

Christmas 1999

The peace of Christ to you! Happy Christmas!

It is for me! My parents thought they could get rid of Michael and myself (so conveniently remodeling our bedrooms)...but guess who's writing the Christmas letter? I am! Now that's power and importance! Ha!

Yes, Mike and I are both on our own now - he is living in a house near PLU with 9 football buddies. No worries though - they have their regular schedule of moms and families who cook and clean for them. Must be nice. In the beginning of the year, he flew back to Iowa for his J-term. He lived with my grandparents and went to school at Luther College in Decorah. That winter turned out to be the coldest and stormiest January on record. He learned his lesson about the midwest's brutal weather! In May, he met his birthmother, Marianne. It was a wonderful evening - the physical similarities were amazing. Mike is such a gift to us from her - it made us appreciate her selflessness so much more. This fall, he decided to major in special education and physical education - and has been enjoying his football season with the Lutes. He actually scored two touchdowns this season - and received an honorable mention for defensive player of the week. As I am writing this, they are heading off to the Division III National Semifinals in Texas! It has been quite a season!

As for myself, I am back up in Washington now. After I graduated from college, I moved to University Place with my kitty. (She was banished from the house too. Maybe it had something to do with the presents she was leaving for my dad on the new carpet.) I have been with Merrill Lynch full-time since June. It's been a roller coaster of events: studying for my licensing exams, starting and building my business, and learning how to cope with being kicked out of the family nest. I started going to a different church, St. Vincent de Paul, and have been very involved in Lifeteen, a new Catholic youth group forming across the U.S. I have also been blessed with a great group of 6th grade girls - whose basketball team I am coaching.

As important as children are to any Christmas letter, I suppose I should fill you in on my parents and how they are doing. Dad's biggest joy this year is ~~getting to see me every day~~ sharing his knowledge and experience with me. He and I took several business trips together and have enjoyed every minute of it. He loves going to Mike's games with the typical "PLU Dad Attire", complete with Lutes hat and sweatshirt, headphones, binoculars, and popcorn. It's quite a visual picture, isn't it? This past summer, he went back to Iowa and headed back this winter for some old-fashioned hunting with my grandpa. I'll be holding down the fort at the office (doesn't that have a nice ring to it?).

Mom has probably been the least affected by all of the changes going on - she's still with Pearl Counseling and loving every minute of it. When back in Iowa during the summer, she and Dad had their first karaoke experience. Again, another experience Mike and I wish we could have seen! (But who could forget when we saw them do the Macarena?) Mom is adjusting well to life without official dependent kids, though I have heard rumors that Mike shops at the Mauss Kitchen for groceries. She and Pepper, the dog, have been keeping each other company at the house.

With all the changes we experienced in 1999, we are very grateful to the Lord for the blessings he has given us. Whether we live together or apart, the Mauss family is extending prayers and blessings to you in this last Christmas of the century! Have a wonderful, peaceful, and blessed Christmas and new year!

With warm wishes > Tom, Karol, Shelley, and Michael Mauss