

The Monk Chronicles

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This has been a wonderful year for us. We've done some fun things and learned much about our world and about ourselves. We've been very blessed.

To start off, you may remember that at this time last year, we thought we might all have a trip to Korea. Well, as it turns out, Ann's youngest brother isn't going to marry until this coming April. Ann is going to fly over about a month early to help with the preparations. I expect she will be gone for about 5 weeks in all. Since the children will all be in school at that time, none of the rest of us will be going.

Instead of going to Korea, we took a long family vacation last summer. I had a conference to attend in Halifax, Nova Scotia, so we loaded up the new van and drove there and back. The trip took about three weeks in all. We visited many interesting places and had a great time as a family. Some of the places we visited include Nauvoo, Niagara Falls, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Boston, Philadelphia, New York, and Washington DC. The kids traveled exceptionally



Niagara Falls

well. The only one who got cranky on the trip was me— and that was just for a few hours one day. I haven't had a chance to get the pictures of the vacation on our family web site yet, but I'm hoping to have time to do that during the holiday break. Be sure to visit and see the pictures.



Monk family visiting with actors portraying Stephen Hopkins and his wife Elizabeth Fisher Hopkins (of the Mayflower) at Plimoth Plantation, Massachusetts. Stephen Hopkins is our ancestor.

As you would expect, music continues to be a major part of our lives. Suzie and Andy are both in the Lubbock Youth Symphony again this year, but they

moved up to the next higher level– the Concert Orchestra. As a part of this program, they went to a three-day music camp at Ceta Canyon (Palo Duro Canyon State Park) near Amarillo. They reported that it was very fun and that they can't wait until next September when they will go again.

Suzie added the viola to her selection of instruments in August. She now takes violin, viola and piano lessons every week. She's working extra hard with the viola because she wants to try for a viola part in the LYSO Concert Orchestra this coming spring. Then she'll drop violin. That's always been her goal– to play the viola. Violin was just a step along the way. This year, she wanted to start flute also, but I didn't think I could stand it.



Suzie Monk, age 11

Suzie, at age 11½, continues to do very well in school. She is still in the G-T program, but we opted not to do Destination Imagination this year since it took so much time last year. Speaking of DI, the roller coaster that her team designed and built last spring went all the way to the state competition. There are pictures on the web site.

Suzie joined the 6th grade orchestra at school this year. She is playing the viola there. She was invited to try out for All-Region, but we decided she didn't have the time. Her orchestra teacher recently invited her to play viola with the junior high school orchestra. Anyway, back to her school work. She NEVER gets any grade lower than 95%. She reads constantly. (I can't imagine where she got *that* habit from!) We are very proud of Suzie. She is growing up and is a huge help to Ann. Suzie does so much to help take care of the other kids– especially Michelle.

Andy is now 10 years old and is in the fifth grade. This past May, he completed the requirements and received his Bear award in cub scouts. Since then, he has earned and received his Webelos award and is now working toward his Arrow of Light. At school, Andy is the model student. For example, for the first five or six weeks of school, he never had a “write-up” of any kind. Then one day, he came home with a note that said he'd forgotten to turn in his homework.



Andy Monk, age 10

He was devastated. Worried, Ann went to talk to the teacher, who explained that she'd made a mistake and that the note was intended for a different student. That is the only trouble Andy has had at school so far this year. Like Suzie, all of his grades are in the high 90's.

Andy is still progressing on the violin. This is his sixth year of lessons. He passed an extra difficult piece in November and is now flying ahead again. Suzie, Andy and Michelle all changed to a new teacher a few months ago. She is very rigorous and simply does not accept mediocrity. They are learning all sorts of things about motivation! Like Suzie, Andy is also taking piano lessons every week.

Ricky, age 8, is in third grade. We wondered how the change from the "lower grades" to third grade would affect him, but he's doing just as well as before— if not better. At the first of the year, he struggled a little with his weekly spelling list, but we all learned what needed to be done (practice the list) and now he's right at the top of his class.

