

## Harriet's Annual Overview November 27, 2000

Wow, this sixth version of this year's holiday letter sounds really upbeat, check for yourself. I'm a roller coaster these past two years. Like last year's overview, I'm keeping the horrible, stressful, and strongly felt stuff sort of to myself. The boys are really good and that's what counts. I'm really looking forward to the future, sometimes it seems like it can't come fast enough!

Lots of GOOD things happened this year. Note all the paragraphs starting with "I'm glad".

*I'm glad* that in August we moved to Delft, a small, 1000 year old city in southern Holland. Alex's years of hard work (and I'm grateful, I am!) are rewarded with a sabbatical here until June 2001. Peter (just 10) and Arthur (6 ½) are enjoying our time here. They're adjusting to their all-Dutch neighborhood Montessori school with mixed ages in one class. The newness is exciting. *I'm really glad* our 350 year old home is comfortable, spacious and light.

*I'm glad* we have no car, just bikes, brick streets and for hills we have canal bridges. It's a fun change, until it rains too long. I'm embarrassed that the ice cream store man keeps "teasing" me about not speaking Dutch. At least I'm in a Dutch class now. Alex is getting tutoring in Spanish. Sure, it's practical, but isn't this Holland? Alex clearly doesn't go to the ice cream store very often.

*I'm glad* I haven't learned any swear words. Everyone swears in English, even in the classroom, much to my annoyance. Peter's definitely getting a complete cultural overhaul, including parental discretion warning CDs. Sigh.

*I'm glad* to travel in Europe, sometimes with Good Eggs from home (friends you know). But my recent trip to Helsinki in Finland was just a little too dark for me, pitch black by 3pm. Even in Paris it did stop raining and there were always croissants. But Helsinki had that great dark rye bread with lots of butter. And the really quite ugly man on the bus who winked at me.

*I'm glad* winking in Finnish means "you look like my grand daughter". I'm off to San Francisco in three weeks to see family and friends, eat out, and shop, go over Mt. Tam. What a lucky dog! I think winking in San Franciscan means "know any good beaches?" Also had fab trip in May with Linda to Italy where winking only means "you're hot". I was hot, but nobody winked. We made the wise decision to avoid all museums. What a glorious vacation! Maybe all the winkers were at the museum? Thank you Grandear for the generous nest egg which funded these important explorations.

*I'm glad* to share Europe with the boys. We've been to southwestern France to see castles and cave paintings, and to London to do all the war, science, and nature museums and see a roller skating musical. Plans are laid for family trips to Crete, Rome and Pompeii, Barcelona, Zurich, the Alps, the Black Forest, and Normandy?

*I'm glad* we get great annual family visits which were very sweet this year. If only they hadn't coincided with such nasty new marital messes (oops, that just slipped out). The boys and I had deluxe, action packed King Family visits in San Francisco in March and fabulous Hawaii in August (thank you so much Mom and

Dad!), and all four of us journeyed in July to Colorado for a great Mayer Family vacation (thank you so much Jean and Boris!). We took a day trip to Dinosaur National Monument which was hard to believe.

*I'm glad* (oh come on!) Alex always does tons of work travel and this year returned to Mexico a few times and to Cuba, which he loved. He takes great slides.

*I'm glad* our time in Delft is so quiet. We don't have extracurricular activities, volunteer work, or committees. Almost no social life too. Everything has a pro and con, eh? I enjoyed watching the Olympics on four channels at once, one of them in English. Not that I watch a lot of TV but have you guys seen "Angela Anaconda" on Cartoon Network? I miss "Wild Thornberrys", we don't get Nickolodeon. The boys and I rent a lot of movies, all with Nederlandse Ondertitling of course so we can "learn more Dutch".

*I'm glad* to have visitors, and if you're interested, please hurry. You can have your own room! Dutch food's ok, especially saucijzen broodje, the weather's ok, many people speak English, and the dollar is really strong! The boys will climb on you and wrestle if you want, maybe break your glasses or read you a story. Don't clunk your head coming up the twisty stairs and bring sweaters. When the house was built they still put the wind in windows (ark, ark, that was the worst one I ever told! seriously?)

Let's not forget the future. Last year I successfully completed my first two terms of studying computer science and hope to keep going until I get a BS in 2004. Then let's hope there are computer jobs locally because I love living in Houghton and it's a great place to raise kids.

Please give me credit for not including diet news or pet news. I disdain diets, fat freedom!

Sweet dreams! Full of hope! Love! Silliness? Silliness is worthwhile. That's my philosophical pronouncement for this year. "Philosophical" might be a great scrabble word.

sincerely (mostly), Harriet