

## 2012 Christmas Greetings!

Dear Family and Friends,

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!** Greetings and felicitations from the Carl and Carolyn Wenning family of Normal, Illinois! Believe it or not, this is our 20<sup>th</sup> annual Christmas newsletter, having started the series in 1993. We hope that it is as much fun for you to read these newsletters as it has been for us to write them. There is great pleasure for us recording and sharing our family history that began on May 29, 1982, when many of you were in Illinois to attend our marriage ceremony. Can you believe it that more than 30 years have passed since that time? It's very hard for us to accept that Carl has been in Illinois for more than 34 years now, and for Carolyn in Bloomington-Normal since 1977. When Carl moved to town, he was 25; this past month he turned 60! Can you believe it? For us, these annual newsletters constitute valuable family history, something we are rarely able to share otherwise with so many of our friends and family scattered across the country and around the world.



Once again, the past year has proven to be incredibly busy for us – filled abundantly with the Lord's blessings, but with its sad moments as well. The family ended 2011 with an interesting event. On December 30<sup>th</sup> Carl was invited on stage at the *Barn II Dinner Theater* in Goodfield, IL, to play the role of Scrooge in an impromptu 10-minute rendition of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Teresa and her friend Michael were present to watch. Carl was dolled up with a top hat and red scarf and we've been told that he played the unscripted role admirably! Scrooge, you need to know, is one of Carl's heroes – the renewed Scrooge that is, the one "who knew better than any man how to keep the spirit of Christmas." All had a great laughable time.

Carl and Teresa visited with Chrystian, Rebecca, and "baby" Thérèse from January 5-8<sup>th</sup>. During this visit they assisted with the care of Thérèse. All five traveled to Milwaukee to visit the gardens known as "The Domes" and then to have lunch at Mader's German Restaurant with Carl's college buddy Mike Bakich – senior editor at *Astronomy* magazine – and his lovely wife Holley.

We were all deeply, deeply saddened by the news that a dear family friend from Coldwater, Ohio – Doris Goettemoeller – passed away at 58 years of age on January 13<sup>th</sup>. Carl and his mother Agnes had visited with Doris two days before Christmas and she seemed to be doing well despite having cancer. She had been diagnosed with ovarian cancer earlier in the year, and it was announced just before Christmas that the cancer had metastasized into brain cancer. She was re-hospitalized on January 9<sup>th</sup> when her condition was downgraded. Doris' husband Charlie was one of Carl's closest friends during their high school days. Carl and Doris had attended the Immaculate Conception High School senior prom together back in 1971 and he had a special place in his heart for her. Carl returned to Ohio for the funeral that his mother also attended. Doris is greatly missed.

Carolyn, Carl, Teresa, and Michael celebrated Carolyn's 53<sup>rd</sup> birthday on February 4<sup>th</sup> by dining out at *The Bayern Stube*, an authentic German restaurant in Gibson City, IL. From February 18-26 Carolyn returned to Crystal Lake to assist with the care of granddaughter Thérèse, allowing Rebecca and Chrystian to have some time to themselves.

From February 24-26 Carl traveled south to assist his work colleague Ken Wester with a *Science Bowl* competition at the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science – a nationally recognized school of academic excellence where Ken taught for 19 years before being hired to work at Illinois State University. While in Columbus, MS, Carl was able to get an hour-long guided tour of the "closed to the public" *Riverview Mansion*. It has been described in the National Register of Historic Places as "the finest example of Greek Revival architecture in the nation." Wow! He really appreciated getting a good "Southern education" from Ken, a long-time Mississippian. Carl returned with a greatly improved impression of the South in general and Mississippi in particular thanks to Ken and his many kind friends. (We'll overlook the problems with gambling! ☺)

During May, and following a visit with Carl's sister Beverly and brother-in-law Edward in Boulder, CO, Carl joined up in Denver with his Michigan State University graduate school friend Jeff Hunt. The two headed west to view the scenic wonders of Colorado (biking 16 miles down Glenwood Canyon) and Utah (hiking Arches National Monument) and to observe the May 20<sup>th</sup> annular eclipse of the sun from Page, Arizona. Carl and Jeff joined up with



two other buddies also from graduate school in the late 1970s – Mike Bakich and Tim Skonieczny – in Page. The event was quite a success in more than one way. Carl met up again with Torsten and Marie Tillmann from Sankt Augustin, Germany, who he had met on the desert trail to Corona Arch while in Utah. A week after returning home, Carl and Carolyn were able to view the movement of Venus across the face of the Sun on June 5<sup>th</sup>. Carl observed the phenomenon telescopically with about 400-500 guests at Sugar Grove Nature Center while Carolyn observed with solar glasses from the Wal-Mart parking lot.



