

# Adel-gram... Too 2003



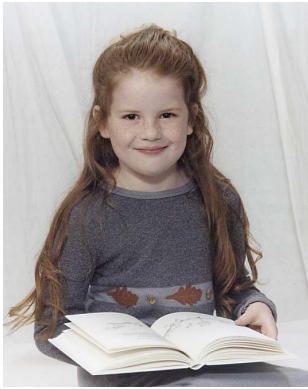
Greetings loved ones!!

Well, the Christmas season is here in full force. I know this for several reasons. For one, Thanksgiving has come and gone, and my jeans are a little tighter than they were two weeks ago. Another reason I know this is that it is *finally* cold here. I was really getting concerned that I was going to have to cross-stitch a snowflake onto one of my tank tops. The merchandisers have let us know that Christmas is here....they started peddling their holiday wares right after the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. And finally, my family senses it is Christmas. Annaleigh has been busy at work making some ornaments for a few weeks now, and suspiciously I'm finding we are all missing some socks! Ripley, our cat, has made a bed out of a stuffed nativity scene that I have for the kids to play with, and let me tell you, it's a bit disconcerting to hear yourself yelling, "Get that cat out of the manger, and get the shepherd out of his mouth!" It was Harrison, however, that really announced the season the other

night. Damon was putting him to bed, and after reading him a Bible story asked, "Harrison, do you love Jesus?" To which he answered, "Yes, and I love Santa Claus too." Ah well...a little remedial on the true meaning of Christmas may be in order at our house this year!

2003 finds Damon in a new position (at least change gives me something to write about in this letter!). He has bid a fond farewell to HCA after six fruitful years to become the chief-of-operations at Mercy Health Services, a not-for-profit, faith-based medical ministry that currently operates Mercy Children's Clinic in Franklin, TN. Annaleigh and Harrison have been going to the clinic since we arrived in TN and Damon had been volunteering there for some time when he received a call to join the ministry. Words really cannot express our family's excitement at being personally involved with this vital ministry! We praise the Lord for the divine set of circumstances that have brought Damon to this point in his career---one that we are quite sure he was being prepared for over the last several years. Although he is just as busy as ever, he is thriving and enjoying every minute of this new adventure! Pray for him and the leadership of this ministry as they look to expand services and clinics in the coming years. If you'd like to learn more about what Damon is doing, e-mail him he'll fill you in on all of the details and even sign you up for their semi-annual newsletter ([damon.adelgren@mercychildrensclinic.org](mailto:damon.adelgren@mercychildrensclinic.org)) ☺

I am still just doing the mom thing. I cook. I clean. I teach the kids. I taxi. I take care of the animals. I scrapbook...well, really I just buy the supplies and organize them, but don't tell Damon this! This year it feels like I've specialized in starting new hobbies. Last January I took a framing class, and then proceeded to buy basically a frame shop in a box that I haven't touched since. Now I need to retake the class in order to remember how to use the equipment. For my birthday, Damon and the kids bought me a sewing machine that I have yet to thread. Now I've been looking longingly at a writing workshop packet that came in the mail, and for some reason Damon's not chomping at the bit to sign me up. Hmmmm...



Annaleigh turned seven this year and is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. She continues to be homeschooled, and we are having a stellar year, as we have finally found a style and curriculum that seem to be working out well for us. Her favorite subject is history. She has been fascinated, as we've gone about our chronological study of the ancient world. She is very hands-on and has enjoyed making cave carvings, writing her name in hieroglyphics, and making a model of a cat mummy. (Damon couldn't understand why we just made a model, when we have two perfectly good cats right here, just waiting to have their organs extracted and wrapped in gauze. When I explained that this is a form of cat worship, he retracted his suggestion.) She also enjoys Spanish (when we can squeeze it in), Bible and geography. She is still taking ballet, and this year advanced to an intermediate class. She is the youngest in there, but she is doing just fine and learning a lot! She is going to be dancing in The Nutcracker Suite again this year, as an angel this time. She spends a lot of time, up on her toes, practicing her "floating." We've added a weekly piano lesson to her already busy schedule as a result of our winning a free semester at a curriculum fair last spring. Her teacher is excellent, and Annaleigh is progressing nicely, so it looks like we'll be coughing up the tuition for next semester.



