

California Breeze

Snapshots of Life...

Well, now that we all have survived another year on this planet, California Breeze enters its third year (yes!) of publication, another new face entered the family, some of us got new jobs, retired from old jobs, or felt the comfort of stability in our current ones, we have probably all done some reflecting on the past year, in preparation for making 1996 something different, if not better. This year I decided not to spend much time on coming up with resolutions, because I know I wouldn't keep half of them, for very long, that is. But for some reason my thoughts keep coming back to why we try to make a fresh start in January, as if the calendar tells us that this is the only time a resolution to drop a bad habit, or to start a good one can be valid. But I guess that January 1st signals a mythical springtime for most of us (even if there is 20" of snow on the ground!), a time for planting for the new year.

For me, the holidays were pretty low-key, and I missed the family more than I have in a long time. I think it was because I felt like I had gotten closer to you all this past year, even though for the first time in my life, I did not see any of you.

Money was tight, vacations were spent locally, and no one put Los Angeles on their itineraries, with the exception of Jim, so the months passed. But through phone calls, reading your contributions for this newsletter, I felt closer to you all. Thus, while Christmas was nice, and we had a beautiful tree and all, it wasn't the same. I went to a church in the Pacific Palisades area on Christmas Eve, and helped with the music. It was a reunion with some old friends I used to sing with a couple years ago at Loyola Marymount University. It was great seeing the familiar faces again, and I pledged that night to stay in touch with some of them this year. (Yeah, right!) Afterwards, I met up with a couple of friends for dinner at the Stinking Rose, one of those garlic-theme restaurants, and had an odiferous time! These friends of mine are in the messy middle of remodeling their house, so I had to step around bundles of wood moldings and look at plastered walls while searching for signs of Christmas there. (There were none!)



I have gotten hooked on the Internet during the past few months, and find it fascinating. Anything you want to learn about, read about, purchase, or do, you can do it on the 'Net. I have downloaded software, ordered wine, chatted with strangers, found the pope's letter on the Christian meaning on human suffering,

and visited weird and wacky Web sites. So my computer is more than a vehicle for publishing.

Work was not as stressful during the holidays as in the past, because I worked on the floor as a manager, and not on the battlegrounds of the Front End. But the year was stressful in the area of payroll cutbacks, and I worry a bit about the direction we are headed, with the emphasis on controlling payroll, and the neglect of member service. Rumbblings can be felt and there might be some major changes happening in the next few months.

I did not print a Breeze last month because no one sent anything in time, and I was in a funky mood, and had temporarily lost my enthusiasm for publishing this thing. I got over that, and now look forward to hearing from you all, and publishing whatever is sent me. I hope all is well wherever this newsletter goes, and that whatever happens during 1996, we are ready to handle and embrace it. We are never quite sure what will happen, but we get in, sit down, buckle up, and go for the ride!



A Streetcar Named Desire

It is nine days before Christmas as I write. Mother and I have finished installing and decorating our nice Christmas tree today and should complete sending our Christmas cards (50-60) by tomorrow. One card goes to Bill and Carol Otto in the next building. Bill is a deacon at St. Joseph Church. The farthest we are sending a card is to the Netherlands to Fr. Hillenaar, a dear Jesuit priest in Delft who has visited St. Joseph Church for a month each summer for the last 20 years. He presents a nice change of pace to our pastor, Fr. Vogan, who is also a very dedicated shepherd of our souls.

Reminiscing recently got me thinking of the old electric street cars which clanged and rolled through the streets of Detroit years ago. We lived one house off 12th Street on Burlingame until I was 12. Then we moved 4 blocks to the second house off 12th on Glynn Court. I lived there from 1936 until 1951 when, with our little family of four, including Lynn and Jim, mother and I moved to our new home in Inkster. The streetcar line ran on 12th St., Trumbull and Michigan Ave. from downtown, past Tiger Stadium (Navin Field when I saw my first game), and on to the end of the line a quarter mile past Burlingame.

Major rides that I remember best were to and from the Tiger baseball games. My dad had a pass from 1932 when he was in the State Legislature until he retired from being County Court Commissioner. Streetcar fare then was 6 cents. My mother often took us kids on the trolley to the Hudson Thanksgiving Day Parade. One year a heavy snow delayed us long enough so we got to see only the end—the Santa Claus float—after walking a half-mile from the trolley stop in the snow.

