

Christmas 2001

Hello again from the *Vogt Family Treehouse*! Another year has flown past, and its time for another edition of the *Vogt Family Christmas Newsletter*.

This newsletter arrives with more weight to it than other years, not because it is so full of words, but because it arrives amid an involuntary and unsettling awakening; our world has changed, and not for the better. The blissful ignorance that we all - but mostly we *Americans* - have adopted over the past years has been forcefully torn away. We now know things we only suspected before: that evil is alive and well in our world; that the "western" sense of right, morality, and justice is not shared by the entire world; that these "times that try men's souls" also give rise to breathtaking acts of heroism, selflessness, and brotherhood.

The events of September 11th have affected us all very deeply. For me, the first day or so afterwards was surreal. The line between fiction and reality melted away and nothing was anchored to anything solid or believable at all. Our eyes saw and our ears heard, but our minds could not comprehend. Gradually, ever so gradually, the horizon came back into view, but it hasn't been the same since, and may never be the same. There is a *physical* feeling that something is wrong, and that feeling will likely persist for a long time.

Amid the trauma, heartache, and turmoil of the last few months, the breathtaking acts of heroism, selflessness, and brotherhood have helped to renew our faith in what is good and what is right. So, for this holiday season and in light of the recent happenings, the Vogt Family wishes you and your family *comfort, tranquility, and peace of mind*. Now more than ever is the time for family and friends. Thank you for being that for us.

Megan

Megan is in her fourth year (of probably five) at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell, majoring in *Sound Recording Technology*. Outwardly she continues on her mostly steady path through early adulthood, progressing through her college years and life-milestones with the usual bumps and turns (changing schools, changing majors, etc.). Inwardly, though, she shows signs of being acutely aware of a simple fact of life that I learned in college and still remember well; college gets harder and more stressful as the years progress, and there's not much you can do about it except put your head down and plow into it straight on. There's no way *around* it, one must go *through* it, and endure. She's enduring - so far - but it is clearly becoming less fun and more work; sometimes a *lot* more work.

Megan passed another of those life-milestones this past year; she turned 21 in May. The celebration was not wild and crazy as some might expect, pleasant but subdued ... at least the part that the parents were allowed to see. Who knows what the *clubbing* excursion after the party was like! At the end of her celebration I gave her the bad news; 21 is the last birthday one looks forward to with anticipation rather than dread. For a child, turning ten (double digits) is big, thirteen (a teenager) is bigger, sixteen (sweet sixteen) is bigger still, eighteen is fun, twenty (no longer a teenager) is exciting, and 21 is somewhat mystical. After that its all down hill from there! Anyone know *anyone* who looked forward to 30, or 40, or 50 with as much enthusiasm as 21??

Megan also "officially" moved out and into her own place this winter. Up until now, she was a "dorm rat," moving in in September and out in May, and spending summers at home. This December she rented a house in Lowell with three other friends, and moved all her furniture and "stuff" out of her room at home. She's on her own year-round now (or at least on her own with room-mates) - no more moving in and out of dorms twice a year. In retrospect, moving into a new place at the end of the semester, with finals bearing down on her, was probably not the best time, but one doesn't often get to chose "best" times for things to happen, they just happen.

Audrey

Audrey has had a difficult year. I suspect she will be glad to be through with 2001, but probably would like some assurances that 2002 will be better - alas there are none, for any of us. Her freshman year at Wilson College was a tremendous learning experience from a *life* perspective, but was less than successful if only academics are considered. *Wilson College for Women* is an all-girls' school in rural western Pennsylvania, about a nine-hour drive from home. She was double-majoring in *pre-veterinary studies* and *equine management* (running horse farms). Audrey has always had an intense interest in - and a gift with - animals, so it seemed natural for her to pursue that as a career in one way or another. But the sudden freedom of living away from home, and the unstructured environment of a modern college dormitory, was a bit more overwhelming than she expected. That, combined with unpleasant and intensely distracting boyfriend problems, led to a dramatic loss of focus on the main purpose of her being there - *book learning*.

