

## Joe Ritchey Family Christmas Letter 2001

This is the time of year when we reflect on this past year and decide what we want to share with you. We have been forced to look at things in a different way after the attack on September 11th. Of course it is especially hard for the families of those who died in the attacks and even those away from home protecting us at home and abroad. Holidays are always more difficult after a family tragedy. Our prayers go out to these hurting and our appreciation goes out to those who have been ministering to them.

Things are going well for Joe at work. The company has grown from 13 people to over 30 and he is now one of three managers. We all benefited from business travel this year. We were able to go to Florida in January. Joe also went to Reno taking John with him as far as Salt Lake for a visit with Uncle Steve and Aunt Carlynn. Joe enjoyed seeing a bunch of fraternity brothers at a reunion, but couldn't understand how they all got so old. Joe and Darlene traveled to Richmond in June for more meetings taking advantage of business to visit friends on the way there and back. Joe has continued running in marathons; Cleveland was in April and Columbus in October. He is looking forward to running in the Big Sur Marathon this coming April in Monterey CA. Joe also keeps busy with boy scouts, the youth group, and the sound system at church.

School is going well. The boys are working hard on a report about Mexico. We are planning to visit there in January with the Ritchey Family. We have been asked to help out with leadership in the home school support group. I spent a large part of the fall planning and teaching for a Christmas program that we shared throughout the community. God is blessing the church with more children and that has been keeping us busy. We have averaged between 50 and 60 kids each Sunday. We are looking forward to starting a new curriculum about "Fruits of the Spirit" in January.

We have a new addition to the family. Sunshine, a female yellow lab, joined us in September. She is very excitable and loves to play "See if you can catch me". We should have named her Cookie, as she will do just about anything for a dog biscuit.

James finished his first year at Cedarville. He has declared a major in broadcasting. He was able to work as an intern at Joe's office over the summer and during winter break. He still enjoys his music, playing his guitar and drums. He enjoyed going with us to the Alive Music Festival in Canal Fulton, near Akron, in June. He was also able to go with us on our vacation to Maine, in August with Grandma and Grandpa Ritchey. He did complain that we were eating way too much lobster, although I do not remember him ordering any.

Tim, John, and I went on a mission trip to Oklahoma, where we held a vacation Bible school program at a small Indian church. We had a great time and it was a real learning experience. Tim was the spiritual leader for the kids and had many activities to plan and carry out. He needed to be the first one up every morning and for Tim that was an accomplishment. Tim also enjoyed being a camp counselor at Kirkwood in June. He stays busy with boy scouts, the youth group and local non-denomination "Discipleship" youth group. Tim is looking forward to graduating in May. He is interested in computer science and is thinking of also going to Cedarville next fall.

John enjoyed his trip to Salt Lake in January. He fell in love with snowboarding and had a great time at the Sundance Movie Festival and eating out. He was able to try many different types of cuisine while he was there. John attended church and boy scout camp. He enjoyed using the small sailboats. He is showing an interest in life guarding at camp next year. John has also taken an interest in photography. He has some great pictures of whales off the coast of Maine. One picture shows three whales surfacing at once. He also enjoys playing his guitar, boy scouts, youth group, and is finally able to go to "Discipleship" with Tim. John is counting the days until he can get his temporary drivers license.

The Ritchey family would like to wish you a happy holiday. May you be blessed with health as the New Year begins. God bless you and Merry Christmas!