

MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR
1998



FROM THE JOHNSONS

<http://members.aol.com/rjohnboy/home.htm>

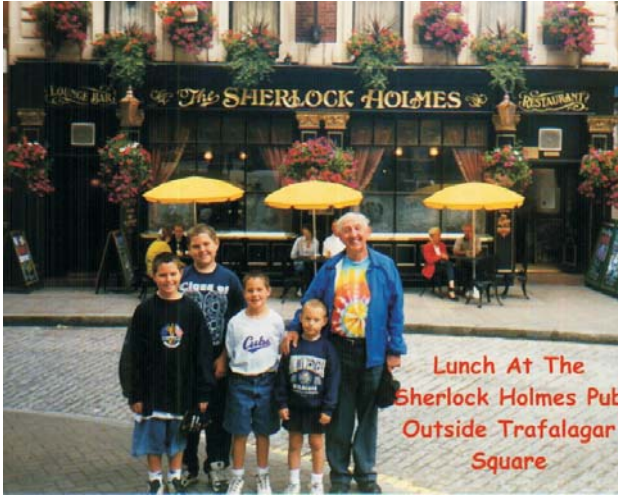
Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, & Best Holiday Wishes to all our family and friends. This Christmas finds us happy, in good health, and appreciative of all our many blessings. In some ways this year was the most difficult for our family that we have had. It also was truly the most memorable.

As most know, I (Rick) was working in London, England for all of 1998. After a lot of discussion, we decided that the family would stay in the US, as moving everyone to the UK in Jan of 98 would involve pulling the boys out of half of one grade and half of the next grade in the fall as well. In hindsight the experience in Europe probably would have been better for all, but we did make sure we saw each other every 5-6 weeks and we spent a great summer together in the UK where we toured through Europe. However, it was unbelievably difficult being away from them for such large amounts of time this year. The assignment is over in a couple weeks on Jan 15 and it has gone quickly, *but there is no place like home.*

Lots of family and friends came to visit, including my Mom, Dad, sister Jean & Aunt Peggy (twice!). Many came with their families and I am sure they all had a good time. At least the rent was cheap enough.

Bryan, 12 entered the 6th grade at a new middle school this past fall. He plays the trumpet in the school band and so far does not think of himself as a band geek. He is doing reasonably well in school with particular interests in science and technology. His current project is mummifying a Cornish Hen. I don't know why they're teaching that in school but perhaps he can use the knowledge for a profession as an Undertaker. He got to the school semi-final in his geography 'Bee' at school after beating his class and then 3 other sixth grades in his school. He is currently taking Home Economics in school and for a homework assignment had to make dinner for the family the other night. At last look nobody was hurling chow after dinner like we sometimes do after eating Kathy's meals.

Ben, 10, is our athlete of the family. He is the first up in the morning and runs downstairs to watch ESPN's Sports Centre. He was his soccer team's Goalie and kept his team in most games this year. He does very well in school and had a nice reading in this year's Sunday School Christmas Pageant. He almost didn't make it though, as he was almost killed by Kathy after he and his friends took down the decorated Christmas Tree rough housing in the Sports Room. Still prefers his head shaved like Michael Jordan's. It used to be that I just cut it with the hair trimmer. Now I have to shave it to the bare skin after that.



