

Jeff Loman and Cathy Cleaver

Jeff's mother asked early on if we could manage going from two incomes to one. Sure, he said. The cars and other major items are paid for. Then came 1993. The refrigerator that Cathy bought when she moved into the Texas house (which we *still* have) died recently, as did the microwave oven she bought when she was a single 2Lt (many moons ago). Following these were the more untimely demises of our VCR and the 27-inch TV we bought at the Ramstein BX in Germany. Although these items were paid off, their less grand replacements may never be. "I feel like I'm in a race with the junk yard" (from *Death of a Desktop Publishing Supervisor*).

Meanwhile, Cathy cleans house in her day dress and pearls and adds to her cosmetic fallout shelter in our basement. If the end comes, she'll go out looking good. Actually, she spends most of her day reminding herself the law says she can't kill the children. Some moments that's all that holds us back (just kidding, really). They are our joy; we can't imagine what we'd do without them. And *that's* the truth.

We didn't do too well at keeping in touch between these stupid "Christmas Newsletters." Of course, one of Cathy's brothers who lives nearby, Jeff hasn't seen since April. All we're saying is lack of proximity or direct communication doesn't mean we didn't think of you during the year, especially when new events brought back old memories. Is it just us, or does life always seem sweeter to remember than to live through?

Oh well, better luck this year. We certainly look forward to hearing from you and will keep you in our prayers. Please do the same and have a great holiday season and even year. The odd years are just too odd anymore.

1993, as often happens in real life, turned out to be nothing like what we'd

The Autistic Family of the Smoky Mts

planned. Jeff found a job (two, actually), Cathy stays at home hoarding cosmetics, Luke is as autistic as ever, and Kate liked what she saw so much she decided to be diagnosed autistic as well. It shouldn't be surprising, then, in a house so strange, that our canary *hen* sings.

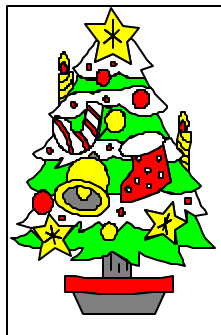
Around last Christmas, with Cathy getting nervous at having no day-to-day income, Jeff joined the job search fray. Based on background, he sent out counseling résumés and ones related to general middle management/administration. A drug rehabilitation counseling job with teenagers was the first to offer. Then Oak Ridge Associated Universities (ORAU) offered him a job supervising five desktop publishers. Both jobs came from the same Sunday's want ads, and as much as he hated to leave—after only one month—the placid environment of 20 teens getting straight, the ORAU job offered better bennies and way more money.

In February, Cathy decided to go for a "fun" job, hawking ©BeautiControl cosmetics in her "free" time. What she spends most of her time on, however, is consulting the "experts" on Kate, cleaning up messes (from Luke, Kate and the other household animals), and planning her escape.

Luke is a hard case, "severely autistic" as most measurements of such come up with. He's almost completely nonverbal, not yet toilet trained (Lord, will he ever be?), extremely active, and—at 7 years old and 85 pounds—getting tougher than ever to control. He's at a new school this year—the fourth in as many years. Unlike previous years, though, this move wasn't due to his parents. He has a more demanding teacher and is making academic progress, which

makes a future for him outside of this family easier to believe in.

Kate is 2½ now, and was diagnosed in November as—you guessed it—autistic. Not what we wanted to hear, but not surprising, either. Her autism isn't as severe as Luke's and since the intervention came earlier, we're letting ourselves be optimistic about her. Kate has around ten words she uses appropriately and plays with action toys as they are intended to be played with. She's more social than Luke and seems to learn better and quicker than he does. She's not normal, but then who is?



1993: adjusting to Tennessee, civilianism, and 2 autistic kids.

In March, we acquired a Shih Tzu mutt. Tribble isn't normal, either, but we couldn't ask for a better temperament in a

Luke and Kate pet. He's only a puppy, but so active a friend of ours calls him "Sparky." Besides the dog, we have five fish Kate terrorizes more than Luke does, and a "true" pair of canaries. Cathy's going to cage them together come spring. Since both sing, their offspring should be singers, unless they turn out autistic. Anyone interested in getting a Romanczuk canary, let us know around April.

Even though Cathy grew up here, we don't take the Smoky Mountains for granted. Even Philadelphia—despite having the largest park within a city limits in the U.S.—seems like a dungeon by contrast. However, there is good in Philly, and it's not only in the trees, pretzels, and steak hoagies.

Jeff & Cathy

Luke and Kate

and Tribble