

Dear Friends & Family,

Sorry we didn't send 1998 Christmas cards. There were events happening so quickly, we were thinking we would have news to tell everyone soon and could tell it only once. Well, here it is May and do we have a bag of surprises for most of you. *Folks, we're not in San Diego anymore!* We are in the Boulder CO, area with a one-year lease. ☺

The following is an account of *The White House on Wheels*, (probably more than you ever wanted to know), but I'm writing to preserve the experience for my book, (if I can ever "stay put" long enough to write it). The title will be *How to Move and Keep Your China [and Mind] Intact*).

This time last year we were settling into the Southern California lifestyle, after our "Grand Adventure" of 1997. The year ended quietly enough, renewing old friendships and making new ones. 1998 was the year of adjustment and growth for the White's. ☺

December 1998 was going to be a quiet, uneventful, well-planned rest for the White household. I knew that with the girls graduating in June, planning a family reunion, (the first part of June), a special prom event for the girls and their friends, as well as trying to start a business, (I'm writing two home-school curriculums), our lives would be going full tilt for months. Well, best-laid plans...

The week of our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary (Dec.1), Den and I had planned for me to join him in Virginia (where he was on business) to celebrate (in between his work). Unfortunately, by the time Den got to Va., the flu we thought he was over had developed into *pneumonia* (Luckily it didn't require a hospital stay). When I arrived Friday, Dec 4 he was no longer contagious and he had worked a bit, though he was easily exhausted. Oh yeah! Also that week: our landlord decided to sell the house we were currently renting. And... the tenants renting our house in VA (who had a lease till May) were moving out January 1. ☺

Den is a consultant to the Navy, in the area of human and systems engineering and he tele-commutes for a company out of Virginia. Originally we moved to southern California to help a friend begin a new church. First the project was postponed and appears canceled for now. Since our reason originally bringing us west had changed dramatically, we looked on this move as a window of opportunity. A move, no matter where, means packing boxes, a truck and disruption, whether across town or across the country. **So...**

There was discussion about returning to Virginia. There was also the possibility of a new job in Boulder CO (both of Den's folks, who live in CO, have been in poor health for some time). The holidays made contacting any one to talk this out nearly impossible, so we continued to pray for wisdom and held on for the ride.

January rolled around and we still had no strong leading as to what direction to go. Every year, our church commits the first week to prayer. Everything except childcare is cancelled, to allow folks an opportunity to worship and pray. Our family hoped for a solid direction, but it seemed every time we shared what was going on in our lives, the blessing was in the sharing and not in concrete answers. "It's such a God thing, what can I say?" The probability that we would leave this fellowship, the people that the Lord had put in our lives and that we'd come to love, was *beginning to become painfully real*.

Thursday of that week, we were told our tenants did indeed move out, and "...If your wife could see the house she would cry!" (I let that speak for our imaginations). The renters had not paid rent for the month of January and could not be reached by conventional means. Our hearts sank! Was God providing the 'opportunity' to return to Fredericksburg?

Unbeknownst to us however, even as we discussed this possibility, Den's Dad had his 3<sup>rd</sup> stroke. He is home and doing very well but has a blockage in an artery that cannot be fixed surgically. From that point on, we were more and more sure that Colorado was where we should be. Our plan was to move in about 60 days so our Landlord could get his house on the market (That was considerably better than at the end of Jan. when our lease expired, as we originally thought).

So, there you have it, our lives in a nutshell (We move, again!). I gotta tell ya', my spirit was will'n, but I'm get'n way too old for this movin' stuff!

I mentioned earlier we affectionately called our trip to San Diego, "The Grand Adventure" and it was ...all 16+ months of it! The pool (our watering hole for the neighborhood animals and

birds), ah-h-h the Jacuzzi, BCI office poolside, Sea World, Mission Valley Christian Fellowship (our church family and all the relationships so unique and special). Just the opportunity for me to turn my dream into a class, teaching History, (its **His**-story) the way I've taught the girls was worth the move, but it was so much more. God has moved in our lives, as never before. Not one of us would change a moment (though, there were moments that put us to the ultimate test!). It was these experiences that made this move to Colorado all the more compelling. We'd already seen what God could do in our lives if we were obedient to His leading. However, if I had to affectionately name this move, it would probably be "*The Move from Hell in a U-Haul Wagon,*" or "*Rocky Mountain Fever*". ☺ Okay, okay, hold yer horses, I'll explain...

Den had a business trip planned to Boulder, CO early in February, so I tagged along to "scope out the lay of the land". Den also seriously discussed a job opportunity with a company here in Boulder. I won't go entirely into how and why we came to the decisions we did, just trust me, "it was a God thing", from beginning to end. We came home from CO having, in faith: rented a house, still working for BCI in Va., and with a determination to move as soon as possible.

