

Dear Friends,

Happy Holidays. First, we must apologize for being so out of touch. The last few years have been difficult and stressful in some areas and vry busy in others and we simply didn't get everything that we should have done. That included keeping in touch with our friends. With things settling down a bit and sorting out, we plan on doing better.



Jennica showing us the wild cucumber she found in the jungle in Africa near Arusha.

Jennica, 8, is now in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at Quarry Lane, a private school in Dublin. Jennica is active in dance, taking ballet, jazz, and hip-hop. She is also taking swimming lessons and is in her fourth year of Girl Scouts. Starting in February, she will add little league baseball to this list. She has done baseball camp during the last two summers and now feels ready to tackle the whole game. She and John go over to the park across the street most weekends to practice throwing and catching pop flies and ground balls. She is also angling to take piano lessons and to follow in Jessica's footsteps in theater, but we haven't figured out how to add this to the list of all things she is doing and it's not all bad that she and Jessica have different activities.

Jessica, 14, is now a high-school freshman. For 7<sup>th</sup> grade (2002-03) she transferred from QLS to the public junior high school. While on a class-to-class comparison, QLS is a stronger academic school; the entire 7<sup>th</sup> grade was only 17 kids and had minimal extra-curricular activities. Centerville JHS had a class of about 550. We felt the strength of a few classes was offset by the variety of people, classes, and opportunities that the public school could offer. This has worked out better than we could have imagined. In 7<sup>th</sup> grade, Jessica tried out for the school play, *Once Upon a Mattress* (she is in the green & red tights). The



Jessica modeling an Iraqw celebration skirt.



school's drama teacher, Mr. C (one of those special teachers the kids will point to as having had a major influence on their lives), took a chance and cast her as the Jester, one of the leads. She really took to this and has blossomed, making lots of new friends. Since then she has performed in *Bye-Bye Birdie* (8<sup>th</sup> grade JHS) and *Honk!* with the cities Star Struck theater. ([www.StarstruckTheatre.org](http://www.StarstruckTheatre.org)) Her next productions are *Seussical the Musical* with

Star Struck in January and *Guys and Dolls* at Washington HS. During *Honk!* Jessica was the recipient of the Gypsy Robe. The Gypsy Robe is given to the outstanding member of the ensemble. Fellow cast members vote on who they believe has offered the most to the performance. Jessica was noted to always be there ready to work, always willing to help a fellow actor and always willing to jump in and do the little bit extra. Besides theater, she is still competing in dance solos and groups in jazz, lyrical, hip-hop, tap and production. Somehow she is also still managing to keep her grades up!



Jill in Pienza, Italy for her brother John and Beth's wedding, June 2004.

The last few years have been a little bit of a roller coaster for Jill. On April 1, 2004, Jill had the dubious honor of “turning out the lights”, for the Unisys PC division in San Jose after working for Convergent/Unisys since 1984. While we knew for almost six months that this was going to happen, it was still quite an emotional event. The original plan was to take the late spring and summer off, enjoy being a Mom and start looking after Labor Day. Great plan, unfortunately, we didn't know that the entire high-tech industry was to go into the toilets – partially, the dot com and partially the 9/11 terrorist attacks. These events turned what was a strong Silicon Valley economy into a minefield. It is estimated that 50% of

all the high tech workers are either unemployed, have moved out of the area, or are no longer working in high tech. While looking for work, Jill continued to work at her Mary Kay business as she continues to do today. She had a job at a web analytics company, Fireclick, for about six months at the beginning of 2004 but was laid off in a head-count move the week before the company was bought out. Jill didn't like the job so she wasn't too upset by this. This also allowed Jill to spend a week in Tuscany, Italy with the rest of her family to attend her brother John's wedding. While John is building (see below), Jill is sewing. She was in charge of all the costumes for *Bye Bye Birdie* (cast of 60!) and made costumes for *Honk & Seussical*. With the new job, Jill plans to sign up for less work for *Guys & Dolls*. This fall, Jill took the CBEST test and passed with flying colors. A CBEST certificate allows her to be a substitute teacher in California. While signing up at Kelly Education to be on their list as a substitute, she was asked about her interest level in a job back in a corporate office. As a result of this conversation, Jill has just been hired as a temp at Clorox. We are hopeful that once they get to know her and she sees what is available within the company, a suitable full-time position will result. On a sad note, Jill's father was diagnosed with lung cancer in December 2002. He had surgery and beat the lung cancer. Unfortunately as it often happens the cancer came back a little less than a year later – it spread and turned into inoperable bone cancer. He passed away in February 2004.

John continued with JC<sup>2</sup> Technologies doing a wide variety of work; naval architecture, software development, carpentry, expert witnessing, pretty much anything he could find. Since this did not provide either the stability or level of income required, in April 2004, John started working at a 'real' job with Navis and shut down JC<sup>2</sup>. This is a very good fit for him as Navis develops software for managing container terminals. With all the turmoil going on with jobs and being involved with the kids various activities, John has not done much sailing although he managed to do the 2002 St. Petersburg to Isla Mujeres race with his father, the 2002 Pacific Cup, and get certified as a US Sailing judge and umpire. He is still sailing the





FJ, although it is a borrowed boat, his boat is sitting stripped in the garage. Instead of sailing, John has been very busy with the back-stage part of the theater. For *Once Upon a Mattress*, John led the group of parents that built the sets and modified the theater. The students and parents had a rare opportunity, since it was known that the building would be torn down, to make the entire building look like a castle, painting walls, building 'turrets' for the spot lights, etc. The effect was amazing and the production was even more amazing. Two minutes into the show you forgot that you were watching a *junior high school* play! Given the state of school budgets, once the old building was torn down, the theater was replaced by a large but empty room. So John led a group of parents who built-out the room into a theater and then built the sets for *Bye Bye Birdie*. This year, for *Guys and Dolls*, the set project is much smaller, only needing to build a number of platforms. John has also continued to play hockey a couple of times per week and has played for the University of

Michigan 40+ team in the Charles Schultz Snoopy Senior Hockey Tournament the last two years. Twenty years after leaving U of M he finally made the team!



In August 2004, we had an adventure of a lifetime. John's mother and husband decided to celebrate their 70<sup>th</sup> birthdays by taking the entire combined clan on a safari in Tanzania. Two grandparents, 12 parents, and 11 kids! We all met in Amsterdam and then spent 11 wonderful days visiting Maasai and Iraqw homes, seeing more wildlife than we could ever imagine, and getting a real education in what life is like in the third world. As a group we took some 3,000 pictures and 3.5 hours of videotape, which John is in the process of sorting through, editing, and turning into video CDs and DVDs. If you aren't careful, that is what will be sent next year!

The grandkids standing in a hollow baobob tree in the Tarangire National Park.

The entire group in the Ngorongoro crater.





A giraffe crossing the road. This truly gives you a feel for how very close the animals were.



Jessica and Mr. C at drama camp summer 2004



Jennica practicing her batting at baseball camp - summer 2004