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**December 2002**

**Merry Greetings of the Season!**

We hope this finds all of you in good health and happy with life in this holiday season. While starting to compose this letter it seems that we have been busy as beavers all year but have little to report that might be of interest.

There have been no major projects to report on and not much travel. Several friends stopped by to visit here, which pleased us greatly.

We made maple syrup in the spring and hay in the summer as usual. It was a strange year for syrup. Quantity was way down but quality was about the best we have ever had. Hay season was strange too. Much of Virginia was in extreme drought but we were unaffected except for a few weeks in August and September. We made more hay of better quality than in any season in memory. We cut a lot of firewood, mowed a lot of grass, planted a garden, worked on the roads – in short, all

of the usual chores of living in the country.



Harvesting the wind for energy is the latest opportunity or threat [we're not sure which] for Highland County. Renewable energy is a wonderful idea but lining the tops of all our ridges with windmills may not be the best way to achieve it. We're studying the issue. The photo above shows wind turbines on Laurel Ridge in Pennsylvania taken from Scullton, about five miles away. The other photos show some of the wildlife we see around the place from time to time.



Flicker



Io Moth

Our business seems to be doing OK. Gross sales are down this year but we feel like we are still doing well given the state of the economy and a record year in 2001 to compare it to.

John's mother is still getting along at 97 living in her own apartment though with full-time help. She had a setback this summer and spent a few days in the hospital. She is better now though she has not fully regained her strength and probably will not ever do so.



John and Char at the ice formations along US 220 south of Mustoe, Christmas 2000 Photo by Barb McKee



Fox

Char went to Dulcimer Week in Elkins in April. We went to State College in July for the retirement party of one of John's best friends and colleagues when he was at Penn State. In October we took a day trip to PA and WV to visit several wind farms.



Fox Squirrel

Because she's president of the Arts Council, Char has been up to her navel in art education since August. Due to one revenue cut too many, the Highland County School Board cut the art program out of the school budget. Art would be taught by the classroom teachers in the elementary school and would just be absent in the middle and high schools. The Arts Council did a quick survey of the local artists and found a goodly number of them were willing to help. So the Arts Council has undertaken to help fill this gap for one year. This has taken the shape of an Art Club which only meets for two hours once a month. We didn't know how popular this would be – thought we might have as many as 12 kids. Well, we have 36 and the group continues to grow.



Here is a closer view of a turbine. They are huge – that is a two-story house hiding behind the base of the tower. The skeletal tower at left is probably a cell-phone tower.

It has been an interesting experience. Everyone should go to any school about twenty minutes before school starts and just watch. I don't know how these people (teachers and staff) keep their sanity. Not that there is disorder, but there is so much going on – so many details and problems dealt with (major and minor) before they even start their teaching day! It's dizzying! And gives one new respect for anyone who works in the teaching field.

In addition to Dulcimer Week, Char went to a Chamber Music "Retreat" at Garth Newel last spring. Three days of playing classical music – quite an experience! Still playing for Farmer's Market, etc., and played for a Coffeehouse Concert last summer and for the radio station's fundraiser this fall.

Finally, just to bring closure to a few items mentioned last year: We completed one of the three porches planned for the cabin, the smallest and easiest one of course. We decided that the "temporary" repair to our dam is holding so well that it might be better to leave it alone. We will fill and grade a gully on the downstream face in the spring and hope that will be the end of the troubles. The US 250 project fell victim to state budgetary problems and its passing is un lamented. John is still working on an alternative plan but with a greatly reduced sense of urgency.

Though we're not on the way to anywhere, we would love to see you! Our cabin stands ready to take you in at a moment's notice, so try to put us on your itinerary! Have a safe and prosperous 2003 – and take time to enjoy life! It's what's happening while you're busy making plans.

Love to you all,