

## Christmas 2009

**Greetings and felicitations from Carl, Carolyn, and Teresa Wenning of Normal, Illinois!**

**Dear Family and Friends,** We started our December 2008 holidays with a terrific ice and windstorm, and were without electricity for more than 30 hours in the days just before Christmas. This was followed by more snow and ice, and this almost kept us from getting together as a family for Christmas. Rebecca and Chrystian were “stranded” in the Chicago area due to the heavy snow that they received. Then, the day before Christmas, the weather broke and they were able to come home. They came home again for New Year’s Day. Over the January 3-4 weekend, Carolyn and Carl returned the favor by visiting with Chrystian and Rebecca in Crystal Lake, IL.

As usual, 2009 has been another hectic year for the Wenning family here in Illinois. Teresa graduated from University High School on May 22<sup>nd</sup>. Unfortunately (but perhaps not really), she was unable to attend her graduation ceremony as our family journeyed to Europe in celebration of the event. Agnes (Carl’s mother) joined us for a Baltic Cruise from May 14-27. We visited Copenhagen, Stockholm, Helsinki, St. Petersburg, Tallinn (Estonia), Gdansk (Poland), and Oslo. (You might remember that Carl took Rebecca to Russia for her high school graduation in 2003 and she similarly had to forego her high school graduation ceremony.) This was Agnes’ second time to Russia, and this time we celebrated her 81<sup>st</sup> birthday in St. Petersburg. Three days after we returned from Europe, Teresa departed to Arizona for a week to spend some time with her boyfriend Cody, his father and grandfather. They visited the Grand Canyon and saw Jerome and the red rocks of Sedona. Shortly after returning from Arizona, Teresa was “adopted” by a baby duckling (female mallard) that she found abandoned along the roadside on June 18<sup>th</sup>. Teresa brought her home and decided to call her “Peep”. Peep followed her everywhere. She enjoyed sleeping on Teresa’s chest and inside a pillowcase. We were eventually able to give the duck to a local farmer who said that he would raise the duck along with his chickens. He renamed her “Desi” for deserted.



Teresa started to attend Illinois State University on August 18<sup>th</sup>. She is planning to become a registered nurse, but is still considering a few other options. Teresa is working a couple days a week as a server at Bob Evans Restaurant. She has been there two years now. Teresa still has her artistic talent. In October, she re-painted and re-decorated her bedroom. She, also, is once again a church lector.

Rebecca finished her first year of teaching at Cary-Grove HS in Cary, IL, and her second year of physics teaching in June. This new setting is much more appealing to Rebecca due to the better-performing students. During September, the National Science Teachers Association honored Rebecca by naming her a 2009 Astellas-NSTA fellow. As part of the recognition, she received a fellowship with NSTA’s New Science Teacher Academy. As part of this academy, for the next three years she will participate in a project called *e-Mentoring for Student Success* where she is paired up with more experienced mentors. Various discussions and “role-playing” situations are held between those in the network. She also received, along with 138 other new teachers from all across the nation, an all-expense-paid trip to Philadelphia to the national NSTA convention this coming spring.

From June 17<sup>th</sup> through July 2<sup>nd</sup>, Rebecca and her dad co-taught a new graduate course of their own design, PHYSICS 489.01 – *Physical Science for Middle School Teachers*. Teaching this course so impressed Rebecca that by July 6<sup>th</sup> she decided to start a Masters degree in Science Education at Illinois Institute of Technology in downtown Chicago. Who knows? She might even go on to earn a Ph.D. in Science Education and take a career in teacher education similar to her father’s own. She expects to earn her Masters degree by the end of next summer. She is a Big Sister to a needy child in Crystal Lake, was a Bible study leader at her church during the summer, is a church lector, and is now preparing students for Confirmation. She, also, continues to volunteer at a local no-kill animal shelter with Chrystian.

Chrystian, Rebecca’s husband, took on a new job working with Motorola Corporation as a software engineer. He was working in Buffalo Grove, IL (a suburb of Chicago) on a “dark project” that requires a US government security clearance. Unfortunately, he is unable to tell us what this work is about. After a few months of demonstrating his capacity as a project leader there, he was moved up to a position with greater responsibility. He is now working on developing an operating system for one of Motorola’s new pieces of electronic hardware. He interviewed for a full-time, permanent position with Motorola in November. He is still awaiting a response for the position.

In September 2008, Carolyn helped her father, Tony Nodus, move from Midtown Towers, a senior high rise, to River Valley Supportive Living in Kankakee, IL. On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, Carolyn’s father had a stroke that was caused by a blood clot. He



had some memory loss, was hospitalized for 10 days, then was moved to a nursing home in Kankakee for physical and occupational therapy. The hope was to get him better so he could return to River Valley Supportive Living. He never got better and was diagnosed with pneumonia, congestive heart failure, and a twisted colon. He was hospitalized, again, on June 9<sup>th</sup> for 10 days, with the colon non-surgically corrected, and then transferred to a nursing home in Normal, IL to be closer to his family. The 2-hour trip was made in an ambulance during a bad storm. Another hospital trip was on July 6<sup>th</sup> when a decision was made that he was not healthy enough for colon (colostomy) surgery. He was returned to the nursing home on July 23<sup>rd</sup> in Normal where he passed away on July 30<sup>th</sup> with Carolyn and Teresa at his side. Tony, who was 83, was cremated and his memorial service was on August 14<sup>th</sup>. Carolyn's sister, Pam, had to come from Washington State. Their cousin, Ruth Nodus from New York, was in Chicago at the time so was able to attend the service as well. Carolyn's father was buried at the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery with full military rites.

