

Christmas 2001

I started this year by vacationing in [Hawaii](#) for two weeks in January. It was a time to get away by myself, recharge the old batteries, and soak up the warmth of the temperate Hawaiian climate and wonderful people. I spent the first week on [Kauai](#) at a vacation condo owned by a Bed & Breakfast operation, which is also a tropical flower farm. I had a cottage to myself in a residential area, and rented a car for the week to get around to some of the sights. Kauai can be rainy, but I lucked out, since it only rained at night while I was there. I took a helicopter ride to see Kauai from the air, which gave me some terrific photo opportunities.



The following week I spent on the [Big Island of Hawaii](#), where I stayed at a coffee plantation B&B. I truly love the Big Island, since it presents the visitor with so much diversity. My favourite spot in all of Hawaii is the very tranquil [Pu'uhonua o Honaunau](#) - Place of Refuge. It was only a five minute drive from my B&B to Honaunau, so I spent most of my spare time there.



This is the first time I have stayed in B&B's in Hawaii, and I would certainly recommend them for your travels. B&B rates are about half hotel rates, and I found them easy to find and book using the Internet. The added bonus is certainly the delicious breakfasts prepared for you every morning, and the friendly proprietors, who go out of their way to make your stay in Hawaii enjoyable. Kathy at [Kakalina's B&B](#) in Kauai cheerfully recommended the best helicopter tour company, booked the flight for me, and gave me pointers to sights to drive to which I would have otherwise missed. [Place of Refuge B&B](#) on the Big Island served the most amazing pure Kona coffee each morning, grown and roasted right there on the plantation. Roger took the guests kayaking and snorkelling in spectacular [Kealakekua Bay](#) (no charge, and he supplied the kayaks and spent half a day guiding us). My photos and travelogue of Hawaii are posted to my website at: [JoeTourist.ca/Hawaii](#) if you want more details (and photos).

Hmmm...I guess I went on about Hawaii quite a bit...perhaps you get the point that I enjoyed my trip! Please don't let the terrible events of September 11th hold you back from travelling - reward yourself, and try to have some fun in your life. That way, we will all win.



As any of you who live in British Columbia know, the government changed in our province this year. The Liberals (aka Social Credit) blew the New Democratic Party out of the water, and are proceeding at break neck speed to fulfill their "New Era" promises. Already, there is grumbling about the ramifications of this political agenda, but make no mistake about it, the Liberals are bound and determined to change the face of this province. Since I work for the government and live in a government town, some of you may be wondering how all this change is affecting me. The short answer is: not much - yet. Of course, the worst is still to come, since politicians tend to get all the bad news over with early in their term.

I expect to survive any cuts to government programs since I have a good set of skills which are in demand, and I have 25 years of seniority to help protect me from layoff. I was reassigned from the Mapping Branch I spent the last 25 years working for, and am now the Manager of Web Services for two ministries in a new branch. This certainly is a positive career move for me, and I am very pleased with the new people I'm working with. However, given that our ministry is facing impending cuts of about 35%, it would be foolish to expect things to remain the same. Time will tell on this front.

Kirk and I continue to spoil Sylvester (the Manx cat), and Tucker (the Jack Russell Terrier). Tucker still behaves like a puppy, and gets three or four walks each day. Sylvester (often referred to as "Number One") is getting smarter with age, and continues to keep Tucker on his toes. Kirk's health is not the greatest, but he copes with his maladies day to day. I have few health problems now that I have my Spring allergies under control with medication, however I have noticed a bit of arthritis developing in my hands. This doesn't stop me from doing household and garden chores, but the pain reminds me that I am getting older. I attended my 25 year Long Service Award ceremony at Government House this year. There were many of my fellow workers there, and a good time was had by all. We may be getting older, but we still know how to party!

Joe's high-tech toys for this year included upgrading my web server (see [Web Server tech details](#)), which also involved upgraded my main workstation computer I use at home to faster/better. I also enhanced my [JoeTourist Weather Station](#) by adding a weather [Web Cam](#), which now shows real-time views of the southwest sky on this website.

I am still happy with my choice of the Casio Pocket PC PDA (see my [Christmas 2000](#) newsletter for details), and have added some nifty software to the PDA which allows me to view and edit photos I take with my Nikon digital camera (see details on my [Photography](#) web page). I also purchased more memory cards for the PDA, and use it to play MP3 music I download from the Internet for free (legitimately from www.mp3.com, if you are wondering). So these high-tech toys complement each other nicely.

My latest acquisition is a digital telescope - a **Meade ETX-60AT Astro Telescope** (very similar to the [ETX-70AT](#) on the Meade website). When I was a child, I always told people I was going to be an Astronomer when I grew up. That never happened as it turned out, but astronomy was always a passion of mine. Now I have a telescope that is easy to use, is low cost, and is something I can have some fun with on clear nights. I have joined the [Royal Astronomical Society](#), which has a thriving [Victoria Chapter](#), so I plan to get reacquainted with this hobby of mine, and see where it takes me over the next few years. It should be fun!



As I write this letter, Mum is in the hospital, after having hip replacement surgery done (Dec 8th). She is doing pretty well, and the orthopaedic surgeon expects her to fully recover. Currently, she is in the Rehabilitation Wing of Nanaimo Regional General Hospital. Thanks go to my relatives in Nanaimo, who are always ready to help Mum anytime they can. She treasures this contact, and it has helped her cope with the loss of my Dad (a year and a half ago), as well as her current health challenges. Up until this recent incident, she still drove her car, and attended heart aerobic class three times a week. I hope she will fully recover in a few weeks, and resume at least some of her activities.

**Kirk and I hope you have a very happy holiday season...
and all the best to everyone for 2002!**

Joe Carr

