

Dear Friends,

December 2000

Can you believe 2000 is almost over? It's funny to look back and remember all the hype and expectation over this year. My Y2K has certainly been a full and unforgettable year. I've experienced, learned and grown so much in ways I never imagined.

Christmas of 1999 was a good one for me. The holidays really started when Bridget came home. We drove down to get her and spent the weekend in San Diego. It was great to visit and shop in my favorite mall with my girlfriends. It really helped with the homesickness and made the season really special. Christmas day was nice. Unfortunately I was sick, having picked up a bad cold from the afore mentioned girlfriends. Still, we were all together as a family again and Mom and I being sick couldn't put a real damper on that.

The next few months passed quietly enough. Bridget had decided to stay home and go to a Bible college in Denver. It was nice to have her home again, if a little weird. These months were to be the only time of normalcy the year 2000 would offer. After this, life would take on an entirely different pace and I, for one, would never be the same.

April was filled with the packing and sorting for our move to Colorado Springs. On May 9th Maegan & Coree Rossitto came for a 9-day visit. It was a completely insane thing to do right before a move but Mom was very gracious and hey, you're only young once! We showed them the sights, watched movies, played games, ate junk food and mall hopped. We managed to squeeze in a lot of nothing time too, which was wonderful. The week ended way too quickly and soon my life was tape and boxes once again.

The move went well. Of course there were the minor crises, sore muscles and bone-tiredness but it was as smooth and un-traumatic as a do-it-yourself-move can be expected to be. I'm afraid I was the biggest casualty. In the stress and single-mindedness of packing the truck I forgot my normal paranoia about the sun and didn't put any sunscreen on. I became a crispy critter! I should say, I got a little sun on my nose and neck but the worst place by far was on my arms. They were burned from where my short sleeves ended to my knuckles. The next day, they were still very warm to the touch, red like a cooked lobster and already peeling. I haven't been burned that badly in a long time. Ouch!

On June 26th my world changed. My Grandma was diagnosed with cancer. We had suspected it for a few weeks and Grandma, for months. The cancer was too advanced and Grandma beyond the help of modern medicine. She was given 2-6 months. Grandma wanted to die at home so hospice was called in and we went down every few days. My Aunt Donna (an RN from Florida) spent the summer with G&G and, in the beginning, she was able to handle primary care. The next few weeks continued the same, Grandma declining by inches and us trying to hold on to some form of normal life as the eventually of the situation became real and accepted.

We were able to get away a few times during the summer. The last week in June we went to Durango (Co) for a mini vacation. We met the Briggs family there and had a fabulous time partying and showing them Durango. We went home through Silverton, Ouray, Monarch Pass, and Cañon City with the Briggs in-tow. The scenery was just as incredible and beautiful as last year. During the dull parts of the trip we entertained ourselves with the CB radios we'd brought along. We celebrated the 4th of July with the Briggs before they left. It was such fun!

On the 28th of July we left for a 12-day vacation in San Diego. Dad had a conference there and we insisted on coming along. It was so good to get away and have some unadulterated fun. We visited with friends, went sightseeing, shopped and ate at our favorite places. It was heaven! Again it was over too soon and life in Colorado was upon us once again.

The rest of the summer was filled with visits to Cañon and preparation for Bridget's departure. She had decided to go to the CCBC (Calvary Chapel Bible Collage) campus in York, England. I was excited for her and sad too at the thought of losing her. Soon it was clear that Grandma needed 24 hour care. Donna arranged to go home for a few weeks about this time. Dad arranged to go down for 2-3 days then my Aunt Susan would take the duty for 2-3 days so Dad could come home and work. Life was completely exhausting and so hard. I didn't want Grandma to die but I wanted the nightmare to be over. Little did I know it had only begun.

The next Friday we got a call saying, "she is slipping away". It turned out to be only a scare and the next day she rallied. It was a wake up call to me; this was serious and there was a time limit. Although Dad had presented the

gospel to her that evening she was un-responsive. Two weeks later after a talk with our assistant pastor, she prayed with him and accepted Jesus as her savior. Wow!

Aunt Donna had flown back that Friday night so there were now 3 siblings to share the duty. Now began the roller coaster ride. Grandma's status would be up then down. We would have 3 more "scares" before the end. On the 6th of September Bridget left with teary eyes but smiling and excited. Soon, Donna couldn't handle Grandma by herself at night. Dad went down almost every night and some days too. I went with him a little over half the time, dividing my time between Mom and Dad, chores and back rubs. It was now physically as well as emotionally draining.

Grandma continued to die by inches. She continued to lose weight and become more helpless. The week after her salvation she really deteriorated mentally. You couldn't really hold a conversation with her after that. Still, she held on fiercely to life, by the sheer power of her will. She surprised everyone with her determination to live but we all knew she would lose the fight. Her decaying body would win the battle eventually. It was only a matter of time.

That time came at 2:00am on October 4th --- my 21st birthday. Planning funeral arrangements on one's birthday isn't the happiest thing I can think of, but it was a release. The nightmare was almost over and soon I could get on with my life.

The day of the funeral dawned bright, clear and cool. The 4 days before had been freezing, snowy weather. I had visions of gloves, hats and many shivers at the graveside service. Monday however was perfect, we couldn't have asked for a better day. The sun shone, the sky was very blue and the few clouds were fluffy and white.

