

Christmas 2001

Where to begin? As I'm writing this, Mom and Dad are busy packing for their vacation to Maui (without Michael or me, mind you) and I'm watching the rain pour down. Cozy, wet autumn in the northwest! I'm secretly hoping for a few rain showers in Hawaii to remind them of home and their frozen children wishing they could be on vacation too!

We did a bit of traveling this year - part unexpected and part eagerly anticipated. The unexpected happened as we traveled home to Iowa to bury my Grandma Mary (Dad's mom). After a full 81 years, she left us to be with the Lord. Michael and I had the honor of being two of the casketbearers, with the rest of our cousins, and there's nothing that can describe the joy in remembering her as we heard the song "When Irish Eyes are Smiling" at the end of the funeral Mass. Thank God for the time we shared with her!

Just three months later, we visited Iowa once again to celebrate my great grandma's 100th birthday (mom's grandma). Mom very much enjoyed the trip back for the birthday celebration - and gave my great grandma her first locket with a picture of each of them. (Something old...something new...oops, that's for weddings!) Mom is continuing her joy as a counselor - and she has really found her calling. I am so proud of her!

Dad was very blessed in a successful hip replacement surgery and now sports a brand new titanium hip! He's quite adept at setting off the metal detectors now - and is a riot to travel with. When Mike had a football game in California, we took my grandpa to Disneyland. Both Dad and Grandpa (at a young 87 years old) survived Space Mountain!

Speaking of Michael, he's finishing up his last football season as a Lute. He was honored to be chosen as one of the five captains, and has been cherishing the journey he's been on. I think we'll all be going through "football withdrawal" next fall as he considers life beyond PLU! Our family has had some very special memories over the years - from fish feeds at our home to the ever-eventful road trips (which always seem to end with creative vocabulary from Dad and incorrect directions)...to really learning to treasure each day as it comes...we've been so lucky to share in this together.

When football is over, and Michael is student teaching, he's moving in with me in my new home. Dad has really set this up pretty well - not only is Mike out of the house, but he's now got both kids depending on each other instead of him! To top it off...I earned my position at the office in a full team with Dad, and it officially begins in January 2002. The local business newspaper even did a feature story on us! I've been so blessed with my time with Dad, and am looking to the new challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for us. It's been an interesting year, to say the very least, but have been fortunate to have each other throughout all of it. Here's to a bullish 2002!

Wishing you a blessed Christmas season as we celebrate Christ's birth...and joy in the new year!

Tom, Karol, Shelley and Michael Mauss