



Season's Greetings
from the Kritzbergs

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Millenium Times

As the little ones stop being so little, our lives seem to get busier—but it's not as if we actually have a lot of news to pass on. We have been extraordinarily busy doing ordinary things. And so . . . **Our Millennium Year.**



The sprats, rapt, pretending some goofus isn't aiming a loaded camera at them.

JANUARY. Oh yeah. The collapse of technocivilization from the Y2K bug. We decide to pass on that one. (I shouldn't be too cynical—I have many friends in the information technology biz who made big bucks mitigating Y2K stuff last year. For them, Y2k had a PROFOUND effect—the folding kind—and they were really hoping for a Y2K + 1 bug. It's a bit late. How about Y2K + 2?)

FEBRUARY. Like many others last year, our home is subject to successive waves of invasion by the Pokémon Menace—most especially at Gwendi's 6th birthday party, which features Pokémon cake, dress, games, and party favors. Not to mention "Pin-the-lightning-bolt-on-the-Pikachu." Pikachu's portrait (with randomly applied tails) hangs in honor in the family room to this day. ("Sarah, are we ever going to take that thing down?")

MARCH. Many years ago, Sarah joins the California National Guard, specifically a unit called *the 59th Army Band*. Sarah's service lapses when we go to Hong Kong, but Sarah has promised her bandmates that she **will** return. (Positively MacArthuresque, no?.)

We return to the States—with Gwendi and Richard. Sarah tells the Guard that return is Simply Not Possible. They slyly ask Sarah to

come on down "just for a physical to keep your records active." This is perhaps prophetic (see photo, right).

APRIL. Gwendi and Richard start gymnastics. This satisfies Gwendi's intense need for continuous movement and Richard's intense need to do whatever Gwendi does.

MAY. Gwendi starts her first sports season with the local little league. Baseball (well actually, Tee ball). Tee ball is a hilarious spectator sport. The players have only the vaguest idea of the rules, and you never know what they'll do or which direction they'll run. But nobody gets tagged out and they always get to run for home base.

JUNE. The last days of school before the summer. Gwendi "graduates" from kindergarten, and Richard commemorates his first year of preschool. Onward and upward.



Cooperstown Class of 2033.

Gwendi also attends her first formal social event. Her teacher, Miss Robison, becomes Mrs. McCullough, and Gwendi (with "adult guest") and her classmates are invited to the reception. Bill and Sarah also go to a wedding in June. In bucolic Cambria. ("where?") The bride is the daughter of



Sergeant Sarah, ready for duty.

Sarah's college roommate—and a clear sign of our rapid aging.

JULY. All four of us watch the Independence Day fireworks over the estuary between Oakland and Alameda. This is the first time we've all tried to watch fireworks in person since we returned to the Bay Area, so Sarah scouts ahead to ensure a perfect spot. On the night, we watch from a preselected grassy knoll overlooking the water, and bring along our boom box to enjoy the simulcast sound track. Unfortunately, congestion on the way out is horrific, and we're held captive in traffic for over an hour after the last explosion—I find out how Napoleon's troops felt on the march back from Moscow (except that there's gas in my car and it's not snowing outside).

Later this month, Gwendi and Richard both attend summer day camp, an experience they both regard as the *ne plus ultra* of the mid-to-late summer.

AUGUST. Shockingly, Sarah and Bill decide it's time to take a real vacation. They go camping, a first for Gwendi and Richard. Just in case it isn't as much fun as hoped, we camp at Donner Lake, less than 10 miles from Grandma and Granddad's house. As it turns out, everyone loves camping.

After a few days of camping, Sarah and Bill leave the little darlings w/Sarah's mom and dad and go to Virginia City, Nevada, for a little romance and gambling. Grownuptime,

much appreciated. S&B learn more than you probably want to know about the dirty, dangerous, and rough-and-tumble reality of the Nevada silver boom.

SEPTEMBER. School starts again—actually since August 27. Gwendi really likes her first grade teacher, Ms. Chu-Lapiroff. Richard's preschool sessions open a few weeks later with Teacher Dana, Teacher Miki, and Miss Vanessa (sounds like a Vegas lounge act).

The week after we get back from vacation, Bill is laid off by the dot-com startup he's been with for a year. Bang! But more on this in the companion story "Death of the Dot-Coms."

We also host the annual family reunion of Sarah's Dad's Mother's clan. This is not entirely what Sarah had in mind, but it turns out to be a certifiable hoot with a little help from her parents and other volunteers. Kids and grownups laughing and chattering, and people of all ages enjoying the food and drink all day long. Could be worse.

