

Christmas 1995

### **Greetings from the Wenning Family**

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

As in the past, the Wenning family has been pretty active during the year. We found time to go on a couple of one-day adventures to different points within the state of Illinois, and a bit more time for a couple of longer trips. In May everyone traveled to the Milwaukee, WI, area for a couple of days while Rebecca spent two days at the Schoenstatt Retreat Center and Carl, Carolyn, and Teresa visited the Milwaukee zoo, the National Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, and a few of the local eateries. In September everyone journeyed to Florida to see Disney World and went aboard the Big Red Boat for a five-day, four-night adventure to the Bahamas with a host of other family members. Carl, Carolyn, and Rebecca had an opportunity to snorkel in the open ocean and in a lagoon in the very place where the TV series "Gilligan's Island" and the movie "Blue Lagoon" were shot. Teresa remained shipboard with Grandma Wenning swimming and generally entertaining herself with the numerous Looney Tunes figures found there. Continuing the international flavor of activities, whole families from Bolivia and Cameroon dropped by for visits to the Wenning household during 1995.

Teresa, our youngest, is now nearly five years old. In many ways she's more active than anyone in the entire household. She has a tremendous amount of energy and is always on the go. We've decided to channel some of her energy into all sorts of activities. She's involved in swimming at the YMCA and is making constant headway. She is involved in Children's Church, and enjoys having books read to her. One of her favorite books is "Curious George." Teresa loves to spend time with the neighbor kids, and it's hard to keep her from climbing all over everything. This past August she was climbing over a neighbor's porch handrail and accidentally fell to the ground by way of a rather sturdy bush. One of the branches of the bush entered her mouth knocking out one of her baby teeth. She needed oral surgery to repair the damage, but she's doing fine now.

Teresa is too energetic to begin home schooling just yet, though she knows her numbers and letters and can write her name. She shows a great deal of technological prowess and can run our home computer with ease. She knows how to point and click with the mouse and has come to recognize the meaning of dozens of words like "play, open, close, exit, and save" just by playing with the computer. When Carolyn asks Carl how to do something on the computer, he usually refers the question to Teresa. Teresa then helps Mom to load and run programs. Teresa is quite a showoff in the children's room of the Normal Public Library where she often has small groups of children gather around watching as

she plays the computer games. Teresa's favorite pastimes seem to consist of working with technology -- TV, VCR, stereo, tape deck, remote controls, and telephone (she has lots of numbers memorized), and listening to the songs of Michael and Janet Jackson. Not bad for a four-year-old. Yet another of her favorite pastimes is applying makeup, perfume, and deodorant, and putting on dress-up clothes and tap shoes!

Rebecca, now ten, continues to grow and mature. Most of her days are focused on home schooling. She's in her sixth year now and has been home schooled since kindergarten. Though she is in the fifth grade, she is doing seventh grade math and has also excelled in music and physical education. Rebecca is formally studying twelve subjects this year. They include: science, math, language arts, phonics, religion, history, map skills/geography, penmanship, spelling, art, music, and physical education. Rebecca has improved dramatically in playing the violin. She now has two teachers, one private and another at Colene Hoose Elementary School next door. (She attends the strings class at Hoose twice a week, and practices intensively for 20 minutes each day.) She can play a little bit of bluegrass as well as traditional symphonic pieces. She played a couple of violin pieces at Lucca Grill in downtown Bloomington where on Friday nights they have a strolling violinist who visits diners at table. She's slated to play at midnight Mass on Christmas, and is working with a self-made quartet (violin, piano, flute, and organ) of neighborhood children and adults. Since she has been swimming since nearly two years of age, Rebecca has now reached "shark" status at the YMCA. She's too young to take the life saving class, but that will probably come next. Unfortunately, Rebecca had a fall at the swimming pool in July that cost her some stitches and five weeks of class. Rebecca took a short hiatus from tap dancing this fall, but will return to it this spring. Unfortunately her schedule is so full, that she will only be able to do so at the expense of Girl Scouts. She has moved up from the rank of Brownie to the Junior Girl Scouts where she is now in her second year. Rebecca's favorite past times are reading and writing and playing educational games on the computer. She also enjoys cross-stitch and playing with her pet hamster "Goldie" who will be one in March.

The number of extracurricular activities that Rebecca involves herself in is quite large. She does so with the support of Mom who now believes that she has the permanent title of taxi driver. This year she has taken a "signing class" for the deaf, a computer technology course which Dad taught, and a course about Laura Ingalls Wilder -- author of the "Little House on the Prairie" series. She was interviewed by the Pantagraph, our local newspaper, about the role of men in Girl Scouts. Rebecca and Dad went on a camping weekend with the Girl Scouts in October. Rebecca has also joined Dad in a puppeteering ministry at Children's Church. Rebecca, along with Teresa, participated in the Gladiolus Festival kids' parade in Momence, IL, this past August. Rebecca took first prize in her division as the "Little Old Lady from Gladland." Teresa managed to achieve second place in her division. She was dressed like a cat; Mom helped along dressed like a witch. Teresa is now taking over some of Mom's duties like dusting, washing dishes, cleaning the hamster cage, and folding towels. Mom calls Teresa her "little helper."

Carolyn busied herself this year with home schooling and planning a trip to Disney World and the Bahamas for the family. She took charge of the herculean task to come up with seventy volunteers to manage a Birth Right booth at the five-day McLean County Fair in August. She did a tremendous job of

arranging the schedule and getting people to watch over the booth and answer questions. The whole Wenning family spent time at the booth during the four-day event. She has begun to take a little time out for herself this year. She even spent some time reading some 35 books as part of the Normal Library's Adults Reading Kids' Stuff program. One of Carolyn's newly-discovered hobbies is watching the wildlife activity in the backyard. She enjoys feeding the birds and squirrels, and is amused by the opossum that periodically shows up to eat the bird seed that gets scattered on the ground. Carolyn is also kept busy with home schooling. She makes teaching assignments, arranges field trips, and co-edits the local Catholic home school newsletter.

Carl continues with his work at the planetarium, though he spends most of his time running the physics teacher education program at ISU. Over the summer he wrote and had published a 174-page *Clinical Experiences & Student Teaching Handbook* which the State Board of Education is now looking at for adoption for all teacher education programs within the state of Illinois. Carl continues with his doctoral-level course work in the department of Curriculum and Instruction at ISU. He has now completed 18 of the 60 required semester credit hours of work. After that comes the comprehensive exams and the dissertation. Carl is not yet sure of the area of his dissertation work, but it will probably focus on some area of physics or science education at the post-secondary level. To add to Carl's many responsibilities, it now appears that the planetarium will soon have a separate office and shop. About ten years ago he made a proposal to the university administration which is finally being acted upon. He's quite happy with the possibility. Carl's favorite pastime is writing. He wrote a couple of journal articles earlier this year, and plans to spend the holiday break writing at least two others. In June Carl was proud and honored to serve as baptismal sponsor for a new nephew -- Jerromy Thomas Young. In August a new niece, Gina Olivia Broeker, made her appearance to Carl's great delight.

Well, that about wraps up 1995 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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