

## 2014 Christmas Greetings!

### Greetings and felicitations from Carl and Carolyn Wenning of Normal, Illinois

This has been an extraordinarily busy year for the Wenning family, so this Christmas newsletter is longer than ever before. First and foremost, we were blessed with the birth of a grandson, Isaac Joseph Wenning, on Sunday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, at 8:49 p.m. Teresa gave birth by C-section and Isaac weighed 9 pounds, 2 ounces, and was 22 inches in length. Isaac is doing fine! But more about Isaac in turn...

Carl ended 2013 by taking his mother Agnes on an 11-day (December 28 – January 8) cruise to Aruba, Columbia, Panama, Costa Rica, and the Cayman Islands. They had a nice time (even hiking in the Costa Rican rain forest) while everyone in the Midwest was shivering and digging out from under heavy snow. Agnes and Carl did not, however, entirely escape the storm; on their way back to Fort Lauderdale from the Caymans, they encountered a 48-hour gale at sea with 15'-18' waves and 50+ knot winds. They were definitely rocking and rolling for two days despite being onboard a 116,000-ton cruise ship!

On February 1<sup>st</sup>, Carl received three additional Astronomical League (AL) observing program awards at the local astronomy club banquet: the Herschel II, the Carbon Star, and the Advanced Planetary Nebula. Carl has completed 14 AL programs in recent years. The Advanced Planetary Nebula program alone took him nearly 5 years to complete. Carl is among a handful of amateur astronomers who have been designated *Master Observers* by the AL.

On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, Carolyn hosted a baby shower for Teresa. About 20 people attended. On February 6<sup>th</sup>, we had dinner with NASA astronaut Col. Doug Wheelock who was commander of the International Space Station back in 2007, and who has flown on both space shuttle Discovery and the Soyuz space transporter – and having even done two daring non-tethered space walks! Carolyn sat directly across from him over dinner sponsored by our Challenger Learning Center. “Wheels”, as he is known at NASA, is very personable and we had an enjoyable time listening to his many stories – especially those relating to training in Russia.



**AEF** Albert Einstein  
Distinguished Educator Fellowship Program

On February 7<sup>th</sup>, Rebecca was informed that she was named a semi-finalist for the Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship Program. She traveled to Washington, DC, February 23-25 to be interviewed by both the National Science Foundation and NASA. On March 6<sup>th</sup> she was informed that she was being formally recognized as an *Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator* and received one of only 13 new *Albert Einstein Fellowships* nationwide this year. This award was formally announced on March 24<sup>th</sup> in a national press release. She is now spending her fellowship year at the NASA Aeronautics Research Mission Directorate in Washington, DC. She started the position on September 1<sup>st</sup> but moved to Washington, DC, several weeks earlier. They live just a couple of blocks southeast of the Library of Congress. Rebecca, Chrystian, and Thérèse are now taking almost daily advantage of an amazing wealth of experiences available in our nation's capitol. In the last couple of weeks alone, Thérèse waved “Hi” to President Obama twice. (He likes to eat at a hamburger joint just a couple of blocks from where they live. The First Lady would not be pleased to find out about this!)

On February 9<sup>th</sup>, Rebecca and Carl finished the last of 40 chapters in a first draft of their textbook *Teaching High School Physics*. This was the culmination of several years of work that started in earnest in December 2012 with beginnings as much as ten years ago. We hope to see Volume I (of III) published early in 2015.

Son-in-law Chrystian (Rebecca's husband) continues to do remarkably well working on his *Physics Toolbox* application for the Android cell phone. He currently has over 90,000 users worldwide, and the application is being used in all sorts of research. A quick search of Youtube will result in a number of videos that Rebecca created to describe some of the dozen or more sensors available on the Android platform. Chrystian also has work contracts related to *Physics Toolbox* in countries as far away as Germany, Brazil, and soon perhaps even Argentina. Most impressive!

Rebecca received a \$25,000 grant to show how to use this application in the high school physics classroom. She even had a short movie made about her by Google that was featured on the Google for Education Training website. Rebecca is a 2014 finalist for the *Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching* and if she wins, she gets a free trip to Washington, DC, to meet President Obama! Well, at least the recognition and the \$10,000 cash award will make it worthwhile. We are proud parents whatever the outcome. ☺

Thérèse is really enjoying her new home in Washington. She goes to a small day school several blocks from home three days a week. The other days Chrystian takes her all over town to take advantage of the amazing educational resources. Just think, the Library of Congress is her neighborhood library, her playground is the National Botanical Gardens, and her schools are the museums of the Smithsonian! Added to all this, she is now taking violin lessons from Pam, a friend of Rebecca and also an Albert Einstein Fellow. What an amazing place to grow up.