We girls had hoped to stay through Easter, and be a part of the music ministry for the Easter out-reach as we were last year. But it did seem a bit ridiculous to stay when we were paying rent in two states, not to mention folks going through the house everyday (after the realtor sign went up). It was too much to pack boxes and keep the house presentable to the public too!

So...we packed the house in **5 days**. On the sixth day we loaded (in the rain) **TWO** trucks. Yup, we never do anything e-a-s-y! With the addition of the office equipment, "some" pool furniture, "a few more books" and the shelves to put them on, plus, all three of us girls are sewing now...well, it wouldn't all fit in a truck and a trailer any more! Den drove the 26 ft' U-Haul, with the ol' Volvo on a trailer. I drove a 17 ft'er and the girls drove the Chrysler, with the two cats (In between, the girls squeezed in two birthday/farewells celebrations ah... youth!). On the seventh day there was no rest in sight, as we cleaned and patch painted, had a "military house inspection", cleaned and painted some more. But, "by-golly" by 7AM Saturday, "*The White House on Wheels Caravan*" was off, like a herd of turtles.

This trip was, well... do remember, God was in the midst of all that happened ☺. Our first day began with mountains, 3 hours and less than 80 miles, and it didn't get any better, (though we had plenty of opportunity in the 15 hours we drove that day). We stopped late that night, but could only get two single rooms. We had no way of knowing at the time, but it was probably HIS SAVING GRACE.

Our one bright spot were the cats. They never meowed, never heard a peep out of them. These little guys had been down this road before, and so had we! You know you've moved too many times and too often, when the rest stops, the fast food and pit stops are all identifiable, or when towns you couldn't name, are familiar by the restaurant you stopped at going in the other direction!

Our second day on the road proved our most challenging. Bridget, (who had been struggling with a very sore throat for most of the trip)... wasn't feeling well at all when we started out. She was stopped "short" in her "tracks" around noon with stomach flu, (to put it delicately). Poor Kid, she was absolutely miserable in a public restroom, while the family pondered how we should proceed.

Den had to catch a plane in Denver in 1½ days, so our options were limited. In the end, Jenny-Rose, who only had her permit and had not been behind the wheel since August, received a hasty driving lesson in the parking lot of Stuckey's [ok, now *this* one is the gas, and *this* one is the brake...], and saved the day! She drove till we reached Albuquerque, when Bridget, having slept, took over. Two hours later Jenny was burning up with fever. I'm convinced, having separate rooms, probably saved Den and I from getting the bug before we got to CO. The Lord is Good. The rest of our day (I have to tell'ya it seemed like two), we made better time than we ever would have imagined. We stopped for the night in Pueblo, CO, some sick, and all exhausted. We were so glad we were only 2-3 hours away from home, depending on how much the mountains slowed us down. U-Haul type trucks are notorious for going 15-20 mph up mountains when loaded.

We arrived "home" in Superior, CO before noon on the third day, a whole hour and a half before the 2 movers arrived! The girls just whimpered and slept in the car, while Den, the two guys and I unloaded the trucks. When we'd finished, we let the "kitties" free, locked the house,

parked the trucks out of harms way, checked into the motel, grabbed a bite to eat, hit the Jacuzzi and lay down and *slept!*

Well that's the end of the story right? No, actually...not quite. I've saved the best for last. You see... there is a lovely brick portico at the Holiday Inn, with a 11 ½ ft clearance...which ~~Den~~ wisely avoided...but in so doing, he accidentally, drove the 12 ft tall, 26 ft U-Haul-it truck into a 9 ft clearance steel overhang. Poor guy never saw it, unlike me, who sat helplessly watching it all. There is... a slightly bent and scraped bar, to remind us of the "**impact**" of our arrival in Boulder! ☺

The truck you would not believe! (I have pictures). Let me put it this way, never crash a U-Haul Truck, 'cause they are made of paper and glue...As we drove across town, pieces began to fly everywhere. (I kept one as a momento!). Well, it could have been worse, the truck could have been loaded. The "Mom's attic" had been full of glassware, kitchen boxes and small furniture. Or...we might not have gotten the full insurance coverage. Is this the end of my story? Almost!

