

Christmas 2000

Hello from the *Vogt Family TreeHouse*, and welcome to the dawn of a new millennium. Sounds a bit melodramatic, and it definitely has a *Johnny-Come-Lately* feel to it, given all the hoopla surrounding the New Year celebrations *last* year, but the purists among us can rest smugly with the knowledge that the new decade, the new century, and the new millennium did not start last year; January 1st, 2001 is the *true* big day – to which you say: “*Who Cares??!*”

Big milestones are sometimes passed without much comment or notice (as the coming true dawn of a new millennium will likely be), but the *Vogt Family* had two related milestones this year... In June Audrey (our youngest) graduated from Woburn High School – we are now officially unassociated with public schools; and in September Audrey officially entered college and dorm life, so Lynn and I are now empty-nesters..... most of the time! College students have a habit of returning to do laundry and sleep late, so we are occasionally blessed with a less-than-completely-empty nest, but for the most part its just Lynn and me and Buddy rattling around the house.

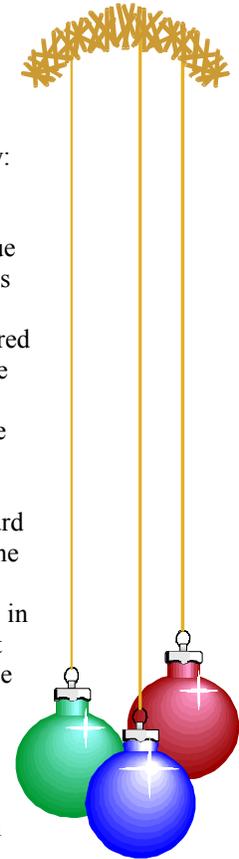
Audrey’s milestones and highlights this year were quite special for us all. She worked hard through her senior year of high school, and donned the cap and gown of a graduate on June 4th, with an added gold tassel for outstanding community service. Her college search had begun last year, and included a visit to her first choice school, *Wilson College for Women* in Chambersburg PA, back in October of last year. She applied to other schools as well, but Wilson College had been her first choice since the beginning. Her first college acceptance letter arrived March 1st, but it wasn’t until May 8th that we heard from Wilson officially that she had been accepted. Once the elation faded, she began having doubts as to whether or not she wanted to go to school so far away from home (about 450 miles – an all-day drive), whether she was ready, whether she would be able to survive college at all – all the usual and healthy doubts that we get when one part of our life is coming to an end and a new and as-yet mysterious part is about to start.

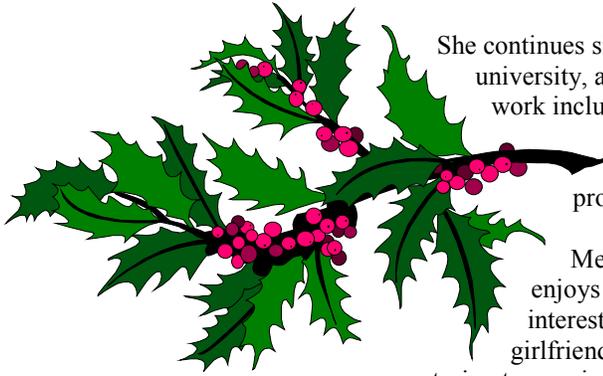
A weekend orientation trip in July convinced her that this was the right place and the right decision, so late in August, after the family vacation to Nova Scotia (more about that later), we packed the van with four people, two ferrets (Audrey’s new pets) and a dog, and packed a U-Haul trailer with all Audrey’s “stuff,” and headed for Chambersburg to get our youngest settled in her new life. Milestones on top of milestones. So far all is going well for her (some classes are harder than others). She’s double-majoring in *Pre-Veterinary Studies* and *Equine Management*, but thinking of switching from Pre-Vet to some sort of English major involving writing – which she does so well - keeping the Equine Management major. She brought her computer with her, so you can send her an email (audriss@yahoo.com) if you want to. Pictures of her graduation, and one of the packed van with trailer are on the web site – www.familytreehouse.net – look under *What’s New*.

Audrey also has been blossoming as a writer at Wilson College (which has contributed to her thoughts of switching majors). Her freshman essay was chosen over all others in the freshman class to be read at the school convocation, and the dean of faculty liked her writing style and skills so much that she asked her to write and present a speech at the Scholarship Donors' Appreciation Banquet during Homecoming Weekend, which she did with aplomb - we got to attend too!