OCTOBER. Bill starts new job. While he enjoys new challenges and getting to know new colleagues, Sarah works on costumes. Gwendi breaks with her personal tradition: instead

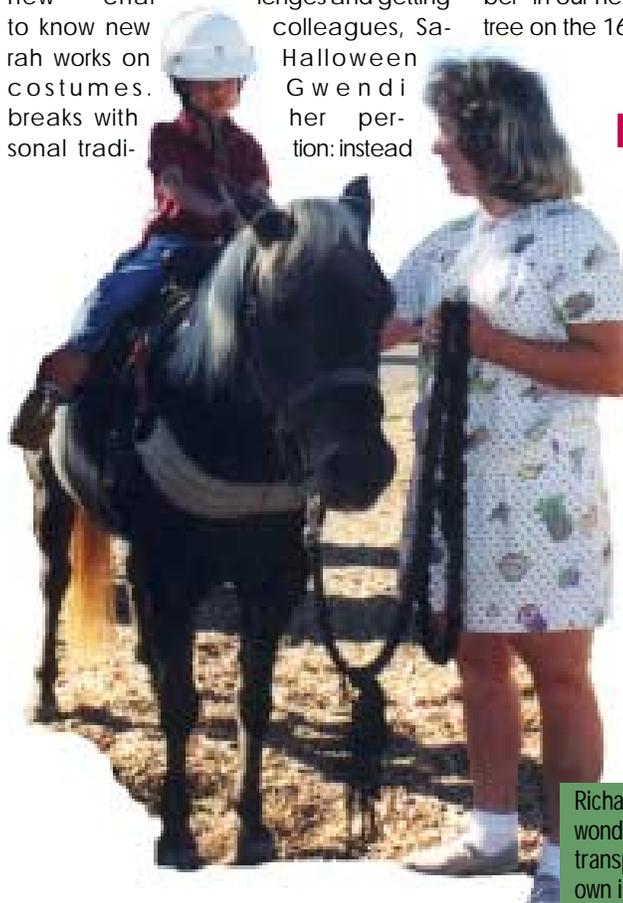
of a superhero, she chooses to be a fairy. And a pretty flighty one she is, too, all in pink and purple and white, with giant butterfly wings.

Richard doesn't want a "silly" costume, and ultimately chooses to be a WWII pilot like his grandfather had been. "The Bomber Jacket was easy," says Sarah, "Since granddad had already given Richard a replica jacket in his own size complete with map of Europe on the inside lining."

NOVEMBER. A quiet month, taken up with the coming of fall, homework, and preparations for Thanksgiving. This year we spend it with Sarah's Aunt and Uncle and their grandson—a college student (another sign of increasing age).

Oh—and the national election. What an ugly circus—with a conclusion no one could have desired, regardless of political persuasion. The less said the better.

DECEMBER. We run late with our Christmas preparations—normally there is no "December" in our newsletter. We get our Christmas tree on the 16th. No small matter.



Richard, on a pony for the first time, wonders whether a mode of transportation that has a mind of its own is such a good idea.



Bill and Sarah, in the carefree days before the March Crash.

AllAdvantage had every intention of taking over the online ad marketplace—to be Masters of the Universe.

\$160 million of other people's money later, profitability is still hard to find. It was fun, though and I wouldn't have missed it for the world—if for no other reason, the chance to observe. I'd been in a "mature" company for years, and watching this brand new company invent itself moment to moment was fascinating.

They made a lot of mistakes, and wasted a lot of money, but there was true brilliance at the heart of it. As things stand now, AllAdvantage will probably fade away in 6 months or so. (So much for my stock options. Sigh.) But it was fun while it lasted.

And lest the punditocracy lead you to believe that the entire "new economy" is crashing, don't listen to them. In any business boom there's going to be a lot of wasted effort and many missteps. But there's still gold in them thar hills and the bold will continue to mine it—enriching everyone else in the process.

DEATH OF THE DOT-COMS

Yep, I was there the night they turned the lights out on the new economy. It was August 31, a hot day in Hayward, growing techno-capital of the Mideast Bay Area. The investors were shaken. They wanted deep cuts, and they wanted them now. Blood ran between the rows of cubicles, as legions of dazed tech workers were mowed down in their tracks.

Cheesy novel? No, just my last day at AllAdvantage.com, the Internet startup I joined last year.

