



## *A Look Back: 2004 Is No More*

*December is the toughest month of the year.  
Others are July, January, September, April, November, May, March,  
June, October, August, and February. — Mark Twain*

We appreciated all your warm expressions of greeting during this past Christmas season. It was good to hear from each of you – some sharing highlights of the year past, some simply letting us know you're still alive and that you remember us, some sending greetings for the first time.

Perhaps you wondered why you hadn't heard from us. Some of you may have formed a pool to see who can guess how late we'll send our holiday greetings this year. Well, we're not late, we're just starting a new tradition: our annual "Look Back" newsletter!

2004 did not start well for us. Our precious cat of thirteen years, Buffy, became increasingly lethargic the first week of 2004. Within a couple of weeks, it was determined to be an untreatable lymphoma. We petted her for the last time on January 19 and then buried our faithful companion under the front crabapple tree. Buffy loved watching birds, and that tree attracts numerous birds every season of the year. We thought the last half of 2003 had been tough enough; but perhaps this grief was necessary to prepare us for the greater grief to come.



Denise's mother, Peggy, had been dealing with increasing complications of diabetes for a few years, and they steadily worsened the first three months of this year. Several times Denise received a call that her mother had been hospitalized and her prognosis was dismal. Each time, Denise made the three hour trip to be at her mother's side, dreading that this might be the last time. After a few days, Peggy would improve and Denise would return home. Finally, though, she did not improve, and on April 13, with her daughters and husband at her side, Peggy left this world of pain and leapt into the outstretched arms of Jesus. The funeral was a time

of both laughter and tears as many shared their memories of Peggy. Though we all know she is much better off where she is now, she is greatly missed by her family and many friends.

A few weeks later, Denise's dad, Roy Leonard, packed up and left the Flint area, home for so many years, to come live with us. Though he misses being close to old friends and much of his family, he has made new friends here in Fort Wayne. This summer, he and Denise traveled back to his childhood home in southeastern Missouri, where they spent a few days with his cousin Sanford's family and enjoyed visiting with many "long-lost" relatives at a family reunion.



Tony continues to enjoy working at Northrop Grumman's Advanced Decision Systems Technology Center. The tasks are varied and mostly looking beyond the cutting edge of today's technologies, so they keep Tony from getting bored.

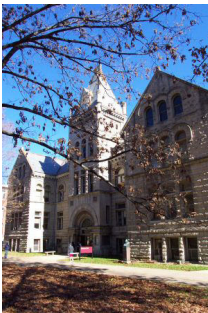


Tony made two trips to Rucker, Missouri, this year – around July 4 (with Josh) and then in mid-October (alone). His Aunt Connie was the last remaining Colley resident of the town the Colleys had owned for nearly 50 years, and it was time for her to move on. The big auction in October drew bidders from as far away as Indiana and Texas; in fact, it was almost a family reunion, but without all the good food. Tony is pictured here with his dad and Aunt Connie.

Josh recently graduated from Starfleet Academy and has been stationed on one of the finest starships in the fleet ... okay, the picture of Josh is real, he was preparing for a "not-Halloween" costume party in mid-November. Tony found the background online, and put the two pictures together.



In real life, Josh finished out his junior year, a combination of home schooling, online education, and technical school (computer programming). He placed first in a programming contest held at Indiana Tech (one of the local colleges), and received certification in Java programming. He is now in the backstretch of his senior year in high school, back at Blackhawk Christian School. He has consistently been on the honor roll.



In early November, Josh and Tony took a tour of the Bloomington campus of Indiana University, which is about a three hour drive from Fort Wayne. Josh has developed a keen

interest in physics and astronomy, so they arranged to sit in on the freshman honors physics class and meet with one of the professors while they were there. They were both impressed with IU, and particularly the physics and astronomy departments. Josh has since been accepted at IU, so Tony will have to put aside years of basketball rivalries and root for the Hoosiers!



Nathaniel breezed through seventh grade and is now in the midst of eighth grade. Though he does well, with mostly As and Bs, he would much rather be doing something besides sitting in class or doing homework.

For the second year in a row, Nate participated in our local Little League. He skipped an intermediate level (relative to his first year) and went straight to the junior major league. He was one of the youngest and smallest on his team and did not get as much time in the lineup as last year. Consequently, he struggled a little to find his groove at the plate, but he did an outstanding job in the field. One of his greatest contributions to the team, as noted by his coach at the year-end banquet (at Pizza Hut), was his constant encouragement of his teammates. His team had the best record during the regular season, and did well in the post season tournament.



Nathaniel joined the Blackhawk Cross-Country team this fall, and he really enjoyed it. They participated in meets all around northeastern Indiana, and did consistently well.



Denise and Tony really enjoy being grandparents, spoiling Caden every chance they got this year. Then, in October, they were blessed with a new granddaughter named Nina Mae. Denise really loves shopping for little girl clothes again, especially after having to put up with a house full of four boys (ranging in age from 13 to 82) every day. Caden seems to have adjusted quite well to the new addition to his family. Nina has been a very good baby, and started sleep-

ing through the night quite soon, which Tracie really appreciates after chasing Caden around all day.

We were thrilled this holiday season that Tracie, Corey, Caden, and Nina could come down to Fort Wayne to spend a couple of days after Christmas. Even though we no longer have a “guest room”, it didn’t seem crowded. Nina slept





through most of the festivities; but, Caden was overjoyed to have another round of Christmas presents to open! He even helped open presents for his new baby sister. Finally, after all the presents had been opened (and played with), Caden delighted us all with a concert on the new ukelele great-grandpa got him.



We may not have any room left in our house, but we certainly do in our hearts, so in November we adopted an adorable seal-point Siamese mix kitten born in September. After a few days we finally settled on a name: Kato (KAY-toe). Perhaps you remember Inspector Clouseau's manservant Kato (from the Pink Panther movies), whose job included surprise attacks on Clouseau to keep him "sharp" — our Kato is always springing surprise attacks on us! He also had great fun with our Christmas tree; several times a day we would notice the tree shaking and then see his little head pop out among the branches. Once, he was caught batting at the angel on top of the tree!



Those are some of the influential events we see as we look back over 2004; but certainly not all of them. There are other events, large and small, which helped make 2004 the year that it was; but time and space prevent their inclusion here.

We are grateful to God for the friends and family He has provided to comfort us, encourage us, pray for us, cry with us and laugh with us. Every year brings its own set of challenges and triumphs, its own opportunities to grow closer to God and stronger in our faith. 2004 was no exception.

*The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers.*

— M. Scott Peck

*Rely on God for strength to step out of the ruts, and for discernment and wisdom to choose His Way and His Truth*

*Tony, Denise, Josh, Nathaniel*