



December 14, 2002

Dear Friends and Family,

I sat down to write one of my wry, we-have-as-many-problems-as-the-next-family Christmas letters, but the words wouldn't flow. I finally figured out why: I'm happy! My good mood is due to this week's news at work: I have a job for the next year. For months I was concerned that I'd be laid off, for the second time. My employment was unpredictable this year, as revealed in the following mostly-true story:

January 2002

Judy gets laid off from the 20-hour-per-week consulting job that she's had for four years.

"Don't worry. Now I'll have time to work on my novel. I'll take a month off," says optimistic Judy.

"Take two," says supportive husband Gene.

February 2002

Judy writes in public places so that she won't be distracted by housework.

"Now that you don't have a job, shouldn't the quality of your housekeeping improve, instead of dropping as steeply as your income?" asks practical husband Gene.

"You said two months," says defensive Judy.

March 2002

Judy's former daytime companions as a corporate communications writer: educated, go-getter co-workers.

Judy's daytime companions as a fulltime novelist: two homeless men, Ted and Jed, who hang out during the day at the same places she does.

"When exactly are your two months up? Those sweat pants are getting frayed," notes critical husband Gene.

"I've decided to add a month. Ted and Jed have been doing this for years," says smart-alecky Judy.

April 2002

Life as a "starving artist," once a romantic ideal, has become a harsh reality. Ted and Jed offer advice: if Judy inserts used AA batteries into aluminum cans to increase the weight of her recyclables, she'll double her income. Judy decides a corporate income isn't such a great evil. She becomes serious about searching for employment, only to find the job market extremely tight.

"There are no jobs," says pessimistic Judy, fingering a used AA battery.

"I refuse to say anything. After 12 years of marriage, I've learned a thing or two," says scared husband Gene.

May 2002

A Christmas miracle, seven months early! No, Judy does NOT win a \$1 million contract for her two completed novels and one novel-in-progress. This miracle is more down-to-earth: Judy is offered her old corporate job back.

"I said yes," says the newly pragmatic Judy. She peels off her pink sweat pants and reaches into her closet to dust off a blue suit.

"I'll tell Ted and Jed," says relieved husband Gene. He takes his first deep breath in months.

THE END

Merry Christmas! May God's miracles surprise you and His love flow through you this New Year.

Gene, Judy, Erik & Justin

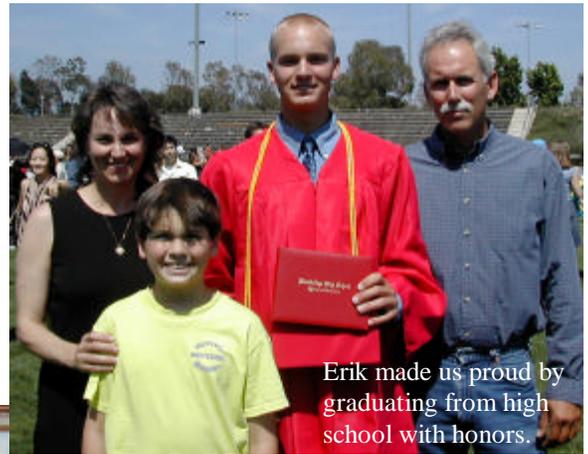




Alexander Family Life in Photos



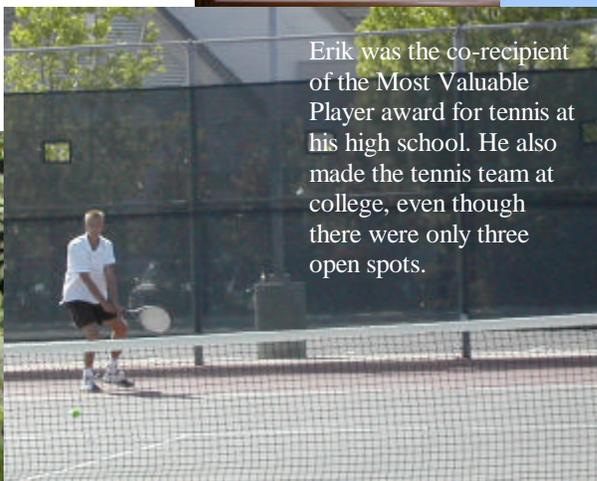
In May, Gene bought a used truck (see truck on right) and attached a tank and all the plumbing to build a water truck, but not without his fair share of impressive welding burns. Gene is proud of his completed water truck, and even better, he's earning steady money with it. His old water truck serves as a giant rusting backyard sculpture.



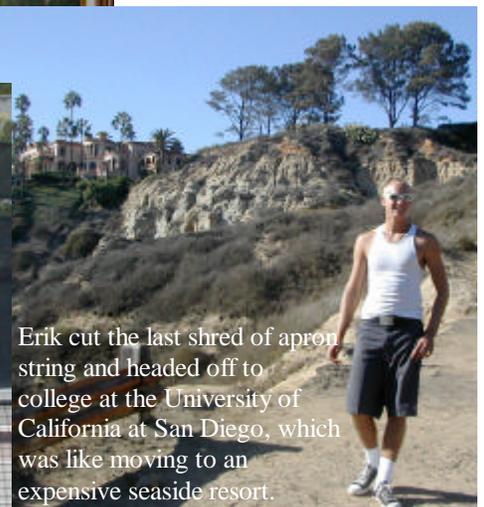
Erik made us proud by graduating from high school with honors.



Justin began art lessons this summer, and has turned out impressive work. Even at home, he spends free time writing stories and drawing, threatening to get his writing published before his mother does.

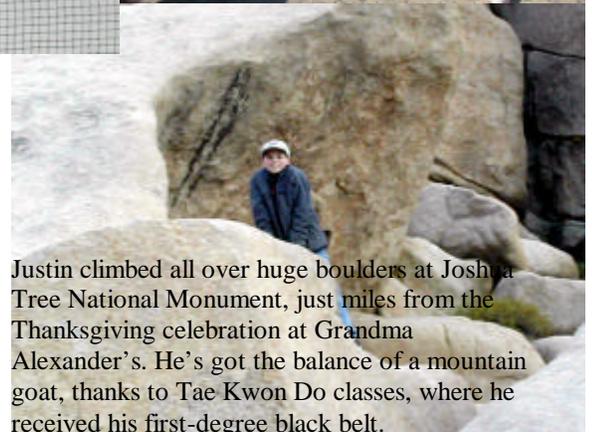


Erik was the co-recipient of the Most Valuable Player award for tennis at his high school. He also made the tennis team at college, even though there were only three open spots.



Erik cut the last shred of apron string and headed off to college at the University of California at San Diego, which was like moving to an expensive seaside resort.

For Halloween, Justin insisted on dressing in an all-black costume, but since an evil child doesn't fit with our "good Christian home," we persuaded him to tell people he was a "shadow." Judy led an employee event dressed as Pippi Longstocking. When she explained to her boss that Pippi was a children's book character who was free-spirited, strong, and made her own rules, her boss said, "That sounds like our Judy."



Justin climbed all over huge boulders at Joshua Tree National Monument, just miles from the Thanksgiving celebration at Grandma Alexander's. He's got the balance of a mountain goat, thanks to Tae Kwon Do classes, where he received his first-degree black belt.

