

Greetings to All Friends and Family,

Happy New Year from the Harts, for whom the holiday season does not end until February at *St. Hart's Day on Feb.15*. We were glad to have received cards, letters, and (mostly) good news from many of you.

2002 has been a bittersweet year for the Harts. Although we are all well, we are saddened by the passing of Hal's father, *Hal Hart Sr.*, at the age of 84 on Dec. 21 after a (mercifully) brief illness; his last year included slightly sharper health, consistently winning bridge in his thrice-weekly groups, and a road trip to his beloved home state of *Montana* – which sounds like a very good final year of one's life. Hal's mother, *Vivian*, braves on, living almost independently in Leisure World (Laguna Woods, CA) despite poor eyesight and needing a walker. Barely a week earlier, we *ended* our 28+ year careers at TRW, with the acquisition of TRW by Northrop-Grumman. Although we are hopeful that this will be a positive move for the company as a whole, we are nostalgic for the company that was – there was a huge run on the company store, with people buying up TRW-logo merchandise by the armful – and sorry that we will be retiring from a different company.

Erika (age 24) is still living in Providence, and still working for a networking startup, Tazz Networks (website www.tazznetworks.com). They are about to deliver their first product (one of their major customers is British Telecom) and recently received another \$7.7M of venture capital to continue their work. So, at least for now, her tech job looks to be secure in this uncertain world. She is putting down roots, having bought a cute little house to call her own and a cute little gray tabby cat (*Mouschke*) as well. She will be home for two weeks for the holidays.

Alison is 21 (surely not having any kids under the age of 21 marks some kind of milestone). In January she returned to Washington University in St. Louis after a two-year absence. She had a very busy summer, attending summer school at Loyola Marymount University (the 6th college to appear on her transcript!) and also had an internship at the Marine Mammal Care Center in San Pedro, near our home. This fall, she is continuing her work with animals, helping with an research project on tortoises at Tyson field station, a large WashU ecological-wildlife research center somewhat removed from St. Louis. Next spring, she will continue her work there for credit and also is taking a class involving research at the St. Louis Zoo, which is in Forest Park, very close to the WashU campus. She is currently on target to graduate with a BS in Biology (*one of today's hottest degrees*) in December 2003. She is home now for just over a week.

Our big family vacation this year was a trip to the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, continuing our tradition of attending all US Olympics since 1984. We were fortunate to attend the first week, when the weather was relatively good, and were rewarded with a variety of great events, including the controversial Pairs Figure Skating Final (*the Canadians *definitely* deserved to win*), several snowboarding and freestyle skiing events, women's luge (where you get about half a second of visibility per rider), and 6 hockey games (3 men's and 3 women's). Unfortunately, Alison and Ruth became ill with flu-like symptoms and a fever and each missed several events, but overall it was a great experience. Erika & Hal went crazy acquiring *Olympic pins* again, ending up with several "sets" and several other neat ones from trading – maybe 200 or 300 total pins.

Hal and Ruth also took a vacation in June that we describe as "*friends, family, and a little bit of a road trip.*" After going to *Carleton College* in Minnesota for Hal's 35th college reunion, we drove to Providence to visit Erika and her new house, stopping in Valparaiso, Indiana, so that Hal could play his childhood golf course (now expanded from 9 to 18 holes), Cleveland, Ohio (to visit the *Rock and Roll Hall of Fame*), and Cooperstown, New York (to visit the *Baseball Hall of Fame*) along the way. After visiting Erika and the *mansions in Newport*, Rhode Island (passing up a chance to visit yet another Hall of Fame (tennis)), we drove to the Nevele Resort in the *Catskills*, where we spent another reunion weekend with about 75 of Ruth's relatives, including her mother, aunts, and almost all of her first cousins on her mother's side of the family. We also learned about her grandfather's family history, met some 3rd cousins she didn't know existed, & enjoyed a relaxing weekend.

Hal and Ruth celebrated their 28th (and last) anniversaries with TRW in July. Retirement is now in sight, with a target date of August 1, 2004, but that could move up, depending on what happens to our pension plan. Indications are that Northrop will not be changing much for the first couple of years, so we are hopeful that we will still have the lump sum option available to us.

Ruth remains as Software Deputy Manager on the *Advanced EHF* project, which is developing a satellite payload for military communications – next generation *MILSTAR* for those up on such things. In addition to her monthly Book Club (5 years and going strong), she has reconnected this fall with two elementary school classmates, both of whom live in Southern California, and has met 8 new cyberfriends with college-age kids with whom she communicates daily!

Hal's work assignments continued as the same mix of *software engineering*, *process engineering*, and technology coordinating in the same Army-business division he's been in almost 9 years now. Outside work, Hal's slow-pitch softball team (*Grunion '77*) has now started its 2nd quarter century of play, but pennant hopes were dashed again after winning the regular season "B" league and getting dumped by the 4th-place team in the first round of playoffs. *Wait till next year!* After an almost 2-decade layoff, Hal took back up golf last spring (*warming up for retirement?*), starting with Beginner lessons which really helped address some of the bad habits he used to have; he's not quite back down to bogey golf, but progressing enough that that's now a reasonable goal. *Habitat for Humanity* arm-twisted Hal into signing up to be trained as a *crew leader*, which includes a modest 12-Saturday-per-year commitment to work for two years, which sounds about right. But, "best" for last: on Nov. 12 Hal had a total knee replacement – 21 years in the coming with functionality failing fast this year as cartilage finally wore out (*bone on bone*). A world-class surgeon, fit muscles from the gym, and being relatively young for this operation added up to an almost pain-free experience and rapid recovery to self sufficiency (*crutches thrown away on day 4, driving on day 7, missing only 12 days of work*), but real sports (and house-building) are still a month or 3 away.

Our herd of cats diminished by one – 15-year-old *Quiet* died under mysterious circumstances during our June vacation. Alison was unfortunate enough to find him in our back yard, but had the presence of mind to put him in a plastic bag in the freezer. Quiet was Erika's cat, and she had always said he had to be "*stuffed*" when he died. *And so he was.* He now lives in Providence with Erika. His littermate, *Rocky*, who 5 years ago was found paralyzed in 3 legs is still among the living, although increasingly gimpy, still lives with our neighbors the LaGrelus's, but the two Himalayan offspring (*Honey & Cream Puff*) we gave them three years ago seem to have moved back in with us 80% of the time. Our remaining regulars *Peace*, *Bullwinkle*, *Boris* and *Baby Natasha* take their meals and sleep here; however, many neighbors report sightings in their yards. But they're all the nicest cats! And they demand just enough *parenting* for transition empty nesters.

St. Harts Day will be Saturday, **February 15, 2003**. The party, originally for Hal and Ruth's friends, is also kid-friendly; hopefully, there's something for everyone. ♥-shaped pizzas as always. (Your **St. ♥'s Day invitation** is, as always, available as the first link at our family website at <http://hart-site.net>) And please send us your email addresses and/or url's for any of you with your own websites – by email, of course.

Hal, Ruth, Erika, & Alison Hart

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