

## 1992 MERRY CHRISTMAS!

As we look back over 1992 and try to give you a glimpse of what happened in our lives to keep our special far away friends and family up to date, it is hard to choose what to say with all of the excitement and ups and downs. The Lord has been very good to all of us. Bob and I have continued to work together on the IEEE Transactions on Neural Networks. I enjoy being able to work from my home and around the children's schedules which means I usually work from 10:00p.m. to 2:00am. My life seems to revolve around the kids and the journal and Bob's travels.

This is our sixth year of homeschooling! Jeremiah is in 5th grade, Joshua is in 2nd+ grade and Marilee has started Kindergarten. Jeremiah loves to read! I must search the home frequently to find out where he is hiding with a good book so that he can do his regular school work. He has inspired some of his friends to read and he enjoys his own lending library. Joshua has overcome the hurdle of learning to read. He improved dramatically after he got his first pair of glasses. He is actually asking to read out loud to me and his favorite books are Calvin Cartoons. However, we are afraid he has been too inspired by Calvin's antics as Joshua loves to tease and he keeps the whole family laughing. Marilee loves to do school work and the more the better! Once when I got busy helping Joshua, she continued to practice her writing. After awhile, Joshua asks her to count how many full pages of letters she had written and she counted 21. I had to convince her to stop and try something else. She also enjoys arts and crafts, cooking, and she loves to be read to. I am teaching her how to read this year. She says she wants to read so that she can read to me and so she can read about Jesus.

All 3 of the children love gymnastics classes. I still coordinate the homeschool gymnastics classes. We average going 3x's/week. Jeremiah is a very serious gymnast and he daily leads the others in exercising and stretching. Jeremiah and Marilee did gymnastic routines together in the swimming pool this summer. All 3 of the children are avid swimmers. Marilee is so proud as she can finally swim in the deep end and jump off the diving board. All 3 are taking swimming lessons this fall as we want to stay home all summer and swim in our own backyard pool.

Marilee's ballet recital was another highlight of the year. She looked so adorable in her yellow and purple tutu and ring of flowers for her hair. Bob had trouble finding her on the stage at first as he never sees her with smooth slicked back hair. Bob presented her with flowers after the performance and we took her and another friend out for a special treat afterwards. If I would have had my video camera, I think we would have won \$10,000. Marilee had stuffed her mouth with candy. I asked, "Marilee, how many pieces of candy have you eaten?" She proceeded to pull one piece of candy out after another from her mouth and placed them on the table while counting. Kids do say and do the darndest things.

Hockey, Hockey, Hockey all year long! Both boys love hockey. Luckily, both boys have very close friends on each of their teams, so it is fun to go to the practices, games and out of town tournaments.

Basketball, one of my favorite sports, is very enjoyable as Jeremiah has a terrific Christian coach and many of the players are his close friends. Joshua hopes to play team basketball next year.

In February we remodeled our kitchen, which is a lot more work than it seems. Our yard was improved this year as we added many plants and trees to our landscaping. However, because of the drought we lost most all of our transplanted trees as we underwatered them. We are not used to having so little water in rainy Seattle..

Birthday week, the first week in March, was special as Jack and Lenore Marks came for a visit. Lenore worked very hard and made my 38th Birthday party very memorable. Jeremiah (10), Joshua (8), and Marilee (5) enjoyed an exciting Birthday dinner at the top of the Space Needle with Grandad and Grandma and Bob and me. The famous dry ice Space Needle dessert was definitely a highlight as well as the view. One of the guests asked if they could video tape Marilee as they thought she was so cute dressed up in her fancy black and gold dress and gold Barbie bracelet that Grandma Lenore had gotten her. It was a busy time as they each also had a family party at home and a children's party.

In March we asked the Norris family to move from our home. They had lived with us for a year and it was time for them to have their own home.

Both boys also enjoyed baseball again this year.

In May, Bob flew to Rose Hulman Institute of Technology to receive a special honor. He was awarded The Distinguished Alumnus Award. They said this was for having... distinguished himself among his peers,...for having used his education for the betterment of mankind, ...and for bringing credit to his Alma Mater. Jack and Lenore and his Aunt Justine and Uncle Junior also came to see him receive his award. Bob enjoyed visiting my brother Rick and his wife Tammy in Farmersburg, In., and touring Jewett Printing. We enjoyed seeing videos of this when he returned and the kids especially liked seeing their cousin Jamie.

In July, I had surgery. Lenore rescued me and flew in to help us out. We greatly appreciate her help and kindness. Many of my friends came and visited and helped me too. It was a humbling time as I had to accept help and learn what it is like to be dependent. Reading, however, made the time pass much more quickly.

Ray, Bob's brother from Ohio, visited us for Bob's 42nd Birthday. We all enjoy Ray visiting. Ray thinks the Seattle oldie record shops are some of the best in the world.

Another very special time was in September when Charlie and Doris drove from Texas to visit us. We all had so much fun blackberry picking, playing cards, and taking a special trip across the mountains to Leavenworth. We took a tour of the Applets and Cotlets candy factory and the children gobbled down the delicious free samples. Grandpa Charlie attempted to teach Jeremiah and Josh how to fish with their new fishing poles. It was an experience in patience of Grandpa and the boys as the dock was crowded and the lines tangle up very easily. Picnics at the beach and in the back yard were one of Doris's favorite times. All of us wish we lived much closer as we miss out on so much being apart from family.

