

Christmas 2005

Has it really been fifteen months since we moved back to Mary Beth's home town of Aurora, Ontario? We are learning the rhythms here as our lives intertwine with family, friends, church, and school. We marvel at the beauty and diversity as each season unfolds in turn. For us, we couldn't imagine a situation that could make us happier. We had our first snowfall of the season on November 24th, but it disappeared by November 28th—hopefully we'll have a white Christmas!



We've stayed closer to home this year, although Richard took a fun, but too-long solo trip at the end of March to drive to Austin, Texas, for the Association of Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC) annual conference. On the way down, he saw his Dad (who will be 90 in January), and visited a friend from the audio mailing lists that he is active on. On the way back, he visited several more friends and picked up items for the tape restoration business. At the end of July, the whole family spent several days driving to New York City and New Jersey to pick up more equipment and then spent some time in Lancaster, Pennsylvania to see Richard's Dad. In the middle of August, we had a wonderful two-day trip to see cousin Cathie Joyce and her extended family in Sarnia. We also took a day trip to Buffalo at the end of August to pick up more equipment. The whole family went once to Paramount's Canada's Wonderland amusement park that is only 20 minutes away, then Mary Beth and the boys went back a second time and bought season passes for the 2006 season. It's really quite a nice park, sort of like Disneyland, and it's a fun place for the boys to escape to in the summer. They especially enjoy the rather large water park portion.

From late spring to early autumn, the boys enjoyed many swims in John's (Mary Beth's brother's) pool, and we all enjoyed quite a number of lunch and dinner barbecues around the pool. John has really made a nice, relaxing spot in his yard. The boys also help with outside work as well as help put up the outdoor Christmas lights before the Santa Claus Parade.

Mary Beth is not volunteering at the school as much this year as she is doing a little more to help Richard with the business. She did assist at two Book Fairs at the school in the Fall. She is also becoming more active in the Aurora Historical Society by assisting at two events. The nursery at Trinity Church some-

times calls on her (and Michael) to help out during the Sunday service. With Richard busy working and building the business, Mary Beth tries to keep our paper filing system up to date and provides, of course, the primary taxi service for the boys.

Robert is in Grade 6 this year and the big news is that this is the first year that they start music. Robert somehow ended up selecting or being selected to play the tenor saxophone, so we bought him one and he's having a ball with it. He's actually making some good progress. Robert is also now in his second year singing in the Trinity Youth Choir. Robert made three of the four cuts in tryouts for the school volleyball team.

Michael is in Grade 5 this year and the focus is on the Canadian government. He will visit Queens Park, the seat of the Ontario Provincial Parliament, in January. When he's not helping out in the nursery, Michael is an acolyte/server at Trinity. He looks great marching down the aisle holding a candle. We have to give Michael a lot of credit for wanting to help with chores around the house. He enjoys vacuuming and shoveling and he is a big help to us in that regard. He's the one who vacuums the entire basement, except Richard wants to do the studio himself. He also enjoys music and occasionally still plays the keyboard.

Both boys have taken skating lessons this year. While they are doing well, it seems to come a little easier to Robert. They also both go to the Youth Group meetings most Friday nights at Trinity Church.



In a couple of weeks, we will obtain our friend Marie-Lynn Hammond's old piano which she decided she doesn't need any more. It's a small Baldwin Acrosonic which will go into our living room. We think it's good that the living room has French doors so it can become a music room for the next half dozen or so years as the boys continue to have fun with music. Michael has been playing the piano at John's quite a bit, so we thought a piano in our own home would be good.

Richard's big news this year was that he and the wonderful handyman we told you about last year, Wolfgang, spent

over 500 hours (each) in the basement building the studio (see URL, below). It has turned out very well, and Richard's been working through the backlog of tapes we brought from California. New projects have been coming in. We have far exceeded our expectations for throughput. He's proving that this business has great potential. One of the major projects in the backlog was transferring 75 hours of oral history of old sea captains for the San Francisco Maritime Museum National Historic Park. He made copies of everything on reels, cassettes, and CDs. He has just received word of the approval of the first phase of a digitization project for a major Canadian West Coast University.

