

Thursday, December 23, 1999

Merry Christmas, Happy Chanukah, Joyous Kwanzaa, Happy New Year, etc., to all.

Millennium, schmellium. It's 1999 and I'm writing this entire weeks (well now it's just days) before Christmas! The organization is amazing! I missed writing a letter last year, you'll understand why a bit later, but your letters provide grist for my humor all year long and it's only fair that I provide similar ammunition. If you're really sharp you may notice that this is the same paper I used for my 1997 letter. I know it's tacky but I just don't know enough people to use a whole pad of paper in one year, and my frugal nature dictates that I continue using it until its gone. Also, I'm sure the more Orthodox among you will find several consonants missing from this spelling of Chanukah but this is the longest spelling my spell checker will tolerate.

Remember two years ago in my last letter when I said that neither of the kids was threatening me with grandparenthood? Well, I can't say that any mo re. Taylor Alexandra Scheef, my beautiful new granddaughter, was born November 8, 1999, and she is a joy to behold. Despite coming into the world a few weeks early, she was a big girl at 20 in. and 8 lbs. 1 oz. She certainly gave us much to be thankful for at Thanksgiving! Since I don't have a color printer yet, you'll have to trust me that she has dark brown hair and dark bluish eyes.

Now I can hear you saying, "Jim, what's the rest of the story here?" Well, David met Rita at work, which was good because until his last promotion, David worked from about 3 AM to noon – not a life style conducive to meeting other singles. Obviously the relationship blossomed and they married. While all this was going on David still managed another promotion and is now responsible for delivery of the *New York Times* in all of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Our family grew in more ways adding Rita's daughter Stephanie, a really great 13-year-old young lady. All this joy was tempered last year when David and Rita lost their first baby. With this tragedy fresh in our hearts, a Christmas letter last year just didn't make sense.

Over the last two years Rob moved to New Jersey and then to the Big Apple where he has begun law school at Fordham University.

And the rest of the news? Well, I hiked the White Mountains (NH) both years, we did our week in Stowe both years, and I rode my bicycle all summer long. "The Hike" as it has come to be known, returned to its roots this year as David, Rob and I hiked and enjoyed each other's company. It was great. This past year I watched, rather than skied, the Stowe Derby (see <http://cardio.med.yale.edu/mmsc/>, the Mount Mansfield Ski and Snowboard Club web site) for the first time since I bought the time-share. And it rained all week long. This was the first year we have had bad weather in five years at Trapp Family so I guess I shouldn't complain. Naturally it would take more than a little rain to prevent us from enjoying the week.

My company, Telemark Systems Inc., continues to keep me busy without wealth with some new clients and some interesting projects. Yes, I finally finished that project for the telecommunications company and they take

several hundred reservations and send out a like number of invoices every day using the system.

Julie joined IBM's Global Services last year and has worked on Peoplesoft installations in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Kansas. Her travel schedule means that we must make the most of the time we have together on weekends. Adding to the holiday stress, we have decided to combine households. Plus we have discussed the "m"-word, and may do something in that direction sometime in the future. Is that non-committal enough? Hey, some things don't change over nite!

What, if any, Y2K precautions have you taken? Since I get asked all the time, here's my opinion for the record. I expect that many companies around the world will have computer system problems, particularly in Asia. Most of these incidents will go unreported but some U.S. companies will be affected by materials shortages caused by computer system problems at foreign suppliers. On the broader front, what's the worst that could happen? Somewhere there's a power company that missed something in their Y2K testing at a generating plant. When that plant fails it could cause a ripple in the distribution grid that trips a circuit breaker at a distribution station that stops power one of those big distribution lines and the regional power grid begins to fail. Before people can react, a large part of the country could lose power. Sounds too far fetched? In 1965 the entire east coast from New Jersey north to Maine and as far west as central Michigan went black in just such a scenario. I was in East Lansing, MI, when it happened and we lost electricity for several hours because of a failure in New York. Hopefully the power industry learned from that and more recent problems but I think it prudent to have some firewood on hand, some food and water in the house and a full tank of gas in the car. Also, I don't expect this to happen on January 1st. Something like this might not happen for several days or even weeks into the new year, so don't think it's over just because the Rose Bowl game is on TV.

Well, that's about all the pretense I can muster for this year. For the millennium, I have new granddaughters to get to know, mountains to ski, and who knows...



Taylor Alexandra Scheef with her father
Nov. 10th in the Special Care Nursery.