

December 31, 1993

Happy Belated Holidays!

We're sorry about getting these notes out so late, but we've been away over the holidays and just haven't had the time to write. We've just completed a short vacation in Alabama, and with all the rushing around buying gifts and visiting the in-laws there just hasn't been much time left in the schedule to send out Christmas greetings.

1993 has been a hectic year and in some ways we are glad that it's drawing to a close. Unfortunately, 1994 is already setting up to be just as hectic. The only one who seems to have much free time in her schedule is Teresa, who is now two and three-quarter years old.

Teresa has a bit o' razz-ma-tazz in her. She just loves to sing and imitate her big sister's tap dancing routines. She's just a regular show off. Teresa is very curious about everything and has a penchant for asking questions as all young children do. She has a special love for trains, perhaps stemming from dad taking her down to the train station in Normal to see the big ones come through. Dad had to take her on a special side trip to Chattanooga, Tennessee, this past week, just to let her ride on a inclined railway up Lookout Mountain.

Another of her loves is Barney, the TV dinosaur. Teresa loves to watch her "Barney" video. Without a doubt, she has a bit of Evil Knieval in her -- she's a real dare devil. Her favorite trick is jumping over and between things. She's been swimming at the YMCA since she was 15 months old; she loves to splash and paddle like a dog. She can already swim the entire length of the pool. In addition to all this, she is very talkative (except when Rebecca is reading books to her) and somewhat aggressive (to hold her own against Rebecca).

And talking about Rebecca... She is now eight and is advanced beyond her years. She is in the third grade and her fourth year of home schooling. She is a good mathematician and a superb reader. She is now able to solve simple algebraic equations and often reads late into the night. We have been steering her into some of the world's great literature. Recently she has read *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, *The Three Musketeers*, and *Black Beauty*. She has an especial love for the lives of the saints and reads every biography that we give her. Right now she's reading about St. Thomas Aquinas, the "Dumb Ox." She made her First Communion May 16th.

Earlier this year Rebecca took top honors at a science fair for homeschoolers. She received a perfect score on her project which dealt with the relative sizes of plants and seeds. She is in her third year of tap dancing, and this summer shared center stage with "Miss Janet," her tappy-tap teacher, at the ISU Shakespeare Festival.

Rebecca remains incredibly busy. She is taking her nth year of swimming; she has been swimming since she was 18 months old. She has just begun taking gymnastics at the YMCA.

She is in her 3rd year of Brownies and has earned dozens of "try it" badges. (She has an outstanding troop leader.)

Rebecca's home schooling continues to go well, even if Teresa tries to help out on a minute-by-minute basis. Carolyn, as you can imagine, works hard at keeping Rebecca working in 12 different subject areas. As Rebecca says, "My favorite subject is science, writing, math, phonics, and health and safety." That's a lot of favorites! Science is the focus of Carl's home schooling work with Rebecca. They can often be found doing experiments in the kitchen or at the ISU Physics Department. Carl and Rebecca like to collect caterpillars and watch them metamorphose into butterflies or moths. Rebecca's interests also extend to her pet gerbil named Jessica and her fish aquarium.

Carolyn finds a bit of relief in her Catholic home school group. This group of about 8 or 10 families provides her the opportunity to share her concerns and frustrations with other parents. She seems to enjoy planning field trips for the group. Recently our entire family went on field trips to the water plant, water reclamation district, and aquaculture building to see talapia fish being commercially raised. A couple of weeks ago the children put on a nativity play.

As a gesture of thanks for Carolyn doing such a fine job with the children, Carl saw to it that Carolyn and Rebecca had the opportunity to attend Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama, December 17-19. This was an opportunity for Carolyn to get away from the ever-present responsibility of taking care of Teresa. From all aspects it appears that Carolyn had a good time. (We're not sure, however, if she enjoyed being turned upside down in the 5 degrees of freedom chair or the spinning motion encountered in the multi-axis chair.)

All our lives were touched with sadness this past summer when Carl's brother David died of cancer. David, a warm and gentle guy, noticed chest pain at Thanksgiving time, 1992, and a few days later it was diagnosed as lung cancer. The cancer had already spread to his brain by that time and there was nothing that could be done. David suffered like a saint and passed away quietly at 43 years of age on August 10th.

Both Carolyn and Carl spend a lot of time working for their parish and diocese. They have been teaching Natural Family Planning for nearly 11 years. At the Diocese' Summer Catechetical Institute in Peoria, Carl received the Outstanding Catechist of the Year award for 1993. In addition to teaching NFP, he has been teaching adult education and CCD classes for high school juniors and seniors at Epiphany parish.

In September Bishop Myers appointed Carl to a temporary position on the Diocesan Pastoral Council. He, along with several others, will be running a diocese-wide meeting dealing with chastity education during April, 1994. Bishop Myers also requested that Carl serve as an advisor and write an appendix for his forthcoming pastoral which will be published January 9, 1994. The pastoral will deal with parents as the primary educators of their children. Carl was also asked by the Office of Family Life to serve on a committee for the religious education of the family. What else could he do but accept?

That about rounds out 1993 at the Wenning household. 1994 promises to be another exciting and hectic year. We hope that all is well with you and yours. May the blessings of this Christmas past continue with you throughout the year to come.

The Wenning Family

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