

December 2002

Well, another year has come and gone. It only seemed like yesterday when the millennium rolled over and now it is already two years later. At the very end of 2000, we started documenting our days with a photo-journal on our website (<http://www.funfolks.net>) and we are now up to May 2001. Boy, are we far behind! But it sure is fun looking at those pictures and recalling those memories. One day, we really will catch up!

In the meanwhile, we thought we should send everyone a "what-have-we-been-up-to" letter. In past years we've resisted the urge to write one of these general letters, but heck!, what better way to keep in touch when your website is over a year out-of-date!?! 😊

We started our year on New Year's Eve with Phil Lesh and Friends at the Kaiser. The New Year's Eve Parade consisted of a multitude of floats, the last of which featured three wizards from Harry Potter who turned out to be Billy, Mickey, and Bobby (the remaining core members of the Grateful Dead) with Bobby being Dumbledore. Wow! It was way fun and set the tone for us for the rest of the year. Nothing brings in a New Year like a big ole party!

In January, we headed off to Florida to the Second Annual Monkey Krewe Masquerade Ball with the New Orleans Radiators. For those of you who do not know the Radiators, they are simply New Orleans' most jamming rock-n-roll band. Why Florida? Well, it was January, y'know?

In March, Ting had some work to do in New York, so Randy tagged along for the ride. And it just so happened that the Allman Brothers were playing at the Beacon Theatre when we were out there! Yippee! (Well ok, so maybe Ting tweaked the trip dates a tiny little bit to overlap the shows).

At the end of May, we headed off to Prague to join several dozen friends in celebration of Dave and Elena's wedding. Prague is a truly incredible city. It has prospered by leaps and bounds in the last ten years. The former Jewish Ghetto now houses some of the most expensive shops in the city. We give David and Elena credit for hosting the most amazing extended wedding party we have ever attended!

In June, Ting was Master of Ceremonies at the WUTC – the World University Taekwondo Tournament, which was being hosted by UC Martial Arts (where Ting and Randy both train). The tournament featured 30 countries from all over the world. It would have been more except that the State Department turned away seven countries because of 9-11 concerns. She got the job because she has been MC at the annual UC Open TKD Tournament that UCMAP hosts every year around March since 1999. Unlike the UC Open, the WUTC fell under exacting FISU guidelines so everything had to be done just so. In spite of the strict rules, the Opening, Closing, and Medal Ceremonies went smoothly. Things did not always go so well in some of the other departments. Needless to say, everyone at UCMAP was quite relieved when it was finally over. But we have to admit — it featured some of the most AWESOME fighting you can imagine — world-class competitors fighting with a speed and agility that takes your breath away!

In August, Ting took her second-degree black-belt promotional test in Taekwondo. She had dropped Hankido earlier in the year so she could dedicate her training to Taekwondo. Randy took his brown-belt promotional test in Hankido the same weekend. (Yes, it is true that that gentle bundle of teddy bear can now break you into teensy little pieces!) 😊 We both got our respective belts in September and Ting is now back in Hankido again where she is a blue-belt. The week after the promotional tests, we flew out to Vermont for a relaxing and fun-filled weekend gathering with a bunch of friends.

In October going into November, we took Ting's parents on a three-week trip to Hong Kong and China. Ting was keeping a promise she made to her parents when she was a kid that she would take them on a trip. We spent three days in Hong Kong before heading to China. The China part was an organized private tour, so our activities were tightly scheduled. We went first to

Chongqing, which is in the upper part of the Yangtze River. One of our three days in Chongqing included a fabulous visit to a new tourist attraction called the Black Valley. Stately mountain walls reaching up to several hundred feet high flanked both side of a rushing stream, the gorge narrow enough in some places to close off our view of the sky. Walking on wooden bridges, which swayed just a couple of feet above the stream, we were humbled by the mountain's majesty.

Next, we boarded the MS. Isabella for a three-day downstream cruise on the Yangtze River. The cruise went through the Three Gorges and ended past the dam building site in Yichang. A week after we passed through, they closed that part of the dam. Construction of the Three Gorges Dam is scheduled for completion sometime in 2003. Once it is finished, the Yangtze will rise 170m above its current level, flooding thousands of acres of land upstream. There is a mad scramble to move everything to higher ground before that day and a flood of tourists rushing at their last chance to see the sites that would soon be underwater. After docking in Yichang, we were whisked off to Wuhan by motor coach to catch our flight to Guilin. We had an afternoon that we spent touring Wuhan before the plane took off. Among the sites that we saw were Chairman Mao's Summer Villa and a Bonsai Garden that included a collection of dazzling semi-precious rocks and crystals.

We were in Guilin for three days. If you ever imagine China as represented in the bamboo paintings, you would be looking at Guilin. The countryside around Guilin features some of China's most beautiful natural limestone karst landscape. It has over 1300 caves that features breathtaking stalactite and stalagmite formations. We visited the Reed Flute Cave, which is advertised as the most magnificent cave in the area. It was truly heaven on earth and would have been an ideal site for a filming of Lord of the Rings. I could almost see the Orcs climbing down the stalactite columns. We also did plenty of hiking and stair-climbing as we investigated the parks and countryside — thousands and thousands of steps! Another highlight of the trip was a half-day cruise down the Li River to Yangshuo. The scenery along the trip rivaled that of the Three Gorges, and the weather was clearer to boot!

After Guilin, we headed back to Hong Kong for a week, starting with a weekend on Lantau Island where we visited the Giant Buddha. We spent a lot of time visiting friends and relatives (most of whom Ting could not remember but pretended to out of politeness). One night, we were out in Mong Kok with our friend Delon and we ran into a Jackie Chan movie shoot, complete with The Man himself. Ting's comment about Jackie: "Dang! His head is BIG!" She meant he had big hair so his head was proportionally a bit big for his body. Despite the big city reputation of Hong Kong (and it is a lot like New York City in that respect), there's an abundance of beautiful countryside to explore, as over 40% of the total land area is reserved as open space. Over the week in Hong Kong we had a great time hiking in the countryside, topped off by a long hike across and around Lamma Island. We will try to get those pictures up soon on our web site (no, really!).

As for work, Ting is still working at Tumbleweed Communications in IT Operations, where she was made into one of those "D" people a year ago. She was a bit embarrassed when she became an "M" person, and now she is a "D". Lordy! Lordy! She feels so old! Randy is still consulting in programming/system administration and financial analysis. (This means that Randy gets the cushy life while Ting slaves away 😊!)

We hope that you will keep in touch and give us a call if you are in the neighborhood – the "hood" being Oakland Hills. We are still at 510-339-8966. Have a wonderful Xmas and the best of New Year's and whatever you do, put your heart into it and HAVE FUN! 😊

Love,

Ting & Randy