another Story

Joe

I suppose, to say that this was another landmark year is just being melodramatic. With three sons and two parents, you would expect a lot to happen every year. And when it does, why should we be surprised or think it is something special. You can tell already that this portion of our letter will be a little different than years past. I am sure that it is just a momentary reflection on what was a steady pace of activity. Rather than belabor it any more let me go over the high points.

This is the first time that I have changed jobs to stay in a location. As you know, we have consistently moved to avoid a loss of work or to pursue what is perceived as better work. As much as Darlene and I have cited dislikes of Southern Ohio we actually are trying to stay put for a while (not that we haven't always wanted to stay wherever we have lived). Here is the list if you didn't happen to know it: Columbus OH, Champaign IL, Rolla MO; Kansas City KS, Lansing MI, Toledo OH, St. Louis MO, Albuquerque NM, Los Angeles CA, and Chillicothe OH. Back to the story, in April my office was moved from a small-town 2-story house to the mega-complex that makes up the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant. In September I changed companies; I now work for Pro2Serve Technical Solutions, Inc. A year ago we had 1 employee in Ohio, now we have 15 and next year this time we are expected to double. We'll see.

In October I ran the Columbus Marathon. This was a big deal to me until I found out that I was bested by a "non-runner," Wayne Mosley, by some 40 minutes. Wayne is a college fraternity brother who has kept in contact by trading Christmas letters each year. Congrats Wayne.

Darlene and I traveled to Turkey in September so that I could give a paper on the hydrology of caves and fractured rock aquifers. We combined the meeting, which was held in a seaside resort town of Marmaris with a weeklong tour of ancient Christian, Greek, Roman, and Moslem sites. We had a relaxing first week; my big adventure was parasailing. And the 2nd week was full of wonder at the history. I don't know what the Turks say, but I say you can't swing a

cat by the tail without hitting an ancient ruin of some kind. This is actually a fair statement, because one of the surprises of Turkey is the abundance of cats, which seemed to be roaming around most of the restaurants.

Darlene

One of the highlights of this year for me was the start of a Kid's Praise and Worship Service for first through sixth graders. This takes place during the 11 am service at our church. We average about 50 kids who have a great time singing and learning sign language along with story, drama, game, and snack time. I have found it to be a real blessing and enjoy the kid's excitement and enthusiasm.

School is going well. I find it a little easier with only two students and continue learning. We keep busy making sure the boys are where they need to be for their different activities, although it helps having Tim driving. Also we usually have extra teens visiting over the weekends. One Sunday we had 14 at the table for lunch. I was baby-sitting my friend's five children and 5 teens came home from church with us. I'll admit it isn't boring around here. We are looking forward to my mom spending Christmas with us, and Joe's family coming for the New Year. We hope you have a wonderful holiday as we celebrate the birth of our Savior and a blessed New Year.



James

As I look back, three major events have taken place. Two of them, graduation and college, have taken place in my educational life. The third is the start my romantic life, having a girlfriend. These three events have been a first

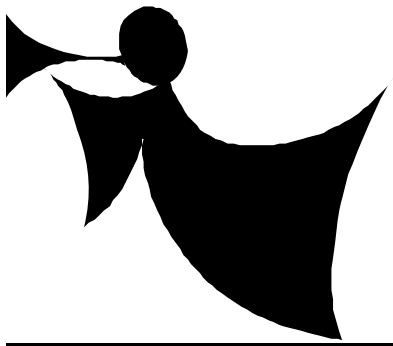
for the family, so it has been interesting seeing my parents' reaction. This is new territory.

I am the first to graduate in the family. I graduated top of the class. This, however, was not a great achievement in a class of one student. Anyhow, my parents presented me with a homemade diploma and I had a graduation party. The party was supposed to be a Hawaiian Luau, but I don't think it could be called such. My mom bought a tropical plant and proceeded to call it a palm tree. So did everyone else. I just don't understand some people. We also had the lays and pineapple and other tropical fruit. It was fun.

College has also been fun. I am a freshman at Cedarville University. I am minor-ing in music. Other than that, I am basically taking gen ed's until I decide exactly what I want to do. I joined the Men's Glee Club singing first tenor. Everything is pretty high. It's been crazy. One of the best things about college is the computer system. A lot of the students have been downloading movies off the Internet and passing them around. It's been great.

The last change in my life has been the romance. I have my first girlfriend and I have had a wonderful time the past few months. Her name is Arlene Brokaw. She is wonderful. A friend of ours played the role of matchmaker and Arlene and I have been going out for six months. It has been interesting trying to maintain our relationship while I am at school. We have had our smiles and our tears. I am looking forward to many more.

My life has been changing over the year. I have been growing up. I guess I am adjusting, but there is still more to go.



Tim

Who could say they had the best year? I know I can't. Yes, there were times when I never want those glorious days to end, but there

were times that are hard to bear the thought of being in the same situation.

The best time was when I went on a mission trip to the Eastern College in Philadelphia with our youth group. Our group of five joined other churches around the country and split into groups to minister to people in different parts of the city. My group was games and recreation. We would go to different parks in the city and play different types of outdoor games with the children. It was planned that we would tour the historical sites of Philadelphia after the Mission trip.

Here is a small example of one of my days at the mission trip. The five of us woke up and walked to the dining room (which is on the other side of the campus) to have breakfast. After breakfast we would walk to the gym and have a small worship service. Then we would be given a few minutes to get ready for our Bible studies, which were with the missions groups. Finally we would pile into the van and drive to one of the parks. Our group would stay there until the afternoon. After we arrived back on campus, our youth group would have free time. We used the whole free time just playing a card game. Following free time was another worship service and then we would go back to the dorm and sleep. The best time was just spending free time with my group.

John

This year has been a little better than last year as I turned 14 and can get away with more things, like teasing my brothers. James is off to college so it's been a little different with just Tim and I. He still seems to come home a lot.

I went to three summer camps. One was with the junior high church camp at Kirkwood. I was awarded camper of the year. The second camp was a senior high summer retreat. I was not supposed to go since I am still in junior high; however, my parents were going and I could not stay at home alone. The third was a Boy Scout camp. The best part was swimming.

So, all and all, this year was pretty good if you ask me. I hope you have a wonderful Christmas and a happy New Year.