

Merry Christmas!

Here we are, wrapping up 1998. Politics are screwy, the weather has been wacky and the millennium is drawing to a close, but other than that, life is just peachy.

Not that the Gingold family isn't experiencing the usual family stress. Everyone is busy, everyone has meetings, everyone needs to be somewhere ten minutes ago. It's probably the same story at your house.

James has his eleventh birthday looming in January. He's in fifth grade, his last year at Mill Street Elementary School, and is doing very well this year. He has continued playing percussion in the school band, and even marched in the Memorial Day parade. He also participated in his first Science Fair and won a ribbon for his "Moving with Magnets" display. James attended Scout Camp this summer, and will move on from the Webelos in spring. An unusual activity he tried was being a Junior Interpreter at Naper Settlement, the living history museum in town. He dressed in turn-of-the-century costume, and answered visitors' questions. He's grown up a lot this past year. Not just in size, although his feet are bigger than his mom's now, but also in maturity. It's obvious that we are harboring a budding teenager. Oh boy!

Emily just turned nine last week and is finding third grade more like "real" school, with homework and all that. A voracious reader like her brother, she's really into ghost stories. Goosebumps are okay, but she also likes books about "real" ghostly experiences. Emily is in her last year of Brownie Girl Scouts, and attended her first summer day camp. She also sings with the children's choir at church and is about to begin her third year of piano lessons. She's really good, especially for a kid who doesn't own a piano! We've decided that after two years, she must be serious so we guess it's safe to buy one now. Emmy will always be our baby, but she's also always pushing to keep up with her older brother. She's just growing up way too fast.

Don and I have been busy as well. Gnu Media is in its third year, and business is good, but sometimes it's so good that it's sometimes hard to carve out family time. Sears has turned out to be a



major client, but Gnu Media also has a couple other clients with regular needs and occasional newcomers. Don handles the lion's share of the workload while Kate puts in part-time hours copy writing and answering the phone.

To further business contacts, we both volunteer at the Chamber of Commerce and have even given a seminar!

When we're not working, we have other volunteer activities. Don sang in the church choir and played with the handbell choir until this fall. He's also winding up his tenure as Director of Lay Ministry. He still helps out at the Community Television Studio and attends several computer clubs. Kate's still playing bells, teaching Sunday School, shelving books in the school library and acting as Brownie leader. This year, she became editor of the Homeowner's Association newsletter as well as the church's.

But yes, we **do** still get to have some fun with our kids! We took several camping trips this year. In fact, we camped at Fort Wilderness in Disney World this fall — during Hurricane Georges! It was a great vacation despite the unrelenting rain, and we even enjoyed the drive down and back. (Which reminds me, we had to put our 11 year-old Taurus and 14 year-old Honda out to pasture this year. Instead, we have the requisite mini-van for drives to Florida and kid-shuttling, while Don tools around in a rag-top Geo Tracker.) We also went to the Renaissance Faire in Wisconsin a couple times this summer, in costume, which is always a hoot, and we made the annual trek to Galesburg for Knox's Homecoming. Kate also attended her high school reunion this fall.

We spent some effort on the house, doing fun things like updating the kids' rooms, and not so fun things like ripping out leaking toilets. We also had a wild-flower addition to the garden this year that was only partially successful. But wait till next year!

On a sad note, our dog, Watney, became very ill and died this spring. We've had him longer than our children, so it was a difficult time for us. Em's Guinea Pig also passed on, so we're down to goldfish at the moment.

All in all, it's been a good year, and we've got all kinds of plans for the next one. We hope 1998 has been good to you and we wish you heaps of love and laughter in 1999!

With love,
Don and Kate, James and Emily