Den came back to the house, just long enough to grab his suitcase, which we had packed in California, kiss us good-bye and leave for the airport. Poor guy was already sickly. I'd cleared a path earlier for the girls and tucked them into bed (mattress and springs on the floor), and there they stayed for the next 4-5 days. I, with the help of coldeez and Echinacea managed to escape the worst. Hey! Someone had to go to the store to get more juice, Kleenex and ginger ale! No applause thank you kindly...I give every ounce of glory to the one whom gave me strength beyond my own endurance. Thanks Lord, you are the greatest! I have to tell ya' though, there is something about this place that sorta gets to you...Maybe it's the 120 mph winds that swoop down the mountains. So far we've experienced two such storms. The house shook from basement to the attic. The stairs, walls and floors were like a vibrator. We had to take breakables (that were jumping) off the outside walls that faced the mountain range. Den was home for the second storm. That one took shingles off the roof. The noise is like having a train go through your house, it's madding - the poor cats freaked out!

The locals say the weather in May will get better and the hail in June hasn't been golf ball size in years, "Great!" They also say, "if you don't like the weather, just wait a couple minutes, it'll change." Believe it! In the 8 weeks, since we arrived, we have seen highs in the 70's and lows in the 20's, and 7 snowstorms, most of them in whiteout conditions. We experienced the most incredible thunder and lighting storm. We watched it come over the mountains in all its glory and fury, giving much needed moisture and then it was over! *Amazing!*

Ah yes, the dryness of CO is a constant battle, our skin, hair, and especially contacts need special care. There are days when "parched" is the appropriate term here, despite a water bottle as a constant companion.

Still, there is something about this place...Breathing is not taken for granted by us "flat landers" anymore. There have been days, when going up and down the stairs once, and starting a load of wash, is cause for a nap! You guys think I'm joking! Actually, we are walking a bit around our neighborhood now, watching the construction of a dozen more homes. We spent Mothers' Day weekend working at Den's folks in the yard, (at a lower elevation), and could breath normally. Despite our "Rocky" start I believe, amazingly, we're gonna' make it! ☺

The Lord is so good! He has blessed us with a wonderful house, the back of which faces the "Front Range" and rolling hills. It is an awesome sight on a clear day or at sunset. It's one of the reasons we settled on this particular house. We were only the second house to be occupied on our block when we moved in. Now, we have neighbors moving in all the time. At least one a weekend. There are no trees and none of us have yards, just mud, so it's not so much to look at yet, but that'll change. Still, it's nice to know that some things don't change. Marshmellow hasn't lost his touch at mousing - so far he's caught 5. He lets us get rid of them when he gets his "tuna treat" for being such a good boy! Yeah, yuck is right!

Still, there is something about this place... the 'exciting' weather, the majestic snow covered mountains, rolling plains... it has God's fingerprints all over it! There are moments when they draw ya' to Him... and that can't be all bad! ☺

Den has been on the road at least 3 days of every week since we arrived. In May and June he travels too, but has several breaks in between for a change. We are leaving this week for

Durango, CO and some R n' R. It's full of History (y-e-a-!) and we are taking the narrow gauge train through the mountains to Silverton, CO. It's 9 hours roundtrip (Consider this your "*I wish you were here*," postcard ☺). With the girls starting school next fall, family vacations will be harder to put together, so this one's special.

Jenny-Rose is 19 and poised on the brink of her life. She now works for her Dad as his administrative assistant and has made herself an invaluable part of his office ("Jenny, where's that report?"). I have seen their relationship grow and mature - all those Navy years haven't stolen time from father and daughter, restored. It's an awesome treasure. Jenny visited friends in Australia for nearly 5 weeks last fall. It was a life changing experience for her and for those of us she left behind as well. As for her future plans? Jenny-Rose would like to take some courses that will help her begin a dress making business. Women's fashion in history, fashion for 2000, or a combination there-of? The how and where of this dream, she says, "I'm willing to wait for the Lord to lead and show me more directly. At least it's a direction." In the mean time, she is busy making most of her own clothes, cooking, decorating, and organizing and as always giving her Mom a bad time. "She's so cute!" Opps, I'll be in trouble for saying that.

Bridget is 18 years old, looking with anticipation and anxiety at her future (remember those unsure days of fun and glory?) She has interests in so many areas, it's hard to pin her down. A year ago we were sure we had a budding chef in our midst. We were excited, all that food, but somehow she always seems to come back to medicine. Her main interest is surgery, though the length of the training and school is daunting. Bridget says, "it's scary thinking about committing to a four year college, when I've never lived in one place more than two years!" ☺ Trauma surgery fascinates her. She's got enough of her Daddy's tenacity in her, she can achieve all the Lord has planned for her, and then some. For the present, she has set her face toward Calvary Chapel Bible College in the fall, (in Murietta Hot Springs, Ca). She likes the idea of being in a small campus and wants to be sure being a doctor is what the Lord wants for her life. She told me one night recently, she simply doesn't want to close any doors of opportunity and drawing closer to Jesus is the place where she will know her answers. It'll be tough for her being so far away, even her Dad and I are not sure we are ready for this, but it's exciting nevertheless. When we lived in San Diego, she would only have been an hour away. Who said moving was easy? How will we get along with out her smile? Bridget has the knack of making us laugh at ourselves (Not to mention how quiet it gets when she's not around!).

