

Christmas 2003

Welcome to the 437th annual Christmas letter from the VOGTs! It's not really that long that we've been writing these yearly tomes, but it must seem that long to some of you.

I'm starting this on the 10th of December this year, which is much later than most years (except for the years when the Vogt Christmas Letter arrived in February!). Hopefully it will get finished before the 31st!

It's been a quiet but interesting year for the Vogts. For one thing, it was a Big-Birthday year for most of us. Lynn and I both turned the big FIVE-OH this past year while celebrating 29 years of wedded bliss (whip out the calculator, 50 minus 29 is.....), and Audrey hit the "21" milestone as well.

Megan finished up her studies (all but one course, more on that later) around Labor Day. Once she stopped being a full-time student, the room-board-tuition support stopped. She hasn't been able to find a job in her chosen field yet, so she's waitressing at Pizza Hut for the time being. But the funds aren't quite enough to continue living out of the house yet, so she moved home, along with more stuff than she left with, and a cute little all-black cat named Hanna. Buddy is afraid of the cat, so when she's around, he's not.

Megan still hasn't gotten her degree yet. She has one more course to finish, and she's trying to straighten out a disagreement on whether or not a few other graduation requirements were met; they were, but she has to convince the chairman of the department of that. She did a 14 week internship at the Palace Theater in Manchester NH last summer, and enjoyed that a lot.

Audrey is living at home still, and working two jobs; one as a pet washer at a grooming shop in Stoneham, and the other as a pharmacy technician at CVS down the street in Burlington. She's not enjoying the grooming shop work as much as she used to, as the owners have not made good on their promise to teach her how to do grooming as well. Her CVS job is quite interesting and has gotten her thinking about perhaps a career in Pharmacy. Time will tell. She's still close with her beau Jake, and they're talking about getting married in 2007 or so.

Lynn got to join me on a couple of business trips this year. In January we traveled to San Francisco for a week. I had a conference to attend, but we both managed to get in a fair amount of sightseeing, and we visited our niece who lives out there as well. At the end of September and the beginning of October, we went to Colorado. I had meetings in Colorado Springs, and again we were able to fit in both sightseeing (Garden of the Gods, etc.) and visiting (friends from Germany who live in "The Springs," and my sister outside of Denver).

June was the "month from hell," as far as business traveling goes. Because my beard is gray, I was asked to join a gray-beard team to travel around the country and evaluate sites for placement of some system services. I spent the first week of June (including Sunday the 1st) in DC for a conference, then the second week was spent in the home office preparing for the upcoming visits. The third week started on Sunday again - I flew to Tampa FL, then Miami FL, then Fayetteville NC, then Norfolk VA, and then home. The fourth week also started on Sunday - first to Omaha NE, then Denver CO, then Colorado Springs CO, then back to Denver CO, and then home on Wednesday. Out again at 5AM Thursday for 2 days in DC, then all of the fifth and final week in DC as well, finishing up the report. Twenty flight segments in the month (9 in one week!).

What with the "month from hell" falling in the prime of the summer, it kept me from taking on any big projects during the summer proper. Towards the end of the summer and into fall, though, I was able

to find the time to build a 9x20 foot pergola (a large trellis-like structure to hold up large-leafed vines like grapes or wisteria) out where the pool used to be. It's built to exactly accommodate Lynn's rope hammock! This was the third summer without the pool, but we still missed it on the hot and steamy days.

Our "vacation" this year was to finally go to Prince Edward Island, Canada for a week. We intended to visit PEI three summers ago during our vacation to Nova Scotia, but we just didn't have time. This spring Lynn found a cottage on-line, so we packed up the dog and one daughter (Audrey was off on a separate vacation with Jake and his family) and drove up. What a fantastic place! We really enjoyed it.

Lynn has not seen much progress on her health-related issues. Her cough still persists, and her other ailments remain as well. She has changed tactics and is now trying to focus on one thing at a time, so she is seeing a specialist out in Worcester for her cough. He believes that her cough is due to a combination of Gastro-esophageal reflux disease, or GERD, and severe post-nasal drip. She's trying to control the GERD with diet and medication, with little success so far.

Lynn also required a third biopsy this year, which was debilitating to endure. Everything was benign, but because of her family history and her own cystic tendencies, the doctors want to err on the side of caution, so she will be watched closely from now on.

On the job front, Lynn is winding down her nanny position with the little twins. They are not so little anymore and don't need a nanny very much. She still connects once in a while for babysitting, and we still stay close friends with the family socially. Recently, she has gotten herself a position in a quilt shop in Cambridge – she's having a ball! She had taken a few quilting classes at this shop, and she decided that she wanted to work there, so she applied for a position and they hired her. Her quilting hobby is going great guns, so this may be like a chronic gambler working in a casino, but we'll see! Quilting combines all her natural creative skills with her ability to design and work with geometric patterns. Her quilts are beautiful!

Once again I can report that I'm still at MITRE, still doing mostly the same things. As I get more senior and grayer, I get called on from time to time to pitch in a help out projects and do things like the month of traveling back in June, but that keeps it all interesting and eventful, so I won't discourage it.

My weight battle has hit a plateau. Haven't put on any of the weight I lost last year and into this year, but I also haven't been able to maintain the slow but steady decline. My blood pressure is stable and under control, I've been off coffee and all caffeine for almost 16 months now. I'll work on getting re-energized after the holidays. Famous last words, right?

Alas, these festive occasions once again come in still-troubled times, with many of us continuing to be unsettled by the changes we see happening around us. As we mentioned last year, evil is still alive and well in our world, and evil in the name of justice or vengeance is still evil. Once again, our wish for you, your family, and all the families of the world is for tolerance, peace, understanding, and good will toward all men. May the leaders of the world find wisdom beyond their years and experience, to find a way through these dark times to a solution that gives all people dignity and freedom.

From the VOGT family to you, Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and best wishes for 2004!