

Christmas 1994

Greetings from the Wenning Family

Please accept our wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! As 1994 draws to a close we are thinking of our many blessings. This has been a very good year in many ways and we want to take this opportunity to share the good news. We hope you'll do the same.

The kids are doing well. Teresa is now three and one-half years old. She just loves to imitate Rebecca. She tries her best to tap dance, goes regularly to Children's Church, and swims twice a week. She can swim 10 yards without a float belt. Her teacher calls her "Little Lady." Though not "formally enrolled" in home schooling, Teresa has gotten to know her letters and numbers and will write several of them upon request. She's even used her knowledge of numbers and letters to become a computer hacker. Teresa and Rebecca participated in a parade at the Gladiolus Festival in Momence, IL, this past August. They took first place under the theme "Peace to all in Gladland." They won a trophy, a blue ribbon, and were featured in the Momence Progress Reporter newspaper. Teresa has become very independent. She loves to talk on the telephone and even, once, ran away to a place a block removed. She's hard to keep down. She wants to cross the street on her own. This past June Teresa was overjoyed to see that the flower pot outside our front door was converted into a nesting site by a pair of mourning doves. They laid two eggs and we all watched as they fledged. Carl enjoyed toying with the birds. They became so used to our presence that we were able to pick them up from time to time (under protest of course). Carolyn calls Teresa a "strong willed" child. She has to be that way growing up in the shadow of her big sister Rebecca.

Like all of us Rebecca is another year older. She is now nine years old and the apple of her father's eye. Rebecca is fully involved in all that she does. She is now working on her fourth year of tap dancing. Her teacher, Miss Janet, always tells the students, "Watch Rebecca! She knows how to do it." Rebecca has just completed her second semester of violin lessons and performed flawlessly at the recital. On the feast of Christ the King (November 20) she played "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" for about 1,200 just before Sunday Mass. Rebecca is also at the head of her home schooling class. She is now in fourth grade, but is doing fifth grade math. As active as ever in scouting, Rebecca "bridged" this year from Brownies to Junior Girl Scouts. Her troop leaders, Dave and Joyce Rutledge, are the greatest! Rebecca has had a few ups and downs this year. She tied for first place in a science fair competition for all age groups. Her project dealt with the pendulum. Rebecca was able to meet "Q" from Star Trek and that she liked. She did not enjoy having four baby teeth extracted in January and having to make the decision to put her beloved gerbil, Jessica, to sleep in October. The "rat" was three years old and was suffering from cancer. Rebecca's newest hobby is stamp collecting. She enjoys helping Dad at the planetarium and periodically gives short "sky lectures" to the local astronomy club. Rebecca told some Indian legends to a group of adults at the Decatur Area Astronomy Club meeting in August.

Carolyn has had her hands full caring for Teresa and Rebecca and the house. She went on a one-day Lenten retreat in March. Carl really enjoyed being alone with the kids, however, as it provided a great time for them to share. Carolyn often thinks that her main tasks are taxi driver and secretary. Carolyn really enjoyed herself on the family vacation during June. Our old but trusty van carried everyone across Iowa to South Dakota, Wyoming, and Nebraska. We toured the Badlands, the Black Hills (seeing "Mount Rushmore" according to Teresa), Devil's Tower, the Oregon Trail, and Boy's Town. Now completing our 11th year of teaching Natural Family Planning, we attended the Couple to Couple League convention in Omaha for five days at the end of the trip. We then went to Florida, Missouri, to see the birthplace of Mark Twain, one of Rebecca's personal favorites. Besides taking care of the family, Carolyn also finds time to care for the house. This year she oversaw the replacement of the roof and a sliding glass door in the family room. Carolyn also enjoys taking hikes and walking the track with Rebecca at the YMCA.

Carl has been a dynamo of action this year, too. Early in the year he published a 16-page booklet dealing with the May 10, 1994 annular eclipse of the sun which was visible from central Illinois. Some 500 schools adopted the publication as their official observing guide. Carl obtained some 30 "spots" of TV, radio, and newspaper coverage for this event. From the sales of this booklet Carl was able to purchase a \$8,000 automation system for the planetarium. In July Carl's job at Illinois State University evolved. No longer is Carl solely the planetarium director. He now is teacher education program director for the Department of Physics. The first thing he did as part of his new job was to totally revamp two senior-level physics courses. In August he commenced teaching physics at University High School. During this month he also became a student for the first time in 16 years. He entered the doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction at Illinois State. In October he received word that he was awarded a \$110,000 grant from the Illinois State Board of Education to improve teaching for science literacy at the high school level. Carl will supervise some 40 high school teachers, principals, and university faculty as Project Director. On November 19th Carl stole the show by being featured on the front page of the area's largest newspaper, the Pantagraph. The article was about him and his grant. A few days later he was featured on radio for another grant which he received from Illinois Power Company to build scientific instruments for University High School. Carl left the country for 10 days in October-November. He traveled with his mother and six others to Bolivia to observe a total eclipse of the sun. They were successful in doing so, and Carl was really pleased with the views he obtained of the southern heavens. Carl was disappointed not to be able to eat any guinea pigs, but he did satisfy his craving for weird food by eating the udder meat -- you know, cow udder!

Well, that about wraps up 1994 for the Wenning family. We hope that your year went well. We would really love to hear from you, so get out those pens and pencils and get them sharpened. (You can also use the phone or Internet!) May the blessings of Almighty God be with you this Christmas and always.

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