We are very grateful to be together as a family and that Bob has come home safely from his numerous adventures. Bob's year would sound like a monologue of a travel agent if we listed all of them. So we will only tell of a few. In September, just after the Olympics, Bob went to Madrid, Spain. He taught a short course there in neural networks. He enjoyed the shopping, flamenco dancers and seeing the Spanish culture. With tears in his eyes, he noticed the air and sewer pollution. He tasted unusual foods such as squid cooked in its own black ink.

The RNNS/IEEE Symposium on Neuroinformatics and Neurocomputing was held in Rostov-on-Don in Russia from October 7 - 10, 1992. Two years ago, Bob and guests from Russia and Japan planned and organized this conference over dinner in our dining room.. This planning happened before the breakup of U.S.S.R. It is exciting to see when plans really do happen as this conference seemed very iffy at times. Bob flew into Rostov-on-Don in Russia with two other Americans who were attending the conference. The Don river is said to separate Europe from Asia. Dr. Witali Dunin-Barkowski of the Neurocybernetics Research Institute, Rostov State University, Russia, served as the conference's General Chair. Bob was the International Chair.

The highlight of Bob's trip was dinner in a Moscow apartment of a Russian family. The apartment was in one of the countless high rises built around Moscow. Anatoly, the father, is a computer programmer who is working for a new private company specializing in optical pattern recognition. Natasha, the wife (and aunt of Witali Dunin-Barkowski) is working to establish a Christian school in Moscow. She asked us to mail some fund raising material for her in the States. The teenage son had been practicing his English, and conversed with the Americans pretty well. There is currently a greater freedom of religion in Russia than the United States. Actions, for example, have been levied against the University of Washington's chapter of Campus Crusade for Christ because the organization does not conform to some modern concepts of political correctness. Christianity and other religions, on the other hand, are discussed openly and embraced in Russian education and government institutions. Natasha's attempt to open a private Christian school in Moscow was impressive. She and Anatoly had been secret Christians throughout the rule of intolerant atheistic communism. Anatoly told Bob in broken English that 'Russia has lived to long without Christ.'

Bob was amazed at the inflation of the ruble. He was able to buy a fantastic breakfast for three people for \$0.35. He liked the Russian people but he could definitely see the damaging effects of a communist government. The

people had very little real concept of what a democracy is all about. The food was extremely greasy and in short supply for the Russian people. The buildings were very run down and everything looked very gray.

Bob and I flew to Beijing, CHINA on Nov. 1, 1992. This is the most awesome trip I have ever been on. I think about it almost every day. Bob was treated as a V.I.P. as he helped to organize their first International Joint Conference on Neural Networks in China. We were able to stay in a western hotel that was built for the Asian Games in 1990. They treated us to special Chinese banquets and a beautiful Chinese dance and music show. We ate unusual things such as jellyfish, turtle soup, Peking Duck, and 1,000 yr. old eggs. We were awed by seeing The Great Wall, The Forbidden City, Tinnamen Square, The Heavenly Palace and the silk markets. The millions of bicycles will forever be etched in our minds. It seemed like a wonderful idea on a sunny day for everyone to be riding bicycles, but when we saw them riding in a snowstorm and in the dark the reality of their lives began to be more clear. They carry everything on their bicycles including pigs, couches, coal, large bags of garbage and multiple numbers of people. We experienced riding in a rickshaw around Tinnamen Square and then fighting over the price of the ride as the peddler wanted to charge us a months wages for a 15 minute ride. Wherever I went, the Chinese people would be curious as I really stood out as a foreigner with my blond hair. Bob seemed to tower over most of the people.

Our trip was exceptional because our dream of meeting Xue Zhen and Ming's daughter Jing and son-in-law became a reality. We wanted to bring greetings and love from their parents who lived with us for 9 months and defected from China because of persecution. We were able to have meaningful conversations with Jing as she is a professor of English. We were surprised to find out what the Chinese are told of Americans. (most are all unemployed, starving, carry guns, are on drugs, and we are dying of air pollution) Jing found out that the Communist government really does lie about the United States. Their sharing with us was very precious to us. She told us that they live in a small two room compound with his family. They do have electricity and coal heat as of Nov. 1. However, they will never be able to save up enough to have a telephone and their community bathroom is non-flushing. She said she rides her bicycle 3 hours/day to get to work. Their cooking is all done outside in the community courtyard. Millions of cabbages are piled on the ground on the streets. She said that for very many years, cabbage is their only vegetable in winter. We did not see starvation like you see in Somalia, however, most Americans would not want to exist on their diet. Most meals consist of rice and cabbage. We did not see any Chinese people eating in nice restaurants. Both Jing and her husband are well educated and are professors, and they hope to work very hard and in 15 to 20 years, they hope the Chinese government will allow them to rent their own one room place. They felt they could not even afford to have one child. We were able to talk to them about God. She asked for my Bible. We continue to pray for them and the Chinese people and hope other believers will also. We were able to treat them to a wonderful dinner in the Beijing Hotel which is very grand, as it was built to host and impress President Nixon when he visited to open up China and help to end the terrible cultural revolution. The only people who were not in terrible poverty were the heads of the Communist Party who traveled around in Mercedes.

When we were asked to tell about our life style in the United States, we had to tone it way down as the truth to them would have seemed totally unbelievable.

Bob and I are learning a new appreciation for our democratic form of government, after Bob's trip to Russia and our trip to China. We were very disappointed at the outcome of our Presidential election. More than ever we can see how we need to keep our country vital with a free enterprise system and one who protects our religious freedom. We noticed that when the government provides the jobs, the government absolutely controls the people.

As I watched our children sing in the Christmas Program, I felt very grateful that we could celebrate and teach our children the real reason for the season JESUS ! We wish you a very Merry CHRISTmas!

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