

Merry Christmas, 2005!

We hope that our annual Christmas letter finds each of you enjoying good health along with a wonderful celebration of love, life, and Jesus' birth with family and friends. What a year it has been – the tsunami in Southeast Asia, the hurricanes turned to flooding in Haiti and in southern USA – and then the devastating earthquake in Pakistan. Certainly the disasters and losses suffered by a great many people this year have impacted how charities and relief agencies have responded. Yet the stories of survival, of heroes, and of worldwide compassion remind us that humanity and love abound.

In January, we lived the old phrase “things come in 3's”. Wendy sprained her ankle, very badly, the first week back at work. Then Bob had a fender bender as he was taking Corinne to church the next Sunday morning (in a bit of light snow). And Vanessa got her first speeding ticket a week later! Off to a running start. Then there were a couple of relatively uneventful (though busy) months, then the midnight-ish phone call came on May 6th that Bob's father had died suddenly, following open-heart surgery. It was a real shock, as he had been diagnosed as a good candidate and things seemed to go well with the surgery – he was sent home to heal but he passed away two days later. It devastated all of us, especially Anne and his kids, who had never considered life without Dad. The family got together a few weeks later and had a family memorial for him in La Grande, the place he truly loved. He will be missed, but we all know he continues watching over us. We are grateful to have spent several days with him the weekend prior to his surgery when Anne's family gathered to celebrate Anne's mother's 90th birthday. When we left for home that Sunday, Bob (Bob's dad) & Anne drove to Spokane to prepare for the surgery. You never know when you'll say your last good-byes. You can't tell someone you love them too many times or too often.

Vanessa turned 18 on May 7th. Her celebration weekend changed abruptly when her grandpa died so we postponed her party and ended up combining it with her high school graduation party. Life goes on, and somehow you get through it. For years our family had been imagining a trip to Europe for Vanessa's graduation. I guess we're doers, not planners. When push came to shove, we bought tickets to Dublin, set a return date from London, and hopped on a plane with a car in Dublin as our only confirmed reservations. We winged everything else day-to-day, with an occasional hotel reservation called in a day ahead. Some day, ask Bob about driving in Ireland; sleeping in hotel room corners; losing a bag in Venice (with our Eurail passes, return plane tickets, Wendy's checkbook that she was using to store all of her credit cards, except for the MasterCard in her pocket – thank goodness - and the CD with 400 pictures from Ireland, Rome, and Florence). Maybe Bob suffered a little stress. Our way of traveling wouldn't suit everyone, but other than a few hitches we had a wonderful multi-cultural experience – and we probably wouldn't have done it any other way. We walked our socks off, ate delightful food, saw many of the sights that regular tourists see, and some they don't, and learned that soda pop is lots cheaper in the USA! Vanessa and Corinne learned that more is not always better: They wanted to visit so many countries – which we had toned down considerably, in the end they realized less train riding would have equaled a more relaxed pace than we maintained. Bob wrote a really in-depth description of our trip for this letter but Wendy edited it and convinced him to move it to the website. Some of you may find it interesting to review later, at your own pace. Others may be grateful that Wendy fancies herself a prudent editor.

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR TRIP: *A BBQ dinner in Dublin with dear friends from Oman – Val, Tony, Ben, Jamie, and Robbie (born afterward) Reilly who Vanessa phoned at the last minute because Wendy was chicken. Somehow it worked out, they were just home from their own holiday in Spain. We are so grateful to have shared an evening with this wonderful family – Ben and Jamie had grown so tall...life is so short. *We all kissed the Blarney Stone. *We ate the most delicious dinner in Rome our first night there and then we could never find it again, but gelato (Italian ice cream) and the girls will be friends forever. Wendy actually didn't collapse on the walk up the stairs to the top of St. Peter's Basilica, although Corinne worried she would at each desperate swallow of water, air, and minute of rest her Mom took on that 323 (seemed like 800) step climb, in cramped quarters, on a HOT, HOT afternoon. *The Sistine Chapel...Michelangelo's David – both breathtaking wows! *Venice - fireworks, canals, pizza, gelato, people dressed in stifling, brilliant costumes while standing in the sun so they could tempt the tourists to pay for their pictures, the stupid directions at a self-service Laundromat, ah the romance of one of the most beautiful cities in the world. *A hike amongst the Pyramids of Ritten in the Dolomites of Northern Italy – views and air like springtime in “Heidi”. *Paris...*London...*The Phantom of the Opera at Her Majesty's Theatre...*the Statue of the Lost Boys, *Platform 9 ¾ (Harry Potter fans will understand). Family memories that will last through the years and that will hopefully inspire our daughters to experience a lifetime of travel and adventure. Travel is a bit like childbirth – who of you can relate??? (Bob says “not me”).

