

Winter 1999-2000

1993-1996 (What happened after college?)

This is the first newsletter that I have written with the intent of mailing it with Christmas cards. I really wanted to correspond with everyone individually, and even with electronic mail, it just isn't working. So, with this letter, for better or for worse, I will officially join the ranks of the Christmas-newsletter writers.

Most people wonder what happened to me after college. They remember some phrase like, "I'll never return to Michigan again," or something similar. So what really happened?

After graduating from GMI in 1993, I worked for Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, Washington. It seemed OK, but it wasn't really what I wanted to be doing. There weren't too many jobs in the area that I was interested in; those that I was interested in, I just couldn't get.

I had joined the Port Townsend Orchestra in late 1993, and played flute, piccolo and occasional harpsichord with them. I was also a member of some related groups, such as a woodwind quintet and a summer wind band. I made a lot of friends, and had some very good times.

Also, sometime in late 1993, I met a gentleman named Rick in Bremerton who helped me get started in my own retailing business (you know, the environmental stuff). It was a great idea, but I just



My 69 Land Cruiser in northern Michigan, with Great Lakes Land Cruisers



The Wolverine Four-Wheelers in North Carolina

was too naïve to go out on my own. It was good to have a job, to support my learning curve.

In that time, I had purchased a 1965 Blue Bird bus/motorhome and a brand new 1995 Jeep Wrangler, which was a sort of premonition of what the years ahead would bring.

In January 1996, however, returning from Christmas break, I had an odd feeling while walking to work, and was met with a layoff notice when I arrived at my office.

My pre-determined plan was set in motion – I could no longer afford to attend orchestra rehearsals, I set up my business office in Mill Creek and Lynnwood, and prepared to make my first million on my own. It was harder than I had imagined. I spent week-nights in an RV park in my Blue Bird bus-motorhome to cut down on commuting time and cost, which worked pretty well. The business was just starting to make some cash for me when I received an engineering job offer from Delco Electronics in Milford, Michigan that I just couldn't refuse.

Since 1996...

Upon arriving in Michigan, it took some adjustment to accommodate the high cost of living and to come up with the money to get settled in. Actually, I never really settled in until July of 1999. In the interim, though, after living in Howell and a rental house in Webberville, I finally found a great apart-



My apartment house in Milford, "Clinton House," on the Huron River. Great landlord – tolerant of my vehicle collecting

1996 to Present, and Beyond...

ment in Milford.

My adjustment included selling off the things that I couldn't really bring back to Michigan. (Of course, I intended to stay here 6 months then return home, but things were just going too well here for that.) I sold my 1980 Chevrolet pickup that I had worked so hard on in college, and the Blue Bird bus that would have died going over Snoqualmie Summit on I-90 in Washington.

I never really quit my business, and after changing product suppliers, I have adopted a more relaxed pace with it (after some personal over-achievement issues). I intended about 2 years ago to get my retailing 100% on-line, which never happened. Maybe this coming spring, I can finish that task. Instead, I have been setting people up with their own on-line shopping businesses, in businesses ranging from automotive lighting accessories to bead and pearl wholesale catalogues. I've even been working on a religious organization page for *Sikh Gurdwara*, which also offers a product, in a sense.

Those who have viewed my stale business page (as my customers' pages flourish), watch for new life this spring as I take advantage of the emerging e-commerce trend myself.

Starting in 1997, I became involved in a group named Wolverine Four-Wheelers, and later another group called Great Lakes Land Cruisers, which have really changed my life. You can take that any way you wish – my checkbook has never been the same, but I've also never had more fun. From that time, my vehicle collection has grown from four to six. After trashing (and restoring) my new Wrangler in North Carolina, I purchased a 1959 Jeep to drive off-road. The 1980 Chevrolet Pickup was replaced by a 1983 Chevette for commuting, the 1965 bus replaced with a 1990 4x4 Suburban. Finally, to add insult to injury, I purchased a 1974 Land Cruiser as a parts vehicle for my 1969 Cruiser (my first "car," for those who didn't know), but now the 74 is also slated for restoration.

But most importantly, the places I've been able to travel to and see from a new perspective have been amazing. For the last two summers, I have been to Tellico in North Carolina in the Smoky Mountains. I've traveled to southern Indiana. Of course, the majority of my traveling

has been to western and northern Michigan. Next year, our group will most likely be traveling to the Alleghenies near Pittsburgh, and to Ouray in Colorado. I hope there is enough time left to do all of this after I get my Jeep running again.

It's now time to get back into music, however, and I've started that process by joining a jazz band run by my neighbor from Milford. He is a GM Powertrain engineer, and he has ferreted out and gathered all of the musical talent from his building. I've been playing keyboard, flute and saxophone in this group, and the quality of the other musicians has been really incredible. We had our second performance this week, and it's starting to sound quite professional.



My 1959 Willys Jeep CJ-5 in Attica, Indiana

I have also discovered (no, I mean really *discovered*) E-bay as a place to get hard-to-find musical instruments. My most recent purchase has been a wooden flute from around 1880 that I intend to restore to like-new working condition. Even now, with two large cracks and a band of electrical tape, it sounds really good. It has that nice baroque sound to it, and plays Bach nicely. I've also been filling out my MIDI (computer-synthesizer) studio collection, and hope to get into that some more again, too.

Last, but not least, I was able to purchase a home in Webberville, which is halfway between Lansing and Brighton/Milford. Now that my work site is in Brighton, the driving distance of 29 miles isn't so bad, and the traffic is very light. I was able to get a pole barn, too, with spaces for 5 vehicles and some other stuff, like a garden tractor, a small enclosed trailer, and plenty of extra tires. Ironically, since moving here, I have not felt compelled at all to work on my vehicles, and have enjoyed not thinking about them at all.

Looking back, if you were to ask me upon graduating from GMI what I envisioned for the future, there is no way I could have come up with a correct answer. If there is one message that I was supposed to get from this unusual turn of events, it seems to be that I need to learn what is most important in life. I'm sure I have a long way to go on that one. Not as far as I did ten years ago, though. I think I'm making progress.

Until next year, best wishes, much happiness, and prosperity to you and yours.

Yours truly,

Mark L. Lott



This is my "new" farm house (~1900) and pole barn (~1973) in Webberville, Michigan, purchased June of 1999