

Merry Christmas – 2002

Behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:20-21)



To start with, those of you who didn't get a letter last year, I didn't forget you. The Christmas season came and went so fast that I never did get a letter written or mailed. So, no one received one! Sorry. In this letter, I'll cover a little of both years to catch up.

My mother has settled in a really nice efficiency style home attached to my sister's house near International Falls, Minnesota. It's a cozy place with family nearby, and she is happy there. So, she wasn't down to spend the winter with us last year.

We have been doing a little remodeling at home too. We have added a nice, big bay window to our family room. We did the work ourselves so it has taken almost a year to do everything. The family room is much more comfortable now so it was worth the time and effort.

Nicole has grown up! She has finished her first two years of college and has moved into her own apartment near Orlando. She is still going to college full-time and working nearly full-time at an upscale restaurant in Orlando called *Stonewood Tavern and Grill*. Because of a huge mix-up in the Florida Higher Education System, Nicole is living and working in Orlando and commuting to Daytona Beach to attend classes. But, that's another story for another time and place! (It does show, though, that not only can't Florida count election ballots, it also can't manage a higher education system!)



Joy is engaged! With that said, it's hard to think of anything else as exciting in her life. Joy and **Dave Liddle** will be married at Grace Lutheran Church in Ormond Beach on January 25, 2003. Joy and Dave have been close friends for a long time and get along well together. They make a really good couple! Joy lives south of Daytona and works down the road from us at *Capo Sunglasses* where they make, package and sell all styles of eyewear. Joy and Dave visited Dave's grandparents in Canada this fall and got in on one of the season's early snowfalls.

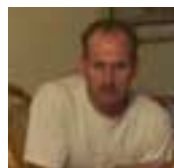


April and Dwight have both changed jobs and are getting along well at work and at home. When they built their home, they were alone on a block of empty lots. Now, all of the lots are full of



new houses and they have an established neighborhood! Two years ago, I mentioned that their daughter, **Haley**, had developed cancer. She put up a long fight but passed away on April 27, 2001. There is a tribute to her 423 days of life at http://www.geocities.com/alkaeding_2000/. We all loved Haley and miss her terribly. April and Dwight do have some exciting news now. April is expecting a child on January 25, 2003! Does that date look familiar? If not, re-read the last paragraph. That's right, we expect to add a grandchild and a son-in-law to the family on the **same day!!!** April is in Joy's wedding party, so Jan is turning gray trying to organize all of this. I think there may be a hint of conspiracy here!

Jessy and Mark have moved. Across the street! That's right, they are our new neighbors!



It's fun to have our three grandsons so close by. **Casey** and



Jordan are both soccer players and are also in scouts. Both like to fish and hunt with their dad and anyone else who will take them. **Riley** is learning to talk. Among his first words were – *ho, ho, ho!* Any sign of Christmas evokes these three descriptive words. Mark is staying busy most of the time with his work and Jessy has changed jobs. She took the summer off to be with the boys and, after school started, she went to work for a company that makes and sells high-end television interconnection cables.



Bennie and Gayla are living in Orange Park, about an hour



north of here, on the edge of Jacksonville. Bennie



manages a maintenance crew for a large apartment complex. **Mia** is at home going to high school there. **Amber** is living with Jan and I here. She attends Seabreeze High School and has had two semesters with straight A grades! She also played soccer this fall for the first time and was scouted to be on a traveling league team in the spring.



Jan and I are up to the same old things. We did travel to Hawaii in 2001 for a combination working and vacation visit. I presented a paper and served as a session chair at the International Congress on Polymers in Concrete along with visiting several customers. Then, on the two weekends, we toured Honolulu and the island. Jan and I also made a trip to North Dakota and Minnesota to see our parents and relatives this year. Most of our spare time has been spent on our boat, cruising the scenic central Florida rivers and waterways. We have had a very gracious host in central Florida letting us use his home dock space while Little Ship is in the water. This has made it so much easier and more pleasant when we have wanted to go out. Jan teaches quilting still and works part time at JoAnn's Fabrics. She is also finding time to cook a Thanksgiving feast for all of us and to make dresses for the wedding. I still like to spend time I can find researching genealogies and writing web pages. I have extended the Swenson branch of the family back six more generations and added large side branches recently with the email help of Inge Johansson who lives in Sweden and is developing a local history of the region the Swenson family came from.



We are enjoying watching our family grow and are really blessed to have all of our children and grandchildren so close by. Our home has few quiet moments because of their frequent and enjoyable visits. And yet, there is a great peacefulness here knowing they are all so close. In effect, we have a year-around Christmas built-in. We love it!



Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year to You All!
Jan Al Amber