Carl, along with Ken Wester, received a \$3,000 grant to hold two Mini Modeling Workshops during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> weeks of June. A total of 36 teachers attended these two workshops. Carl also received a \$9,800 grant to start the ISU Beekeeping Club that presented introductory workshops on April 21<sup>st</sup> and October 13<sup>th</sup>. About 40 people attended these workshops. And speaking of beekeeping... Carl was delighted to find out this spring that his beekeeping friend, Fr. Jan Vokál, was ordained bishop of Hradec Králové in the Ecclesiastical province of Prague in the Czech Republic. Fr. Jan had served as an official in the Vatican's Secretariat of State after departing the Diocese of Peoria where he served as assistant pastor at our local parish church. You can imagine how, a few years ago, Carl was stunned to receive an email from the Vatican. (*My God, what have I done now?*) Fortunately, the email was from Fr. Jan who had become Pope John Paul II's "official beekeeper." He had a few questions (Fr. Jan, not the pope) for Carl. Fr. Jan, it appears, was keeping several hives atop the Vatican! Evidently Pope John Paul II liked his honey, and Carl was happy to advise his beekeeper!

We travelled to Wisconsin over the Memorial Day weekend to celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary that occurred on May 29<sup>th</sup>. Most of our time was spent in and around central Wisconsin such as Baraboo where we visited the International Crane Foundation, the Mid-America Train Museum, House on the Rock, and Dodgeville where we stayed overnight in *The Float* – a Viking fantasy suite at the *Don Q Inn*.

We lost our family cat, Catarina, on Tuesday, June 12<sup>th</sup>. She was suffering from cancer and had to be put down. She was nearly 16 years old, and was our first family cat. We all greatly miss her, but feel that this was the right thing to do in light of the fact that she was slowly starving to death due to mal-absorption of the intestine.



Teresa bought a house on Thursday, June 14<sup>th</sup>. Carolyn provided assistance and Carl provided a bit of financial backing, but just a small amount. She is now living in Bloomington, not far from St. Joseph's Medical Center where she works as a phlebotomist – drawing blood – in conjunction with her medical lab science major. Teresa is scheduled to graduate in May of 2014. She still volunteers at Birthright and enjoys fostering dogs for Wishbone Canine Rescue.

Chrystian, Rebecca, and Thérèse came for a 3-day visit June 28-30. Carl returned the visit when he joined them for supper in Lake Zurich, IL, on July 6<sup>th</sup>. They had dinner at a traditional German restaurant. Carl was visiting in nearby Lincolnshire, attending the 2012 Astronomical League convention.

When returning home, a car – whose driver ran a red light – broadsided his truck. Fortunately, the driver was making a right turn and only crinkled the right rear quarter panel of the truck. The other driver's insurance company took full responsibility for the repairs. Teresa was similarly rear-ended by a careless driver in Bloomington on May 16<sup>th</sup>. Fortunately, the damage there was minor too.

Chrystian and Rebecca continue to work at their respective positions – software engineer for Iusacell of Mexico City and physics teacher at Cary-Grove High School in Cary, IL, respectively. Thérèse turned two (Can you believe it?) on October 16<sup>th</sup> and is now enrolled for three hours a day two days per week in a Montessori school where she is very comfortable. Chrystian works on his programming at the school, looking in from time to time to see how Thérèse is doing. She is now learning to speak both English and Spanish, and Chinese is coming soon!

We traveled to Ohio to visit with Carl's mother over the June 2-4 weekend to belatedly celebrate her birthday. During mid August, Carl and Teresa traveled to Ohio where Teresa had a great time working with grandma Agnes to make hospital "scrubs". All three traveled to downtown Dayton over the course of a few days to visit various historical sites associated with the work of Wilbur and Orville Wright.