As for me, I'm out of a job! The girls have officially graduated from high school, though they are making up for the time it took to move and finishing loose ends. No graduation party, prom or family reunion, (who would we invite?) but we've planned something special for each of the girls to mark the passing of an era and the beginning of the new!

I plan to continue to do the research for my History course (cause it's the most fun, anyway) and work on future presentations, so when a door opens, I'll be ready. (I *interpret* History, using historic costumes, food, forms of entertainment such as music, toys or games of the period, slides, fictional stories, etc... to allow parents an' kids to touch, see, smell and experience the life n' times of "**His-story**" through the ages). It's a lot of work, but I really do love it! I've never done it without the girls help, however. H-m-m-m.

I am anxious to begin work again, on a Home Economics curriculum for junior and high school students. As I talk to home school families about this project, I'm encouraged at their excitement and desire to have a curriculum to use. On the one hand, I am learning how *little* I really do know after 20+ years as a homemaker. At the same time it saddens me that *training homemakers* is becoming a lost art, so I'm gonna' try. My goal is to create something very basic, that kids could learn from now and then take it with them when they leave home, as a reference.

For now, I'm working on putting together my work/office area downstairs in the unfinished basement. I've made and hung tab curtains for the walls on PVC pipe, been busy putting up shelves, organizing the sewing and my homeschool reference books. Den will bring in more outlets (when he stays home long enough, poor guy), and network my computer to the office. We're getting there! It'll be the "neatest" workspace I've ever had. The sewing mess will stay in the basement. Yea!

We attend Calvary Chapel in Boulder. They've been in a school gym for 9 years (property is out of sight here). Pastor Richie Furey is a solid Bible teacher an' folks have been "rite friendly". We like 'em and feel comfortable here. The music ministry has a bit of a western flavor at times

and that's understandable. It's not Fredericksburg, nor is it Mission Valley Christian Fellowship of San Diego, "for sure dude."...Guess we'll see how the Lord chooses to use our gifts and talents in this fellowship. I gotta tell'ya we are excited (and not just a little over whelmed) to see what the Lord will do. We are committed to helping Den's parents, so it'll be tough to do much in the church, for 3-4 months, there's so much to do in Canon City. Even the work's sort'a fun. To see the girls spending time with family that use ta' be only faces between moves across country.

I imagine the time will fly by, with weekends at the folks, getting Bridget ready for school and settling in here. Before ya' know it, it'll be **time to move again** (Well, you never can tell. We only have a year's lease, after that all bets are off!). We certainly expect to stay busy in 1999/2000. Personally I can't figure out how we'll get it all done.

Some have called or e-mailed, wondering where we are in relation to Littleton, CO and the tragedy that occurred at Columbine H.S. We are about 30 miles northwest and yet just next door; the effects are felt *that* intensely. We have two girls high school age, so our family's thoughts and prayers are often with the families of those involved. I can't even begin to imagine what these families are going through. The papers are full of details, some of which are a pocket-full-of miracles in themselves, as they dramatically tell of God's presence, His children sharing testimony after testimony of His Grace, His Love, joy, faith and victory in the midst of evil, hatred and death! This, coming from papers, editors, sports reporters, athletes, even realtors, individual stores and malls, all desiring to reach out and help ease the pain.

Much will be said before that awful day is forgotten, but all around the country parents and children are being drawn together, mourning and crying together. God is alive and working in the lives of families because 15 died. I am grateful for that. I'm grateful too, that it wasn't worse.

For me personally, I had to stop and consider my own commitment to Jesus Christ...as I ponder the story of a Christian teen, when asked by a gunman, "Do you believe in God?"...was shot as she confidently answered, "yes". Another girl, when asked the same question and answered with the same response, was also shot. As the gunman stopped to reload, she crawled away and survived. I don't understand, but I know God has a plan, and His plan never changes or varies.

I never want to forget I can **trust** Him...in my daily life, in a move, or facing any fear or heartache. I have to tell you, My life has been touched in the midst of this tragedy. I love you all the more Lord, thanks for loving me first!

Sorry it took so long to write... sorry this is so long... sorry you aren't here to share it over a cuppa' coffee or better yet, a cuppa' tea. "The Western White House" is looking toward whatever challenges 1999 will bring. Change isn't always easy, or comfortable. It's terribly lonely without y'all. Remember that you are loved and missed. May God bless you richly!