Megan’s news for the year is getting harder and harder for me to report on, since she is living away at college for most of the year. I can only tell what I see and know about, which is not much these days! She’s still at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell, majoring in *Music Teaching/Education*, but has been working towards switching to *Sound Recording Technology*. She took some pre-requisite Calculus courses over the summer, and last I heard she is just about set to switch.





She continues singing; this year she is in the elite Chamber Singers at the university, as well a couple of other ensembles. Her extra ensemble work included a performance of highlights from *Jesus Christ: Superstar*, where she had two solos. The outstanding performance was a delight to watch, as her professionalism and joy of singing shone through.

Megan has maintained good grades through the year, and enjoys a close circle of friends at school. She has also gotten interested in camping this year, going several times with a girlfriend to a number of locations in MA and VT. She is now trying to convince us that camping would make a great family vacation for this coming summer. Oh our aching backs!

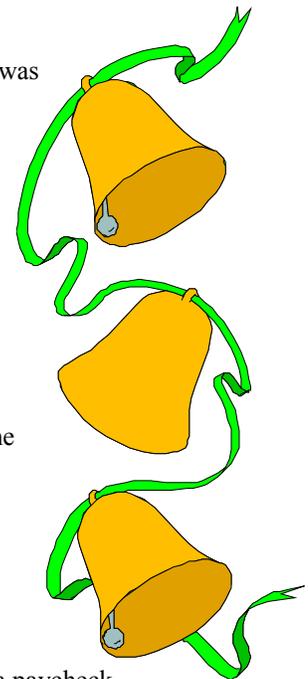
Lynn has had a busy and interesting year. In last year's installment we told you about her new job that she was about to start - as a nanny to infant twins in a nearby town. Lynn did start the job in January, and had a wonderful ten months working as a nanny to these two great little people. Alas, babies grow bigger, and by October the now 15 month old twins were getting too heavy for Lynn to hoist around on a daily basis, especially the boy who was approaching 30 pounds. Lynn has developed a slight case of arthritis in her hands, and her shoulder has been problematic for a number of years now. Lifting and holding a sturdy and wiggly baby was getting to be too much of a strain on her hands and shoulders, so it was with much reluctance and sadness that she gave her notice to the wonderful family. Her last day was on October 31, but we have become friends with the family and keep in touch on a regular basis. Come the first of the new year, she will find another nanny position for an infant (possibly twins again), but now she knows that her position must be limited to something like birth to six months to keep her shoulder from becoming more troublesome and her hands from being difficult.

She has also taken possession of the corner bedroom (the bright and sunny one that was Audrey's before Audrey moved downstairs to the apartment bedroom) and has her sewing machine and work area and computer in there rather than down in the dark, dreary and isolated apartment. We repainted and installed a ceiling fan-light combo, and put new curtains up, so its real bright and cheery now. We also have our guest bed in there, so when folks come to visit they stay upstairs now, rather than down in the apartment like a troll (no offense Audrey! ;)

We had a small scare in late September when Lynn had a scheduled breast biopsy, which came back negative (thank goodness!). The doctor had found some atypical calcification and wanted to make sure of its type. Lynn had had a biopsy before so she was fairly familiar with the routine, but anything like that can be a bit nerve-racking. She had the biopsy as day-surgery, but it still takes a lot out of you, so she was a bit under the weather for a few days afterward. All is well now, though.

Lynn's outdoor gardens were spectacular again this summer. She knows what combinations of things go well, and how to tend them to their fullest. I help a lot. We actually make a good team - she tells me where to dig and how deep, and I dig! She tells me where to put the bush and I lug it over and put it there!

My year has also been busy. MITRE must still like my work, they keep giving me a paycheck every two weeks. A *part-time* project at work (imagine if it were full-time!) required four more trips to Stuttgart and/or Brussels over the course of the year (plus one in October the year before); in January (just Brussels), April (Stuttgart and Brussels), June and October (just Brussels). The April trip was special in that I was able to bring Lynn over to Stuttgart with me, and we took a week's vacation in addition to my work and visited all the friends and places we knew so well while we were living there, including our dear friends and former neighbors (*unser Nachbarin*), Gerhard and Ursula Bruckner. We couldn't believe that we had been away from Germany for five years! Time sure does fly.



Another business trip in September brought me to Colorado Springs, Colorado, and Lynn got to tag along on that trip too. We flew a few days early, and spent a few nights with the Belks, good friends we met in Germany and have kept in touch with (trading visits too) over the years. Once the weekend was over I headed off to my week's worth of business meetings, and Lynn headed off to the vicinity of Denver to visit with my sister and her family for the week. We had hosted a visit from my sister, her daughter, and her daughter's two young boys during the summer, so this was a return-the-favor visit! After my meetings were over I scooped up to Denver too and spent a couple of days visiting before we flew home.

