

Dear Friends,

Dec 2005

I love this time of year I really do. There is something about going through my journals and letters and remembering the good times, the tough times and how I've changed through it all that makes me happy. I love the chance to look back and see how God has worked in my life.

I guess my biggest news is that I have embarked on a new career. I am now an Independent Beauty Consultant with Mary Kay Cosmetics. It has been amazing how everything has worked out. Or rather I should say how God has worked everything out! It's been a lesson in how sweet God's perfect timing is when it unfolds and that it's definitely worth waiting for.

I don't believe in coincidence so I find it fascinating that in July I 'happened' to run into a friend at church, 'happened' to be invited to a makeover she had won as a bride that afternoon, I 'happened' to be free that day, it 'happened' to be Mary Kay and the consultant, Laura, 'happened' to be very professional and just the sort I would want to train under. All coincidence? *wink*

After a talk with Laura (now my MK director), much thought, prayer and talking with the whole family I signed up. It's been great so far. The pieces (especially those that I have no control over) have just effortlessly fallen into place. I don't know why I'm always surprised when God blesses my socks off and provides beyond my dreams. I mean it's not like He hasn't done it countless times in the past. My memory can be so short!

Not to say it hasn't been hard work, because it has. It's keeping me on my knees and in prayer anyway. In a lot of ways MK is a great fit for me and in others a real stretch. I've had to step out of my comfort zone, sacrifice activities and re-prioritize my life in many ways but I've already learned so much. Not just about make-up or business, but about myself, my God and who I want to be.

As much as I love MK, the free jewelry, prizes, trips and other opportunities it provides, my real focus is to just be obedient to God and my greatest ambition is to simply be His handmaiden. " He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" – Micah 6:8

I know I can't do this on my own but I can do all things through Christ. I just need to be faithful with the opportunities and responsibilities that come my way. I'm content to leave the results up to Him. So far it's been a pretty wild ride and I'm so curious to see where the next year takes me and how God uses this business in my life and the lives of others.

Probably my biggest struggle this year, besides the new career, has been to balance all my jobs, hobbies, commitments and responsibilities. That has been a huge challenge and frankly I'm not sure how successful I've been at it. *shrugs shoulders* I have dropped a few activities since the summer (the quilting fellowship & some online activities) and scaled back on others at times but I'm still trying to find the balance.

My struggles haven't been helped by the fact that I've been ill quite a bit this year. Lots of sinus, migraines, colds and even a bout of flu or two. You know, nothing major. Just enough back-to-back sickness to be seriously annoying and frustrating. Here's hoping 2006 will be a healthier year!!

I am still involved at Calvary Chapel Fredericksburg as the website manager and a singer on Wednesday nights. With the help of Joe, the IT guy at CCFred, we revamped the website, updating the format and coding with Dreamweaver and some CSS. That was a fun process and the skills Joe has helped me develop have been useful for my personal websites as well. *hee hee*

Costuming and historical fashion are still very much a part of my life, although I had to scale back significantly over the summer and autumn as I threw myself full throttle into my new career. I always knew that the season in my life when I could devote huge amounts of my time to costuming would be a short one. Knowing that season is over makes me a little sad

but change is good too. As much as it frustrated me at the time, I think the forced hiatus this year was good for me. It restored my joy for the hobby and I remembered how much I truly love doing these mad things. Even ripping out seams and sewing eyelets seems a delight now. Hems are still evil of course. : >

In February I attended a workshop on draping an eighteenth century gown. Most of my education in this hobby has been self taught through books and pictures so it was wonderful to have an instructor to ask questions and double check my progress as I worked. The class really helped me understand all those un-intelligible period construction techniques in my books.

The draping class was hosted by the Rappahannock Colonial Heritage Society, Inc, a group that does eighteenth century reenactment & English country dancing in this area. I quickly became a member and have been attending dance classes and events ever since.

I quickly started on a 1770-1780s wardrobe (with my newly acquired knowledge from the workshop) and debuted my first eighteenth century frock, a red-stripped gown, at the Belmont Tea in May. I got many, many complements on my ensemble and even a few people who asked to take my picture. I hope I didn't look too pleased with myself... *wink* I am proud to say that I helped our table win prizes in the hat contest. Our table even made it into the local newspaper. *grin* Pretty cool, huh?

In July I joined my friend Tina (my "Auntie Tina" when we are reenacting) for Colonial Williamsburg's annual Under the Redcoat program. The year is 1781 and the events portrayed take place during the period that Williamsburg was under British occupation. A camp is set up on the market green, barricades are erected everywhere while soldiers and sailors roam the streets. Anyone in 18th century clothing is subject to interrogation and search and those without "papers", refusing to take the Loyalty Oath or caught with contraband can be detained or sent to the courthouse to be tried. In conclusion, it is a weekend where a bunch of adults get to play dress up and war games, all in the sight of and for the education and amusement of the public.

Auntie Tina and I were there as unregistered participants, to stroll around in costume and, as she said, "ogle the troops". We didn't have official papers so in due course we were taken into custody and marched off the Provost-Marshal's post. We were then padded down, our baskets searched and after declaring loyalty to the King *snigger* given a pass. Everyone was very nice about it, helped by my Auntie's flirting and offerings of biscuits no doubt. : >

We were stopped constantly through the day to have our papers checked and our baskets searched, both inside and outside the barricades. We toured a few of the buildings, had a picnic lunch, watched a play in the outdoor theater, had refreshments at a tavern and generally strolled about town visiting with friends and chatting with the public. Out of the blue I had one gal who recognized me from my web site and thanked me for the help of one of my dress diaries! That was bit of a shock but I have to admit it totally made my day. I guess it's pretty hard to miss me in that red striped frock, aye? *grin*

The experience got me thinking about what it would be like to live in a hostilely occupied city though. I had watched a movie set in Nazi occupied Rome the week before the event and having a little taste of it in Williamsburg was an interesting experience. It brought home a bit how precious freedom really is and how grateful I am to those who had the will and courage to fight for it and those who are still willing to continue the fight today.

