



NEWS FLASH! Dateline North Pole. Santa's wife has filed for divorce and moved out. Seems she's become Claustrophobic. No word yet on who gets custody of the elves ... but you seem to have custody of the 1987 Christmas Newsletter!

First, an update on last year's news. For those of you have been dying to know, we were never asked to appear on Portland's TV game show *On The Spot*. We choose to blame this on a plot involving Mafia chieftains, fear of our vastly superior intellects, and terrorist penguins, but suspect we were simply judged Too Dull for a Major Television Appearance.

And now it's time for this year's edition of *Adventures in Horticulture*. Last spring we remembered all the excess summertime vegetation around the house and wondered what some of it was, so we called the Emily Littella Lawn and Garden Service and asked them to "kill and sort the weeds". I suppose we should have paid closer attention to their reply ("*What's all this about kill the wort and weeds?*"). They wiped out an entire bed of St. John's Wort, and some Oregon Grape for good measure. In all fairness, they were quite chastened when they found out ("*Oh ... That's very different Never mind!*"), promptly sent a check to cover replacement costs ... and *did* kill the weeds!

This hasn't really been our year for sports. Our volleyball and softball teams finished middle-of-the-pack, with the exception of the men's volleyball team, which finished third in the league. Steve won election to the THPRD Women's/Coed Softball Board¹ and served a term as Member-at-Large (you there, no snickering about the aptness of the name). This turned out to make him Tournament Director of the 1987 Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District D League & Under Coed Softball Tournament, which took almost as long to play as it does to say. We're sure this will look most impressive on Steve's resume. Incidentally, he regained his good sense and declined re-election.

All those accounting classes finally paid off for Janet; she's been working in a Finance group at Intel for about a year as a FWE. (That stands for Flexible Workforce Employee, and is not an indication of how much she's paid.) In Janet's own words, she "does accounting things" (hope that's not too technical). She's still taking additional accounting classes, and the combination of work and school keeps her pretty busy. This led her to formulate Janet's Rule for Active Individuals: "I don't have *time* to be aware of things!"

After years of successful shucking and jiving, Steve zigged when he should have zagged and was made a full-fledged project manager. The four poor unfortunates that he inherited have been good sports about it, and it is nice having someone to shine your shoes and make cinnamon toast in the morning. Steve also inherited the mantle of Software Architect for the operating system, which gives him license to meddle in most everything. It's also made him thirty-six percent wiser, as judged by the number of opinions he is requested to render on subjects he knows nothing about.

The last couple of years have been downers for the semiconductor industry in general and Intel in particular, so the company celebrated this year's upturn with a Flying High party in April. Intel employees provided the entertainment, and we did our share. The Juggling Murali Brothers (with Steve as brother Felipe) regaled the crowd with spectacular feats of juggling/dropping and snappy patter like this:

¹Actually, "won" is something of a misnomer; this was less a matter of achieving greatness than of having greatness thrust upon him. By being foolish enough to allow his name to be added to a ballot containing only one candidate for each office, he pretty much guaranteed being saddled with the job.

Felipe: Sundry and diverse objects flung into the air ...
Jose: Simultaneously tossed from place to place in random and pseudo-mystical patterns ...
Sancho: And always more objects than there are hands to catch them.
Ramon: We call it ... juggling.
Felipe: Intel calls it ...
Unison: Business as usual.

The Brothers also took second prize in the costume contest by being clever enough to wear matching T-shirts. Janet did her best Ann Miller imitation, tap-dancing her way into the crowd's heart to "Shakin' the Blues Away" (this is not as lewd as it sounds). Her photo in the following month's Intel leads made her an instant celebrity, and she was besieged for autographs for minutes afterward.

Flying High wasn't our only show-biz opportunity this year. The Juggling Muralis reprised their performance at the Intel summer picnic. Steve and three other loons hosted a 10-years-at-Intel roast for Steve's boss, complete with black tie, audiovisual effects, and a King Tut dance as the grand finale (videotape available on request). Most impressive was Janet's dancing debut on Broadway in the new Portland Performing Arts Center (I'm not making this up), where she was the star² of the fall recital of the June Taylor School of Dance.

There really isn't time or space to report fully on the April Foolishness Games that we organized at work (you can guess what watching four high-level managers playing Pig Pong looks like!), or the name-the-lab-dragon contest (Kali Mahumbug Firehouser won). So we'll close with the reminder that, in spite of what the Coca-Cola Company would have you believe, Santa is truly "The Claus that refreshes". Stay healthy and happy, and keep in touch.

With much love,

Steve and Janet Tolopka

²In her fans' unbiased opinion.