In early July Carl received an order for 650 whiteboards to be delivered to the Detroit metropolitan area. He and Teresa worked on the job for about two weeks. He drove the 2,500-lb. load to Detroit near the end of July. After that, he received orders for hundreds more whiteboards. From July through September we sold around

\$11,500 worth of whiteboards! Happy to say, these sales paid for the Eastern Caribbean Cruise – that we are enjoying as you read this letter – as well as much more. ☺

From August 5-9 we joined Rebecca, Chrystian, and Thérèse for a 5-day visit to Door County in Wisconsin. The county is located on a peninsula that juts out into Lake Michigan. The week was filled with simple family activities such as visiting a dairy farm, a German clock and beer stein shop, the lakefront, watching sunsets, eating out, taking a ferry to Washington Island, and much, much more. On our way there, we again visited with Mike and Holley Bakich, this time visiting them in their warm home in west Milwaukee. Everyone was enthralled to see Holley's artwork. Their home has an art gallery, and everyone was quite impressed with the variety and quality of Holley's work (and great cooking too).



Carolyn returned to Crystal Lake on October 5<sup>th</sup> for a weekend stay for an early celebration of Thérèse's second birthday (that occurred on October 16<sup>th</sup>). That same weekend Carl traveled to Edwards, IL, to attend the wedding of a community college physics teaching friend. Nonetheless, he was disappointed not to be able to go with Carolyn to Crystal Lake. Teresa and Carl traveled to Ohio in advance of Thanksgiving for a family reception held there the weekend before.

We are now awaiting the arrival of a visitor from Indonesia. Arif Hidayat, a physics teacher education faculty member at the Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI, Indonesia University of Education, Bandung) who will arrive on January 11<sup>th</sup> for a 5½-month stay in our home. While here, Arif will study the physics teacher education program at Illinois State University – now the largest in the United States – and learn more about Carl's *Levels of Inquiry Model of Science Teaching* that is gaining popularity in south Asia and India. Arif comes to the USA on a UNESCO grant. You might recall that Carl visited Arif at UPI in Bandung during October 2011. He hopes to return to Indonesia some time in the next year for three weeks with a team of workshop presenters from the USA.

Finally, after 26 years of living in the same house, we began some major remodeling projects in anticipation of Arif's arrival. We had a new concrete driveway poured on April 11<sup>th</sup>. A couple of weeks later we had a 4'x4' egress window installed in our basement as a matter of safety. On July 9<sup>th</sup> work began on a basement bedroom. Following that, during the first days of autumn, we totally rebuilt our basement bathroom, cleaned up the basement office, cleared out and painted a basement storage room, and redid our laundry room, central hallway, and bar area. The backyard also saw some improvements. We cut down three dying pine trees (the "Three Kings"), trimmed the large maple tree, added a 16'x16' deck over the existing patio, and installed indirect LED lighting. A complete remodeling of our kitchen is now in progress, and Carolyn has overseen most of the work. We are now finishing decorating and are nearly all set for visitors.



We have had very few visitors here from out of state since Carl first moved to Illinois in 1978 and our wedding in 1982. You are invited to come and stay a while next summer to take advantage of our new basement accommodations. While we are a happy and busy couple, our greatest sadness is not being able to visit with so many of our family and friends – some of whom we have not seen for 40 years or more. Perhaps this summer that can be remedied by visits to and from Illinois.

Carolyn continues to work at the Wal-Mart pharmacy in Bloomington, and Carl continues to teach physics part time at Illinois State University in semi-retirement. Progress is being made in moving ahead with a 16'x24' roll-off-roof observatory at Sugar Grove Nature Center just south of Shirley, IL, where the local astronomy club – the Twin City Amateur Astronomers – does most of their observing and education/public outreach. Carl and a friend are trying to leave a legacy for the people of central Illinois. Carl continued giving talks about physics and astronomy around Illinois during 2012.

Well, that about wraps up this year's Wenning family newsletter. We would love to hear from you and, more importantly, visit with you sometime during the coming year. Please keep us in your plans and prayers.

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

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