



2003, A Year of Changes

Business continues to be slow, but it has picked up a little compared to last year. A large portion of the high-tech industry (along with banking, automobile design, customer service, telemarketing, and others) is moving to India and other countries. This means less work for our company.

For Christmas 2002, we treated our friend Alison and her kids to a movie. Jerry went along to help keep the kids under control and to give Alison some time to enjoy the movie. Other than that, we spent a quiet Christmas at home with a friend.



In January, Jerry won tickets to a preview of the movie *Lost in La Mancha*. It was an interesting movie about the attempted making of *Man of La Mancha* where everything that could possibly go wrong did. It shows that other people can have a lot more problems than you.

Jerry was the cover story for the February issue of the Japanese engineering magazine, *TYPE*. The article is only one page long and has a couple of errors in it, but does make it sound like we're a really successful business.

In the spring, Sharon learned that her father had passed away in December 2002. She hadn't heard from him in many years and didn't know until now that she has a 12 year old half-sister, whose current whereabouts are unknown.

At the end of March, Jerry's mother fell ill and entered the hospital. A couple of weeks later, we flew to Florida to visit her. She passed away a few days after we returned home.

We didn't go to Hawai'i this year due to the poor business climate. We were able to rent out our condo for the week, so it didn't just sit there empty. We do plan to return next April to celebrate our 23rd anniversary.

In April, we met our friends Chris and Stu in San Francisco for dinner. We hadn't seen them in a couple of years, so it was nice to get together again.

During the summer, we finished building our picnic table and set it under the kiwi arbor in the back yard. It's 9 feet long and made out of large planks of very old virgin redwood. Wood like this hasn't been available for a long time; Sharon rescued it from scrap. We're looking forward to having some outdoor parties next summer.



In June, Jerry took a couple of classes to learn a new programming language and how to use a new type of part. After all these years, school still isn't over. We also attended an IEEE meeting on "quantum dots" for a client's project. Yes, all those fantastic things in the science fiction magazines are becoming real. You'll be seeing some amazing things appearing on the market soon.

On the 4th of July, we worked on a fireworks show for the city of Hollister. It was a small show (only a couple of hundred shells between 3 and 5 inch diameter), but it was interesting for us because this was the first hand fired show that we worked on. Jerry fired about a quarter of the shells using a road flare (other people fired the rest). The shell Jerry has in the picture is 4", the second smallest shell normally used in public displays. In the picture they haven't been lowered into the mortars yet so we could double check they were in the right order. It was a challenge to set up the mortars as the grass was extra spongy and it was very difficult to get the



racks stable. The mortars are essentially canons like you see in civil war movies (and they fire almost instantly when you light them) except that you're standing next to the end the shell comes out, so you get hit with a big blast, burning black powder, and paper bits. A few seconds later, you fire the next shell, and so on. You hope nothing goes wrong or the shell itself may explode right in front of you. For the firing, Jerry wore long pants, flame-retardant heavy jacket, hardhat, earplugs, face shield, and heavy gloves. Sharon (shown nailing racks together in the picture on left) doesn't do hand firing because she can't take the concussion at close range, but she helps setup, load, and tear down the displays.



In September, we drove to Sedona, Arizona for a vacation to make up for not being able to fly to Hawai'i. We also visited Jerome, which has been a ghost town since the main mine closed. It is now being revived as a tourist attraction and has many interesting old buildings to see.



On the way home, we stopped at El Dorado Hot Springs where we rented a cabin and stayed the night, soaking our cares away. The drive back home the next day was much nicer after this stop. After a late-night soak we were walking back to the cabin in complete darkness (other than a small flashlight), and being in the middle of the desert with no city lights, we could see a huge number of stars, pretty much the entire Milky Way spread out above us.



We returned home to complete a major business project that was running way behind schedule due to changes beyond our control. After finally wrapping it up, we decided to check out one of the local hot springs (Harbin Hot Springs) for an overnight break. The area and facilities are nice, but the water temperature in the pools is a bit extreme. The hot pool is way too hot to stay in for long, while the warm pools are too cold to get any beneficial relaxation.



Later in October, we made a trip to Virginia for another week at Roberts Mountain Retreat. We arranged our trip so we could spend time with our friend, Jena and also visit some other friends. While there, we saw dual rainbows and Sharon saw her first aurora borealis!

On Thanksgiving, our friend, Susan joined us for dinner and we enjoyed watching the added scenes and documentary from the recently released extended version of *The Two Towers*.

Steven, a former housemate, plans to spend Christmas Eve with us. It will be good to see him and catch up on life; we haven't had a chance to chat in a long time. We've also decided to prune the suckers from the redwood tree in our back yard for a Christmas tree again this year. They have to be cut back regularly anyway, and this gives us a nice tree that we grew ourselves. Our garden also gifted us with lots of avocados and squash.

Come February, we will be attending our first Western Winter Blast in the city of Lake Havasu, Arizona. We will arrive a day early to help set up the shows and we'll also work on shows during the convention. We'll also be staying an extra day to help tear it all down again and clean up the area. Watch our web page for pictures next year (www.interstellar.com/photos).

All in all, life has been good.

With Love and Wishes of Happy Holidays to all from Jerry & Sharon

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