The funeral itself went well. Pastor Hank (our assistant Pastor) did the service and Dad read the eulogy. Dad choked up and cried a few times as he read it. I cried too, first because Dad did. Then during the song it suddenly hit me, Grandma is in heaven. It's over and she is praising God. I wept.

When Grandma accepted the Lord all those weeks ago I couldn't believe it. I had prayed and wished and wanted it so bad but I never really thought it would happen. Never. Then it happened, God in His love and mercy reached down and touched her heart and drew her to Him. I never believed that would happen. I didn't have any faith that it would. Looking back I can see God working on my heart, asking me to trust Him with it. He as much as told me "her salvation will be the outcome" a few days before and I didn't believe it. So when it happened it was like "Wow"! I was in shock. I don't think the final realization hit me until the funeral, during the song and when Hank was speaking. Yep, this story has a happy ending. My Grandma, the one that wouldn't suffer the name of Jesus spoken, was before Him, praising His name. So I wept and praised Him.

Since then life has slowly started to get back to normal. We are almost finished cleaning out Grandpa's house and there is a contract on it. We moved Grandpa into an assisted care facility without any hitch. If this contract goes through we will be done with Cañon City before Christmas. Then that chapter of my life will be over.

I've learned a lot through all of this. I've learned about death, life, God's love and His wisdom and about what *really* matters in this life. I used to think about what would be the worst way to die. I'd decided it would be either being eaten alive (by a shark) or burned alive. Now I know the worst to die. That is to die without hope. I watched Grandma begin the process without hope and it is a terrible thing. Even if I were to find that Jesus was a liar and Christianity were only a religion, I would still choose it because I can face death with hope.

The day after we moved Grandpa in to his new place we left for England. Oh yes, I, Jenny-Rose world traveler extraordinaire was off again. We flew into Heathrow (London) on the 10th and were met there by Bridget. We had one day as a family in London so we only able to see some of our favorites, the Victoria & Albert museum and Fortnum & Mason. We parted at Victoria Station, Mom and Dad going on to Portsmouth and Bridget and I staying in London.

Bridget had come down with a group from school. They were in London to lead worship at the Calvary Chapel there. The next morning we went to church then spent the day wandering London. A few of the people we were with didn't have the money for tube fares so we walked the whole day. I will admit I wasn't happy about that at first but it worked out for the best. We got to see a lot more by walking, like Buckingham Palace and the Serpentine. It was a fun day. We first walked through Hyde Park to see Speaker's Corner. Then we went on to Piccadilly Circus for lunch. Then on to Trafalgar Square and the National Gallery. We had to "power-walk" the Gallery (because of time) but I still really enjoyed it. It was fabulous to see all those famous paintings in person. Photographs simply don't do them justice.

Late that night we caught a bus to York. I spent 7 days in York and loved every minute of it! York is a great place. There is a lot of cool stuff to see in London, but I have to say I prefer York. It's so pretty and everything is within walking distance. The people are nicer too. You don't have to go looking for history in York, you just have to stand there and soak it up! :-> I did some sight seeing, of course, but I also spent a lot of nothing time with Bridget. We stayed in a flat the church had rented for next term so it was just us two for the week. The time with her was so precious.

My two favorite sights were the Minster and the Abby ruins. While Bridget was in school one day I went alone to the York Minster. It is a 14th century cathedral and one of the few remaining in England. The walk from the flat was a straight shot down this great old street of cobblestones, lined with shops and restaurants. You can see the Minster tower over the rooftops of the shops for most of the trip until suddenly the road opens up and before you, in all it's glory, is the church of St. Peter. It is an enormous structure with walls of stained glass as big as tennis courts, hundreds of flying buttresses, countless gothic arches, and incredible gothic detailing and art.

Walking inside was magical. The sun was actually out that afternoon so as I walked around the nave, I saw the light streaming through the stained windows filling the cathedral with an enchanted light. I can't really describe it. I walked the entire building, walking up one side and back down the other. There were people all around but I felt alone. I've never been in a building that compelled me to praise and worship God. Wow!

Mom and Dad joined us on Saturday and I went again to the Minster with them. There was no light streaming through the windows but there was a service going on. We were able to walk into a small part of the church (and the book shop). As we stood there looking around the organ and choir began to play. The song was "Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi", one of Mom's and my favorites. The whole building was filled with sound, like an intimate home fellowship. It was awesome and beautiful. Mom cried and I admit my eyes got a little watery too. We went back again that night so Mom and Dad could see more of the building. Half of it was roped off unfortunately but that was because the organ and choir were practicing for a concert (I think). It was quite incredible to listen to those classic pieces in the acoustics of that church. We also saw the chapter house, which was way cool.

My second favorite spot were the Abby ruins. They were the ruins of a Benedictine Abby destroyed at the time of Henry VIII. Bridget and I saw them on one of our outings. It was the only other time I saw the sun. The way it lit the ruins was... again the only word is magical.

I so enjoyed just being there. I had such a wonderful time walking the old, winding streets and watching the people go by. I can understand why Bridget wants to go back next term. I want to go back too! (If only I didn't have to fly there. Our trip home was something of a nightmare but in the end we did make it home.) Hey, maybe next year! :->

The Christmas decorations are out, Christmas music is playing and I'm so ready for the holiday season to begin. The celebrating won't really begin until Bridget gets home but it won't be long until then. Yeah!!

I hope you all have a very Merry Christmas and an even more wonderful New Year!