Harrison is an active 3 year old, and I think the term "all-boy" was coined just for him! He is happiest with a gun in his hand, a sword sheathed into the side of his underwear, a football helmet on his head and cowboy boots on his feet...and yes, unfortunately, he will wear this exact combination at times. He is a fashion-conscience mother's worst nightmare, especially this past summer when he wanted to wear his boots with his shorts. Once while visiting his grandparents in NC he wore a pair of camouflage pajamas with his cowboy boots to go get ice cream at a rode side stand. (Oddly enough we didn't get many looks....maybe it was deer season...) Besides excelling at fashion faux pas, he is also "doing school." We spend 30-45 minutes with a letter-of-the-week curriculum that I found on the internet. He is learning letter recognition and sounds through coloring, crafts and stories. He has enjoyed it and looks forward to his activities everyday. He has a little drum set that he used to play surprisingly well for his age, until he decided he needed to dismantle it and lose several of the pieces. He is very much looking forward to being old enough to play sports, and so far, wants to sign up for football, hockey, soccer and baseball. I'm sure that if he knew about wrestling that it would top his list. Actually he's already quite good at this...just ask his sister.

2003 has brought quite the increase of the animal kingdom to the Adelgren household. For Father's Day, we got Damon a thirty-gallon octagonal fish tank (yes, we succumbed to the Finding Nemo craze). At present it holds fifteen or so freshwater fish, our favorites being two really large angels, named Pirate and Princess (after the kids). At the onset of the school year, we purchased a smaller tank for the schoolroom and added two little mascots: African water frogs, Hilton and Hilary, named for our school, Hilltop Academy. Our mammals are all doing well. Baxter, at age thirteen, has not changed that much from about age four or so...fat and lazy. Ripley, our one year old feline, whom I've already mentioned, has tried to reform the older cat, but doesn't get much more out of him than the occasional half-hearted hiss. Bridget, our boxer, is still happy, loving and playful and perfectly willing to chase Ripley and give him a good slobbering at any sign of mischief. I guess with all of this activity, all we need now is a squawking bird of some kind...NOT!



In many ways this has been a bittersweet year for our family. We have enjoyed many, many joyous times and tremendous blessings, but we have also suffered a very great loss. As a matter of fact, I was just telling someone recently that if we had still lived in Charleston this year, we would have attended seven funerals! This is remarkable, as I have often gone an entire year without attending just one. Many of those who passed were just acquaintances, but several were friends and loved ones. Most

significant for our family was the loss of my dear grandma, Gigi to many. In February, she had to be hospitalized for some fairly routine issues relating to her multiple myeloma, a kind of blood cancer. One week later, after a series of bizarre circumstances, she was in ICU, on a breathing machine, and in a coma. For six weeks we all sat hopelessly, yet prayerfully, by her bedside and watched this sweet, tiny woman deteriorate. On April 4, her body quit its fight and her spirit met Jesus. Many, probably even most, of you have lost someone dear. For me, I have lost other people whom I have loved, but never anyone who was such an integral part of my everyday existence, for Grandma had lived with my family since I was just two years old. I couldn't remember life without her, and it is hard, even months later, to come to the reality that she is no longer here. As I have dealt with my grief, I am often comforted by some of Grandma's own words: "God is good." She had spoken this simple sentence to my mother just a week or two before her final hospitalization. This is not always an easy mantra to adopt. I know, for Grandma, it was not. She was born to a large, poor farming family in Arkansas. She lived through the Depression and WWII. She lost her mother at a very young age and had to take over part of the care of her family. As a result, she never finished school. She was widowed very unexpectedly in her mid-forties, only to tragically lose her twenty-three year old son a few years later. She sold her home and most of her belongings to go live with her only daughter's military family and be jostled about the country for the next fifteen years or so, with only a bedroom to call her own. Then late in life, after only seeing an eye doctor for the past fifty years, she is diagnosed with an incurable cancer and subjected to two years of invasive and rigorous treatments, which would ultimately fail.

I apologize for going through this rather solemn biography in what is supposed to be a cheery yuletide greetings, but I feel the message here, one God has been showing me over the past few months, is so very vital. Grandma, after all of this I've shared, in her last few weeks of conscience life, was able to proclaim that God is indeed good. What better time than Christmas to reflect on this goodness! I pray that you and yours, through trials and joy, rain and shine, come what may can also proclaim this ancient truth!

Reflecting on the goodness of His Son,  
The Adलगren family  
Damon, Kellie, Annaleigh and Harrison  
Baxter, Bridget and Ripley  
Fish and Frogs