

Dear Friends

(Alan 12 December 2002)

I have once again re-read the 1999, 2000, and 2001 newsletters, and I seemed to be waxing forth an awful lot: announcing new arrivals to the family. In continuing this tradition, I am pleased to announce the newest addition: Rosie.

Just in case I have caused permanent heart failure to some of you, allow me to explain that Rosie is a Rabbit. A White Rabbit, ensconced in the Aviary, which now sports a hastily added mesh floor to somewhat discourage the urge to create subterranean mansions.

Rosie arrived, in keeping with the Clark Animal Tradition, in Madam's arms after a full, long, open, and frank discussion, whose conclusion was that a Rabbit was not, in fact, going to be bought. Kippie bought the mesh.

Rosie is a source of great entertainment, especially for Ruff, the boxer.

It is the end of the year, thank goodness, and once again, it has been a hell of a year, with much activity, heartbreak, joy, growth, and frustration. Kathleen learn't to walk, and now has a small, but very vocal! vocabulary.

On the heartbreak front, we did a mid-week chalet thing at Pilanesberg (Fools were trying to get us to buy TimeShare. On *MY* salary???) which included Kathleen's First Birthday. (Testily:) Lest anyone forget, my 38'th!! We came back to a home that had been severely denuded of belongings, including tent (we were chalet'ing, so we took it out the trailer!) Weber, Lawnmower, all power tools, music equipment, computer, and most distressing, our Video Camera (No, we still don't have a TV or VCR :-)) *with a full* tape which started with Kathleen's caesarian—if only it had been taken out!

Not being able to afford Insurance, this has been a severe economic blow, with only essential items replaced, and then with inferior ones. So Kippie spent a good number of weekends installing InfraRed beams and passives all over the place. Sigh. . .

We re-purchased a CampMaster "Condo" tent (Rk1.5). I refer to it as our "two-man" tent (PS: can add two kids at a squeeze). It takes me the best part of 10 minutes to put up: it has the most intelligent structure I have seen in a tent. It is packaged in quite a small bag, being very light etc and measures a mere five and a half metres in length by a shade over three metres in width and well over two meters in height for the majority of the tent. Lovely and airy, windows everywhere, doors everywhere, kids love it. If it rains, plenty of space for two energetic toddlers etc. I like to observe the looks of disbelief as the little tent package turns into this monster!

We went to Mountain Sanctuary Park, which was a bit far for the kids (2.5 hours) and recently to Goode Olde "Hennops Praahde" (Pride, for the uninitiated) less than an hour away—and that was fantastic. Arrived Sunday 14h00 to the entire population of JHB and PTA: by 17h00, it was us :-)) Spent three wonderful nights there. Only when it was getting dark on Sunday Night did we realize that my usual lighting arrangement of fluorescent tubes with wires to the car battery had been nicked too!! We now have paraffin lamps :-)

I have not done much on the piano front (we have a 1920 Chap-pell with very rich sound that we bought for Rk5 about 2 years ago), but have now purchased "How to play popular piano in 10 easy lessons". Sucker. It concentrates on Guitar Chords for the left hand and a simple melody for the right. Madam and the kids now have to put up with the lofty strains of "Silent Night"

(or is it strained lofty's?). They are praying that I will get to the end of lesson one and expand my single-entry repertoire.

On the work front, this was the Year Of The Accreditation, meaning, essentially, a hell of a lot of administrative stuff for me, including being forced to use MicroSloth's Word. It was very painful. But they came and inspected us thoroughly, and we passed with flying colours, meaning that the Outcomes-Based degree is internationally accredited officially through the "Washington Accord" (US, UK, Canada, Australia, Hong Kong! etc. . .) I think that senior staff took a look at me after all that and felt sorry; either that, or they voted for the wrong bloke, but I got my promotion to Associate Professor! That, of course, simply means more admin! Had to get the Rubber Stamp changed, and all my letter/fax/etc templates changed.

Finally, I decided to splash out, and use some research funds (R250!) for a new business card: after all, my old one still had mister on it, and described me as a Professional Assistant. That was 1988, before I became a lecturer. After several to-ings and fro-ings (4, before they got it right!) with our Central Graphics chaps, I had a *New Business Card*, complete with *ALL* of the *correct* alphabet-soup that trails my name—full-stops in the right place, in the correct order etc. (Pr.Eng, Ph.D,B.Sc(Eng) Elec,AMIEE,MIEEE,MSAIEE — quite a mouthful of obligatory memberships)

The day, I kid you not, *the day!*, my first new business card in 14 years arrives, I get a letter from the British Institute (IEE): "in line with international trends, the associate member grade is being abolished. All former Associate Members are now Members". AMIEE morphs to MIEE. Colleagues pacify my screaming.

