

Adel-gram...too!

A second generation's Christmas greeting. December 1998

I have been struggling for weeks to muster up enough inspiration to write this annual Christmas letter. To tell the truth, in our recent record-breaking heat wave where temperatures reached the mid to high eighties, I nearly forgot that Christmas was fast approaching. Thankfully, over the weekend a cold, rainy front blew in. So here I am, curled up in a comfy armchair in my warmest jammies, beside my lighted evergreen, listening to a favorite Christmas CD, beginning to summarize the Adelgren's year of 1998.

Damon is still working for Columbia/HCA in their Southeast division office as a Senior Business Systems Consultant. To me that means that he travels frequently, works hard and carries fancy gadgets like a laptop PC, a digital pager, a hand held computer and a cell phone. Damon would explain, however, that his job entails training, supporting and consulting with medical practices throughout the Carolinas and Georgia on a particular computer billing system. He also deals with trouble shooting and trains in customer service. He enjoys the challenge and environment. There have been and will continue to be many exciting opportunities. For example, this year he attended several conferences, including ones to Orlando, Florida and Toronto, Canada. Annaleigh and I went with him to Florida in June, which turned out to be a great family vacation.

Speaking of Annaleigh, or Annie as she calls herself, she is right in the middle of the so-called "Terrible Twos," which I find not all that terrible. "Mildly Irritating But Mostly Enjoyable" would be a better phrase. This year has been a literal verbal explosion as she has probably learned and used new words everyday. She still takes one nap (thank goodness!), but otherwise spends her days playing with her toys, particularly her baby dolls. I use the term *playing* loosely as this usually entails taking her doll's clothes off and changing their diaper. This wouldn't be so bad except that Annaleigh insists on using her own diapers, so ultimately this game could be rather expensive. Needless to say, plans for potty training, both doll and tot, are in the near future.

Annaleigh also enjoys singing, going to church, playing outside and coloring (thankfully only on paper). Really the only two things I have to complain about are her appetite (it's a real struggle to get anything past her sweet tooth except an occasional hot dog or a bowl of grapes) and a little bit of a mean streak, which usually only flares up in the territorial church nursery.

I am still at home with Annaleigh and still loving it! This fall I even gave up the substitute teaching. I felt that the irregularity of the whole thing might be upsetting to Annaleigh, having to go to day care at just an hour or so's notice. Besides, there are many other things that have kept me busy, such as teaching junior high Sunday school, singing in the choir and various other church

activities. This past Spring, I even played on a women's softball team, which was great fun, despite my ten year absence from the sport.

This year has brought a new addition to our family: Bridget. Bridget, a two-month old Boxer pup, was a surprise from Damon for me and Annaleigh back in March. At fifty-five pounds and eleven months old, she continues to be a surprise everyday, from holes in the backyard to the shredded kitchen wallpaper. She's really not a bad dog. She actually very loving. It's just the real "in-your-face" kind of love. Bridget is particularly fond of my very overweight, lazy cat Baxter whose only desires in life involve a full food dish, a convenient litter box and a warm, soft place to sleep. He never wanted, nor expected a happy, slobbering, over-grown dog, who wants to use his tail for a chew toy and sniff his rear end all the time. Ah well...it looks like 1999 may bring obedience school for Bridget, possibly self-defense or karate for Baxter and some kind of therapy or anger management class for Damon and me.

All of the extra activity in our house had me seeing question marks as to how to celebrate Christmas this year. Do I stick my beautifully decorated Christmas tree in an unattractive playpen to protect it from Bridget, who very likely will think it the mother of all rawhides? Do I spend hours meticulously wrapping gifts only to have a curious two-year-old unwrap them when my back is turned? Do we build some sort of scaffold in our living room in order to keep our cherished, hand-painted Nativity scene away from little hands and big paws? Well, despite my doubts and concerns, we went with business as usual, and miraculously, there have been no major disasters. Annaleigh has stayed clear of the gifts after a stern warning and has only managed to undecorate my miniature tree once and break a small inexpensive candle holder. Bridget is uninterested in the tree and only sneaks a nibble from some homemade potpourri on occasion. Once again I made the mistake of focusing too much on the secular side of Christmas and it's demands and worries.

Ironically, it was Annaleigh, one of my would-be Christmas assailants, who brought my perspective back into focus. Several days ago we took her to a drive-through live Nativity sponsored by a local church. I delighted in watching her eyes brighten with pleasure at seeing a "real" baby Jesus, flanked by a convincing manger scene with a real cow and donkey. But the action didn't stop there. It continued through his life, death and resurrection. The last scene showed a very serious looking man depicting Christ in some man-made clouds. It was a warm seventy-five degrees that night, and so with our windows down we heard him say, "I am leaving now to prepare a place for you, but I will return one day. Will you be ready?" I don't know if Annaleigh understood what he said or not, but the next thing I know, she was sticking her head out the window and shouting, "Hi Jesus! Happy Bir'day!"

I've thought of this incident a lot over the past few days and realized that my little toddler taught me a very valuable lesson. It doesn't matter if our tree falls over or

how many times we have to rewrap our gifts. It is Christ's birthday, commemorating his ultimate humiliation of taking a human form and giving his life for an unworthy, ungrateful world. I am prayerfully trying to develop that two-year old innocence and in the midst of all the hubbub and going-ons of the season pause to with Him a very happy "bir'day" and give Him the gift of my life. I hope that you are too.

A very merry Christmas to all of you!!!

The Adalgren Family
Damon, Kellie, Annaleigh
Baxter and Bridget