

December 2003

Dear Friends,

My memories of the first part of 2003 are full of white and tulle. My "big brother" Ted finally found the perfect gal and we became the bride's sounding board and general helpers for their April wedding. Helping Jeannie with her wedding was my "ministry" for that period of time. I put myself at her disposal and helped with wedding gown shopping, gift registering, flower ordering, house cleaning and a thousand other things. I also made her garters and embellished her veil.

The White House ladies became "The Keepers of the Dress" and we designated ourselves the wardrobe mistresses of The Day™. Our job was to make sure that Jeannie was ready to walk down that aisle. We got her all zipped up and ready to go with 10 minutes to spare - pretty impressive, huh? I never realized before how much behind the scenes work goes into these things. A wedding really is a production and it took a lot of background people to pull it off. I swear the next time I help with a wedding (I keep saying *no way* but figure the odds!), I am going to wear a tag that says "stage crew" on it!

While I didn't enjoy the stress it generated, the experience was rewarding. Besides learning to love the bride as a sister, it was fun to use my strengths (and sometimes my weaknesses) to help someone who needed me. I also received a wedding planning education; I know how to order flowers, how to register and all that fun stuff now. It was very satisfying knowing that I was fulfilling my ministry calling and for those few months I knew the purpose God had for me.

I have to admit that post wedding was a hard time for me. For a while afterwards, I felt out of place and very lonely. I found myself re-evaluating where I was (in general) and why I was there. It's an odd place to be; 23/24 years old, living at home, no school, no job, no desire for a career outside the home, no guy and no clear direction for what the future holds. Yet I know, (that I know, that I know) that I'm where I'm supposed to be right now. On one hand it is incredibly comforting and on the other hand it's very frustrating, as I'm not particularly comfortable here. God has been so faithful to pick me up out of the dark times (and there have been a tidy sum this year) and just love me through them. Not that He's told me much about my future but I know He loves me and He has a plan. Somehow that makes everything okay.

Mom was not well again this year. She has had a lot of medical problems since we moved to Virginia and last fall she became anemic. She took iron supplements and eventually had outpatient surgery to correct the problem. For most of 2003 she literally had no energy. It got better as the year progressed and now she is doing 100% better. With Mom out of it most of the time, I had to try and pick up the slack in the household. It's been rather humbling, to discover what a bad homemaker I am. I learned a lot though, and the household has run much smoother since I've gotten my feet under me, and Mom's recovered a bit. Someday I'll get this stuff down!

Mom and Dad have been away from home for several weeks this year. It was mostly Daddy taking Mom along on business trips but they had fun and Mom got out of the house which was good for her. They spent a week each in San Diego, Colorado and Baltimore and then had two weeks in England/Scotland. In addition to all that, he just took her on a romantic Caribbean cruise for their 25th wedding anniversary. Talk about spoiled!

All that "parent away" time gave Bridget and I some good "sister" time this year, except when they went to Scotland in May. Their trip overlapped Bridget's trip to San Diego and left me all alone for a whole 7 days. I've defiantly decided that I don't want to live alone. I like a certain amount of quiet "Jenny time" but the house was too quiet, like a tomb. Mom and Dad are just stuck with me until some guy comes to sweep me off my feet I guess. :->

I'm still doing the website for my church, CCFred, and singing on the worship team on Wednesday nights. The church started paying me for my website work this summer, which is

nice. It's not much, but I'm contributing to the household a bit without any outside expenses so that works out well. It is really fun having a bit of spending money again!

I have taken over the editing of Pastor Chris' broadcasts too. CCFred has a 30 minute radio program on CSN•Virginia. Dad and I digitize, edit and put those programs together. Bridget did the editing last year but as her school load increased this summer, she handed it over to me. I now listen to (a minimum of) three of Pastor Chris' messages every week. It's good in that it keeps me in the Scriptures but it's extremely time consuming and I now find it very hard to concentrate in church. I've trained my ear to pick up all the bad sounds (in order to edit them out), coughs, pulpit bumps, throat clearing "you knows", etc. I'm so used to zoning out what the pastor is actually saying that it's hard not to zone in church too!

I am also doing the website for the local Christian radio station, CSN•Virginia, in addition to my two personal websites. So I'm now maintaining four sites and am a section editor on another, *In Timely Fashion*. The sites definitely keep me busy, one can't seem to get ahead with them. There is always something to do and the pressure to keep everything updated is constant. It's a challenge to keep a balanced perspective sometimes but it keeps my interpersonal skills sharp.

My creative outlet has continued to be my websites and my sewing. My costuming website is the one I spend the most time on and the one I'm most proud of. I've been sewing quite a bit this year, learning lots, stressing myself out to the max, and having way too much fun along the way.

I mean, how is this for crazy... I wanted an excuse to dress up in costume so I hosted a dinner party for four of my girlfriends in July. Bridget and I planned and cooked a five-course French dinner (okay so we bought the cheese and dessert courses!). One of my friends, my sis and I didn't have good costumes to wear so I volunteered to make them something. Add cleaning, shopping, menu making and table setting and you end up with a Jenny-Rose ready for the mental hospital! It wasn't that bad really, I just didn't get much sleep the week before. Bridget helped as much as she could and a dear friend came a day early to be my sous chef. We managed to pull it off and despite being tired I did enjoy the evening, even if my dress was held together with safety pins!

Actually we partied pretty hardy this summer. We had a huge 4th of July bash, complete with grilled food, a water balloon fight and fireworks. About 30 people (including kids) came and we all had a ball. In August we had a family reunion at our house. It was my Mom's family; her brother, sister, sister's kids, parents and a couple of cousins as well. It was a good visit; good food, a couple of hours visiting and we are set for another 20 years!

In August Bridget, five girlfriends and I went to the Maryland Renaissance Faire together. About half our party were in costume, which made it even more fun. I'm already planning my outfit for next year!

In September my San Diego pastor, Leo Giovinetti, came to Charlottesville (1.5 hours away) for a CSN radio rally and crusade. It was just what I needed; a time of refreshment and a small taste of home. All that was missing was the In'n Out Burgers. <sigh>

Life is goodish for me right now. I'm making myself slightly mad by planning two holiday parties and four costumes to make for them. We are having a Lord of the Rings fest to celebrate the *Return of the King* premiere, complete with a LOTR marathon, costumes and a party. We are a bit mental to be doing it but our motto these days is "you're only young and foolish once" :->

"Twelfth Night" is our next big party and I'm really looking forward to it. Bridget and I are hosting a Jane Austen tea right after Christmas. We have invited six girlfriends to join us and are requesting that they come in period costume. I don't have a Regency dress that fits right now so I'm making a new one. I've finished my corset and the gown is mostly done, just working on the hem and

embroidery. I'm actually making three outfits for that party, one for me, one for Bridget and one for a friend to wear. Seems to me I swore I would never do that again! I am mad - completely nutters. The scary bit is that I'm having a blast!

So that is pretty much my year and my life; a wonderful God, incredible family, good friends, extravagant party planning, many websites, much sewing and endless radio broadcasts. Gee, whatever happened to my quiet life?

I hope you have a wonderful Holiday season and a very Happy New Year