

Millennial Greetings from the Wala's

E-mail: walaseca@hickorytech.net

Home page: <http://www.hickorytech.net/~walaseca>

2000 – The Year In Review

On Thursday, January 4, 2001, Stephanie is reading her history textbook, and laughs when she gets to the phrase “in the early part of this century”. “Oh, you mean like ... Monday?” Yes, she is among the enlightened few who realize that the old century (and millennium) weren't over until the end of the 2000th year. So, welcome (officially) to the new millennium!

The Wala's began and ended the year with memorable Christmas vacations. Last year we enjoyed a long planned vacation in Florida: eight theme parks (Epcot Center, Magic Kingdom, MGM Studios, Animal Kingdom, Busch Gardens, Sea World, Universal Studios and Islands of Adventure) and Kennedy Space Center, in nine days! This year we spent Christmas and New Year's in Arizona, visiting Phil's brother and family, along with our old friends the O'Briens. We also had a chance to do some sightseeing, from the Grand Canyon down to the Mexico border. In between the two Christmas vacations, Vonna and the kids had a chance to fly out to Washington state for a fun visit with her family there.

2000 was also a year of more changes for our church, Waseca Christian Assembly. We sadly said goodbye to our pastor for the last fourteen years, Jim Risner, and his wife Barb, who have moved to Missouri where Jim is going back to school. But in his place we are getting to know our wonderful new pastor, Brad Wickersheim, as we enjoy God's goodness together, and look for land to build a new ministry center!

Phil continues in research and development at ADC (one more patent received, and one applied for last year), and in his spare time finished the home remodeling project. Vonna passed her test and is now a Licensed Associate Marriage and Family Therapist. She continues in private practice, and as a family involvement worker at a group home for teenagers.



**Pale Minnesotans Spend Christmas
Squinting Into the Arizona Sun**

Stephanie the Flutist (or is it Flautist?)

Multi-talented Stephanie (10½) continues to enjoy swimming and gymnastics. She is developing a wonderful sense of humor, and loves animals, especially her new cat, Chip (see p2). She is also in Junior Bible Quiz, and this year, has begun playing the flute in the Intermediate School band. The picture at right shows a very classy looking Stephanie performing at this year's 5th grade band Christmas concert.



Jeremiah Gets Wired

Jeremiah (13½) continues his drumming in the Junior High Jazz Band, and has just recently begun playing the drums with the church worship team. He enjoyed golf lessons this summer and, loves the computer and music (everything from classical to contemporary Christian to “Dr. Demento”), and has room wired for sound and light. Even his teeth are wired — orthodontically, that is. In career news, after three years of faithful service to the Waseca County News, Jeremiah has retired from the news delivery profession, to take a few months off in preparation for a hoped-for position in the field of grocery management upon his 14th birthday.



Pussycat, Pussycat, Where Have You Been? ...

It's the trip of a lifetime. In April, Phil is scheduled to go to England on business, and Vonna gets to go along. We cash in some frequent flier miles, fly Vonna's sister out from Seattle to stay with the kids, and make our plans and reservations, even scheduling a side trip to Paris. The day arrives, our bags are packed, and we're at the airport. Only one thing is missing — Vonna's passport. But the expediting agency we used promises it will be waiting for us at the airline's counter-to-counter service. We go to the counter — no passport — we wait — and wait — and wait — until the airline finally admits they lost the package. No passport, no trip. They refund the fare, and we leave the airport in disbelief. We eat at a *British* restaurant and stay at a motel on *France Avenue* in Minneapolis, but somehow it's not quite the same.



Phil and His Friend Ben

Several days later, Phil goes to England sadly, without his beloved wife, whose passport still has not been found. He goes just for the business portion of the original schedule, and has only a few hours to see what little of London he can. He races from sight to sight, finally ending up at Tower Bridge. As he's about to catch the train for his next business meeting, he notices a crowd beginning to form — and who should show up, but the Queen herself, who is in the area to christen a ship. She walks past, about 12 feet away, waving at the crowd, and looking at Phil with a knowing glance, undoubtedly recognizing him as the husband of Vonna, close personal relative of Queen Wilhelmina of Holland.

In October, Phil travels again, this time for a conference in Barcelona, Spain; but in a scandalous breach of etiquette, King Juan Carlos (unlike Queen Elizabeth II) does NOT run out to greet him.

By the way, the passport was eventually found, and Vonna has a promise that someday soon she has a trip to Europe coming!



Her Royal Majesty Smiles at the Handsome Gentleman from Waseca

Speaking of Pussycats ...

Stephanie gets a goldfish as a gift from her teacher. It dies. So we go to the pet store to find a replacement. As Phil is looking at the fish, Vonna and Stephanie begin telling him about the cute widdle putty-tat that the humane society has brought to the pet store. Cat-hater Phil pretends not to hear. Besides, we already have a dog. Vonna and Stephanie continue to tell how this little kitten was hand fed by people, and adopted a dog as its mother. By the time the kitten starts to purr, and Vonna and Stephanie begin extending their lower lips, Phil knows that he has lost, and "Chip" becomes a



Mandy rolls her eyes and says to Chip, "OK, I'll be your foster mother ... but no more trying to nurse!"

member of the family. Eventually, Phil and Jeremiah come to love him too, and even the canine member of the family, Mandy, learns to tolerate his persistent nuzzling.

Minnesotans Welcome Winter

After three years of wimpy winters and brown Christmases, hardy Minnesotans welcomed the return of a traditional "macho" winter. We look upon the snow and -50° windchills we had in December as our way of keeping out the riffraff. Barbecue on the deck, anyone? •



French Cars, and Other Annoyances

The French have a saying: "To own a French car, is to cause all other problems to melt into nothingness." Being former Renault owners, we understand this well, and laugh about it. We also had to laugh when a friend asked if just being in our family was like owning a French car. This comment came at the end of a year in which Vonna, already suffering from polycystic kidney disease, learned that the numbness she was beginning to feel had been positively diagnosed as multiple sclerosis. And while Phil's health has been otherwise good, a sleep study revealed "central sleep apnea" — his brain was "forgetting" to send signals to breathe, for up to two minutes at a time.

Vonna takes weekly injections, and has been coping well with the numbness, fatigue and occasional limp. Phil uses a breathing machine, which has worked well to correct his problem. But in the end, it is our sense of humor, our shared love, and our faith in God that gets us through all these things with laughter in our hearts and smiles on our faces. Our prayer in this new millennium is that no matter what life brings, you too will allow God to fill your life with the joy that only He can give!