

March 1997

We're happy to report that all is well in the Holtz household. 1996 was a healthy year for us, and we are thankful for nothing more serious than a broken finger (Arthur).

Highlights of 1996 include trips to New York in March (Karen) for her dad's 70th birthday and retirement party; to China in May (Jim, Karen, and Abby) for a memorable vacation; and to Boston (Karen and Jim) in December for a combined business trip and 18th wedding anniversary weekend.

The trip to China was fascinating! In Beijing, we visited Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, the Ming Tombs, the Great Wall, and the Peking Opera. We were impressed by the Terracotta Warriors in Xian and entranced by the scenery in Guilin. Our vacation ended in Shanghai, with a tour of the beautiful Yu Gardens and a performance by a troupe of Chinese acrobats.

Abby especially enjoyed the trip. She had mom and dad to herself and was treated like a celebrity wherever we went. Since the Chinese don't see many children with blonde hair and blue eyes, she really stood out! Crowds gathered around her, she posed for countless photographs, people wanted to touch her hair and skin, and she was called "pretty baby." It was quite an adjustment to come home and be "just another kid!"

1996 marked another milestone for our family: we now have two children in high school!

Eva (16-1/2) is a junior, beginning to think about where she'd like to go to college. With strong academic skills plus artistic talent, she should have no trouble finding just the right place for herself. But will it be East Coast or West – or somewhere in between? We'll let you know where her search leads. Spring Break will find Eva and Karen on the East Coast visiting Harvard, Yale, and Princeton (and maybe catching up with a few relatives and friends, if time allows). She's also considering Stanford, which may turn out to be her first choice when she considers the weather factor! This summer Eva hopes to return to California Institute for the Arts in southern California, where she spent four weeks as an arts scholar last summer.

Emily (14-1/2) is a freshman this year. She's also a great student and a talented musician. Besides the flute, she is playing piano again (no lessons this time; she's teaching herself to play Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata and lots of Beatles songs!). Emily has signed up for driver education during Spring Break, in preparation for the learner's permit test she's eligible to take when she turns 15 in June. She can't wait to drive... though mom and dad are not quite as anxious as she is! Emily is very social these days, preferring the company of her peers to anyone in the family (except, perhaps, Eva). She's struggling to understand why we won't let her go "midnight bowling" (12 to 2 a.m.) on Saturday nights!

Abby (11) is in her last year of elementary school (5th grade). She loves the Beatles and is in the process of acquiring all their CDs to play on her new boom box (a Chanukah/birthday gift from her grandparents). Abby is active in our synagogue's junior youth group and continues her Hebrew studies in preparation for her Bat Mitzvah, scheduled for December 5, 1998. Abby is a prolific artist, and she's anxious to have some of her work framed and displayed

properly. She is responsible for the care of two family cats and recently became the proud owner of a pet turtle, "Loch Ness," who lives in an aquarium in her bedroom.

Rebekah (7-112) is a second grader and a first-year Brownie. She delighted in selling over 100 boxes of Girl Scout cookies this year! Rebekah has a terrific sense of humor and is a devoted fan of her dad's original bedtime stories. Like Eva and Abby, she loves art and has joined Abby's class. (We really do need to get into the framing business!!) Rebekah became an excellent swimmer this year, taking lessons three times a week for nearly the whole summer. More recently, she has mastered the art of riding a two-wheeler and just signed up for her first year of soccer. Rebekah is a remarkable young lady who takes her responsibilities as a student very seriously and wants no help from her parents when it comes to homework!

Arthur (also 7-112) continues his love affair with computers and, now, guns. Recently he had the pleasure of spending some time with a friend of ours who collects guns, learning all about safety and seeing some collectors' items "up close and personal." He likes to play computer games like Abuse and Doom, and to "network" with his dad on Marathon. He has even learned how to find his favorite software company, Bungie, on the "web" (<http://www.bungie.com>). Arthur has also learned to ride a two-wheeler (Jim "taught" the twins on the same day) but is not interested in playing soccer just yet. He continues to do best in structured environments and is learning to take responsibility for his homework.

Business is good for Jim at Star Medical, where he continues to work on the development of medical lasers. They are currently conducting clinical trials on lasers for removal of unwanted hair and for cosmetic treatment of spider veins, as well as a diagnostic for determining burn severity. Results to date are encouraging, and Star is expanding and getting ready for production of the lasers. We'll see in the coming year how it all works out. In general, Jim would like to work less and travel more. He says his goal is to get up each morning and do what he wants to do that day. Maybe in a few years he'll be able to do that.

Karen is seeking a new direction as well. She is ready to do something more than just being a stay-at-home mom. Exactly what she wants to do, however, is a much more difficult question. Ideas range from more volunteer activities to getting a part-time job. Although she hasn't yet come to a firm conclusion, being a travel agent (with the ultimate goal of having her own business) is one possibility under consideration. Stay tuned; we'll let you know when she figures it all out. Meanwhile, Karen continues to be an active board member and co-chair of the Programs committee at our synagogue and is a regular volunteer in the two elementary schools that our children attend.

We are excited to have a really nice family photo to send to you this year. The enclosed snapshot was taken by Paul Baird, a former roommate from Jim's college days. (Paul and his wife, Linda, visited us in October while in the Bay Area for Jim and Paul's 30-year Stanford reunion). From left: Emily, Karen, Jim and Eva in back; Arthur, Abby, and Rebekah in front. Thanks for the great photograph, Paul; it's one we'll treasure!

Have a great 1997!

Love from Karen, Jim, and family