One streetcar ride we kids dreaded to take was our annual ride to the dentist. Dr. Roach had his office on Vernor near old Holy Redeemer Church, a long ride. I can picture those visits like they were yesterday. Dental work is a picnic today compared to then with the equipment and materials they used then.

Streetcars were fun to ride though. When one had a good stretch for

the motorman to get up speed (20-30 MPH?) the car would rock back and forth and if you were standing you would hold defiantly to the nearest seat handle or a leather strap hanging from the ceiling, trying to keep your balance. I guess some of those trolleys are still running down in Mexico.

Well, I hope you all have some fond memories of days gone by. Everyone's life is comprised of some good experiences and some sad experiences. It's never too late to be optimistic and see the good side of the present and the future.

This seems a good time to pass on the inspiration from number 380 of the Christopher News Notes which I get in the mail regularly. The title is: "Make the MOST of YOUR potential." Some quotes: "There's **nobody** else like you. Nobody else has the same ability or personality, interests or feelings as you do, and nobody else ever will. Your Creator has given you special gifts but it is up to you to use them well. The only one who can make the most of your potential is you."

Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, have a Merry Christmas every day and a Happy New Year all year long!

Dad



More Quotes...

Take stock of your strong points. No person is generally inferior to another. Every individual is spotted with a multitude of strengths and weaknesses. We often look so hard at our weaknesses that we miss seeing our strengths. Make the most of your gifts. You're not a copy of anybody else. You're an original creation by the Master Artist—God's work of art!

Recognize your role in God's creation. He has given you a unique combination of traits and a special mission. Avoid comparing yourself unfavorably with other people. They have been given different abilities and different jobs to do.

Focus on strengths, not weaknesses. It's unrealistic to expect to excel at everything. Instead of wasting time worrying about what you can't do, spend time working on the things you can do. But that doesn't mean limiting yourself to things you're great at. You can have fun swimming without feeling pressured to qualify for the Olympics.

Take yourself less seriously. Look for the humor in awkward situations. Laughter can help you feel more comfortable with yourself. Learn to relax and enjoy life.

(Taken from the December issue of Christopher News Notes, 12 East 48th St., New York, NY. 10017)

A Texan Look Back on 1995

By far the most important highlight of 1995 happened at the very beginning of the new year, on the sixth of January, to be more precise. My last and oh so precious baby arrived to start the year off right! There is nothing as special to a father than when he gets a baby boy into his life, and this time was no exception. From his very beginnings, and now up to this writing, Gregory Christopher has given all of us in this household so much to be thankful for to God! After all, Frinee and I had planned no more children—two was enough for us. But God had other plans, and thankfully so. As his first birthday fast approaches, he walks much more than he crawls, and continues to blossom into such a good-looking boy!

We began our second year with the two girls from El Salvador staying with us, one in grade school, and the other taking care of the now-expanded bundle of kids around here. At first, we were afraid that two small ones would be too much for Marlyn to care for during the day, at the same time she was going to night school to learn English. But she handled them okay (at least at first, we discovered). Arianna was at the age where she did not have to be constantly watched all day long. This arrangement lasted until just recently, when Frinee and I decided that we would make other plans for the care of our kids during the day, and that we would terminate the special arrangements with the two girls. It had gotten to the point that we could not trust them, after catching them both in one lie after another, so although it will cost us a bunch more to put them into day care, we get our peace of mind back in our own home.

Stefanie started a bi-lingual kindergarten program, where she will learn to speak Spanish on an everyday basis. Half the time her classes are held in English, and the other half in Spanish. We were pleased and lucky as well, to get her into this as the school is out of our district zone.

Due to the problems with Frinee's car, we were forced to sell the new truck and buy another Taurus stationwagon, this one in mint condition, for her to drive to work and the kids to school/daycare. So we are a two stationwagon family living in the suburbs. I never would have imagined this years ago!

The master bath got a facelift in October, it had gotten embarrassing for anyone to see it. The landscaping received some improvement this year as well, and now our backyard looks better than ever. The summer was long and hot and dry, but the trees, grass, and flowers held up pretty well.