Lunch At The
Sherlock Holmes Pub
Outside Trafalagar
Square



Vacationing In Phoenix



Visiting The Royal Family At Madame Tussauds Wax Museum



Standing Guard At The Tower Of London



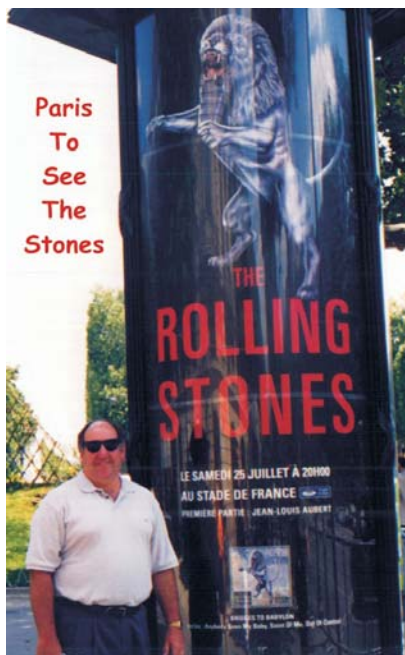
The Harley Dudes



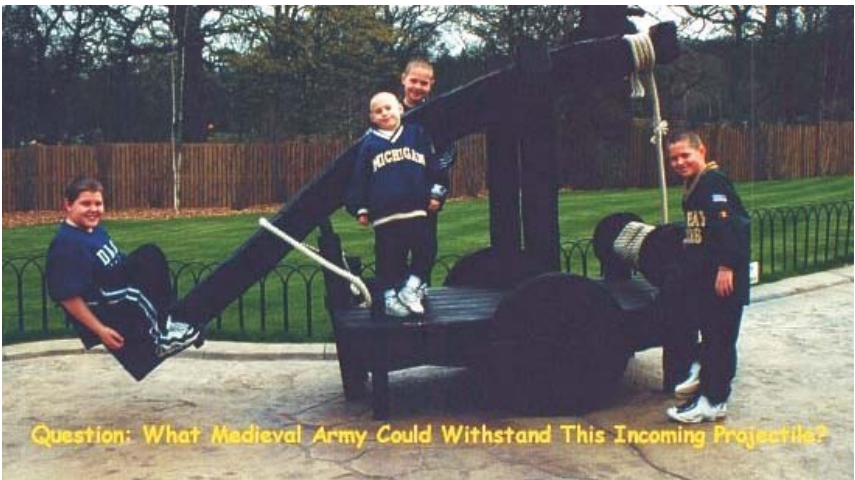
Snow Boys



Bradley Gets A 'Balloon Dog' From A Street Performer In London's Covent Garden



Paris To See The Stones



Brett, 8, had a calm year for him with no stitches, broken bones or accidental fire incidents. He gets great reports in school, where his 2nd grade teacher claims he is an angelic joy to behold. Kathy & I look at each other and just shake our head wondering if they should institute mandatory drug testing for primary school teachers. When we visited the Tower Of London he must have had 50 people howling with laughter as he mimicked the guard on his rounds at the Jewel House. Check out the picture. After a while though, the guard didn't look to pleased. He's great with a yo-yo although he just plunked his brother on the head with it doing an 'Around The World'. Needs some practice.

Brad, 6, is now in 1st grade. He had a great time in Europe where he kept the Dutch and English tooth fairies busy as he kept losing teeth across the continent. He keeps the family watching WWF wrestling with the current favorite being 'Stone Cold' Steve Austin, (the rattlesnake). Played soccer this year on the same team with Brett and did great. Bradley is known for many things in the family, like being the 'Best Thrower' and the 'Best Cleaner'. He used to have 'Best Sneezer' until Brett took the record away earlier this year when he strung 7 together. But this summer he added 'Best Bullrider' in the family to his list of achievements as he road the mechanical bull like an expert at Euro-Disney in Paris.

Kathy turned 37 this year and is really starting to show it. Yuk, Yuk Yuk. She, sisters Jean & Nancy, and friend Gail bowl every week and remarkably-given their lack of skill - are not in last place. She had a good time this summer in the UK where she shopped and sampled the pubs. Kathy and I even got a way for a weekend where we went to Paris. Had a great time and saw a Rolling Stones concert there. She has a little more time to herself now that Bradley is in all day school. But it amazes me how busy she is as she is shuttling kids everywhere. It seems like our house is like the neighborhood road house with all the boys friends there as well. She had an especially great time in Amsterdam where she sampled some of the 'off the menu' delicacies at the infamous coffee shops.

Rick, 43, had quite a year. In England I took a large flat in the town of Ascot, which is about 20 miles west of Central London. It was so different working in a new office, with new co-workers and coming home to a home that was so quiet. Luckily, I made some great friends, best of which are my upstairs neighbors, Ken & Joan Crook. Ken is a retired Quantas 747 airline captain having started his aviation career during WWII as part of the Royal Australian Air Force. Joan couldn't have been more helpful getting me acclimated to laundries, and cleaning services and



grocery stores, etc. With the family over in the summer we had a great time, the best being our vacation to Amsterdam, Koln and Paris. Kathy and I also had a great time taking in the London Theatre scene. Our favorite by far was Phantom of the Opera. Following my seeing it with Kathy, I saw it 3 other times with other friends & family. I am up for it again but you have only got until Jan 15 of next year.

A story that puts it all in perspective... As I said earlier, it was a difficult year for our family due to our extended separation. But our sister in law, Valerie (wife of Kathy's brother Jay) was fighting a far harder battle with her degrading health. Without going into a lot of detail she was days away from leaving us. At the 11th hour, she underwent a double lung transplant that miraculously has restored her health. For this and all our many blessings we give thanks while wishing you and yours Health, Happiness and God's Peace in 1999.

From Our Family To Yours...

Merry Christmas - Happy Holidays

Rick Happy New Year!!!

Kathy
Brent
Bryan
BEN
Brad

1998 Year In Quotes

Memorable Quotes Heard By The Family This Year

“How’s The Leak Coming??”

Bradley, dozing through the long movie Titanic, wakes up long enough to enquire as to the ships status just as it’s about to disappear under the Atlantic.

“Pyramids?? Big Deal!”

Kathy’s response to my suggestion of holidaying in Egypt to view one of the Seven Wonders of the World. She proposes Euro-Disney instead.

“Why Is She Waving At Us??”

As the family stumbled upon the edge of Amsterdam’s famous Red-light district, Bradley wonders why a woman clad in Harley boots and not much else is waving at him from a glass cage. Being the polite boy he is, he waved back with a big smile.

“How Do You Say ‘Beer’ In This Country?”

A friendly Grandpa asks an Amsterdam barkeep for the thousandth time how to translate a key word into English. The answer was “Beer”, pronounced the same way.

“Hey! We’re nowhere near the dock!”

An angry Brettie discovers that although they have arrived first at the paddle boat finish line on an Amsterdam canal, his navigating brother Bryan has parked their boat 25 feet from the nearest dock. They lost to a better paddle boat parker, Brad.

“Shietz!”

A helpful German points out to Grandpa that he just sat in a huge load of bird doo-doo at the Koln, Germany Zoo. Grandpa cheerily replied “Dunka” as he wiped the mess from his trousers with his trusty hanky. The hanky went back in his pocket awaiting his next sneeze...

“Mind The Finger!!”

In her best British accent, neighbor and surrogate Grandmother Joan Helen Crook reminds Brettie to not forget the bloody, severed finger that he left in her apartment from his scary magic trick.