

Greetings and best wishes for a joyous and healthy holiday season and 2001! Once again, we will be spending our holidays with Mary Beth's brother and mother in Aurora, Ontario (near Toronto) from December 16th to January 1st.

This has been a quiet year in many ways for us. Since we last wrote, we had a wonderful Christmas 1999 in Aurora. Robert and Michael even got to sit on a real horse (as opposed to ponies) in Aurora and be led a few times around the riding arena by our friend Marie-Lynn Hammond, the consummate horse and cat lover (as well as excellent musician and writer).



Mary Beth's brother, John, visited us in the spring, traveling once again by train. Our only weekend trip this year was to Cambria on the Memorial Day weekend, and we had our usual good time. In April, Richard took the opportunity to see his dad during an East Coast business trip.

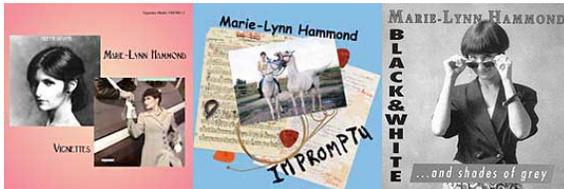


Robert (7) and Michael (6) are now in Verdugo Woodlands Elementary School, our local (and highly rated) public school and they appear to be doing well. Robert is in first grade and has a full day schedule. Michael started kindergarten and attends mornings only. The boys continue to do well with keyboard music lessons, but since they are not that appreciative of them at the moment, we're considering taking a hiatus after this term.

For fun, Mary Beth and Richard attended concerts by Judy Collins, Anne Hills, Christine Lavin, Eileen McGann, and Cindy Mangsen and Steve Gillette this year. Richard also managed to attend a concert by Marie-Lynn Hammond and Kristin Lems in Chicago on the way home from another business trip.

Mary Beth continues to be a stay-at-home mom who always finds her time filled with caring for two little boys. School homework, music classes, and music homework keep her busy every afternoon. This fall, Mary Beth completed her 45-hour continuing education classes and exam to renew her real estate broker's license.

Richard's spare time, after work and family obligations, has been focused on growing Vignettes Media, Richard's new record label. We have met with some success selling the first Marie-Lynn Hammond re-release (*Marie-Lynn Hammond & Vignettes*). We achieved 36 consecutive weeks on the Folk DJ mailing list's Canadian spins tally. As we write this, the other two CD re-releases (*Black & White ... and shades of grey* and *Impromptu*) are just coming out. Together, these three CDs represent the complete re-release of Marie-Lynn's five solo albums. Marie-Lynn and Richard are working on a new release for 2001. Richard is also working with Marie-Lynn's former partner in Stringband, Bob Bossin, to put together a Stringband CD retrospective for release in 2001.



Robert



Michael

We planned another long transcontinental driving trip during August, and to start that off Richard drove the family from Glendale to Aurora in four days and then flew back to California on July Fourth for what was supposed to be four weeks of bachelor life. In the second week of the family's stay in Aurora, Mary Beth's mother was taken ill with a systemic infection and surgery for a stomach ulcer that required hospitalization. So Mary Beth could spend as much time with her mom as possible, we delayed Richard's return until mid-August and cancelled all of the stops we were planning to make on our return trip. Hopefully, we will be able to reschedule meeting all the family and friends at a future date. Richard and the boys did manage to make a side trip to Lancaster to see Jay and Dick (Richard's dad) and we spent a joyous day playing near, in, and on old trains at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania and the Strasburg Railroad.



Keeping up the train theme, during the early part of their visit to Aurora, John (Mary Beth's brother) treated the boys to a ride on the South Simcoe Railway.



The Labor Day holiday weekend saw Richard retracing the trip he drove in June, getting the family back to Glendale one day before school started. We're becoming all too familiar with the 401, 402, I-69, I-94, I-80, I-70, and I-15! Four days has become a comfortable transcontinental drive for us, but we should try some alternate routes!

Mary Beth's mom, Margaret, remains in the hospital since mid-July. With Mary Beth in California, John has been doing a yeoman job in taking care of her. Thank you! We also wish to thank Lise Preston, a special friend of Mary Beth's and the family, for all her visits to the hospital and her caring. Please remember Margaret in your thoughts and prayers.

With all our love,
Mary Beth, Richard, Robert, and Michael

email: richard@richardhess.com
Web: <http://www.richardhess.com>