

# Christmas 2001

## Kochert Kronicles

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**W**hat a year this has been! Quite frankly, our household has been turned upside down since the beginning of the year. Many issues are far too personal to discuss here, but it has been one of the hardest in our family life. Every one of us has



faced some nasty demons. We are happy to report that as of this writing, the demons seem to be on the losing end! When coupled with the events in our country, it is hard to imagine the peace and joy that go hand-in-hand with the holiday season!

We are thinking about building another house next year so we are busy getting this one ready for the market. Plans are to downsize and move closer to the plant.

As you can imagine, working at a nuclear power facility has been made a little more difficult for Steven as a result of 9-11. In addition to iris scans and rampant rumors that have to be cleared by the NRC and FBI; he now has National Guard soldiers on site for extra security.

On a light note, Steven and Joseph ventured out to Colorado in February for some skiing. Weren't sure they were going to get there due to the snow storm they hit on the way. They had to shovel their way out of the motel parking lot just to get to the



Interstate. When all was said and done, both had a great time.

The summer, Steven rode solo on his bike from Columbia, Missouri to Indianapolis, Flora and Oxford, Indiana. He was stopped by police as having matched the description of a bank robber in the town he just passed through. Steven assured the officer he could check everything he had on his bike, but they decided to let him go. He enjoyed visiting family and the solitude of the trip.

Steven and Jamie managed to get away...ALONE...to celebrate their 22nd wedding anniversary. Setting aside the current climate of fear in the country, we spent four days in New Orleans.

Jamie continues her part-time work at Regional Economic Development, Inc. She has a new boss from New York and that has certainly livened up the workplace.

Finally, we are happy and proud to report that Sandy (Jamie's mother) has been smoke-free for one year. She has also recovered nicely from her knee surgery. However, it's looking like the other knee might be due for a replacement soon. She continues her duties as lunchroom lady at a local elementary school, loves to watch more baseball than humanly thought possible and has been known to hit a few garage sales on Saturday morning.



**M**ark June 8, 2002 on your calendars! It's looking more official as each day passes. Joseph is on track to graduate in June. It will certainly be cause to celebrate and there will be a party.

He is fortunate that he will graduate from an A+ certified high school. This designation makes a special program available from the State of Missouri. What that means to Joseph is two years of free tuition at most technical and community colleges in the state of Missouri. Requirements include a 95% school attendance; no drug or alcohol related offenses; no brushes with the law; fifty hours of tutoring; and finally, a 2.5 grade point average. These are all good things from a parental perspective.

Joseph's senior year is a relative easy one. He has the customary English class. He hates it, but seems to be doing well. He is also

involved in a construction trades class building a house which he likes as it is a hands-on activity.

Because of what seems a light course load this year, Joseph is scheduled to begin an EMT training class in January. It only meets two nights a week and he seems to be up to the challenge. If all goes well, he will be ready to take the National Board Exam after he graduates from high school.

Joseph continues to work Saturday and Sunday at MBS Textbook Exchange. Nice perk...reduced book costs for his sister. Joseph continues to date Ashley Rapp, his girlfriend of almost three years. Most weekends, they are inseparable.

This is a challenging time in Joseph's life. What the future holds...we'll all have to wait and see!





Ashley made some dramatic changes in 2001...many of which we, as her parents, did not agree with. Nonetheless, she seems to be persevering.

After being at home in March for Spring Break, she ceremoniously announced that she was "not returning to the University of Kentucky and we couldn't make her." Given that she willingly returned to Kentucky after Christmas, we had assumed things were going better. As you can imagine, her decision left us disappointed and shocked! To this day, there has been no reason offered; leaving us to wonder why such an absolute decision.

Having been out on her own, Ashley found it impossible to ad-



just being back in our house with our rules. After sitting around for a couple of months and many loud discussions about the rules of the house, she got a full time job and moved to her own apartment.

In addition to working full-time at a convenience store, Ashley enrolled as a full-time student at Columbia College. She plans to continue her quest to obtain a degree in Psychology. Needless to say, she certainly has her hands full.

For those interested, her address and phone number are: 1610 Parkside Drive, Apt. 2, Columbia, MO 65202; 573-256-4624.

As her parents, we have found it very difficult to accept the road she has chosen to travel, but it is her road. We are and always will love her and wish her only the very best that life has to offer. We know that Ashley is in God's hands and only he knows what lies ahead!

Our pets usually don't make the newsletter, but this year there were some notable developments that dictate sharing.



Sadly, on a routine visit from our vet, we were told that our cat of 16 years had cancer...a fast-growing cancer at that. Dr. Frank told us we needed to put her down to ease the pain she was in. After giving us a week to say goodbye, our vet came out to the house and with tears as we held her...we gave her to God!

Our cocker spaniel "Barney" is almost 12 years old and is beginning to show signs of age. Several joint injuries have lead to difficulty in getting up and down stairs. You can imagine his surprise when we added a much younger addition to the family.

Unknown to us, Joseph's girlfriend bought him a new puppy as a

Christmas gift. At first, we told her she had to take the dog back home. But, she knew exactly what to do. She continued to bring the dog by to see Joseph AND US. In a very short time, we fell in love



with our...are you ready...**pit bull terrier**. Her name is Bella and we adore her! She has been a God-send to this family. She has helped Barney shed 10 pounds and given him a new lease on life. More importantly, she has raised Jamie's spirit when no one else could. We can easily say, everything you have ever read about pit bulls is false. She is the sweetest, gentlest and most loving pet we have ever owned. We thank God for her presence!

In closing, we would like to share with you our newfound faith in the creator. Like many, we believed we were among the faithful. We were good people who did the right thing MOST of the time. And, like many, it took facing insurmountable odds

*God Bless You  
at Christmas*

to humble ourselves. Funny thing is, after asking for help, many of our difficulties no longer seemed so important.

We have a wonderful church family and have found untold blessings of heavenly grace.

Don't get us wrong, we still struggle with our faith on a daily basis. However, with God as our guiding light, we firmly believe we are finally on the right road.

God's blessings to each of you during this holiday season!