Another highlight of 1995 was the visit from Mom, Dad, Lynn and Woody in February, to celebrate the baptism of Gregory and Dad's birthday. We all saw the best of our town, and it was great having family come down here, especially for the reason that they did!

Lynn and Woody liked us so much that they

returned in October, when it was Stefanie's birthday, and the weather was cool, and the kids really, really enjoyed their stay down here once again. There is so much love in this Houston-New Jersey connection! Our girls still mention Lynn and Woody's names every week around here.

We all have been pretty healthy this year with nothing more than the usual colds and the occasional flu to bring us down. Because Gregory and Adrianna stayed at home they have not suffered from the expected ear infections so commonplace in daycare. Hopefully, their resistance has been built up as we go into '96. Frinee's mother has been bothered all year by the aches and pains associated with aging, and I can truly relate to that at age 39! She has been to numerous doctors for various related complaints, but arthritis is the main culprit that makes day-to-day chores difficult, as well as sleeping. But she does not look 65 years of age, even though she probably feels older than that, and we will continue to monitor her as best we can in the coming year.

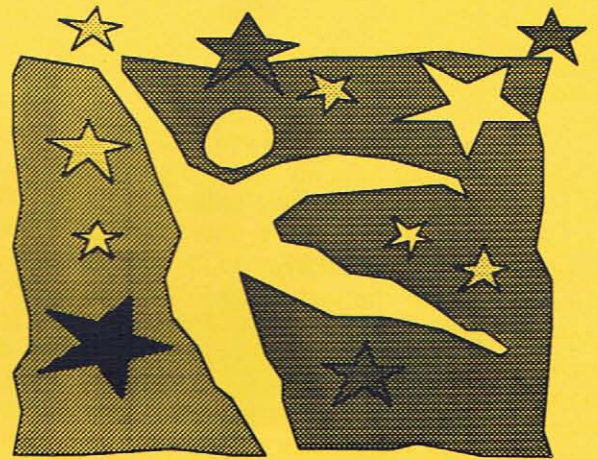
Most major events happened outside of our home, of course with the resolution of the O.J. trial, and the tragedy in Oklahoma, but for Houstonians, 1995 saw another championship brought home by our Rockets. Talks of the Oilers and possibly the Astros leaving town still continue to dominate the sports pages. That's okay, because I still have my own athlete in my family. Jason played basketball in a league sponsored by his city. He started his first year of high school by playing football on the freshman squad. Jason continues to shoot up past me in height, and will have the excellent athleticism to allow him to do well in most sports. He got an electric guitar for Christmas, and will learn how to play the music he listens to. As usual, he has received all A's and B's on his report cards throughout '95.

This year, more than any other year made me realize my role in life now is to be the best father that I can be. No longer should I be thinking that I am closer to my 20's, and physically able to do the things I used

to when I was young and single; instead, my life is devoted to giving my family the guidance and protection I should, to raise my kids to be good and responsible, with a strong faith in God and Jesus Christ. The future of my wife and kids always takes top priority over my own individual concerns and interests. Being a parent involves many years of sacrifices, and with a new child born to us this year, I have four children all in four different stages of growing up. That means four different ways of handling them with their problems and their concerns. There is nothing like being a parent.

This year has been a mixed bag of successes and setbacks, with lots of ups and a few downs. All in all, 1995 will probably go into the books as a year where the good things that happened were really good, and the bad things were, well, let's just say they weren't too good. I enjoyed the Dillon wedding, especially since that last trip back home helped me to stop reminiscing about the good ol' days. It made me realize that looking back isn't as satisfying as looking forward, that my life is here and now, in Houston, Texas, with a wonderful family. My relationship with my daughter, Stefanie,

has started to improve late this year; she is getting more intelligent and observant, which makes for interesting conversations. My marriage to Frinee has never been better, as we have settled into a more mature and comfortable level with each other. The only bad thing was the lack of time together alone, and that should remain status quo for a couple more years. We look forward to whatever comes our way in 1996, and no matter what it is, we will face it as a close and loving family. God bless everyone during the New Year!



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