



Christmas 1996

We are thankful for the season of Christmas: the celebration of God's gift of LOVE for all people! It seems to bring out the best in most folks, probably because we're thinking of others rather than ourselves. It's February, and I'm still basking in the warmth and wonder of it all! If I weren't so indulgent, you might have had this letter early on. We appreciate your patience and your part in making our Christmas a memorable one.

1996 was especially eventful for Carl. The Doron Employees Association produced an amazing retirement "blast" on his 70th birthday! Family, friends, and colleagues braved a severe snowstorm, including delays, layovers, and dangerous driving conditions, to be a part of the celebration. Our kids entertained by singing an original parody revealing amusing and little-known facts about their Dad! There were many moving tributes as well, and rib-tickling anecdotes from fellow workers and associates that we'll forever treasure. As a special gift, the Doron people put together a driver simulator for kids, license plate "CJ Wondercar," and donated it in his name to our local Discovery Center... a touching presentation.

As if that weren't excitement enough for a "man of his years," we spent a remarkable weekend in St. Louis at an LCJ reunion (Landing Craft Infantry) with WWJ shipmates from more than 50 years ago! Although this was not their first reunion, Carl learned of it just last year. We are grateful to Rus, a diligent shipmate who located Carl and most, if not all, of the others (who have attended these reunions) who served on the LCJ-G-458. The bond among these men is extraordinary, and for the wives, too. It was a privilege to be among such excellent people.

Though "retired," Carl is still working part time at Doron--no surprise! We do try to spend half of each month at our waterside habitat in Virginia and to visit our girls and their families (in New Hampshire and California) at least once a year. We are fortunate to have our boys and their families living nearby in New York. When in Virginia, Carl is happiest "playing" in the yard and on the "Karen Leigh," his "ship." (It's not work when you love what you're doing!) I especially delight in adding a bit of warmth and charm to our home through recycling and displaying old photos and family treasures, which portray the history and spirit of our family.

About the "grands." We think they are incredible! Seven (eight in April) are teens, one preteen, twins almost 8 years old, and one toddler. We have no doubts that all twelve will use their varied capabilities and compassion, their pleasant ways and senses of humor to make a difference in this world for GOOD! It's such a joy to see each of them becoming their own person. It's been our privilege and great pleasure to watch young Grant Thomas (15 months) grow and change almost daily. He's the best entertainment in town! Grandparenting allows us to observe and "accentuate the positive" without having to deal much with the traumas of kids growing up. It's awesome!

We value the gift of your friendship and we love you. Be mindful that each day is a gift, as well, and remember to "sprinkle blessings wherever you go!"

*Dottie and Carl*

