



# CHRISTMAS 1997



I'm not in the habit of writing a Christmas letter to everyone, but I'm forced into it this year, since my cards are being sent out so late. I know my overseas friends won't receive my cards until after Christmas this year. The postal strike here in Canada dragged on until early December, and I didn't get motivated until quite late. Please accept my apologies.

So...back to some news about me for 1997.

A friend and I decided to **vacation in Belize** for two weeks in April and May. We enjoyed ourselves immensely, however we found the country was a bit of a backwater, at least as far as tourist facilities were concerned. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, since the people were very friendly, and the country has lots to offer the traveler. We saw Mayan ruins, swam and snorkeled nearly every day in the warm Caribbean, and had some superb seafood dinners. The local fish is excellent, and is usually grilled in coconut oil (the locals say it's best for cooking fish), and is served with rice and beans - a staple throughout Central America. Conch was in season while we were there, and was the specialty in many places - at about US\$10. When lobster is in season, the price is about the same!

We rented a house in the south of the country on the Placencia Peninsula for the first week, and then travelled in our rental 4 wheel drive to the mountains, where we stayed at Francis Ford Coppola's Blanceneaux Lodge. They had just reopened the lodge the very day we arrived, due to forest fires threatening the area. After exploring the huge Mayan ruins at Carocol, we travelled back to Belize City and flew to Ambergris Caye and stayed in a beachfront condo. As it turned out, Ambergris Caye was an excellent jumping off point for snorkling (or diving), and exploring the other cayes located inside the huge barrier reef that is just offshore from Belize.



In July I met what turned out to be a very good friend - **Kirk**. In August, we decided that he would move into my house and share expenses. It has worked out very well for both of us, and I'm slowly adapting to having someone else around, after living alone for so many decades!



In September, a small white kitten decided to adopt us. She was about three months old at the time, and ever since, **Sylvie** has kept us busy. She is turning into a very nice cat, and gaining weight like crazy. She is pure white, with a natural bob tail, and has one tan coloured eye and one blue eye. She is also completely deaf, as most white cats seem to be these

days. Her disability doesn't seem to slow her down though!

Which brings me to our next pet. Kirk and I had agreed that we would look for a small dog...in



fact, we really weren't originally looking for a cat, however Sylvie adopted us - so what were we to do? We found **Tucker** just two weeks ago. He is a Jack Russell puppy and is three months old. He is not yet house-trained, so that is a challenge to all of us, let me tell you! As you can see by the picture, he is as cute as can be, and can already take fairly long walks with us (providing we pick him up when he gets tired).

So the big news this year is that my little household has expanded- for the best, I think. It will be a very different Christmas this year, for although we will do the traditional stuff, there will no doubt be some nice surprises for us as well. There will be four stockings hung from the mantle this year, and I'm sure Santa will visit us all.

**Mum and Dad** continue to keep fairly healthy, although they are now in their late 80's, and have some ailments that are not entirely easy to take. They still live in their own apartment in Nanaimo, and now get Meals-on-wheels four times a week. They still drive their car a bit, but are starting to accept more rides from friends and family. They took a trip to Reno, Nevada earlier this year. They always enjoy this trip, and look forward to cleaning up at the gambling machines and tables. Although their winnings weren't quite up to some past trips, they were pleased with themselves nonetheless.

They spent last Christmas with me in Victoria, and they were snowed in for a couple of weeks, since we experienced the worst blizzard in 50 years in Victoria. It was a good thing the power didn't go off, and we had plenty of turkey to eat...although we were getting a bit sick of the old bird by the end.

*I hope this finds everyone well. I wish you a very happy 1998, and hope you have a nice holiday season - whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, or some other seasonal celebration.*

*All the best to everyone...*

