

*Answered
in Christmas
1977 communication*

Nov. 1977

Dear Dad and Mom:

First, we would like to extend our greetings for the very special occasion of your birthday on Nov. 25th, Mom! We hope you have a very enjoyable celebration with the relatives you will be visiting. HAPPY BIRTHDAY! Robin would like to add his greeting. (He likes typewriters, but his choice of keys is generally rather random. Lets see how he does if I tell him what letters to push).

HI ???? "GRMNBFVFGT%\$#@+?????"::...LLLOO)))_++'/////

It seems that finding letters on a typewriter is not as much fun as pushing keys at random.

We took Robin to the Barneveld School last week to pick up one of the desks they were selling. In the school office he pointed at a magnetic letter on the wall and said "Purple H! Robin have green H". The woman running the office was very impressed that he got both the letter and the color right. And when we got home we found that the "H" in Robin's set of magnetic letters was indeed green.

Letters and numbers 1-10 (he has trouble with "5's") are kind of old hat to him now, however. His current passion is birds. He spends time almost every day looking at our "Birds of North America" and has one story book with several pages of bird drawings where he can name all the birds, including a Toucan. So when I showed him the picture of the Toucan you sent and asked him what it was, he immediately named it correctly (even though the bill was not colored like the one in his story book). Thank you much for the pictures Dad.

Debbie has been going to a class on Parenting in Dodgeville on Wednesday afternoons and combining the trip with a trip to the Dodgeville library. Last time she took out two bird books for Robin.

Sorry to hear you've been having so much kidney stone trouble, Dad. You mentioned in your Oct. 7 letter that the first 2 weeks were pretty painful. Did the pain return during the later part of the 5 week ordeal? Did you have to cancel your trip to Doug's place and the Zonta convention in Santa Clara? I hope you are returning to good health now.

Did Doug & family visit you in Prescott this summer? What happened with Betty's possible Nov. visit, which you mentioned some time back?

Things have continued to be hectic for me. I don't think I've had 3 consecutive days of actual vacation in the last 4 years, with the possible exception of some Christmases with the Doobs here or visits by Warren and Patty. Debbie usually has some special project in mind for her father & me to work on during his Christmas visit. This year she wants him to look at the washing machine, which has a malfunctioning automatic valve. (She doesn't want to call in professional help until we've had a chance to look at it, and I haven't had a chance to yet). Joe likes to tinker with things.

Rather to my surprise, I did get DNR approval to take 5 weeks of leave to study for my P.E. exam (except for days when I was called in for important meetings, etc.). However, I was not able to start leave on schedule because of uncompleted pressing work. Then the Wis. Office of State Planning and Energy ~~AS~~ asked to meet with us to solicit grant proposals for projects related to promoting energy ; conservation and alternative (renewable) sources of energy.

These grant proposals had to be prepared in draft form within the period I had planned to take leave, and the final submittalx deadline was originally 2 working days after the exam. For this and other reasons my supervisor ~~asked~~ asked me to postpone the P.E. exam once again, and I agreed because I felt the experience of writing energy grant proposals would be more valuable to my professional development than taking the exam at this/ time. It's an/ area I would very much like to get into. In fact, besides preparing 4 draft porposals for DNR I submitted 3 of my own. (One/ has been essentially rejected and I haven't heard yet on the other two). of the latter

Besides seeking energy research grants for myself and possibly another young fellow with a Ph.D. (who recently quit his job with the state's air pollution program and who has interests similar to mine) I am looking into another couple of possible energy jobs which could be part time. One is with the new federally / funded Energy Extension Service which the Univ. of Wisconsin - Extension has set up and the other is with the Southwestern Wisconsin Community Action Agency (headquartered in Dodgeville) which fecently lost ~~the~~ Energy Director. (I am about ready to conclude that I will never have the time I want and/or need to devote to farm, family and personal matters if I continue to work full time in Madison.) There has been only "limited" progress toward advancing me to an Environmental Engineer 4 position. Perhaps a part-time position with more energy-related work would keep me at DNR. Our bureau has just received the governors approval to split into two bureaus, a Bureau of Air Management and a Bur. of Solid Waste Management, and upgrading of our "unit" to a "section" may soon follow. This may mean new advancement opportunities in the administrative ranks, but what I am pushing for is nonadministrative advancement for professional technical people. The need for this has been discussed for some time, but nothing beyond my present level has yet been authorized.

