

6 Dec 89

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Dear ,

The best Summer we have had here has run to it's close, and Christmas is coming near, so it seems a good time to bring you up to date, and ask, "How are things with you?"

Jobs seem to dominate much of our activity these days. John was made employee of the quarter at the gas station he works at around three shifts a week. This got him a dinner out and a cheque for \$50. Wendy has worked at Toys R Us for a couple of years now, and has a share purchase option if she works there another four years! She was offered a supervisors job, but reckoned it was not worth the extra 50c an hour. She has still managed to save up for a very good hi - fi, and a very nice leather jacket, to name just a couple of the more expensive items!

Our jobs are of course rather more demanding, but not without personal and financial compensation. Sue has been at Litton Industries for a couple of years at now. Though it has been difficult at times, Litton have given credit where it is due. They have raised Sue's money a quite a lot, and she is now running three test teams. By comparison, Pete's job is a sinecure. The frequent travel that had been a feature is now dwindled to three trips this year. The job has been fairly tough, but it is nice to be at home more.

It is just possible that you could come on references to the first customer aeroplane for the engine Peter (and a few others) are working on. The aeroplane is the BAe 1000, the successor to the BAe 125. It will be made at Chester and Woodford. The announcement was only made public a few weeks ago, though it has been a 'secret' known here for a year. Several newspapers have run ads. The engine is called the PWC 305, by the way. It looks like other aeroplane companies will also have to buy our engine, just to keep up with BAe!

We completed the new washroom around the turn of last year, so we got under way on renovating the original one this year. However things have been going in fits and starts as always. Latest stoppage was caused by sickness, the round of Autumn jobs, and a technical hitch. Hope to resume next week.

Have done more tree lopping this Autumn, and will do more in the Spring - all being well. This should get more sun and water onto the back lawn, which is very tatty and thin. It should also mean somewhat less leaves to rake up in the Autumn. The tree that is finished in the back yard now looks very nice, and it is a better match to the other large tree in the back.

Our weekday evenings seem to be fairly full, though less so than in the days of taking kids to ballet, Aikido, swimming, etc.. Sue goes to Mothers Union some Mondays and visits the Anglican babies in the local hospital on Tuesdays, Wednesday is house church homework night, and Thursday is house church, Friday is grocery shopping night. This is about as much as we can cope with on top of everything else. Our alarm goes at 5.45, and we are not back home until 6 - 6.30 (Pete) and 7 - 7.30 (Sue).

John has a scooter now. This is a blessing, we don't have to take/collect him to/from work. However like all these things, it needs work, and does not always go when wanted. He is now

talking about buying a car off friends of ours. It is a nice little car, so despite our feelings about buying from friends, we are staying out of it, and expecting the best. Both of our cars have given trouble over the year. One little and often, the other once but big. Don't let anyone kid you US cars are reliable. On my experience, it just ain't so!

Wendy's boyfriend Dave has been like a permanent addition for some months now. He is a likeable lad, though not the most practical. Wants to be a policeman if he does not make lawyer. Seems to spend most of his time writing essays on why capital punishment should be brought back! Hew does seem to have a talent for art, he has (legally) done some nice illustrations on one of Wendy's essays. His parents are both musical. We went to a local performance of "Oliver", (which was excellent by any standard) in which his parents played in the orchestra.

Wendy is taking University entrance very seriously. She is getting good marks and reports from school. She certainly intends to spend a year at work saving, before going to University, as many here do. John still has a couple of years to go before things have to be taken this seriously.

This is done on our new computer. We have kept the old one, the kids use it for homework. (See Dave's essays above). The old one is like everything else, needs more TLC as it gets on. It is made in such a way as to need more work than most. Also the absence of a "hard disk drive" (makes it go faster) was getting me down a bit, and the old machine could not have bits added to it because it was not of the standard type.

The 'book' Peter is writing (on computer programing) is slowly moving to its end, and desultory attempts to see about publication have been made. So far it has not been directly rejected, since it does not get considered! All the Canadian (listed) agents have been contacted, but none of them touch technical books of any sort. Also they say that the publishers of such books decide in advance what they want, and then commission someone to write what they have decided on. If you find it convenient to research at your library, you might look for a list of agents in the UK, and let me have a copy.

We had a lovely holiday this year, our first real family Canadian holiday. Last year we hired a boat and sailed around Toronto harbour. It was very nice, but too close to home to quite give a sense of adventure. This year we went to the Rockies. We centred on Banf, in Alberta. We spent several days there and only scratched the surface of what was on offer. We lived in a chalet in a pine forest about 10 minutes drive from the centre of Banf, and about a thousand foot higher. There were deer and birds and squirrels in the trees. We went for several cable railway rides. One must have taken over 20 minutes and taken us up to about 10,000 ft. Up there were beautiful Alpine meadows, and lovely lakes. We walked far enough to just cross the border into British Columbia, but could not go too far. Not being used to even this altitude, we found our breath short, and walking a little tiring. There were good ski slopes stretching well above us on two sides with plenty of snow, even though this was in August.

We went to the Calgary Stampede, which is a sort of combined fair, open air market, and rodeo. We specially liked the chuck waggon races, and the Indian dancing. Sue and Wendy bought Western boots and hats. Now we know why cowboys walk like they do, its nothing to do with riding, it's the weight of them boots!

After that we spent three days white water rafting. We went with a good outfit, they made you paddle the boat, not one of those businesses that drive you around whilst you just sit there. We were warned, and it was true, that Red Deer river water is just melt water straight of the Rockies and it was cold! But they fed us very well, got us all warmed up by a big log fire, and then we (and guide) shoved of in a rubber boat into the river and paddled downstream. The river was fast but shallow, and when it went over rocks, so did we! That's when you find out why they call it "white water" rafting.

As we started to get used to it, our guide suggested, "Right side paddle back, left forward", so we spun our way through rapids used for the canoe championships a couple of years ago! All this surrounded by totally wild forest land, otherwise populated only by wild animals and oil prospectors. We missed seeing a bear by a couple of minutes, but did see one eagle. It was really the oil companies that make it possible, since they cut the roads (who said anything about "paving") that allowed us to get there, and be picked up. At the end of the day, our guides partner would be there by the side of the river. We would pull in to the bank, pull the boat onto the roof of a large US four wheel drive station waggon, and get driven back to our bush camp. There we were greeted by another enormous meal, and the same log fire we had left.

Well I think that about covers where we are at these days, so will close with love. Please let us know how you are whenever you can.