

Dear family and friends,

Greetings and Happy New Year. I hope you had a wonderful Holiday season. That's "excusism" for "I didn't get this written in time to go in with Christmas cards".

"Did you get a picture of the tree?" Pat asked, as she swept up the remaining pine needles left after I dragged the drying pine tree out the door.

"No," was my response after a brief pause, "Not unless you count the Christmas Eve shots with the tree in the background.

That was the way 2002 went. As I sit here, I have to wonder what happened to it. It seems like only a few months ago we were recovering from 9-11, and yet that was over a year ago and I guess we are still recovering. But, 2002 is like the mouse trail across my computer screen, gone in an instant!

So, what did happen to 2002? I guess, I must say, I worked it to death. If you keep track of the nine year repeating cycles of your life, you will understand when I say I was in an 8 cycle which is business. I had major remodeling projects going all year. While all the work didn't get us out of the hole we were in, at least we quit digging! It became evident early on that the void in my inspection business was being filled to overflowing with general handyman work. While I missed the prestige of the "white collar" consulting business, I realized how much I enjoyed getting back to work with my hands creating things. I have built, moved and painted walls. I have made lights turn on and toilets shut off. I have created waterfalls and flower beds full of nature's beauty. My new motto became "Beautifying the neighborhood, one home at a time". I also found that in the process of creating beauty, I had also created friendships that I hope will never be lost. As of today, January 1, 2003, I am no longer doing pre-purchase home inspections but I am already filling my spring calendar with new remodeling projects.

While wood and tools take up my work days, my free time is consumed by the electronics that surround me at my desk. From interconnected computers to sound and video equipment, my office is a collage of sights and sounds. My screen saver is a continually changing photo screen and surround sound speakers fill the space with sounds of bubbling brooks and chirping birds to the Kingston Trio or Mozart. I have digitized pictures of family and friends and landscapes of all the beautiful places we have been. Music has been converted to digital MP3 files that can be stored on a CD containing hundreds of songs. Now, I am converting old movies and tapes to computer files I can retrieve and view at will. Nothing can take away the stresses of the day like memories of your kids first steps or award ceremonies where they were honored. My new office in the back of the house has windows on two sides that open onto the new deck and garden with waterfalls and feeding birds. It is certainly my favorite room.

Pat has settled into her job with the Secretary of State where she has been over two years now. Wow, has it been that long? She left behind a lot of stress and headaches at SIU and her former bosses have just recently moved into private practice so it is good that she left when she did.

Although she misses some of her old friends, she is certainly glad to be in this new environment. We have all heard about the life of a state worker but she is the exception. She works part of the day. I'm Just kidding; as you all know if you know Pat, you know she is a worker. She will do her work and yours, too, if you let her. But here she feels appreciated and enjoys her work.

Krystal, now 25, is living and working in Chicago. Actually, she is in Darien which is a SW suburb; but to all us down-staters, she is a Chicagoan. After three years experience teaching in Florida and here in Springfield, she finds herself in temporary teaching positions. While there are a lot of jobs in the suburbs, there are also a lot of people trying to get them. She wants to stay out of the "city" teaching so a tenure position is harder to find. She seems to have her foot in the door now so I expect her to call any day with the good news that she has a contract for next year. Her boyfriend, Steven Oh, has a good job with ICON, but he is on the road 2 weeks out of 3. It makes for some lonely nights; however, she has started several new stories/books and perhaps this will be her year to be published. She is also looking into furthering her education. Krystal and Steve were able to spend about 4 days with us this Christmas which was certainly enjoyed. Having them join us around the dinner table is much better than just a picture on my computer screen.

Kim, now a sophomore at Southeast High School, is growing all-too-fast into adulthood. She got her drivers license just after her birthday in October. While she doesn't take quite as many drives around the lake as Krystal did, she does like the freedom to be able to do so if she wishes. It is nice to have someone around to run after "fast food" on occasion. She is second in her class which sure makes us proud; but more than that, she is a good, caring person. She seems to have found her nitch in computers. She was tops in her freshman Pascal programming class made up primarily of upper-class boys and now she is doing the same thing in her Java programming class. She has gone from "the girl" to a respected peer. She is making good use of my "electronics genes." I can take some credit, can't I?

So, there you have it; 2002 for the Sriners in a nutshell. I am going to try to get better organized this year. I have started to use Outlook on my computer to track projects and tasks. I will add "write Christmas letter" to my task list for Dec 1, 2003 so Pat can include it with our Christmas cards, and I won't have to make-due with another New Years note like this one.

So, with this note, we send best wishes for you and yours for a happy and fulfilling 2003. Happy New Year! And a belated Merry Christmas.

The Sriners
Dulany, Pat, Krystal, Kim