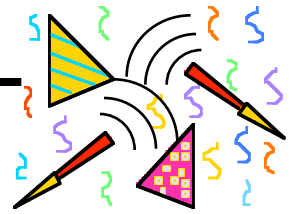




Happy Holidays

from Meerkat Meade in the year 2000!



Dear Family, Friends, and Posterity:

Greetings from the Future! We're actually composing this letter in the Year Two Thousand; through advanced science, it will be sent through time to a U.S. Post Office mailbox in the year 1965. From there, the Post Office will speed it to you, and it should reach you in plenty of time for the Holidays....

Actually, we're not really writing this letter -- we're dictating it to our VoiceScriber™, which instantly renders our words into the fine printing you see here. Simultaneously, the Voice Scriber™ produces a microfiche version, which it sends to Washington, DC via the pneumatic tube system. There, our letter joins the millions of other microfiche documents that are stored in the vast archives of the National Computer Administration. Years from now, if someone wants to see a copy, the lightning-quick indexing machines under the direction of the Multivac will find, print, and mail a copy *in a matter of hours*.

Enough of the wonders of the future, you want to know what this momentous year has been like for us. We're all doing well, especially now that science has conquered cancer, the weather, and the common cold. When we gathered for Thanksgiving dinner a few weeks ago, everyone commented on our great fortune and how wonderful our lives were (in between turkey, stuffing, and mashed potato pills, I hasten to add.)

TOM-1183 is still a courier with the Papa-2213 service. Last week his car was in the shop with a broken rotor, but the shop robots fixed that and now he's back in the sky. DON-2153 is one of an army of researchers, indexers, and information retrieval specialists at the Public Library. Since books were replaced by microfiche in the 1980s, he's had his hands full keeping up with the flood of information.

REN-666 and JUN-3438 have announced their intention to sign a five-year marriage contract in May 2001. The celebration will be held under the Greater New Jersey Dome, and the happy couple will spend a week on the canals of Mars for their honeymoon. They have not yet been licensed for any children, but hope springs eternal!

REN, who operates a medical supply company, has been on the road a lot recently, bringing medicine and advanced medical technology to the poor peasant hordes of Communist Southeast Asia. He's been back and forth constantly on the Trans-Pacific Highway, and says he's looking forward to settling down for a while. Meanwhile, JUN is a secretary for the same company; she supervises a clerical department of over two hundred Gammas, Deltas, and steno-robots.

Our ROB-4644 is taking night classes -- he has a big bottle of them, and pops one each night with a glass of distilled water. Yes, we have our own distiller in the house -- you can never be too careful, what with all the fallout. We're also very careful to wear long-sleeved shirts and hats when we go outside, and to apply the ointments that prevent skin damage from all the harmful radiation.

There have been some sad family developments. The Population Board euthanized both DON's and TOM's mothers this year, one month apart; although we miss them, we know that their passing allows two couples to each have a child. World population has held steady at about 15 billion for the last five years in a row, so the Board obviously knows what they're doing. On a happier note, DON's father had a prosthetic knee installed, and he can now jump eighteen feet from a standing start.

Let's see, what else? The Commies have been fairly quiet recently, if you don't count those few atom bombs in Kosovo. President Kennedy III was just re-elected to his fourth term, which makes everyone happy. And the colonies on the Moon and Mars are in great shape, growing by leaps and bounds.

Wait -- I think I hear the prancing and pawing of tiny hooves on the roof. Those pesky mutants! As we climb up to deal with them, let us end by wishing you and yours the happiest of holidays, and the very best of luck in the brave new world (to you) of 1966!