

December 14, 2002

Greetings to all from the balmy climes of Texas! We are having unusually warm weather even for Houston – temperatures will be around the late 60's for the next couple of days with blue skies and chilly evenings – glorious!! This has been a somewhat more settled year (almost boring in fact) without any major shakeups impacting the family. Lots of positive things and no real negatives to offset them so perhaps at last we are settling down.

Cheryl has continued with her work at Continental Airlines and is, predictably, doing very well. She has been chosen to be included in a Talent program that offers her temporary assignments in various areas and may lead to a permanent transfer in due course. She really enjoys her job but would not be unhappy to have more of a challenge and so will keep her eye on opportunities. She went across to Holland with Lauren in May with a Dutch couple that we have become friendly with here in Kingwood. They celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary and had just under 40 of the family with them at a beach house in Noordwijk. As they were flying standby it was touch and go literally until a few minutes before take-off as to whether they would get on the flight. They were only there a week but were shown a lot as every day had activities planned for the group. Lauren loved it and has maintained her friendship with the grandchildren who are in Kingwood and other parts of Texas.

I have had a relatively quiet year at work. We had a new local chief appointed to the business in January but it didn't work out and he left a few weeks ago. No replacement has been announced and it is likely that we will continue without one for the time being. The CEO and CFO are essentially running the division and it seems to be going fairly well. Although I will not meet target this year I will have sold more than the other 2 sales folk combined so am not really unhappy. I have a large deal pending in California and if that came through before the end of the year I would be really close to target. I am covering the whole of the USA again with the exception of the North East and so am traveling most weeks. My large client in Atlanta has continued to be an important generator of revenue so I am up there about every 2 or 3 weeks. They have an operation in Connecticut so I get up there occasionally as well. If the California deal happens then I will spend a fair bit of time out there first quarter next year. I also have a potential large account in North Carolina and will be working that in January. So all in all a satisfactory year and I am pleased I hung in with DACG over the past few years. I am still involved with Lions and am the Treasurer. Our primary project this year was a Golf Day which raised just under \$16,000 so we are again able to service our biggest project which is supplying eye exams and glasses for needy kids in the area. We will help about 100 this year. Aside from that I spend a fair bit of time in the garden and am pleased to see gradual improvement although I would really like to find the magical command that puts areas of the garden on hold for a few weeks until I can get to them! You get busy with a piece of it and then look around and the rest is a mess – very inconsiderate.

Ryan has had a very good year. He finished his second year of college in May and did well enough to retain his scholarship. His major excitement was landing himself a very good summer job for 3 months at SouthWesternBell. He worked on telecommunications diagnostic programs and did so well they offered him a full time job if he wanted to leave college. As a result he built himself up a nice bank balance and needed to find a way to spend it!! As luck would have it, Lauren turned 16 in August and so became qualified (correction- licensed!) to drive and needed a car. We had already arranged that she would take over Ryan's car and he would take over mine and I would get a new one. With his new found wealth, Ryan

decided that he would rather not take over my boring family car and would like to buy a sports car. We did a deal and he has sacrificed his monthly allowance to pay for the new car. He will take over the payments when he leaves college. It's a great car and you can see pictures of it on our webpage (<http://www.theaustinfamily.com>). He is now back at college and comes home for Christmas next Wednesday after finishing finals. He is back with Meredith after a break of a year or so and again you can see her picture on the webpage.

Lauren turned 16 in August and celebrated by getting her driving license since when she has become a social butterfly visiting all and sundry in the neighborhood. Fortunately Texas has a graduated driving license for teenagers and she is only allowed one other person under 18 in the car with her at any time. She continues doing very well at school although she is struggling a bit with English this year. She is still very involved with dancing with the local Christian group although she did not make the dance company this year. I imagine she will try out again next year and she is now helping with some of the teaching of the other students.

In July I felt the need for my annual London fix so Cheryl, Lauren and I went across for a long weekend. It was really only 4 days but it turned out to be one of the best trips we have done. We arrived on Friday morning and went down to the Thames for a few beers on in the evening. Saturday we spent the day with my aunt in Daventry who had arranged for our cousins to be there as well. We had a great time and I realized what Aunt Joyce meant when she said that maintaining links with family is important – she is the only person on my parents side that we are still in contact with and we will ensure that we hold on to that valuable connection. We then went to Cheryl's nephew for the day on Sunday and again had a great time out to lunch with them in Camberley. On the Monday we surprised friends of ours from Durban that we had lost contact with for 5 years. Despite the lack of warning they were sporting enough to disrupt their day and join us for the afternoon and dinner – it was as though the 5 years simply evaporated.

In January our neighbors from Durban came across to visit us and we met them in New York, spent a few days at Disneyworld, a road trip around the Texas Hill country and then Los Angeles. Also managed a flying visit to Memphis to see Elvis' Graceland. Cheryl and I also went up to Chicago for a weekend in July.

No great changes are anticipated next year but we are looking at a possible trip to Australia and New Zealand to see old friends there. However it's a long trip and quite hazardous on standby so not sure if we can pull that off. Also I guess we will make the annual pilgrimage to London at some time. We have started receiving the annual letters and it's great to catch up on the activities of all our friends across the globe. Please keep keeping in touch and we may just knock on your day one day when you least expect it.

Cheers for now from the Austins .....