The months of January through March were very trying for us due to the constant cold and snow. It did not get above freezing for some three months, and there was plenty of snow and ice. On one occasion, coworkers could not make it into work, so Carolyn was called in to work at the Wal-Mart pharmacy. Carolyn had to drive 10 miles round trip to work in white out conditions at least once. Snow drifted in the driveway so badly that it had to be plowed so she could get out. Carolyn's last day in the pharmacy, after over 7 years, was February 28<sup>th</sup>. She decided to retire from her job as pharmacy technician to be the caregiver of our new grandson while Teresa is at work. A nice retirement party was held on March 2<sup>nd</sup> for her at TGI Friday's restaurant. Carolyn has been babysitting Isaac about 5 days per week since he was 2 months old. Carolyn has been a great support person to Teresa during her pregnancy and after. Carolyn and Isaac enjoyed being a part of the Bloomington Library Summer Reading Program and taking long summer walks.



The weekend of March 22-24 saw the visit of Carl's mother (Agnes), sisters (Bev and Christy), and niece (Gina). They came from Ohio to see Isaac for the first time.

Carl attended Conservation Congress from April 11-12 in Springfield to help advise the Illinois

Department of Natural Resources. As the result of a request, he presented sky lectures and observing sessions at Lincoln Trail and Walnut Point State Parks in east central Illinois on July 18/19. Also during April, Carl wrote an invited book chapter called *Sky Interpretation* for the University of Illinois Master Naturalist program. He spent part 2013-2014 writing another invited book chapter called *Recruitment and Retention of Physics Teacher Education Majors* for the American Association of Physics Teachers book *Effective Practices in Preservice Physics Teacher Education* that should be published before 2014 is out.



Family got together for Easter in Crystal Lake (April 20<sup>th</sup>). We posed for the above informal family photograph.

Throughout much of spring semester Teresa was an intern at OSF St. Joseph Hospital in Bloomington, IL. She is the first student from ISU permitted to take her internship at St. Joe. Teresa graduated from Illinois State University on May 10<sup>th</sup> with a Bachelor's degree in Medical Lab Science. As a faculty member, Carl – in full regalia – was able to hand Teresa her diploma as she crossed the stage. In attendance were Carolyn, Isaac, Agnes, and Teresa's friend Matt. Following the graduation ceremony, we all went out for an early supper at Bonanza in Lincoln, IL. We also celebrated Mother's Day that same weekend. St. Joe's liked Teresa's work so well that they decided to hire her full time starting in June (she previously worked for them as a phlebotomist). She now works full time second shift – working roughly from 2:30 to 11:30 p.m. During this time, Carolyn takes care of Isaac, sometimes at Teresa's house and sometimes at ours. Carolyn, also, takes care of Teresa's 2 dogs and 2 cats during this time.

On May 19<sup>th</sup>, three video producers from Google Education flew in from Seattle (2) and Florida (1) to observe Rebecca's Physics class at Cary-Grove High School. They produced a wonderful video that can be viewed here:

<http://goo.gl/wi7MLS> (Note the goo.gl addresses are case sensitive.)

This year both Carl and Rebecca taught in Indonesia. Carl was there from June 6-16 and taught about his Levels of Inquiry Model of Science Teaching. Rebecca traveled to Indonesia at around the same time, arriving days later and departing days after Carl departed. Her focus was primarily on teaching the nature of science.

Our dear family friend Mr. Arif Hidayat coordinated the trips. (Right now Arif is a doctoral student in Hiroshima, Japan.) Carl visited Surakarta (Central Java), Bandung (West Java), and Malang (East Java); Rebecca visited Surakarta, Bandung, and Bogor. They both had an opportunity to visit Borobudur Temple, a United National world culture site just north of Yogyakarta during their visit to Malang. Rebecca and Carl's



June trip to Indonesia was prominently featured in the ISU *College of Arts & Sciences News*: <http://goo.gl/DXbgYz>.

