

December 2003

For those of you who are short on time and/or attention span, here's the Eisenberg's year in a paragraph: We travelled and the kids settled into adulthood. Happy Holidays and wish you were here. That's it. For the rest of you, details follow.

Bob and I went to New York City, Washington, DC, and California several times. In Nice, France, we took a madcap side trip to Aix-en-Provence, where we irritated toll collectors and drivers with our inability to operate the windows of our rented Citroen, mistook the hospital for the visitors' center and tried to drop off the rental car at the wrong airport terminal, before having had morning coffee. Italy, in May, was much more civilized: after a few days at a villa outside of Rome, we stayed in the city near the Piazza Navona (sans rental car). We also played in Telluride, Colorado, where Bob gave the "Town Talk" one night. I went to Boise for the Western Idaho State Fair. (Sister Barb and I lasted about an hour and wondered why we found it so interesting as teen-agers.) Bob and I are headed to Honolulu for Thanksgiving and Maui for a meeting.

Bob, of course, works to support my travel habit (or perhaps I travel to support his science habit). The science is going at least as well as the travel. I continue to work *pro bono* at the ACLU about three days a week, still on the same case, and truly enjoy it.

While we were in Chicago, we had the pleasure of Jill's company twice. My nephews Shawn and Ryan made their first visit here and niece Annie returned for another tour. Both Annie and Shawn plan to apply to Chicago-area schools, so our indoctrinations have worked.

Bob and I both had annoying but treatable middle-aged health events this year. Bob had some inpatient surgery (which I will not name in a family letter – suffice it to say one of our clever friends began calling him the "rear admiral"). My thyroid decided to wear down, but not before it managed to stash ten extra pounds around my middle.

Jill, John, James and Holly are enjoying their new home in Honolulu and awaiting the arrival of a second son, on February 14. Jill is trading in real estate and into multiple volunteer organizations and John is completing his Ph.D. dissertation.

Ben and Crystal continue to live in our building. Crystal, at 9, is engaging in more of the activities and behaviors of pre-adolescent living, much to our occasional amusement. The economy and construction have not done well by Ben, a union worker, this year, and we hope 2004 is better for him.

Emily, her partner Ben, and their dogs, sold their condo and are taking a second look at the Chicago real estate market. Ben is attending college, after his long-time job at the Board of Trade was eaten by computers. Emily is thinking about going into a skin-care business for herself.

Sally also moved this year, into a co-op in the East Village of New York City. Her first official act was to buy a pair of kittens, Bon Jour and Bon Soir, to make it home.

So the offspring have graced us with plans made, plans accomplished and work in progress. We have the pleasure of cheerleading, advising and learning (still) when to be quiet, but mainly, we have had the gift of watching them progress and enjoy their lives. In between, we have been to the Chicago Symphony and local theaters, and have continued decorating our remodelled condo (we will order no window treatment before its time). We hope you and your loved ones have had your own versions of our pleasures during the past year.

From Bob: There seems to be room on the page, so I guess I should break tradition and write something myself. Ardyth has done wonders with the family news, so I need not add anything, as well as dare not. Professionally, we have had an exciting year. At Rush, we have a new administration (my 11th boss in 27 years as Chairman, more or less the longest lasting Chair of Physiology in the US, if not longest lasting Chair of a basic science department). The newcomers are wonderful people and it is a joy to work with them.

Science is at least as exciting as ever, with our goal of understanding biological molecules with physics, chemistry, and mathematics being as frustrating/fascinating as ever. But now the goal seems to have been adopted by many others, which brings its satisfactions and aggravations too, of course. More specifically, we have made some progress in understanding how ion channels (proteins with a hole down their middle) control the flow of electricity in and out of cells. These channel proteins control a substantial fraction of the life of cells and so are of enormous biological and clinical significance. It seems that the behavior of these channels is governed by a few physical principles, namely the properties of electric charges as they crowd into small charged spaces. We hope we can calculate the properties of these proteins with the same success that physical scientists calculate the properties of digital circuits. We all know what digital computers and electronics have done to our lives.

Imagine what will happen to our lives if we can calculate the properties of biological molecules as well as we calculate digital circuits!



- 1 Holly Trowbridge,
- 2 Emily,
- 3 Ben Taylor,
- 4 Crystal Moutoussamy,
- 5 Ben,
- 6 Ardyth,
- 7 James T,
- 8 John T.,
- 9 Jill T.
- 10 Bob



Left to Right.

Jill Trowbridge
Sally Eisenberg