

Lefton/Steinbart Holiday Letter 1999. . . .Take 1. . . .and. . . .ACTION!

Hi there (puff...exhale). I'm the Lefton/Steinbart holiday letter. I'm supposed to tell you about this little two bit family, just trying to make a decent livin' in the Southern US so they can have five beds and a cup of hot java every now and then. That gorgeous dame over there making cookies in the shape of perfect icosahedrons is the lady we like to call Mom. Enid. Dr. Steinbart. She's a great gal, but don't try to pass off an incorrect proof of the Cauchy Residue Formula on her. And who are those cute little girls? They're the sunshine (and also the storm systems) of the household. That's Hannah dancing around to pop music. She tips the calendar at 6.5 years, and the Feds think she's the brightest scientific mind in the Winnona Park Elementary School first grade! What do I think? Hey, I'm just a letter. The 4 year old with the big smile is known on the streets as Natalie. Some say she's the brains behind the whole operation. The girl's as smart as a whip, but look out 'cause her temper can sting just as sharply. Here comes the other 4 year old, all dressed up in her 17th outfit today. That's Monica. A natural born leader who could probably get a poor slob with two broken arms to stand on his head. And the tall guy? He looks funny you say? Good call Sherlock, he is funny.... sometimes. You can call him Lew, the IT Director. He's even been known to answer to "guru." He's the Dad around here and that means he types me. I shouldn't complain, but he uses the backspace key too much. Then he decides on this film noir motif and I come out looking like a bad Bogart script! But this ain't about me, it's their story, see? The names have not been changed. There are no snakes. All information is now Y2K compliant. Wait, a minute, he's shifting gears again! He says this genre is too hard to maintain.

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We have had quite a year. The biggest news is that our family now lives in Atlanta, Georgia. Our current coordinates are:

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This may or may not be a permanent move. Here's the situation. We're spending the year working at the Georgia Institute of Technology where Lew was hired as the "Information Technology Director" for the School of Math. This is a new faculty position created to be responsible for the math department's computing environment. The job is a career drift, if not a career shift for Lew. He has no required teaching or research duties, but he can do either or both if he wants and time permits. He's trying to continue his work in numerical PDEs. Lew spends a lot of time these days doing UNIX system administration, consulting with mathematicians on computer issues, buying equipment, going to seminars, squeezing in some research, and loving every minute of it. His new job is a permanent faculty position, but it's not tenurable. Since it's a new position here, he has the opportunity to create a sort of niche profession for himself that combines many of his interests and strengths.

Enid was awarded a prestigious three year NSF research grant starting this summer. She has done a lot of travel this year presenting her research to the complex differential equation cognoscenti at various meetings, and including an invited talk at the math institute in Oberwohlfach Germany. (If you're not in mathematics, just politely nod and smile now.) Enid was also recommended for promotion to full professor at UNO! Of course this year we are both on leave of absence from our two tenured positions in New Orleans. Enid's teaching two courses at Georgia Tech as a visiting associate professor, but she currently only has a one year faculty position there. She has applied to several colleges and universities in the Atlanta area and is excited about some (but not all) of the prospects.

We rented our house in New Orleans in case we return next year. The new job/new city/moving is stressful at times but overall we're doing pretty well. It's still unclear whether we'll stay or not, but we're making the best of our adventure. It's a nice change of pace no matter what the future brings. We live in the City of Decatur which humorist Roy Blount accurately calls "a cross between Mayberry and Berkeley." We've enjoyed camping in the North Georgia Mountains and exploring a great International Farmer's Market near our house. We don't like the smog and traffic, but we do like the community in which we live.

Hannah was a ghost for Halloween. She loves reading (Harry Potter and the Olsen twins are big now), and likes her new friends and her new school. Winona Park is much smaller than Hynes. She went from being in one of six Kindergarten classes to being in one of two first grades. Hannah's tall and she's growing out her hair. She loves singing along to the top 40 station "Star 94".

Natalie was "The Count" (A mathematical vampire from Sesame Street) for Halloween. She's making lots of friends in the Bambini class at the Phoenix school, a nearby private pre-school. She loves drawing and writing. Natalie is now in speech classes to work on her k's and g's. She's an early riser, often getting up with Mom at 6:30 AM!

Monica was a Spice Girl for Halloween. She's also in the Bambini class at the Phoenix school where she gets lessons in French, Spanish, Music, Art, and even field trips. Like her sisters, Monica is a Barbie freak. We suggest you buy stock in Mattel. Her favorite game is dressing up in clothes, hats, scarves, etc. and playing house with plenty of baby dolls.

Other notable events of the year: Lew's sister Linda visited for Mardi Gras and helped the girls catch lots of throws. We got our first real family pet, a goldfish named Alison who died in less than a month. Lew's Dad married Dione Danis, a lovely lady from New Jersey. We visited Albuquerque in October to celebrate Lew's Dad's 75th, and Enid rode in a hot air balloon during a mass ascension of hundreds of balloons at the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta. Enid's parents are having some health problems, but they are keeping up an excellent attitude. They're waiting to move out of their house to a nearby apartment for easier maintenance. Lew traveled to Seattle for a UNIX conference in November. He's running with a different class of geeks now! For Thanksgiving, Lew's sister Irene, his Dad, and Dione all shared in the L-tryptophan buzz. Lew bid fond farewell to his weekly performances with the New Orleans improv group *Brown!* after more than five years in the cast. He hasn't done much stand up or improv in Atlanta yet, but he expects to start soon. After reading this letter you're undoubtedly saying, "Don't hurry."

Upcoming stuff: We're making a holiday visit to Virginia and Maryland where Enid will join her three sisters Sylvia, Ellen, and Stephanie, and their respective families to eat too much and share in the spirit(s) of the season. We may also be jaunting to Bolivia in the future since Lew's sister Charna took a Peace Corps Director job there. And of course, we're prepared for Y2K, the biggest anticlimax of the millennium!

We wish you a happy holiday season, and a healthy 2000 filled with laughter and love. Drop us a line and/or let us know if you're ever in the Atlanta area. We are desperate for familiar faces!

Merry Christmas!

Happy Chanukah!

Happy New Year!