

### The Transplanted Pacific NW Langer Family Wishes

you and yours the very merriest and joyous millennium greetings. Notice that I didn't say Merry Christmas or Happy New Year. We had every intention of getting this letter out by Christmas, which didn't happen and then we missed New Year's also. So, here it comes to you somewhere between Groundhog's Day and Valentine's Day! Where is it written that you can only communicate with your friends and family at Christmas? Maybe we will start a new tradition.....in any case, we can bet you didn't get twelve other letters today and that you might actually have time to read ours!

Sheryl recently left her job after 18 months as a "temporary" employee and has now graduated to "contract" status (that's a big term here in Seattle thanks to Microsoft). She is now working as a contract employee at Washington Mutual Bank in the Information Services Department as a Data Analyst. She is a whole lot more challenged, enjoying a larger paycheck, less hours and a much better work environment. Having to leave for work at 5:30am and not getting home until 6:00pm has cut into her swimming schedule so this year she took up stair climbing. This fall she participated in the Washington Mutual Tower Cystic Fibrosis Stair Climb and raced to the top of 57 floors of stairs along with about 500 other people. She is now training for the Columbia Tower Stair Climb, which consists of 76 floors and happens sometime this spring.

My job has been, well... busy. You may recall from last year's letter I mentioned that we were working on a handheld ultrasound unit. The company that we were partnering with (SonoSite) has now gone public on the stock market. Somehow, my research partners and I missed the 400 percent profit. My grant on Image Compression wasn't funded, but two other grants involving the ultrasound unit (on the International Space Station) and using the Internet for live tumor conferencing were. Also, since much of the job involves the computer imaging aspects of the department, I stood watch on New Year's Eve for the dreaded Y2K bug. Oddly enough, despite applying all the fixes that the vendors recommended, numerous systems in our hospitals insisted that people born in 1938 were really born on 2038. It was a long night, but fortunately nothing serious went amiss.

NW gardening continues to pose a challenge. You may recall from last year's letter that my slug control method of choice was an air pistol. This year, the little beasts seem to either have become endangered or have learned how to hide. I'm not certain whether that was due to last year's excellent marksmanship, or this year's extension of cold and rain through most of August. In fact, this year we had a grand total of 5 days for summer. July 15, August 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, and two days in September. Some of you probably think I'm joking, but our tomatoes didn't actually ripen until mid-October. The corn was knee high by the 4<sup>th</sup> of... September. And, our pumpkins never got bigger than baseballs – a new challenge for pumpkin carving!

We learned the real meaning of "island time" this past year. Our pipes in the lower level of our house froze and burst in January of 1999. The job of tearing apart the walls, having the entire lower level re-plumbed and fixing it back up took a grand total of 11 months and about 15 different contractors! If you want something done right, take the time off from work and do it yourself!

1999 was a year of "more of the same" with some exciting twists. We both traveled quite a bit for business as well as pleasure. We just returned from our customary three week trek through IL, WI, and MN and in the end decided the 2000 holiday season must be handled differently as we were hit by the big FLU bug and never did get to see any snow!

Seattle suffered quite a few media blows this year and we have been on the receiving end of many jokes. We were able to miss the whole WTO fiasco but in a small part wished we could have been here to witness it in person just like many of our tear gas inhaling friends. Just when we thought our reputation as a city was recovering the mayor cancelled our Millennium celebration forcing 80,000 people to find a new party at the last minute and yet more jokes from the rest of the world. We can only hope that things will soon get back to normal.....it will rain every day, we will be accosted by homeless people on our way to work and that the killer slugs will find someone else's garden to feast on!

We hope that you are doing well and we would love to hear from you. If you would like to experience "island time" near a big city please let us know as we have the room and would love the visitors. Have a great 2000!!!!!!

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HAPPY NEW YEAR  
FROM SEATTLE!!!!!!!!!!!!