At the beginning of November, Richard held the first of what we hope are an ongoing series of tape restoration seminars. Mary Beth provided refreshments and lunch. We had four attendees, two from Ottawa, one from Toronto, and one from Indiana. We received positive feedback from all of the participants, although one thought the days were too long—but we were busy answering attendees' questions and showing them techniques. The attendees actually brought along tapes and we were able to successfully transfer all of them.

In October, we all visited St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newmarket where Mary Beth's Grandfather was a minister for many years. Above, we see Michael and Robert below the window honouring their grandfather and great grandfather.

May we conclude by wishing you a joyous Holiday Season and a healthy and prosperous 2006. Thank you all for your cards and newsletters. It's great to keep in touch.

Love from us all: Mary Beth, Richard, Robert, and Michael. You may reach us at 905-713-6733, or email Richard at: richard@richardhess.com



1 December 2005—Supplement

After completing our Christmas letter, we realized that we had not relayed much information about our home-office-studio. We are including this supplement as we thought some of you might be interested.

Computer Systems

- Added a dual-WAN router so that we have both cable and DSL high-speed services.
- Upgraded our main switch to a 16-port Netgear FS116.
- Installed a four-strand fibre optic link to our neighbour's house and two media converters at each end that convert between 100BASE-TX and 100BASE-FX. This extends my network to my neighbour's and his network to our home. One of my two 1,000 GB NAS boxes is in his basement and he has a 250 GB NAS box in our basement.
- Added two Dell 3000 computers for the family, one in the basement "library" and the other in the kitchen.
- Added a local store-built computer (Asus motherboard, Sempron 3100 processor) as an email client. It's running Windows XP Pro so that I can remote desktop into it from a variety of workstations.
- Added dual monitor (CRT) support to the office/graphics computer (the studio audio computer already had dual monitor (LCD) support).
- Now that Mary Beth's brother (John) has retired from full-time work at Seneca College, we are making our office/graphics computer available to him on an as-needed basis.
- We purchased a Hewlett-Packard 2600n Colour LaserJet printer just in time to do the Christmas letter. This joins our large-format Epson Photo Stylus Pro 5500 ink-jet printer and our Dell 1700n black-and-white laser printer. All three are network printers, so they're available to all computers, including the laptop via a wireless LAN link.
- Added small 4- and 5- port switches in the workshop (for servicing computers) and in the printer area (to accommodate the second laser printer) as opposed to expanding the central switch. All other items are home run to the central LAN closet.
- Since our local cable ISP insisted that Lunarpages.com was not in compliance with internet standards, we switched our Web hosting to 1and1.com. It's been good so far.

Audio Systems

- Added Algorithmix NoiseFree Pro and Diamond Cut 6 Live/Forensics for enhanced audio cleanup.
- Added a second RME Multiface so we now have 16 channels of 96 ks/s, 24 bit analog to digital conversion.
- Added a MOTU 828 MK II to use in the field along with the laptop to record up to ten simultaneous tracks at up to 96 ks/s, 24 bit.
- Added four Sony DASH (Digital Audio Stationary Head) audio recorders so we can recover tapes made in that format.
- Added 16 channels of Dolby A and 16 channels of dbx I noise reduction to the studio.
- We also purchased a used Racal Store 4DS instrumentation recorder with both direct and FM cards. This is an interesting tool for looking at any 1/4-inch tape.
- We have perfected our technique of using a Sony APR-5000 reel machine to recover old 8-tracks, thanks in part to JRF Magnetics' great work. Who would have thought that people would have recorded memories on this format!
- We have purchased players for both the dbx 700 digital format and the Mitsubishi X-86 format, but have not yet tested either, due to lack of source material.

Photography

- A friend of mine upgraded to a Nikon D2X and I had the opportunity to buy his mint D100 as a second camera body - and you know how much I like redundancy!

Home

- In building the studio, we added a 7.5 kVA 240:120 V shielded isolation transformer to protect the aging audio equipment (somewhat) from lightning strikes and broken neutrals. We also installed two 1 kVA UPSs in the studio and much of the gear runs off this to combat those short interruptions we sometimes see.
- We purchased a 6.5 kVA Coleman Powermate generator with Briggs and Stratton engine.
- We bought new appliances this year: a stacked washer/dryer, a bottom-freezer refrigerator, and a glass-cooktop stove with convection oven.
- We have converted almost entirely to fluorescent lighting in our home.
- Our Christmas lights are all LED!