Ricky was baptized in August. Grandma and Grandpa Monk, Aunt Sylvie and Charlie came down for that. It was a special occasion for all. In addition, Ricky has received his Bobcat award in cub scouts and is working diligently toward his Wolf.



Ricky Monk, age 8



Michelle Monk, age 6

Ricky is still playing the cello. I've always said that the cello is the one instrument I'd like to learn to play— I guess I'll have to settle for watching Ricky learn. It is good to see. He is very intent on doing everything "just right" when he performs. We wanted to start Ricky on the piano this year, but the teacher who is teaching Suzie and Andy didn't have any openings. Perhaps he'll be able to start during the coming year.

Michelle is now in first grade. The funny thing about Michelle is that everyone at school comments on how quiet she is there. It's hard to imagine that *Michelle* would be called "quiet." I guess they're all different when they're away from home. Like another "pea-in-a-pod," Michelle is

doing exceptionally well at school. She's already reading. Not long ago, she commented that she was tired of the "little kid books" and was ready to start reading chapter books. Say "hello" to Suzie, II!

Michelle is still playing violin. She, more than Suzie or Andy (in my opinion), has shown real improvement with the new violin teacher. Her intonation has improved so much it's unbelievable. We look forward to seeing what she'll do in the next few years—she's already progressed so much.



My new car: 1988 Mercedes 190E

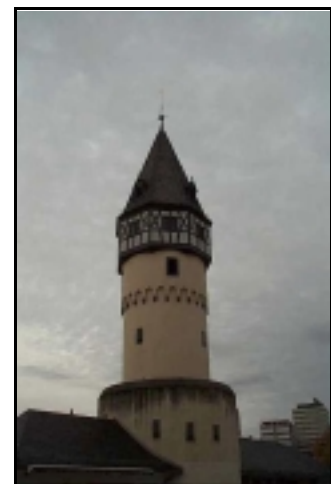
In addition to all that, all four children are members of the Lubbock Children's Choir, which they *really* enjoy. They also attend Korean School every week. I know what you're thinking: "when do they find time to be kids?" Well, that's a good question, but somehow they do. We know all about Pokémon, Digimon, Eiffel 65, Britney Spears, the Animorphs, Harry Potter, and Color Gameboy at our house. (We do not, however, have a Color Gameboy!)

As for us, what can I say? We chauffeur the kids around to their lessons and activities and "encourage" them to do their homework and to practice! Ann really is the true hero. She keeps everything else going and still has time to run her business. During the past year, she expanded to the point that she was selling in six different places (Amarillo, Clovis, Brownfield, Odessa, and two in Lubbock). She has also gone to a show every weekend since September! I honestly don't know how she does it all. I do know that our family would not be nearly as successful as we are if it weren't for her.

The biggest improvement in my life is that I'm not building birdhouses anymore. (Whew!) I made 3000 birdhouses between August 1999 and June 2000. I made some money at it, but I *really hate* birdhouses.

Another change is that I'm driving a new car—Ann bought me a 1988 Mercedes 190E for Christmas. When we got the old one two years ago, we decided we needed to drive it for 2 years to be worth it. Well, we got 23 months out of it, so I guess we did okay.

Oh yes, I nearly forgot! I made a quick trip to Frankfurt,



Frankfurt, Germany

Germany, in November. I was there for a three-day conference. I did not take any time to vacation, but I did see some of the city of Frankfurt. In addition, I met a distant relative there; we had a nice visit. I have put the pictures of that trip on the web site.

I do invite you to visit the family web site— even if you're not family. In particular, there's a newsroom page that I update regularly. I try to keep the photo album pages up to date also. The address for the main page of the web site is <http://mum202-2.musm.ttu.edu>. For those of you who are family, we've been fortunate to add several dozen individuals to our family tree. Take a look at the on-line ancestry for updates.

As I said earlier, we've been very blessed this year. We hope that 2000 has been as wonderful for you as it was for us.

All Our Love,

Richard and Ann,

Suzie, Andy, Ricky, and Michelle



Halifax Harbor. Andy, 10, Michelle, 6, Ricky, 7, Suzie, 11.