Her concentration, focus, and grades suffered badly, but she was far from home, and at a school that believes that college students - even freshmen - are full adults, so the school felt no obligation to inform parents of any academic or social problems. We were unaware of the problems until it was far too late to help, and we were much too far away to be of any use except with encouraging phone calls, which weren't much help. As a result, her first semester grades were poor, and her second semester grades were worse.

Audrey did a lot of thinking and soul searching during the late spring and into summer, and we as a family did the same. As a result, she came to the conclusion that the environment and situation at Wilson were not as idyllic as they had initially seemed, and she withdrew from the college. She then worked hard at re-establishing her academic "sea-legs" at *Middlesex Community College*, taking biology and psychology during the summer session, and enrolling as a full-time student this past fall. She lives at home and commutes to school with Lynn's car. School life has not magically become easy for her, and not all her grades have skyrocketed, but she is doing better than last year, and the structure and familiarity of home life has its advantages.

Boy problems (she recently broke up with her boyfriend of 8+ months) and work problems (she's had employment problems lately) have followed her back home, so life has not yet become the bed of roses we all long for, but she has a good head on her shoulders and thinks things out - usually for the better. Audrey is hoping for some solid improvements in all areas for 2002, and with a little luck and some hard work, she'll probably get her wish.

Lynn

Lynn has had a busy year. She has continued with her Nanny jobs, part-time. She worked for a while with a family in Lexington, but phased out of that as the infant got bigger and the weight started affecting her shoulder. She has returned to her original family of twins on an occasional basis, as the children are now mobile and can be managed (usually) without too much heavy lifting. She really enjoys those two!

She has also rediscovered knitting. She is amazing to me, because she can fly with the needles while carrying on a normal conversation or watching TV. She attended a knitting camp in upstate NY this past summer, learning new techniques and ideas and enjoying a vacation away from the house and family demands. She's also been stocking up on yarn in anticipation of upcoming projects... we may have to buy a new room to store it all!

We're still feeding all the birds in New England, thanks to Lynn's interest and generosity. Mornings and evenings on our deck sometimes look like the set of an Alfred Hitchcock movie. I enjoy looking at them all, but Lynn actually knows what she is looking at, and can rattle off the species of recent visitors to our feeders with aplomb.

Gene

Gene is still at MITRE, still traveling, and still working on genealogy. He (I) found more info about the VOGT line while on a business trip to Germany in January. I was able to extend the line back two more generations, to GGGG-GF *Jean Nikolaus VOGT*, born 15 March 1710 in the village of Lich (near Geißen) and his wife *Anna Maria WOHMANN*, and Jean Nikolaus' parents *Heinrich VOGT* and *Anna Marguerite Wilhelmina (last name unknown)*. It truly is never ending.

We had a Father's Day triple disaster this year. During the day a surprise storm came up and dumped so much rain so quickly that the water was in danger of coming in the back door. I had to scramble in the rain to set up drainage pipes and places for the water to go that kept it away from the door. Once that was taken care of and I dried off, I heard a loud crack and groan from the back yard, and looked out to see that one side of our above-ground pool had let go and was in danger of dumping 15,000 gallons of water into the neighbors back yard (then *his* cellar door would be flooded!). So, back out into the rain I went to shore up the pool wall and being draining it safely. Once again I dried off and the girls and I settled in front of the TV to watch old home movies from when they were little tykes (a good Father's Day activity). About five minutes into the first tape, the TV popped and went all purple - a color gun in the picture tube had failed. Not a good day

The pool area is now barren (it was unrepairable), but in the spring we plan on building a garden area with gazebo and potting shed and patio area. It'll be a long process but the final results should be worth it.

I also broke down this past August and bought myself a new computer. The old one was getting quite old, and everyone else in the house had gotten new machines except me, so I treated myself to a zippy new 2 GHz Pentium 4 machine with lots of bells and whistles. I'm in heaven!

That's all I can think of. I hope I didn't forget anything! Oh, I forgot - Buddy says *HI* and asks me to tell you that he's doing fine. As always, news and musings can be found on the family web site: <http://www.familytreehouse.net/>, and we all do email: genevogt@familytreehouse.net (Gene), lynn@vogtfamily.net (Lynn), plaidocs@mediaone.net (Megan), and audriss@yahoo.com (Audrey).