

The Tilden's Christmas Letter 2002

The story is told of a pastor in a church in California who put a sign in front of his church during Christmas that said "Jesus is the reason for the season. Merry Christmas." Shortly after he posted the sign, a nearby resident called to complain about the sign. At one point in the conversation, the neighbor said "I don't think the church should try to drag religion into every holiday..."

Funny story....sort of....but more sad than funny. It's not coincidental that our calendar measures years from the birth of Christ. This single event is the most significant in all of human history because on that day, God became a man, and that's what we celebrate at Christmas. That's exactly what the prophet Isaiah was talking about when he wrote:

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever."

This year certainly hasn't been one of peace in our world, but we hang on to the certainty that God is absolutely in control, and He will bring lasting peace.

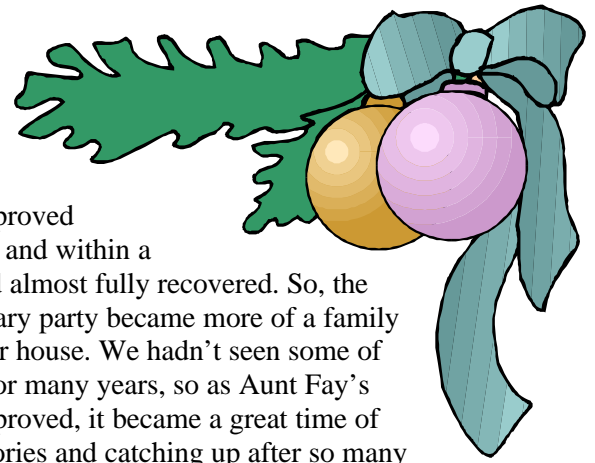
Through a year of great political unrest and economic uncertainty, we feel *enormously* blessed as a family. We all have our health, we have plenty to eat (actually, more than we need...), and a wonderful home.

Our year started with a planned big celebration for my parent's 50th wedding anniversary in February. My mother's twin sister and her husband flew in and we were all going to drive to Hermiston, about 3 hours east of our home in Portland, to have a big party. Unfortunately, Aunt Fay suffered what we thought at first was a stroke just before we were going to leave. At first, the prognosis was pretty bleak and within hours, all of my cousins (her children) flew in from as far away as Florida. However, through the next couple of days her

condition improved dramatically, and within a week she had almost fully recovered. So, the 50th anniversary party became more of a family reunion at our house. We hadn't seen some of the cousins for many years, so as Aunt Fay's condition improved, it became a great time of telling old stories and catching up after so many years.

In early March, we spent a weekend with our small Bible Study group up at the place in Gig Harbor, which we now call "Harbor House." It was great fun! We've had several groups from church up to use the house, including 25+ college kids last Christmas for our annual college group "winter retreat." We had kids sleeping pretty much on every square inch of floor. We've spent quite a few days there ourselves, and both played and worked on a number of improvement projects. The view out over the bay is fantastic. Roseanne has even taken a couple of photos from the deck that have been shown on our local television station as part of their regular "Weather Pictures" feature, where people send in scenic shots that are used as backgrounds during the weather.

Roseanne, Jessie, and I made another trip to Russia in April to help with our sister church in Voronezh, about 250 miles south of Moscow. This was Jessie's third time, and Roseanne and my second time, but it's the first time that Roseanne and I have been able to go together. It was, as usual, a time of great growth and challenge for us. I had the opportunity to preach at our sister church on the Sunday we arrived (using an interpreter of course). Then we witnessed a baptism for several members of the church in a nearby community pool. The water in the pool was so brown from the rusty pipes that you couldn't see the bottom of the pool. It's a good thing that baptism is only a symbol of Christ's washing away our sin, because I'm pretty sure that the people who were baptized came out dirtier than they went in! We made a lot of new friends and had a great time seeing people we'd met on our previous trips to Russia. Jessie is hoping to go back again this coming summer, but it's not clear whether Roseanne and I will be able to, since the trip is currently scheduled right on top of Roseanne's family reunion----at our house. It would probably be a bit awkward if we didn't show up.



A big part of my time was consumed this spring and summer getting ready for my second time participating in the “Pacific Cup” sailing race from San Francisco to Hawaii. Many of you probably remember that I’d done this race back in 1996 as part of a crew on a friend’s boat. This time, I was foolish enough to enter our boat. I discovered first hand how much time and money it takes to prepare for such an endeavor. It was a HUGE task. The crew all pitched in to help, but it still was an enormous effort. Even before we started the race in San Francisco, we sailed over 1,000 miles in practice and moving the boat to the start (it’s about 600 miles from the mouth of the Columbia, down the coast to San Francisco).

Unfortunately, we didn’t do very well in the race because we had a lot of problems keeping our spinnaker up (the big parachute-like sail in the front of the boat). I won’t bore you with the details, but we did have a good time, and we got there with everyone healthy and no serious damage to the boat. There were at least a half dozen boats in the race that didn’t fare as well and had more serious problems—the most common being losing their rudder or mast. The boat is back in Portland now all safe and sound.

Jessie is a senior this year, so we’re coming down the wire on a college decision. It looks like she’s settled on an excellent Christian school in Seattle (about 180 miles north of here) called Seattle Pacific University. Quite a number of students from our church have gone to this school and it has an excellent reputation both academically and theologically. We’re really excited for her. She’ll be close enough that she can come home pretty regularly, but far enough she’ll have to live independently. We’re all going to miss her immensely, but especially her younger sister.

Katie is a sophomore this year and is doing very well in school. She is involved in the youth group at our church and is involved with a group that meets before school once a week for prayer and worship.

She has a continuous stream of boys calling or “dropping by” but she handles them well, so I haven’t yet had to pull out the shotgun.

As I mentioned last year, I’ve taken on the roll of board chairman at our church.

Between that responsibility and serving on three company boards, I may be “board”

but I’m not “bored.” (OK...I know it was bad...but I couldn’t resist). One of the boards I serve on is for “Conducive Technology”, the company we bought back from the Irish company that bough Sight & Sound a couple of years ago. Like many other small technology companies, the past year has been pretty rough, but we can see the proverbial “light at the end of the tunnel.” Wait...is that a whistle I hear? I’m also working with a small company that creates web content that helps foreign students learn to speak English as we Americans do—teaching them about American culture and slang and how we use the language. I’ve also launched a new web site for my consulting business. Stop by some time and check out www.mdt-consulting.com.

Roseanne is in her third year of piano lessons and is making good progress. She gets frustrated at not making progress faster, but I think she’s doing great. She is also leading a Bible Study with several women from the neighborhood, and continues to enjoy digital photography and scrap booking. Last year, I got her a digital video camera, so now she’s trying to learn Adobe Premier and digital video editing. Between her digital photograph and now the digital video, she is the family’s biggest consumer of hard disks. The drive manufacturers love her!

As usual, this is just the highlights. For more details, you need to drop in and see us! There are also more family photos available on our web site at www.tildens.org. In the mean time, we hope you enjoy the holidays and remember “Jesus IS the reason for the season!” Merry Christmas!

