

December 14, 1990

Holiday Greetings!

It's 11:00 a.m. and, miraculously, it's quiet at the Holtz household. Eva, Emily, and Abby are at school and the twins, Rebekah and Arthur, are both napping. This is a rare occurrence these days, so I'm taking advantage of the situation by writing this much overdue letter to all of you.

We're coping fairly well with the demands of five young children. Arthur and Rebekah were a year old in May. We celebrated surviving the first year with twins and, yes, the first year is the hardest. That is if you measure in terms of how much (or, should I say, how little) sleep you get. Everyone is sleeping through the night most of the time now, which is a real blessing! Now we're dealing with two active toddlers who have learned to run and climb, usually going in two different directions at the same time. Mom gets her exercise not at an aerobics class but at home--twelve hours a day--chasing these two.

Abby, nearly 5, attends preschool five mornings a week and is looking forward to being in kindergarten in September. She also has a gymnastics class and is learning to ride a two-wheeler. Abby is a sweet little girl who enjoys singing and, believe it or not, likes to organize things around the house. "Everything in its proper place" is her motto, and she keeps after all of us to tow the line. (It appears that Rebekah also has this compulsion; Jim believes it is "the neatness gene," which Abby and Rebekah apparently inherited from me!)

Emily, age 8, is an enthusiastic student, always eager to accept a challenge. Her teacher this year is an avid storyteller, a passion that she shares with her students in a storytelling club that Emily attends after school one day a week. Emily played in her third season of soccer this fall as a member of the Awesome Angels. She is continuing her piano studies and taking first year Hebrew, in which she is about to surpass her parents in her ability to read and write. High points of her year include a week at Brownie day camp and a trip to visit Grandma and Grandpa Wenzinger in New York, both in August. On the return trip from Binghamton to San Francisco, she flew alone for the first time, changing planes at Dulles airport in Washington, D.C.

Eva, age 10, is our creative and artistic child. In addition to being a straight-A student in the fifth grade, she, too, finds time for soccer. The Banshees finished first in their division this fall and were tied for first place in the year-end tournament until the fourth quarter of the championship game, when they lost on a goal kick. Eva attended Camp Swig for a week in June and is eager to spend more time there next summer. Eva is a second-year Hebrew student and also takes art lessons: a clay class and a drawing class this fall and, next quarter, printmaking. Her artwork was displayed at a Spring exhibit at the Livermore Public Library, and she was a winner in a sidewalk chalk contest and a fire prevention poster contest this year.

When I'm not busy tending to the twins, I manage to squeeze in some volunteer work at various schools and at our local synagogue. Abby's preschool is a coop, so I participate in the program one day every other week. In addition, I'm the school's treasurer and serve on the Board. I have been on several field trips with Eva's and

Emily's classes, and next week I'll be helping the children in both classrooms with holiday projects. At the temple, I share responsibility for running the gift shop, which has been a fun experience--especially the part where we shop for our inventory!

In February, Jim and I spent a weekend in Tucson at the annual Gem and Mineral Show. It is the largest show of its kind, featuring exhibitors from around the world. The displays of rocks, gemstones, petrified wood, and fossils seem to go on forever. I was concerned that our flight back to San Francisco would not get off the ground because of the weight of the treasures we had acquired (three sets of petrified wood bookends, 10 pounds of quartz crystal, 10 pounds of amethyst crystal, an ammonite fossil from Morocco, plus assorted rock specimens), but we made it safely home.

In July, we took a (partial) family vacation to the Galapagos Islands off the coast of Ecuador in South America. Jim, Eva, Emily and I went on the 10-day trip while my friend Judy and her daughter cared for Abby, Rebekah, and Arthur. We visited six different islands observing such exotic animals as blue-footed boobies, frigate birds, sea turtles, iguanas, and giant land tortoises. We also spent several days touring in and around Quito, the capital of Ecuador. It was the experience of a lifetime which we recorded in photographs and on videotape (we remembered the camcorder this time!).

We spent Thanksgiving with Jim's family at Yosemite National Park. Altogether there were sixteen of us: seven adults and nine children ranging in age from 18 months to 10 years. The weather was warm and there was no snow, so we were able to hike and take bicycle rides throughout the valley. Most of all, we were together in a beautiful, relaxed setting. We even managed to find babysitting on two nights so the adults could enjoy a quiet dinner together.

On December 23, we leave for two weeks at my parents' home near Binghamton, New York. The children are looking forward to visiting with their East Coast cousins and playing in the snow. If all goes well, we may take a side trip for several days . . . possible destinations are Washington, D.C. or Boston.

Karen left me a little space to write (no editing please) about the things I have been doing outside of the home (since I'm considered of little help around the house). To bring you up to date, I left Lawrence Livermore Laboratory about a year and a half ago and have been doing consulting work on my own. I work mainly for a Japanese company which is interested in going into the laser business (only slightly preferable to Texas real estate and Savings and Loans). I have been doing a lot of market studies and business planning over the past year; we are at the point (hopefully) of really doing something. We'll find out before too long, but in the mean time the work's been interesting and I'm learning new things at a rate that is faster than the rate at which I'm forgetting old things (e.g. Maxwell's equations).

We hope all is well with you and your loved ones, and we wish for you a happy, healthy, and prosperous 1991.

ABBY

Rebekah + Arthur

The Holtz Family

Karen, Jim, Eva

Emily Holtz