

8 January 1999

Dear Family,

The Christmas season was nice. The 23rd saw us fly from Baltimore to Spokane, Washington. We were greeted at the airport there by all of Crystal's siblings along with her mother and step-father. This marked the first time in 3 years (since Crystal's Mom's and Pat's wedding) that they had all been together. Adding to the romance of the moment was the fact that it all occurred right there by gate 11 at Spokane International (International because it occasionally services puddle-jumper flights to southwestern Canada) Airport. We then undertook the 3 hour drive from the airport to the house in beautiful Wenatchee. Wenatchee, I am told, is in the middle of the state, about 40 miles north of George, Washington. The stay was pleasant. Most people went skiing at one time or another. Wenatchee got 12 inches of snow on Christmas. We took Hannah sledding--an activity she doubtless would have found more enjoyable had we not forgotten her gloves. I had the opportunity of using Pat's tractor to plow the driveway--Crystal has pictures. Pat especially enjoyed watching the whole thing as he perceives me as being something of an Eastern stuffed shirt (which, of course, I am--while everyone else on Christmas opened enough REI inventory to open a small store, I opened dress shirts and ties.) Anyway, the tractor was fun and I only hit the garage door once. Christmas Day was spent with the aforementioned individuals, as well as what seemed like every single one of Pat's living relatives, (he even invited his ex-wife--who conveniently lives next door--she didn't come) and another 10 or so drifters. I guess they were invited. But seeing as nobody at this gathering knew more than 30% of those present, it would have been easy to crash. I don't think anyone was claustrophobic, so all must have had a good time.

On the 27th, we embarked on what amounted to a day-long journey from that Pacific state to a more familiar (to me at least) Atlantic state, New Jersey. We left Wenatchee at 8:00 am--just enough time to grab some brunch and catch our 1:00 pm flight. We arrived in Baltimore around 10 pm, retrieved our luggage from the carousel and our car from the long-term lot, and arrived at 3 Walnut Court at around 1 am. Dad not only was still up, but still dressed--he had removed his tie however. Neither Grant nor Jen woke up, but Peter did. He naturally was overjoyed to see his favorite brother, and doubtless had a hard time getting back to sleep.

We enjoyed our week there. It was nice to be able to spend part of the holiday with Mom, Dad and Peter, and especially pleasant to visit with Grant and Jen, who we see far less frequently. The stay included two trips to Philadelphia with Dad, Jen, Grant, and Pete (one of these trips was highlighted by a memorable lunch at "Pete's Famous Pizza" 3 blocks from the Franklin Institute -- Jen has photos.) Everyone followed us home on New Year's Eve. Together we enjoyed the Henrichsen Christmas/New Year's party. It was good seeing Britt, Christopher and Lindee (all home from various Utah institutions of higher learning.)

All these exciting experiences are fading memories now that work has resumed--although there is still some air in the balloon as school doesn't begin (at GW) until the 11th. I've been at my current position long enough that I'm starting to feel quite comfortable--but not bored. I'm charged with, among other things, figuring out why our mortgage investors identify servicing screw-ups. Basically, my job is to solve math book word problems all day. It might get old at some point. I can't foresee that in the near future though. It can actually be rather enjoyable--the only downside is that when a particularly sticky problem arises, you can't just flip to the back of the book for the answers or ask the teacher. At times a teacher would be really nice, but flying solo has certain benefits. My immediate supervisor is the only person in the organization with even the vaguest notion of what I actually do. And he has me on a pretty long leash, so nobody rides me. I like my job.

The Day Care business exists. We have one full-time client--an at times rambunctious 5-year old named Jake--and a couple of part-timers. Marci is waiting for more full-time clients before quitting her job and coming home for a piece of the action. Until that happens, Crystal is taking care of Noah as well (at a substantial discount.) There are days she enjoys and days on which she swears she'll never accept another client. Still, she perseveres. Things are good with us, as we hope they are with you.

