

Greetings from the Jay Helmericks Family

January 2003

Happy New Year everyone!

It has been more than two years now since we were married on August 31, 2000, so we wanted to send an “update” to family and friends who blessed us in the beginning of our marriage, and let you all know how Jesus has continued to bless us in our life together.

Our big news (as you’ve seen): we’re a daddy and mama now. Our baby girl was just born, and this letter was waiting on her arrival. We have been well taken-care of, and are very thankful for what people have invested in us (though with the new pace of life we wonder when we will be getting each batch of thank-you notes out :). Natasha is a delight, and, having already met five Grandmas and Great-Grandmas, is certain to be “well taken care of”.

About a week after our Thursday-night wedding, back in 2000, we returned to classes at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Amy had been interviewed for and offered a student position during the honeymoon, so when we returned we both had school and work before us and jumped into “real life” with both feet. We have been learning how to swim ever since. Jay continued to work for the Student Rocket Program as he plugged away at finishing the thesis for his Masters degree in Electrical Engineering. The following semester Amy quit her job to return to a full-time class load, and we lived off our savings and Jay’s part-time student job. It was a neat time of watching God meet our needs. Amy applied for a bunch of scholarships during that semester, the spring of 2001, and ended up with plenty of support for her last year of school.

In June, just a few weeks after his thesis defense and before his official graduation in August, 2001, Jay was hired to work for the Geophysical Institute at UAF. He works in the basement of the GI in the Electronics Shop and has two jobs rolled into one. The first is the actual Electronics Shop job, where he uses his electrical engineering talents to support the needs of the researchers in the GI. Jay loved working with rockets throughout college, and has enjoyed continuing to pursue that interest area – something he thought he had to give up when he accepted this job in Fairbanks. As a result, his most exciting project so far has been working on the electronics for the HEX rocket mission. It will launch this spring from the University’s rocket range, Poker Flat. This rocket will be the first horizontal profile of an auroral arc, and will be the first guided rocket launched from Poker Flat.

The second part of Jay’s job is working with infrasound, very low frequency sound. Any major atmospheric event, such as a big storm or large explosion, can be detected by the instruments, which are essentially very sensitive barometers. An array of 4 to 8 sensors is used to be able to compute the direction back to the source of the sound. Jay’s supervisor for this job has a contract from the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) to install and maintain infrasound arrays at McMurdo, Antarctica and Fairbanks, Alaska, with the possibility for more elsewhere. The two arrays are part of a global network monitoring for illegal nuclear tests. In November Jay was gone the entire month servicing the sensor-array in Antarctica. It was his

second trip to McMurdo station (his first was last winter about the same time), and he really enjoys the opportunities to travel his job provides, though neither of us likes his having to be gone such a long time.

The spring of 2002 brought a lot of excitement. Amy finished her degree, a Bachelors in Photojournalism, a few weeks later we closed on a house, and a few weeks after that we discovered we were pregnant.

The house is one of those unexpected blessings (a serendipity) that God provided us. It is a small three-bedroom house with a two car garage (yippee!), and is only five years old. When we began looking for a home to buy, two years ago, we came to the conclusion than any house we'd be able to afford would be older than we were, so this home was an answer to prayers we hardly thought to pray. The layout is exactly what we were looking for, with the bedrooms together on one end of the house and a nice open living area and kitchen. The previous occupant, a renter, smoked a pipe, and we had our work cut out for us getting the place livable. Jay spent days repainting the *entire* house. The work was extended by having to use two coats, the first, Kilz, to seal in the smoke stain and odor, then a top coat for color. The result was worth the effort. The house looks very nice now, and each bedroom has a favorite color on the walls.

Over the summer we begin working for Family Treatment Homes (a division of Fairbanks Community Mental Health) providing respite care for foster children. Respite care usually involves keeping a child in our home two days and nights, twice a month. We had children more frequently than that usually, with a couple longer stints, one more than a week. We stopped taking care of the children when Jay went to Antarctica in November. We told the respite coordinator she could call us again in March, so we would have some time get to know Natasha.

We have been exceptionally blessed, and are thankful to have both loving friends and family supporting us now as always. We are attending two churches regularly (we started visiting each others' churches when we were engaged, and sort-of became enmeshed in both), one Saturday night and the other Sunday morning. They are *quite* different from one another, but both are "home" now. We are involved in a cell (small study group) based out of Door of Hope, the larger body, and help lead music every-other week at our smaller, "Sunday" church, University Park Bible Church.

Right now Jay is on paternity leave and we've really appreciated his being home. In addition to his wonderful help with the baby, and a great time of getting to know his daughter, we've been able to complete a few projects that have been waiting for attention, like this letter.

We hope your year ahead will be filled with good memories.
God Bless!

Jay, Amy and Natasha Helmericks