

The Wattman's Almanac: Christmas 2004



ELISE

HELLO TO EVERYONE! 2004 has been a *phenomenal* year for me. I am 14 years old and loving my first year of high school at Main Street School of Performing Arts! Not only my first year but *the* first year for the school and an exciting journey for all. Praise God, this school was made for me! I am “majoring” in music although I love dance and theater and am taking classes in all three areas. One highlight of the year so far has

been our work in music class with abstract percussion ensembles. We have composed, performed, and recorded a number of pieces using all non-conventional percussion instruments (such as the PVC pipe organ!!). It just tickles me that we are given assignments that require us to compose, something I do for fun!!

I had the opportunity to return to Mexico for my church youth missions project this summer. God always surprises me, I keep thinking I know everything about Him, but He taught me SO much more! I am on fire to share Christ with everyone and radiate His love, and not just during that week in Mexico! Praise Him!!!

Aside from school, life is full to the brim with other activities that I enjoy so much. In the world of piano, I am taking lessons (my 11th year of piano) with Irina Elkina at MacPhail Center for the Arts. I have taken extremely large leaps and bounds in my classical technique under Irina's instruction and have participated in many competitions, recitals, judged festivals, and a master class. I fill the rest of my time with composing, classical ballet, church, youth group, worship team, reading, CC running, and MATH! The Lord has truly blessed me and I thank Him SO much for all of you and the life He has given me. I pray that you have an awesome 2005 and a Merry Christmas!

- Elise



JUDY

IN THE WORDS of our homegrown writer, Garrison Keillor, we are well, doing good works, and now are keeping in touch. God is gracious and great. As I age I have made two discoveries: One, that time accelerates!?! And two, that teens are busier than toddlers!

I remain in the same profession, the world of moms, babies and the uterus. The babies still come out the same; it's how they get in and what we do *while* they're in that causes me much ethical alarm and prayer.

Over the last couple of years: We took a 36-hour train trip across our great country from Minneapolis to Portland to visit Rick's family. Fun adventure! The sleeping berths are about the size of coffins and you have to belt yourself into the upper bunk so as not to be thrown out by the side-to-side motion of the train. Anna wanted to make sure that terrorists would not use trains and because trains can only follow the tracks, she thought it safe enough to go.

This summer we drove out to the Custer State Park in South Dakota. We camped in the mountains, and it was dramatic and beautiful. We packed a lot into a short time, including two trips through the Badlands and three visits to Mount Rushmore.

For the first time ever, this year I finally saw the northern lights. I have read, studied, looked, and longed to see them and finally experienced a vivid display from our own yard (in spite of all the city light pollution competing).

Finally, my favorite, I play the conga drums/percussion in the worship band at church. I love it! I graduated from leading children's worship to the big people's group. I am with a great team of people and my soul rejoices with worship in song. Praise God.

- Judy



ANNA

GUTEN TAG, und Froeliche Weihnachten! (in other words, Hello and Merry Christmas!) I'm into German and Spanish languages this year. I'm so excited for Christmas. It's probably one of my favorite holidays. There is just a feeling that I love at Christmas. Also what it is about. The weather is lovely, and I enjoy the music, too.

I play the clarinet now, and my band teacher says that I'm a natural player. So he put me in the 7th and 8th grade honors band.

My birthday was on December the 13th. I'm 12 now and in 6th grade. My hobbies are soccer, painting, and playing outside and a lot more. At church, I played the angel Gabriel for the Christmas musical play. That is one of the main parts. I had to memorize a lot of lines, and sing a solo, too. It was really fun.

This winter I am planning to start swimming on a swim team. I'm still taking ballet lessons. And I love my new school, especially math and PE and band.

We just got two new pet rats (Dot and Dash) since one of our old ones died (Baby Pip). We still haven't put them together with Big Pip because she keeps biting the new ones.

- Anna

I'M STILL WORKING at Faith Studies International as director of communications. I continue to love the work, deal with the challenges, and rejoice that I have a job that fits my interests and abilities and experience.

I'm in up to my eyeballs at church this year. I'm on the pastoral search committee as co-chairman. I'm also writing for the church newsletter AND doing the layout. Even if we weren't hauling the girls all over town, I'd be busy.

Like Elise, I was blessed to accompany the youth missions team to Saltillo, Mexico, this summer. It was a blessing and honor to be there, to be used by God, and to see our youth (including my Elise!) devote themselves to serving Him and others. I was a driver and group leader, which both blessed and challenged me.

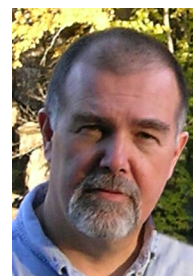
We're still trying to decide what to do with our kitchen: It needs a lot of work. Now we've enlisted the help of Judy's Uncle Rodney, a retired architect. We like the ideas he sent us (except the first one, which was to move!). Next step will be to answer the load of questions he asked in response to our initial inquiry, and see again if we can decide on a concept.

I'm still crowing about our Honda Hybrid. We've finished a full year and still love it, especially with gas prices as they are. We took a trip up north with a trunk full of luggage and all four of us on board, and got around 65 miles-per-gallon on cruise control. My daily commute has been through a construction zone this year, which won't be finished until next summer, so it's been quite a hassle. But the 45 mpg reading on the dash week in and week out helps me relax.

I'm studying biblical Greek now—in my spare time. I've progressed much farther than the last time I attempted it. Joe Coenen (Judy's brother) and I are studying in parallel, so we'll be able to compare notes and keep each other accountable.

May God bless you. Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year.

- Rick



RICK