Then, Home again. We thank Wendy's sister Debbie for house and pet-sitting during our 27-day trip. It took Ginger a while to remember our scent, or care to, and Cookie ignored us for days. But, back into the swing of things, we geared up for Corinne's next experience. Way back in February, Corinne wrote a little note to her parents explaining why she wanted to participate in the National American Miss Pageant, and how she would find sponsors to defray the cost. Bob & Wendy agreed to support Corinne's goal, and Corinne did her homework and raised \$370 toward the costs. The actual event occurred on Labor Day weekend, and along with about 200 other girls in her age category (there were two other categories, older and younger), she was a princess for a weekend. Check out the website to see our 11 year old daughter (now 12 since Nov. 20th). She is still considering whether to participate again in 2006. There's a lot of personal growth that occurs in the pageant arena, but it's definitely a business, which translates to spending lots of the green stuff!

The next McClure focus was getting Vanessa packed up and sent off to Central Washington University and a new lifestyle and living in a dormitory. CWU is in Ellensburg, about 3 hours drive from us, east of the mountains. It's a small, old, beautiful school in a smaller town with few distractions for the students. So, Vanessa has made many new friends and is now a nocturnal creature who tries Bob's patience every visit home ("she's still growing and needs her sleep"). She is enjoying the experience – socially, academically, and from a newfound independence perspective. She's playing intramural volleyball and loves snowball fights. We are so fortunate that Vanessa receives a grant from the family trust of a great-aunt of Grandma Anne's. It makes it easier for Bob and Wendy to bear the college expenses, and we are so grateful for Anne's mother (Grandma Margaret) in helping with the college expenses as well. On top of that, lots of family & friends pitched in and helped pay for Vanessa's notebook computer for taking to college (Thanks). Vanessa has not yet decided on her academic major and is taking the essential core classes, applicable for many majors. We all know that she will not become a mathematician, a scientist, or an engineer (no interest there).

Corinne has made the transition to middle school very well. She likes the variety of changing classrooms and teachers and probably the school dances as well. She's been playing volleyball, taking piano lessons, and doing lots of homework. She also plays with her friends, likes the computer, and is hooked on the TV program "Smallville". She's a typical kid, although Bob thinks she's ready for advanced academic accomplishments, time will tell.

Bob was an unopposed incumbent for November's school board race (and he won the election). The highlight of his previous term was getting to sign and present Vanessa with her High School Diploma! Bob still works for BioSonics as Director for Marketing & Sales. That means that he is responsible for making sure that the products keep selling and the company has an income! Always busy and there are new adventures all the time along with several (usually) domestic trips to trade shows and conferences each year. Wendy continues to work at Open Door Theatre. As a nonprofit organization, the hunt for money and grants has become harder this past year. With all the catastrophic events and budget re-focus of the government, grants and funding has been competitive to put it mildly. But we persevere in the objective of preventing childhood sexual abuse by teaching personal safety skills. Wendy keeps active in PTA, and has been walking Ginger a lot with a neighborhood friend, Mixie, and her dog, Zoey. Wendy walked so much on our trip this summer that she wanted to keep walking!

Well, that pretty much summarizes this BUSY year. Although we may not see you very often, we think of all of you, family and friends, often and are grateful at how lucky we are to have you all as part of our lives. There may even be a few of you who are surprised to receive this (or e-mail) out-of-the blue this year – write back and tell us you were surprised!

We send our love, best wishes for a Blessed Christmas, a Joyous Holiday season, and a healthy and loving (and more peaceful) 2006.

Bob, Wendy, Vanessa & Corinne

Phone: (360) 435-2143 e-mail: bwvcmc@yahoo.com web site: www.geocities.com/bwvcmc