

December 2004

Dear Family and Friends,

Merry Christmas! It is hard to believe that it's that time of year again – time has been flying by so quickly. As we contemplate the last year and a half of marriage, we realize how much has transpired and how truly blessed we are. Since we did not send out a letter last Christmas, there is much to share! Let me start at the beginning...



As you know, we wed in July 2003, on one of the hottest, most humid days known to upstate New York. After a brief trip to the Delaware Water Gap, we loaded up a U-Haul and prepared to drive my things to Illinois. Unfortunately, we quickly discovered that the U-Haul was making an awful noise every time we turned right. So, we spent most of a day at the U-Haul depot as they used a wire to tie up a loose plate of metal that had been rubbing on the tire. They assured us it would get us to Illinois, which it amazingly did! We had an otherwise uneventful trip, accompanied by our two cats, Tangent and Omega, who insisted on squeezing into the same small carrier together for most of the ride.

Upon arriving in Illinois, we moved my things into the apartment that Larry had found for us. He'd also spent weeks sealing up the baseboards to keep out the smoky smell that constantly drifted up from the apartments below. That was one problem we were never quite free of, which made us realize that our stay there would not exceed our year-long lease. Sometime during the winter we got the "crazy" idea to look at houses to buy. We had attended a free housing fair and were inspired by all that we had learned. After overcoming the initial sticker shock (\$600,000 and up?!?!), we switched our focus to townhouses. Through divine providence, a colleague of Larry's put us in touch with a friend who was preparing to sell her townhouse in the Trees of Wheaton, a very nice community that we took to right away. To make a long story short, we made an offer and signed the contract the day before the house was to list on the market! We closed at the beginning of July, spent WEEKS painting (we're still not done), and moved in at the end of July. We're really enjoying owning our own place, even though we fight the constant battle of having too much STUFF for the space we have. We absolutely love having a washer and dryer IN our home, and we don't even need quarters to use them!

Another big accomplishment of the past year involves running. We began running together shortly after we were married, Larry as an old pro and I as a struggling beginner. To his credit, Larry ran at my pace and never left me behind. He still does this, making our running a truly shared hobby. Last January we began training for an 8K (4.97 miles) race, which we completed at the end of March. We then started training for a half-marathon (13.1 miles), which we accomplished in May. After that, we began training for the Chicago Marathon (26.2 miles). That alone was a huge step for me. When I started I could barely run for 5 minutes. Was I crazy to try to run for 5 hours?!?! I may have been crazy, but come October 10th, we were lining up for the race with 40,000 others who were crazy too! Five hours and 31 minutes later, we were the proud owners of a shiny, colorful marathon medal. Wow!

This Thanksgiving we planned to run the Atlanta Half-Marathon, but the weather had other plans. A surprise snowstorm grounded us in Chicago on Thanksgiving Eve. After changing airports and waiting for more than 10 hours, we finally took off and arrived in Atlanta around 4 AM. Needless to say, we didn't run the race at 7 AM. Instead, we just enjoyed time with Larry's Mom and his brother's family, who all live in South Carolina. We learned that "popcorn" is pronounced "popeone" in "Southern." We had a great time! This Christmas we are planning to fly to New York to see my family and friends for the first time since we got married. We're planning a whirlwind tour, including visits to Endwell, New York City, and Albany. We are praying for better weather this time around!

During all of the moving and running and traveling, Larry resumed taking classes from Penn State in order to finish his Masters in Education that he began many years ago. We found out "just in time" that the requirements would be changing at the end of this school year, so it was now or never for finishing. We were elated to find out that he could take his remaining classes through distance ed., since it really wouldn't have been possible to move to PA for a year. To date, Larry has finished two classes and has one to go. He will graduate in May 2005, just in time to embark on yet another life adventure...read on!

Many of you know about our deep interest in China and all things Chinese. Well, we have been given the opportunity to lead a group of college students on a Christian summer cultural exchange trip through a partnership with Leadership Development International (LDI). The team will be gone from June 25th through August 3rd – more than five weeks in China! We are excited beyond words to experience Chinese culture firsthand. The trip is still in the planning phases at this point, and we are ready to follow wherever the Lord leads. Your prayers for this endeavor would be much appreciated!

Best you think that all we do is "play," let me set the record straight. I am still teaching math at Timothy Christian High School and Larry is still working for Wheaton College as a Network Systems Administrator. What is that, you ask? In the words of a colleague's daughter, it involves "breaking things and then fixing them." Ok, perhaps there is more to it than that, but Larry does indeed spend a lot of time fixing computer and network-related problems on campus. I've had my hands full with high school freshmen this year, on top of a commute that varies from 20 minutes on a good day to 45 minutes on a bad day. Since moving to Illinois, I have learned to drive Midwestern style. With all the flat, straight roads, everyone drives quickly, and lane changing is an art form. I think I've finally adjusted! I'm not sure I've adjusted as well to the landscape, which consists of strip-malls, billboards and corn fields. During the fall we traveled to Wisconsin so that I could get my fill of hills, trees, and curvy roads. It's almost as beautiful as the Adirondacks...almost!

Finally, we would like to share with all of you that we are beginning to research what it takes to adopt a baby girl from China. God has laid this desire on our hearts, and we are eager to follow Him. Especially during the Christmas season, we are reminded of how God, himself, made a way to adopt us into His family through the sacrifice of Jesus. If He hadn't sought us out and chosen to make us his children, we would be lost and orphaned, living in darkness. What better way than to honor the heart of God than by adopting an orphaned child into our family. Please pray for us as we embark upon this life-changing journey.

We do hope that this letter finds you all well. We would love to hear from you or see you, if you should ever find yourself in the Chicagoland area. Erica's email is ericampotter@yahoo.com and Larry's email is larry.potter@wheaton.edu. Our home phone number is 630-752-5228.

With love and prayers for a very special Christmas,

Larry & Erica

Tangent, and Omega Potter, too! ☺

