

## Christmas 2002

This past year turned into a bit of a marathon for me. We seemed to be moving from one stressful situation to the next. I also didn't take any vacations this year, so perhaps that has something to do with my memory of this year past.

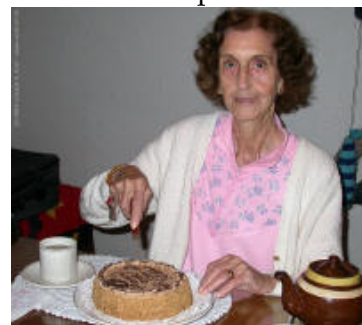
The year started out with Mum recovering from hip surgery over last Christmas. By mid-January Mum was discharged from hospital and returned to her apartment. I arranged for Home Care to come in, and we restarted Meals-on-Wheels. Mum wasn't doing very well on her own, and was dependant on others to do her shopping and take care of the other essentials. In mid-April Mum fell in her apartment and broke her other hip. She had another hip replacement surgery, and spent another 2½ months in Nanaimo Hospital. Although she recovered quite well, her capacity to take care of herself was seriously degraded.

In mid-June Mum moved into Hecate Lodge, renting a very nice one bedroom apartment. Living arrangements at Hecate Lodge include provision of all meals in a dining room, activities, cleaning, heavy laundry, heat, electricity, cablevision, and some transportation to appointments. I added administration of medications to the services, since Mum was having difficulty remembering to take her medications. I managed to convince Mum to voluntarily surrender her driver's license, and I sold her car.

In retrospect, dealing with Mum's various crises took a great deal out of me. Driving to Nanaimo twice a week while she was hospitalized, and once a week when she was well was a chore at times, but it kept her spirits up, so the added stress was worth it. As always, Bob and Jean Carr were there for both Mum and I throughout - a big *thank you* to both of you. Mum's friends also rallied around her. Everyone's support was very much appreciated. There is no doubt in my mind the constant flow of visitors and their good wishes made Mum's recovery possible. The care Mum received from both Cowichan and Nanaimo hospital staff was excellent. Surgeons, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, social workers, and many others did a great job.

While all this was going on with Mum, my cousin Don Carr in Vancouver was struggling for survival. He was stricken with Necrotizing Fasciitis (flesh-eating disease), however after some surgery Don appeared to be making a slow recovery over several months in Vancouver General Hospital. Then he took a turn for the worse and died in April. I found his memorial service and celebration of life most uplifting, despite the tragic circumstances of his death. His life is permanently memorialized on a website I created, which is based on the wonderful slide show and photos supplied to me by his immediate family. [www.Carr.ca/DJC](http://www.Carr.ca/DJC)

**On a more positive note**, I brought Mum down to my place in Victoria to celebrate her 90th birthday on Dec 6<sup>th</sup>, 2002! Although she didn't feel up to having any big celebration, we had some cake, a few presents, and she received good wishes from many friends and relatives.



As mentioned in my Christmas letter last year, I was exploring my interest in astronomy. I am continuing to enjoy looking at the stars very much, and I'm involved in the Victoria Chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. In August I decided to upgrade my observing equipment by purchasing a more capable telescope - a Meade LX-90. This scope has proven to be an excellent choice, giving me observing capabilities that should serve me well for many years to come.



Along with the new telescope, I also upgraded my digital camera. This latest model Nikon Coolpix 4500 has some new features which allow me to use it with my new telescope for astrophotography. If you browse my personal website, you will see the results I have achieved so far. My technique needs work, but I'm having an immense amount of fun with my new interests.  
[www.JoeCarr.ca/astro](http://www.JoeCarr.ca/astro)



Kirk, Tucker and I have been taking good advantage of Victoria's exceptionally dry weather this year by going for regular hikes and walks to the local regional parks, lakes, rivers and beaches. Traveling to far-away destinations really isn't necessary to experience beautiful sights and sounds - it is all here within driving distance of Victoria.

Tucker and Sylvester are both five years old now. Sylvester experiences life at a much more sedate pace than Tucker, but they both get along with each other very well. Tucker tears around as though he were still a puppy.

My job as Manager of Web Services with the Province continues to challenge me. I'm enjoying the new job, but the constant staff cuts the current government are doing takes some of the fun out of it. I only have four years until I retire, and I am looking forward to that day. I have been financially planning for my eventual retirement for the last decade or so, but lately I find myself playing little *what-if* games - trying to imagine what it will be like to live the rest of my life as a retiree. I suppose this means I am preparing myself psychologically for retirement. Having lots of outside interests should allow me to fully enjoy my retirement when it comes.

As usual, Kirk is always first to put up some Christmas decorations, although I have put up about half of the outside decorations. This Christmas Letter is a bit late this year, but thanks to the Internet, most of you will receive our good wishes on time electronically. For those of you who are still not *connected*, postal mail will deliver our greetings just as before.

*All the best to you and your family for the coming year.  
Please accept our good wishes for the holidays.*

*Joe and Kirk, Tucker and Sylvester*