The Examining Board has given me one ; more chance to take/ the P.E. exam (in April) without paying another fee. The fee for taking the exam was recently increased to \$50. I should know by March whether I'm going to quit my job at DNR in time to study for the exam or get another leave of absence.

You asked about what I'd accomplished this past summer (while I was working half-time). One thing was that we made better use of our apples this year. Debbie's favorite tree (the one nearest our house) had a very poor crop this year but 5 others did better. (There^{are} several other trees I don't count because of the poor quality of the apples). Three of the trees we used are near the far side of our woods and hadn't really been used before because they drop their apples rather early and we didn't get to them in time. This year I raked away the first batch of windfall apples in time to collect quite a few later apples (mostly windfall) which Debbie canned as apple sause. It's a pretty pink, and much tastier than the bland stuff you get at the supermarket. The weekend of Nov. 12-13 we had our first long freeze and got our last pick of apples, g from a late-ripening tree which our neighbor has but doesn't use just down the hill from our woods.

Other jobs around here which got done included the following:

- 1) Knocking down the exterior cinderblock kitchen chimney which cracked last winter and which was in the way of where we wanted to put a picture window.
- 2) Repair of our living room oil heater's chimney with the help of a mason who also patched up cracks where water had been ~~is~~ leaking through our basement wall and who patched a large crack in the house foundation near where the damaged kitchen chimney had been.

- 3) Installation of a new metal chimney for our small kitchen oil space heater (with the stove pipe running into the unheated laundry room to help keep the water pipes from freezing) and reinstallation of the oil heater in a new corner of the kitchen.
- 4) Installation of a 49"X55" picture window (which I brought from Madison on top of our station wagon) in our kitchen facing southwest down into the valley. The kitchen previously had only one window which didn't get much sun and ~~this~~ the new window makes it much brighter. On sunny days we get a good deal of solar heating. Still to be made are an insulated inside shutter to close at night and an adjustable awning to keep the sun out during the summer. The rope and pulley system for adjusting the awning from inside the house has been installed.
- 5) Wood stove installations. When Warren and Patty were here and we got our piano we had to take out the wood stove and stove pipe to get the piano in the front door. In July we ordered a new "Kickapoo" stove but it turned out we couldn't pick it up at the factory until October so we had to reinstall the old "round oak" stove this fall and then replace it last month. The air tight Kickapoo takes much longer pieces of wood and permits a controlled fire to burn all night but it also creates a serious problem with creosote condensing in the stove pipes and leaking out the joints when the air inlet is shut down very far. The problem is caused in part by the long stove pipe, with 4 bends, which runs from our living room up through our bedroom to the chimney. It looks like more stove pipe work or frequent cleaning will be needed to avoid serious chimney fires.
- 6) One of the ceiling vents above the stove was enlarged so that Robin's room would get more heat.
- 7) Painting of certain outside metal surfaces with rust inhibiting paint.
- 8) Scything of thistles, ragweed and the best part of our alfalfa (to save the latter from the bugs which were eating it). The farmer who cuts our hay does us last. This was the first year we got two cuttings (while some farms around here get 3 or 4), but the second cutting has been rotting on the ground for two weeks now.

Thank you so much for the T-shirt and card you sent for Robin's birthday. The event was celebrated with a party here with two children from up the road and their mother. I was at work and Debbie was too busy most of the time to take any pictures, but some were taken later in the day (which are on the roll still in the camera).. The pictures enclosed are from last spring as indicated on their backs. The goat kid competing with Robin for the lawn chair is one of those born in May which was being bottle fed. The enlargement of Robin and the chickens is our favorite from the last roll of film. I hope you like it too. ~~the one~~ I didn't know whether you would want to keep it loose, put it in an album, frame it or have it mounted. If I send you scenery enlargements this size should they be dry-mounted on heavy cardboard? I thought I'd better check since there is always the danger that I might send you more pictures than you would want to have out at one time, and unmounted enlargements are easier to store.

How are Warren's cassette letters working out? I thought I might get a cassette-type tape recorder like yours so that we could send you samples of the current sounds of Robin talking or singing. You might also here from us more often if I didn't have to write out the letters. Next to picture books of birds I think Robin's favorite things are records with nursery rhymes or animal songs. "Old MacDonald" has long been one of his favorite songs (though I think he was better at imitating animal sounds before he learned to talk) and he is learning the verses to so many songs we have trouble keepin'g up.

I hope this finds you both well and that your Thanksgiving is very enjoyable.
Best wishes,

Robert