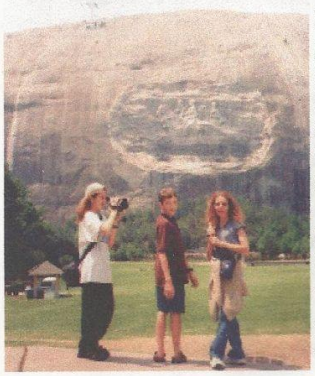
Family News

December 15, 2001

We published our very first Family News ten years ago this February. Now and then I look back at those first additions and am amazed at how much life can change in ten years. This year our nation has had a strong reminder of how quickly things can change in just one day. September 11th will forever be remembered as a day of tragedy, but also as a day of unity. Each of our lives have been changed (and united with others) in some way.

We have had several deaths this year including my Uncle Harry, friend and cousin Jeannie, Larry (Perry's father), and most recently my Grandma Fern. Change is a part of life both good and bad. With that thought let me share some of the changes and experiences we had in 2001.



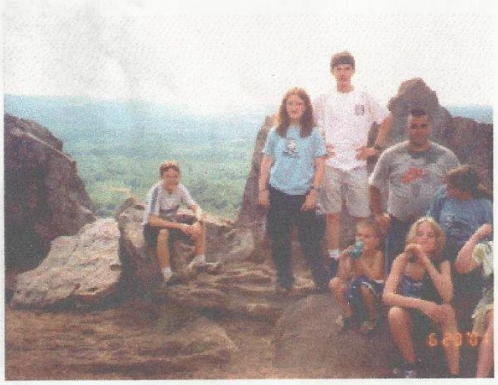
Stone Mt.

In April Kathy began a new fish pond project. We hand dug a new fish pond ten times the size of the existing prefabricated pond she had. She connected the new pond to the old one and built a small stream running between them. We've also added a wooden bridge going over the stream. The new pond is surrounded by rocks and has a beautiful waterfall and a small fountain in the middle. There are over a dozen gold fish in the pond and they let Kathy pet them when she feeds them.

In June Kathy, Justinn, Marc and I went to the Bailey Family Reunion (my Mother's side of our family) in Kings Mt, North Carolina. On our way up we made a quick stop at Stone Mountain just outside of Atlanta. A thunderstorm prevented us from going to the top, but the kids saw the huge carving for the first time.

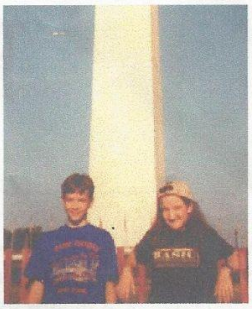
We had a wonderful turn out for the reunion. Our clan had half the rooms in the hotel! There was great food, entertainment, and fellowship and everyone had fun!

While we were there a dozen of us climbed Kings Moutnain. It took about an hour, but was well worth it. What a view! Kathy and I took all four of our kids up ten years ago. Marc and Justinn went up again this time, but we did not have to worry about them falling off like we did in 1991.



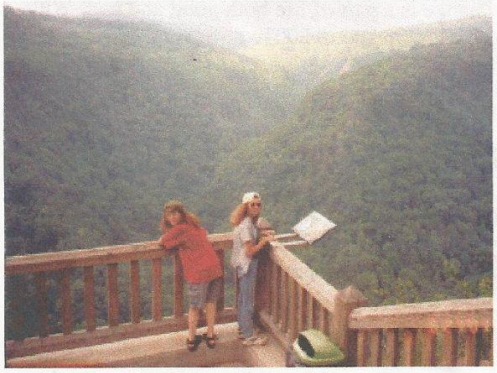
Kings Mt.

Next Page



While much of the family left the reunion and headed back to Florida, we went north. We left North Carolina and spent the night in Washington DC. Kathy and I took the week off and Justinn and Marc scheduled their summer activities to be off for the week. We got up early the next morning and visited many of our nation's memorials. We saw the Wahsington, Jefferson, and Lincoln Memorials as well as the White House and US Capitol.

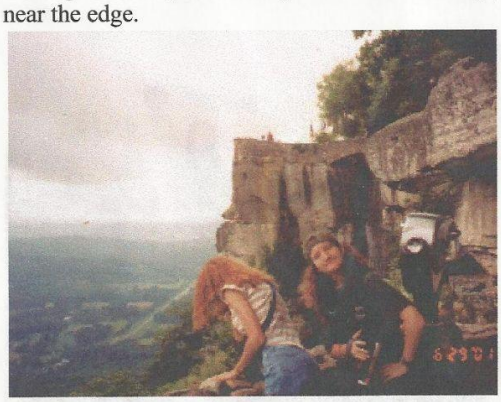
We left just after lunch and headed for Gettysburg. We toured the battle fields and museums and Justinn got an address off of one of the houses in town so that she could give her friends a Gettysburg address . We spent that night in Hershy, PA. The next morning we saw the worlds largest chocolate factory before heading up to northern PA to visit with a good friend of mine.