One of my nephews was forced, screaming no doubt, into first year this year, coming 12th overall out of a good 150 odd. Which made me sit-up a bit. The first year's this year *were not yet born* when *I* was in first year (1982). I guess later you get used to this kind of thing, but it does remind one that the big 4 is on the horizon! (By the way, the top 5 first years were Black, proving that we have, in fact, achieved wonderful things)

Our dear kids are wonderful, expressive, tiring, and challenging! Kathleen has become a little madam, expressing dislike of something in a *far* more emphatic manner than Robert ever did! They are both growing up "too quickly" and are an immense source of Joy.

(Lesley, same day)

Hi All

Yippee, I am able to sort of use my computer again. After my old one was stolen in June I have been grounded.

I have been thoroughly enjoying my children (between the occasions when I just need to get away for a few hours.) I am so grateful that Alan is such a hands-on dad as this enables me to get away knowing that they are in capable hands. My friends know about being invited to join me at "mommy land" at the drop of a hat. "Mommy land" is anyplace that doesn't involve children or chores.

Alan and I (and kids) have decided to become a "Homeschooling Family". This has been a very exciting development. We have done much reading on the subject and have been networking with other "HF's". We have fully bought into the philosophy of homeschooling.

I am a frequent visitor at second hand book stores ever on the lookout for INTERESTING books that will have educational value. At present Robert's favorite book is on the history of

flight. He wants it read to him at every opportunity and, at age 3, can tell you why birds and insects can fly while humans can't. Knows about wind pollination, hot air balloons, hang gliders and knows that aircraft fly because they have engines and specially shaped wings which cause the aircraft to "lift" because the shape causes an upward force. (I am learning as well:-) The other day we were messing around with different painting techniques. I left him for a while to do something else and he came running to me to tell me that he had discovered that if he mixed red and blue paint together he got purple.

We have had a few outings with other "HS families". The most memorable and fun one was a picnic at Emmarentia Dam Botanical Gardens. We went to see the Cherry tree blossoms, visit the herb garden and fly paper aeroplanes. We had a wonderful time running through the sprinkler system that was watering the lawns. (It was a very hot day).

Another enjoyable outing was to the Randburg Traffic Department Junior Training Centre. The kids brought their own bikes, tricycles or whatever and had a fun time riding on the left side of the "road", obeying all the traffic signs, robots and being given speeding tickets by a real live traffic cop. (This one smiled while issuing tickets :-) Hence, the philosophy:- learning while having fun.

Our time at Hennop's Pride was partly shared by the Koetsier family. Our kids had a wonderful time playing with their 5 children. It is great to see the dynamics that happen when children of widely ranging ages play together. The older ones looking out for the younger ones.

Until recently I was involved in a Mom's Support Group which met every Wednesday. I have decided that I would like to reintegrate back into Women's Group (no kids) at Kingsgate Vineyard and concentrate on building into the relationships I have there. Alan and I haven't been actively involved in church life since Robert's birth and have very much taken a back seat. I feel excited about getting back into things.

This year has brought many new friendships across my path and has really cemented and grown some old friendships. One of these has been a friendship with a lady, not much older than myself, who is a biological grandmother to three little ones. She was very supportive of me during the traumatic when time my mother was dying and I had just had Robert—a time when I really felt the loss of my mom very much. Anyway, this lady has been "mom" to me in many little (and big) ways that "moms" are. Even more importantly she has become "grandma" to my children who adore her.

Robert and Kathleen are very privileged to have a massive garden filled with wonderful toys. The most used is our 12 foot diameter trampoline.

This Christmas we are starting a new tradition with our family. On Christmas Eve we are going to pitch our tent in the back yard, have a braai, watch the stars (another interest of Robert's) and tell the kids the story of when the Angel came to the shepherds to announce Christ's birth. I got a lovely children's book from the library about this event and Robert is already becoming familiar with the story.

One of our favorite outings is to Edenvale Children's library which has a brilliant selection of books and toys.

Robert has enjoyed his year at playschool where his favourite "friend" is Auntie Viv. He goes once a week and has made some nice friends there. Kathleen has started going with him this month. The plan for next year is that they will each go once a week on different days, giving me a full morning to devote to

whichever one is at home. On alternate weeks they will go on the same day giving me some time for ME :-) (Today they were both at "school" and ME time was spent preparing a shape game to play with them :-)

Kathleen is a real little lady. Very cute and becoming her own person now. She does EVERYTHING she sees and hears her brother doing. They play nicely together and Robert is very sweet to her. He has to deal with her often volatile personality which is teaching him a lot about dealing with people.

(Alan again)

No, not even in 6pt font did it fit onto one page :-) Just in case, we'll do a \Huge:

THIS IS PAGE TWO. To get things in context, it is preferable, but not imperative, to read page ONE first.

In case you read page two first, click on:

[My Brain|File](#)
[|Page Sort|Ascending](#)

All the best for 2003

't Clarks.