

#8
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Dear

OK, I was getting so much grief from everyone about sending my Christmas cards ridiculously early that I just blew them off for a month. You watch, this will probably arrive in January, now!!!

We wish you a Merry Christmas, etc., etc. and feel a little sad that yet another year has gone by without our being able to get back to England for a visit. You'll be forgetting what we look like. "Much older" would be an apt description, I think. The children are all starting to loom up around me and Mick and I both turn 40 in the New Year. No comment, but it can't really be 18 years since we left University, can it???

I wasn't sure what to put in this letter this year, as life feels rather like it has just been ticking along, albeit rather frantically. I finished my Montessori training in June and was very proud of myself for working harder than I'd ever done in my life. Seeing as I didn't want to get a full-time teacher's job until Gregory went to 1st grade, I was very lucky to get a 1-year post as an assistant with the woman who had taught all our kids in the local Montessori school. It is just perfect. I have a ball, I'm learning loads from her and I'll be all set to branch out into my own classroom come September.

Mick is right now in a brand-new start up, with consulting on the side to pay the bills. This means he's working silly hours again, but this time he's here in Salem, which makes quick trips home for dinner much more feasible. He's also having a ball. Can't be bad that we both love what we do. Now, is there any way to actually earn some decent money to go along with it??

This summer, we had "The Cousins" to visit. My sister Pauline's boys, Ian and Andrew, aged 12 and 11, flew over by themselves without batting an eyelid. Their Aunt Christine was the only hysterically relieved one at the airport (I loved being called "Aunty" all summer. Something I hadn't even realized I'd missed, living over here). I look after 2 other children during non-school hours, too, so all through the summer, with 8 children in tow, we gave the impression of a school trip wherever we went! We all had a blast. Pauline's making offers to reciprocate next summer and I must confess to being tempted. Anyway, we'll see, as Mummies around the world continually say.

Quick run-down on the children. Andrew, now 11, seems to have grown-up enormously in the last 6 months. He tackled Junior High with great enthusiasm and is doing fine. He still plays the wretched trombone (mostly at school, thankfully) and sports the inevitable American teenager metal-mouth! Who says the Browns aren't truly American? Ellie, at 10, is over at Haigh School now, in a regular 4th grade class. I think it was a bit hard for her in the beginning, but she's got her act together now. She's the proud owner of a room of her own, finally, and spends her life trashing it, much to the annoyance

of her mother! Stephen, now 7, is in 2nd grade and also much more grown-up than this time last year. Can tackle anything, teases everyone and looks like an angel doing it.

Gregory is in kindergarten this year and is in the class where I am teaching. Neither of us were very sure about how it would work out, but it is great. He is very relaxed about having his mother as the teacher and I love seeing him in the classroom. It's a pleasant way for us both to finish our time at this pre-school. I've been a parent there for 9 years (should have bought shares in the place!) and Gregory has been going since he was 2. It'll be hard to say good-bye to them all.

Is this enough? I won't even mention politics, as I'm disgusted with the voting population of this country, who seems content to allow people like Newt Gingrich the opportunity to run their lives!!! I'm focusing my attention on the local level instead, where at least I feel like I get my "tenpenneth". I'm sure you remember how much I love to express my opinions! It's all great fun and keeps me busy.

So, this is it for 1994. Have a lovely Christmas and New Year and perhaps we'll get the chance to see you in 1995. Take care of yourselves and come see us if you can!

love

Chris, Mick & Co.