

1985

Knock Knock.

Who's there?

Aardvark.

Aardvark who?

Aardvark a million miles, for one of your smiles ... or to get a copy of this year's Christmas newsletter!

First, some important late-breaking news. Carl Sagan has discovered that Santa's Workshop is *not* at the North Pole, but is actually on the Sun! December is the month in which the Earth is closest to the Sun, so naturally that's the time when St. Nick drops in on us. Carl notes that Santa's traditional outfit trimmed in fur provides the final proof: "You'd dress warmly too if you were visiting a place that's billions and billions of degrees cooler than what you're used to!"

Well, we've now lived on Murlea Lane for one entire year, and generally think it's pretty swell. Steve managed to get the garage door opener installed, and it's only fallen out of the ceiling once (unfortunately, this is not a joke). We're still a little short on furniture (the empty living room is still known as the "juggling room"), but are quite contented on the whole.

We've also spiffed up the yard by getting it landscaped, and now have bushes, shrubs, trees, grass, carefully-manicured piles of decorative bark dust, and moles. The latter seem to think of our backyard as the Underground Mammal's answer to Disneyland, and visit often. We're waging a small war with them, but so far the furry little beggars are winning hands-down (thankfully, nobody has come home with a war bride yet). At the moment, there's an uneasy truce for the winter hibernation season, but hostilities will undoubtedly recommence in the spring.

Landscaping the yard proved to be quite educational. There is a park behind our backyard complete with tennis courts, Little League diamond, etc. There are also two *beautiful* thirty-foot tall evergreens in the park that are easily visible from the house. Steve thought that some of these trees would be just the ticket for our yard.

Steve: "I think we'd like a couple of those trees in our yard; what are they?"

Landscaper: "Those are sequoias; they'll probably be twice that tall in five to ten years."

Steve: "Oh."

There's also a small herd (a herdlet?) of cattle that lives behind our backyard (behind our backyard is a *very* busy place). This spring, we were awakened early one morning by some impressive bellowing from the farm. Evidently, cows get quite vocal when they're in the throes of passion. There were eventually two calves born, and we watched them grow up over the summer. If you've never seen cows romp, you've missed one of life's amusing moments.

But enough of the splendors of our bucolic existence and on to the personal news. Leonard Nimoy called earlier this year to book Janet for an episode of "In Search Of" as she seeks yet another college degree, this time in accounting. Her days are now filled with the joys of inventory costing methods, least square approximations of fixed and variable costs, most round precision forecasting of gross national puns, etc. Her long-term goal is to ensure that no one can accuse her of being "no account". (Ar-ar! Humor! Actually, her long-term goal is to make big bucks.) Since being a student doesn't keep her nearly busy enough, she's also been making herself indispensable to the Portland State University math department as an instructor of Mathematics for Elementary Education Teachers. Her students claim she's better than Anacin for dispelling Math Anxiety.

Steve is continuing his Quest for the Perfect Operating System (codenamed "Grail") at Intel. He managed to sucker the company into a promotion this year, making him a Staff Engineer (not to be confused with a Staph Engineer, who prescribes penicillin for throat infections).

After almost two years of work, Steve has finally achieved up to forty throws in a 5-ball juggle, and club juggling and passing have become old hat. The Intel juggling crew (collectively known as The Juggling Murali Brothers) performed in public twice this summer; the big gig was a Vacation Bible School class. With fame like this, can fortune be far behind?

This has *really* been a big year for us in the sports department. Our co-ed volleyball team finished 2nd in B league last winter, our co-ed softball team finished 1st in the first half of the season this summer, Steve's men's volleyball team finished 3rd, and Janet's women's volleyball team finished first in B league, going undefeated. As a result, we're both renegotiating our contracts and holding out for an endorsement with Nike.

That pretty well wraps up the highlights of the year. Sure, there was the trip to Victoria, British Columbia that produced the best pun of the year, but it's not printable in a family newsletter; write and ask us if you really wanna know. In the mean time, stay Healthy, Happy, and In Touch, and may all your Christmases be Lite. (Less filling! Tastes Great! Less filling! Tastes Great! Less filling! Tastes Great! Less filling! Tastes Great! ...)

Much love,

Steve and Janet Tolopka