*Jo Crystal  
offered*

Dear Andrew:

The other side (obviously) contains my monthly (monthly, yeah right) letter to the fam. Here's your personal version:

The Eagles finished the season with a franchise record 13 losses and the second pick in next year's draft. The word suck does not even begin to describe how bad they were. The last game of the year was a loss to the Giants. It was also Irving Fryer's last game ever. The team gave him a pretty cool Harley which he rode around to the stadium--an event witnessed live by all 67 people who actually went to the game. If you're wondering what the Eagles will do with their high pick, I don't really know. Knowing Jeff (cheap-ass) Lurie, he'll probably sell it. He's spent the entire season whining about needing a new stadium--his complaints were somewhat legitimized when the play clock didn't work at all during the second half of a nationally televised game (what were the Eagles doing on National TV? It was a Thursday night game--you know how they sometimes have those toward the end of the season)...That and 10 or so Cadets had to be ambulated to the hospital when a railing at the stadium collapsed during the Army-Navy game. (Army won.)

The NBA lockout is over. The players and owners came to an eleventh hour agreement the day before the so-called "drop dead" date after which the owners would have been "forced" to cancel the entire season. I've said it before and it's still true--Nobody could care less. There's going to be some kind of abbreviated (50 or so game) season. -- Which is great if you're a Sixers fan, it will just take that much longer for them to be mathematically eliminated from any form of post-season play. The Flyers are still in second (behind a very good NJ Devils team) and the Caps absolutely blow. (I know you don't care about the Caps, but after their Stanley Cup appearance last year (when they got swept by the Red Wings) a lot of people were talking about a new dynasty and blah blah blah. We'll, they suck and probably won't even make the playoffs this year. I think I told you last month that BYU was playing Tulane in the Peach Bowl. Sorry. Right team wrong bowl. As you've doubtless heard, it was the Liberty Bowl (Virginia was playing in the Peach Bowl on the same day--that's why it was on my mind.) -- Anyhoo, Rodney Jenkins (BYU's awesome running back) got expelled for a second honor code violation, so he wasn't available for the game. Consequently, Grant, Jen and I together watched Tulane beat the living piss out of us. Tulane (undefeated on the year) is a pretty good team, even though the win over BYU was only like the third win over a team with a winning record. Tulane actually played Army AND Navy. -- and they actually wonder why they didn't get invited to a real bowl. Incidentally, Tennessee beat Florida State in the Fiesta Bowl for the National Championship. Florida killed Syracuse in the Orange; Ohio State whooped up on Texas A&M in the Sugar; Wisconsin beat UCLA in the Rose; and there's your major bowl action.

The NFL final four is in place. Atlanta (14-2) plays at Minnesota (15-1) for the NFC championship, and the Jets (12-4) play at Denver (14-2) for the AFC title. (Records are regular season.) These were actually the 4 best teams in the league this year. The Packers and Niners met in the Wild Card. The Niners scored the winning touchdown with like 5 seconds left on a drive that should have ended with a Jerry Rice fumble, but the ref said he was down. He wasn't, and this has been widely considered to be the worst year of officiating in NFL history. Anyway, the 49ers promptly lost the next Saturday at Atlanta (who won that division.)

I'm sure you heard that President Clinton was impeached by the House. His Senate trial begins this week. In all likelihood, nothing will come of it. The general consensus among most Americans is that the president should not be removed from office since he's doing such a good job as president (they offer as proof of this the relative health of the domestic economy.) Most Americans are idiots. Even if the president were somehow responsible for the robust economy (which he ISN'T -- no president ever is), officials aren't impeached for doing a bad job, they're impeached for BREAKING THE LAW. Nobody seems to be able to grasp this simple fact, and everyone seems to think that lying under oath and obstructing justice are okay, as long as it's somehow related to sex. Anyway, Elizabeth Dole might run for president. So things aren't all that bad.

I hope things are good with you. Keep working hard and remain focused on your task. The nice thing about missions is that you really don't have to worry about anything other than helping people. It's a pleasant position.