Carl traveled to Ohio to visit his mother over the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend. A few days later, on July 7<sup>th</sup>, Carl was featured in a “hometown boy makes good” story in *The Daily Standard* from Celina, Ohio. <http://goo.gl/8Tdtst>. The Vieyra family as well as Carolyn’s sister Pam were in town on Sunday, **July 13<sup>th</sup>**, for Isaac Joseph’s baptism. His baptismal sponsors were: Lisa Falasz and Chris Miller.



In recognition of our 32<sup>nd</sup> wedding anniversary, we went on a cruise to the British Isles from July 21<sup>st</sup> through August 3<sup>rd</sup>. We flew to London and then caught our ship at Southampton. From there we went to the Balliwick of Guernsey, and then onward to Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and past the white cliffs of Dover to France. There we visited the beaches of Normandy and saw the D-Day Museum and American Cemetery. How very touching.

In an effort to develop educational materials (learning sequences) for the Levels of Inquiry model, Carl volunteered to teach a high school physics course for homeschoolers. The class consists of 8 bright students, and has been meeting on Thursday evenings from 6-9 p.m. since August 21<sup>st</sup>.

On August 23<sup>rd</sup> Carl, working with the Twin City Amateur Astronomers, hosted the Central Illinois Mini Conference for area astronomy clubs. 31 amateur astronomers

were present and Carl cooked the evening meal and gave an address dealing with the 2017 total eclipse of the sun.

From August 29 to September 1, the Labor Day Weekend, we went to Grafton, IL. Joining us were Teresa and Isaac. This is an old French settlement just northeast of St. Louis on the east side of the Mississippi River. We whiled away the days visiting nature preserves, hiking, visiting the Mississippi River, visiting shops, and tasting samples at a local winery.

During September, Carolyn helped bottle about 100 bottles of honey. Carl was without honeybees until late summer, but Teresa’s colony survived the winter and produced about 70 pounds worth of honey from their hive location in her back yards. Carolyn has been helping Carl with the whiteboard business throughout the autumn months as we prepare for the spring 2015 sales season. During November and December we made over 500 whiteboards. We have been using profits from whiteboardsUSA.com to fund our leisure travel.

Carl was honored by Illinois State University when he was inducted into the College of Education Hall of Fame on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Carl earned his Ed.D. in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction in 2007, and has spent the past several years promoting his Levels of Inquiry Model of Science Teaching – having traveled worldwide to do so. Almost as if to celebrate, on October 8<sup>th</sup>, we observed a total eclipse of the moon from our backyard in the hours just before dawn. And on October 23, we observed a partial solar eclipse from the school parking lot down the street.

We travelled to Ohio on October 10-13 to attend the wedding of Amy Goettemoeller, the daughter of Carl’s classmates Doris and Charlie.

Carl visited Brazil from November 2-14 and gave talks at three universities, one in Bauru, and two in São Carlos. All in all, it has been a heavy travel year for Carl. This year alone he has traveled to 14 countries outside the USA. He has now spent time in 43 countries and territories.

Carolyn, Isaac, Teresa, along with dogs Sophie and Helga, travelled to Ohio over the Thanksgiving weekend. Great Grandma Agnes was happy to see Isaac again. She had not seen him for about 6 months. Carl stayed home to rest up from his recent trip to South America and to care for the cats of two households.

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, we all attended *Holiday Spectacular* at the Bloomington Center for Performing Arts. Isaac was a perfect gentleman during the 2¼-hour program despite the fact that he was dressed like a candy cane!

On December 8<sup>th</sup>, Teresa took and passed the national American Society for Clinical Pathology examination that allowed her to become fully certified. She is now a full-fledged **Medical Lab Scientist**. We are immensely proud of her ongoing accomplishments! Not one to rest on her laurels, Teresa was admitted to graduate school at Creighton University in Omaha, NE, where she will be a distance education student majoring in Public Health. Earning a master’s degree will allow her to move up professionally over the years.

As many of you are reading this, Carl, Carolyn, Teresa, and Isaac are in Washington, DC. We are visiting Rebecca, Chrystian, and Thérèse from December 15<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup>. It’s not a long visit, but Rebecca is overwhelmed with work at NASA ARM and so we are keeping our visit relatively short.

Well, that about does it for another year. We feel truly blessed by God’s blessings, and have enjoyed recounting them with you. May His blessings be with you at this season and throughout the New Year! Carl & Carolyn, Christmas 2014

