

yes, it's another one of those yearly family update thingies...

Rick & Lesley Gardiner's Annual Christmas Letter

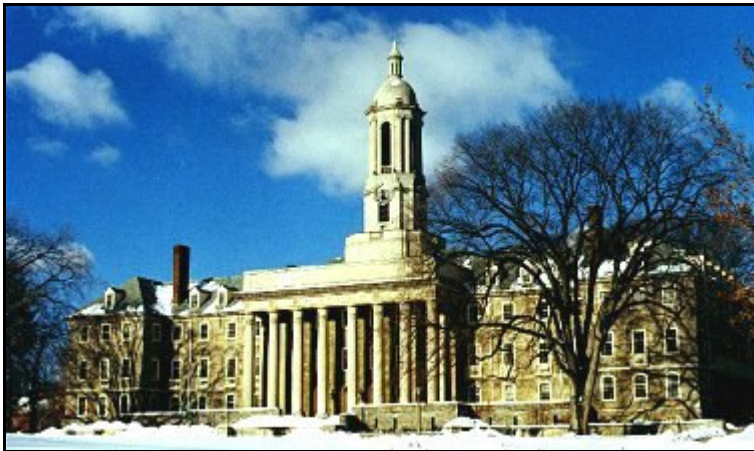
The Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Three

Glory to God in the highest!

Two years have come and gone now since we moved to Huntingdon Pennsylvania. We embarked onto unexplored seas this year as Lesley took on several new responsibilities. Most notable is her entry into the Ph.D. program at Penn State University in the Nursing Department as a result of a full scholarship and an assistantship. She began in September and is coming to the end of her first semester. Additionally, Lesley took on a multitude of other duties. She accepted a position as an instructor in Nursing at Pleasant Gap Vocational School. She supervises a student clinical program that takes place at Bellefonte and Westminster Woods. In the summer she served as a camp nurse at Camp Beacon Lodge in Mt. Union. She continues to work as a Family Nurse Practitioner in cooperation with Dr. Lamey, and this year she entered into an arrangement with Dr. Swindell to do the same. In her volunteer work with Kiwanis, she won a state honor as newsletter editor. A Deacon at the Huntingdon Presbyterian Church, Lesley has been coordinating a Soup Kitchen that operates in the church fellowship hall on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month. She occasionally sings in the choir on top of all this. Next semester, she will be a research assistant for one of the Professors in the nursing department at Penn State.



For Lesley's birthday, Rick commissioned an artist to paint her portrait in the Manse Library. This portrait now hangs above our fireplace.



Old Main at Penn State

Now in his 40th year on this planet, Rick became more involved this year as a Civil War re-enactor: a Union chaplain. He coordinated a re-enactment of an event that took place on the steps of the Huntingdon County Courthouse in 1862. The "Huntingdon Bible Company" was a group of local soldiers who were led by Captain William Wallace, the Huntingdon Presbyterian man who first coined our national motto, "In God We Trust."

The Gardiner family lost one of its members to cancer in 2003. In spite of Lesley's heroic efforts to preserve his life, Stinky the ferret died at the old age of six years. Obi now has a new companion that Lesley named Feanor. Her temperament is very different than either Stinky or Obi; she is small and hyper.



Feanor



Rick (far left) with the Huntingdon Bible Company in a reenactment of their departure from Huntingdon. Pictured in the center is Karl Lang as Captain William Wallace

As pastor of the Huntingdon Presbyterian Church, Rick portrayed one of his predecessors, the Rev. George W. Zahnizer, whose actual 1862 sermon was used as the basis of the portrayal. After completing a final class at Penn State, Rick completed his coursework for the Ph.D. in history at Marquette this year. He traveled to Wisconsin in the fall to report to his professors. Now he has to pass his exams and finish the dissertation. Rick became a member of the Huntingdon Presbytery's Committee on Ministry as well as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Presbyterian Homes this year. He taught a Lay Pastor course for the Presbytery and continues to teach theology and bible at the church. He is frequently invited to give presentations to various groups in the region and is currently working on a project in 2004 that will commemorate the historic work of his friend and mentor, the Rev. Dr. George Docherty.

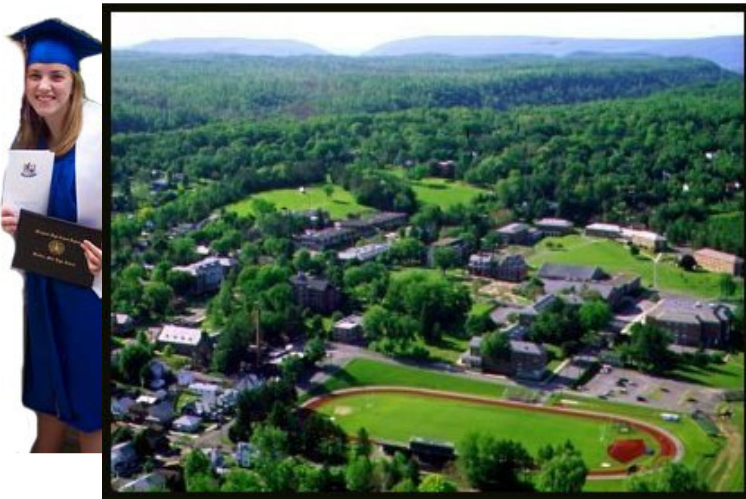
Rick's daughter, MaryBeth, graduated from high school in June and matriculated at Juniata College this year as a freshman. She is a philosophy/religion major, and she is having the time of her life. She relates that she has never been as content as she is at Juniata. She works in the office of campus ministry, is the president of the Philosophy Club, and is a groupie with the Rugby team. In the summer she became a candidate for ordained ministry through the Presbytery of Huntingdon. We are proud of her achievements and dedication to her education.



Rick as Rev. George W. Zahnizer

After his life-threatening accident last year, Lesley's brother Andy has now regained some of his physical and mental capacities, but remains in need of constant care. He has been moved to a nursing home in Magnolia, Arkansas. Lesley's parents and Rick's mom were here in Huntingdon over the Thanksgiving holiday and we really appreciated their visit.

As we complete our ninth year of marriage and enter into our tenth in 2004, God is continually drawing us closer to each other and to Him. With our schedules and endeavors as ambitious as they are, we have been forced to rely on each other for support, guidance, and mercy. As we have stated each Christmas, it is ultimately the grace of God that has sustained us in all that we are and do. The gracious souls of Huntingdon Presbyterian Church have been a manifestation of His gospel to us. The work is sometimes taxing, sometimes frustrating, and sometimes overwhelming, but we press on knowing that the trying of our faith produces patience.



Mary's School: Juniata College Campus

We are both aware of how cheesy and perfunctory these kinds of yearly updates can come across, but we send you these letters because we consider you an important part of our lives and are interested in staying in touch. We hope to hear from you. We can be reached by email at Gardiner@pitnet.net or by phone at (814) 643-1826.

Above all we would have you to remember that God's Christmas gift to you is eternal joy through the knowledge of his unconditional grace given through Jesus Christ. It is our wish that you will embrace that gift to the eternal delight of your soul this Christmas and evermore.

Sola gratia,
 Rick, Lesley, MaryBeth, Obi, and Feanor Gardiner
 529 Church Street
 Huntingdon, PA 16652



Rick, Lesley and Mary in period costumes at the spot on Little Round Top (Gettysburg), where Col. Chamberlain's 20th Maine narrowly held the hill