In November I participated in an event at Gunston Hall, which I have to say was my favorite event of the year. The weather was perfect, the autumn leaves were at their peak, Gunston was gorgeous as usual and the event was a lot of fun. Towards the end of the day I took a solitary ramble through the gardens and just enjoyed the beauty around me. In between demonstrating period dances, I finished up the handwork on the wool cloak I'd whipped up for the occasion. After the grounds closed to the public, we were treated to a candlelight dinner that had been cooked in the kitchens. The food was wonderful and it was great fun to have the

place to ourselves. Gunston Hall is one of my favorite old spots in Northern Virginia. It was such a treat to be there in costume and eat in the courtyard - under the stars no less. *sigh*

My second favorite event of the year was my evening at Stratford Hall in December. I actually danced in period attire in the Great Hall of Stratford Hall - something I've wanted to do (and never thought I would!) since I was a little girl. My new ball gown was another feat of marathon sewing, I managed to make it up in a grand total of three days. *shakes head* I still don't know how I did it!

I was able to do quite a bit of traveling this year as well which was great. Apart from gallivanting all over Virginia for RCHS events, Bridget and I made it to the Renaissance Faire in Maryland in October. It was in last minute costumes, without friends, in the rain, with lots of mud, cold, no electricity at one point, hems four inches deep in mud, very little sleep and we had a lovely time. It all proves we are insane and have a sick sense of enjoyment really. *nods head*

Also in October I traveled to Myrtle Beach for a Mary Kay event. It was an honor just to be invited to attend and I had a blast. It felt seriously bizarre though - me, Jenny-Rose, at a business convention - can you image? I felt very grown up indeed. *grin* Of course being Mary Kay it was far from being a stuffy business conference. Apart from all the award ceremonies, good eats, MK girlfriend fun and classes, the weather was perfect. High 70s, cool ocean breeze, low humidity. It made me a bit homesick for my beautiful San Diego. The hotel suite was right on the ocean. I could open up our balcony door and see the beach right from my bed - it was heaven! I'm learning to love the perks of being a Mary Kay lady! *grin*

My favorite trip of the year though was the chance to spend a glorious week in San Diego in March. *happy butt wiggle* Bridget and I went out for her spring break. The trip was soooo fabulous. There are other words I could use but really fabulous seems to sum it up. I couldn't have asked for a better vacation. The weather was absolutely perfect, the company a joy, the memories sweet, the sites and smells just gorgeous and the food even better than I remembered (and that is saying something).

It's funny, some things have changed in SD and some things haven't changed and it doesn't matter in the least. No matter where I go, or what I experience or how long I'm gone, San Diego will always be home. It has its share of issues too but I don't know... there is something about the place. It's where I feel I belong, where I fit, if you know what I mean. Like a comfy sweater or that favorite pair of jeans; it's my comfort zone... home.

Of course the only bad thing about going on vacation in a place where you have lived for years is that there is more to see, do and eat than you can possibly do in a week! We gave it the old college try though. In addition to church at MVCF, a wonderful day at Sea World, several meals at Casa de Pico, even more at In'n Out Burger, excursions to favorite malls and lots of lazy time with Maegan & Coree, we squeezed in a daytrip to LA to see the Fashion in Film exhibit at FIDM.

Each year FIDM exhibits costumes from the films that have been nominated for the Academy Award. *shakes head* I still can't believe we got to go - oh my gosh was THAT cool! The best part was the chance to see costumes from The Lord of the Rings, including the gown that inspired my green velvet costume. The LOTR were by far the best costumes there. The detailing, especially on Théoden's armor, just never ended and the craftsmanship was superb. I could have looked at Théoden and the Witch King for hours. In fact I kept walking away and coming back because each time I did I saw a new bit of detail and design. Very, very cool.

There is so much more to mention (my - it has been a full year!) but I will spare you. Before I go I should mention my baby a bit though! Nefret (otherwise know as "Stringbean") has been the light of my life this year. She is now my little shadow; laying in my chair, on my desk and in the sun next to my feet as I type away on my computer. She is super affectionate and

comes running for a pet whenever I walk in the house. I get the distinct impression she misses me when I'm away too. I think I finally have my-very-own-kitty-not-Mom's-pet to call my own. *woo hoo*

As I type we are getting ready for our New Years celebrations and after that our annual Twelfth Night party. Last year's party An Enchanted Forest, with lots of candles, silver branches, dark blue accents and glitter everywhere was a lot of work but it was totally worth it - definitely our best Twelfth Night yet.

The theme for this year An Old English Tavern, complete with colorful tavern signs, tankards, wooden plates, the warm glow of candlelight and yummy pub food. It's probably the result of too much BBC and reading a bio on Shakespeare recently but who can really tell where this sort of inspiration comes from? *smile*

There is nothing I love better than being a hostess, setting a mood with decorations and inviting friends into my home to enjoy themselves. Add the chance to dress-up in a costume and to talk about costuming with fellow artists and my happiness is complete! I can't wait!

I have to say I'm really looking forward to 2006. I'm so curious to see where the next year takes me and what God has for me. I know what in store but I know it's going to be wild!

May your New Year be happy & blessed!
Much Love,
Jenny-Rose