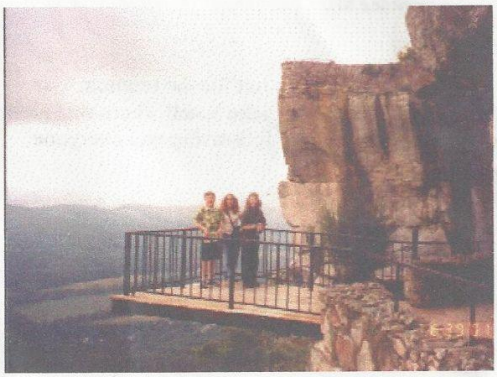


Grand Canyon, PA

Wayne and his family were wonderful hosts! They rearranged their own vacation plans to accomodate us. They have a wonderful house on 150 acres. We climbed the big hill in his back yard (we flat landers call it a mountain!) and were overwhelmed by the natural beuaty of the area. Justinn and Marc drove a tractor for the first time in their lives. We were given a a grand tour of the area and drove a few miles into New York State through some of the Omish communities. We also stopped off at Grand Canyon State Park and saw some spectacular views. We had a wonderful time with Wayne, Dawn, Ashley, Courtney, and Naomi.

We left Wayne's and headed south. We ended the trip crossing the Great Smoky Mountains and then visiting Rock City and Reuby Falls in Chatanooga, Tennessee. I think Kathy and Justinn enjoyed being near the edge.





Next Page

We visited many mountains and on the way home I offered to stop at the highest lowest point in the United States right here in Walton County (20 miles north of our house). Its a state park with the highest elevation in Florida (345') making it the lowest high point of all 50 states. Our vacation took us through 11 states in 8 days and we were all thankful to see so much of our wonderful country.

Tropical Storm Barry paid us a visit on the first day of school in August. Needless to say school was cancelled as we experienced sustained hurricane force winds from a direct hit. Chelco (the power company I work for) had over 12,000 meters out of power. After experiencing Opal back in '95 Barry was nothing more than a minor inconvenience.

In October Kathy, Marc, and I went to Orlando for Patsy (Kathy's sister) and Kevin's wedding. It was a beautiful wedding at a bed and breakfast in Mt Dora. We enjoyed seeing everyone! Bill and Lori were kind enough to share their lovely home with us. For those of you visiting at Bill and Lori's house that Saturday night I want you to know I've not told your Mom a thing .



TJ turns 24 in two days. He and Tiffany celebrated their first wedding anniversary on 10/10/01. Tiffany completed boot camp earlier this year and in June they moved Junction City, Kansas. Kathy keeps a close eye on the weather in Kansas (part of tornado alley) and is quick to call her first born if the weather gets rough. Its hard to get used to not getting to see them. It seems like they've been gone much loner than 6 months.

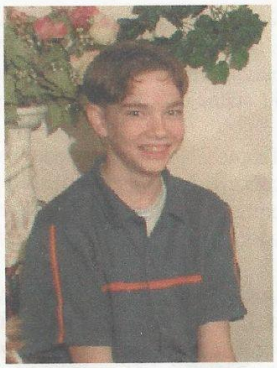


Perry turned 21 last May. He still lives in Freeport about 30 minutes south of our house. We see him and Michelle now and then. It still hard to imagine both the older boys are gone. Just two years ago they were still living at home and we saw them everyday. It looks like Kathy and I are going to be grandparents. Perry and Michelle are expecting a baby in May or June. Kathy is excited about being a grandmother for the first time! I'm a little more reserved because I think I am too young) and am not used to the idea of being called grandpa (grin).



Justinn is a senior in high school this year. Last spring she went to Orlando on the youth group from her church. They did a preformance in Orlando and found time to spend a day at Universal Studio. She turned 18 last September and is now a registered voter! We bought her a new guitar for her birthday. She is getting very good at playing it. After she turned 18 she worked as temporary help at Walmart for ten weeks. I knew life had changed when I saw my little girl wearing a blue Walmart vest and working as a cashier! She did a couple of radio commercials for one of the local radio stations last spring. Justinn also worked four weeks at camp last summer. She played on the soft ball team last spring, and she also drove through the mountains on our vacation including driving through a tunnel in the Smokey Mts. She has had a very busy year.

Next Page



Marc turned 15 this year and is now taller than Mom and Justinn. He still thinks he is too short. On his application to be a CIT at camp last summer they asked him to list any physical problems or handicaps. He wrote "None, but I am a very short person".

He earns money making buttons and checker button sets. He enjoys riding his skooter and bicycle and is anxious to get his drivers license. He and I started playing tennis a couple of months ago. Each time we play he gets closer to winning as many games as me. He has also taken an interest in singing. He sang at Patsy and Kevin's wedding recpetion and also sings at church and in the high school chorus. He is already better at singing than me and has a wonderful voice!

The Gipsons

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Favorite Thoughts:
An expert is one who knows more and more about less and less until he knows absolutely everything about nothing.

Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.
Chinese Proverb

You can still reach us at tomgip@yahoo.com - we would love to get email from you and hear the latest in your lives. This year's newletter was done as a web page. If you have access to the internet you can view this online at: http:\\atfar.com\fn01
And if you missed last year, it is still available at http:\\atfar.com\fn

Thanks for allowing us into your home and we'd like to wish you a **Merry Christmas!**