Carolyn has now been a Pharmacy Technician at the Bloomington Wal-Mart pharmacy for three years. She is still working full-time and has to be well organized to attend to any family matters that includes taking care of the family's five cats: Catarina, Phyllis, Mystique, Romeo, and Pac Man. She has the backyard animals to feed as well – these are mostly squirrels along with a few opossums and raccoons that are eating us out of house and home.

Carolyn's mother's house in Momence is still for sale. Carl and Carolyn spent some weekends there doing yard work, cleaning, painting, and having somebody come in to do some remodeling work. (They even managed canoeing one weekend.) The house has been on the market since March 2008. It is a nice house along the Kankakee River.

From October 2-6 Carolyn and Carl toured New York City for a well-deserved five-day vacation. They visited all the important tourist destinations, and spent two nights on Broadway seeing *Lion King* and *Phantom of the Opera*. While there, they were able to visit with Carolyn's cousin Ruth (who lives on the east side of Manhattan) and nephew Gary Kawamura. Gary gave up a rather lucrative job in the Seattle area this past summer to return to graduate school to earn his Masters degree in Art History. He is currently enrolled at Stoney Brook University on Long Island not far from New York City.

During April Carl gave invited talks in the physics departments of Tarleton State University in Texas and at his alma mater Ohio State University in Columbus from where he graduated in 1976. He was asked to speak about the Physics teacher education program he had built at ISU over the past 14 years and from which he had retired as director. Also during the spring semester Carl started working 40% time at ISU even though he is formally retired. He wrote three grants, and two were funded. He taught spring, summer, and autumn university courses, as well as an adult education course during October.

Carl traveled to Ohio to participate in a family reunion on July 5<sup>th</sup> commemorating the 53<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of his sister Janice's birth. Jan passed away when she was only 33 from melanoma cancer. From July 26<sup>th</sup> to August 1<sup>st</sup> two of Carl's nieces from Ohio visited. Gina and Jodie spent a week going to the fair, picnicking, attending stage performances, dining out, and shopping. A week before, Carl's brother Tim stopped in for a brief visit on his way through town. Carl returned to Ohio again on Sunday, September 27<sup>th</sup>, to attend the Muhlenkamp family reunion at Zens City (known locally as Sharpsburg), and yet again to visit November 28-30. Carl purchased a new GMC truck on October 10<sup>th</sup> as his 12-year-old Ford Ranger finally died.

On October 17<sup>th</sup> Carl once again became the president of the Illinois Section of the American Association of Physics Teachers. Carl is the first person in the 68-year history of the Association to be elected to two terms as president. He considers it quite an honor. He continues to be a popular public speaker, giving talks about physics, astronomy, and history. He gave public talks about the 1633 trial of Galileo in Normal, Springfield, and Champaign during September, October, and November respectively. Throughout all of 2009 he presented some two-dozen talks dealing with various aspects of astronomy and physics teaching. Carl continues to be active in the Twin City Amateur Astronomers and has written the 50-year history of the organization. The club's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be on February 4, 2010. Carl is serving as the program chairman for the North Central Region Astronomical League convention that will be held locally April 16-17, 2010. At the club's 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting on February 17<sup>th</sup>, Carl was recognized with a number of observing and service awards.

During 2008, Carl worked diligently with five other physics teachers to write the booklet *The Role, Qualifications, Education, and Professional Development of Secondary Physics Teachers*. It was accepted as a policy statement of the American Association of Physics Teachers and published during July 2009. Some 15,000 copies were distributed across the United States during the summer and autumn. He wrote an invited chapter "Building social consciousness through civic engagement: Lessons from physics" for a book to be published in 2010, and had the article "Scientific epistemology: How scientists know what they know" published in the *Journal of Physics Teacher Education Online*.

One of Carl's physics teacher education students worked at FermiLab particle accelerator outside Chicago over the summer. His research project landed him a national honor, being invited to the Science and Engineering Research Challenge (SERCh) competition. Both Carl and Andrew Gillespie traveled on a two-day all-expenses-paid trip to Oak Ridge National Lab in Knoxville, TN, November 8-9. Even though Andy did not win the competition, they both had a good time.

Carl and Carolyn traveled to Chicago with a parish group on October 24<sup>th</sup> to visit two religious sites. They visited St. Stanislaus Kostka Church (Sanctuary of Divine Mercy) in Chicago and Marytown, National Shrine of St. Maximilian Kolbe in Libertyville, IL. Part of the trip was lunch at the Czerwone Jabluszko (Red Apple), a Polish buffet restaurant. Well, that about covers the year 2009 for our family...

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year* from our family to yours!

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