On the home front, I've been installing a computer network in the house, bit by bit (pun intended). I want network drops installed where all the computers are or might be. I have a couple more to put in for completeness (you never know when you might want to move a computer on the spur of the moment!), but it's basically finished. It all congregates in the "network center" in my basement office..... that's where the cable modem, a router, and a hub all sit and merrily hum away sending electrons from computer to computer and out onto the internet. Geeky stuff, but fun.

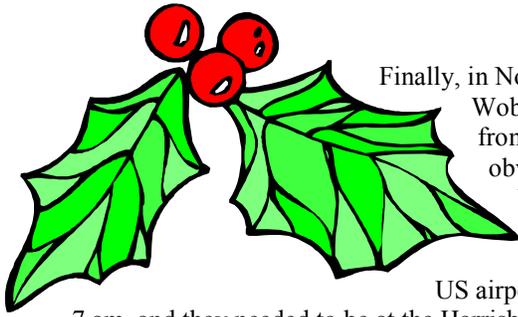
It's been an off-year for genealogy research, I haven't been able to grab a large enough chunk of time to focus on any one particular topic to dig into. I managed to find (or be given) some newspaper articles with snippets of information, visit the Waltham Archives once, and we found a great old group photo of some Irish ancestors and relatives in an attic. The picture has been sent back and forth to Ireland for identification and shared among families on both sides of the Atlantic. We struck gold in the attic! Thanks, Sarah!

I've also re-invigorated my interest in Coin Collecting this year. I was asked to "do something" with a coin collection that belonged to Lynn's mom – it was all jumbled up in boxes and baggies with no order or sense to it. In spare minutes here and there I slowly sorted, inspected, catalogued, and made an attempt at grading the 450+ coins from the US and around the world. It was a lot of work, but I really enjoyed it and was a bit disappointed to have completed the task. It inspired me to apply the same level of order to my own haphazard collection too. Too many hobbies, not enough time.

Returning to the *travel* front, in August we finally got to visit **Nova Scotia** for a family vacation. We've been wanting to get up to that island for years, what with Lynn's and my Celtic ties, and it finally happened this summer. Megan did all the leg-work (phone-work actually) for the trip, arranging the sequence and booking us into B&Bs and hotels all around the island. She worked with the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism and Travel who only made one screw-up with our reservations. We drove to Portland Maine on the afternoon of the 17th and boarded the *Scotia Prince* ferry with our van that night. The overnight boat-ride included cabins to sleep in and a breakfast buffet the next morning. The boat is fitted out mostly as a floating casino with a restaurant and a lounge/club/bar too. I managed to extend my infamous slot-machine winning-streak by escaping with about \$160 in quarters.

In Nova Scotia we drove clockwise around the island for the next 8 days, racking up 1650 miles on the van. It was a great time, with spectacular scenery and lots of interesting things to do and see. I've parked about 21 MB of Nova Scotia photos on the Photo Point picture-sharing website, if you're interested (see the *What's New* page on the web site for a link to the photos). On the 27th we re-boarded the *Scotia Prince* for the return voyage to Portland. The return is not overnight, so the cabin we rented was extra, but it was worth it to have someplace to park and snooze for the all-day trip. I managed to win another \$180 in quarters on the return trip, so it was fun *and* profitable!





Finally, in November our distant college student made a triumphant return to Woburn for Thanksgiving. She brought a delightful friend with her from school. Jane lives outside of Belfast, Northern Ireland, and was obviously not going to get a chance to go home for such a short break (4 days) so she and Audrey flew up from Harrisburg PA to Boston on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and flew back on Sunday after the holiday (the two busiest days of the year for US airport travel, I might add). It was an adventure, as their flight was at 7 am, and they needed to be at the Harrisburg airport at 6 am, and Harrisburg airport was about 75 minutes from Chambersburg, so they left the campus at **4:30 am** to catch their flight!

It was so marvelous having everyone – and a guest – home for the holiday. We hosted the feast ourselves with my sister and her family joining us for the day. Magnificent, but Lynn and I did notice that it was a lot more hectic around the full house than we had remembered – I guess we're getting used to *empty-nest-syndrome*!



Happy Holidays to all, and may the coming new millennium be the best one ever for you and your family!!

Love

Gene, Lynn, Megan, Audrey, and Buddy

<http://www.FamilyTreeHouse.net/>

