

## Merry Christmas Everyone - (Christmas 2003 Newsletter)

Here is an update for everyone, on things down here in beautiful Tennessee!  
They call this God's country! And it is beautiful here too!

Sorry I couldn't make it in again so soon for Christmas at Mom's, but I did see ALL of you last month at Thanksgiving Dinner at Mom's.

For me, this is the first Christmas away from home, which makes me feel a little extra homesick. I had every intention of coming home early and staying through Christmas, but I finally got my much-needed doctors appointments and he had me scheduled for a exam date just before Christmas and another all day session for the 29<sup>th</sup>, just after Christmas. Plus, I had my heater core go out on the Blazer, I added a little Stop-Leak to get me through the holidays, but don't want to try to head home before it's fixed and end up get stranded somewhere between nothing and nowhere.

I thought I would start by introducing you to Debi's family.



This picture was taken at Delbert's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday party. On the left is Lavern, Debi's elder sister; Her Mom & Dad, Ruth & Delbert (Deb); Her niece Pamela; and Bro-in-law Everett. Pam is Everett & Lavern's daughter! Deb is who passed away last month.

We live in South Knoxville, which is on the OTHER side of the Tennessee River, or as they call it Fort Lauden Lake, because of the dam making the river into a lake. Although the layout is like nothing anywhere in St. Louis, to offer a local comparison. About the closest I can come is saying it is akin to the northernmost end of Valley Park. With an area similar to Meecham Park like houses, south of Kirkwood just on the other side of the tracks from us, except there are very few African-Americans here. The area we live in is known as Plaza Park, there is a combination of older and newer homes in this subdivision, which is fairly well squared off like older city type subdivisions, except the property sizes are much larger. The area across the tracks is called Vestal.

Many northern locals (across the river) refer to all of South Knoxville as Vestal. Which is a very nasty insult, it's like calling ALL of Kirkwood, Meecham Park.

The home we live in was built on property purchased by Ruth while Delbert was in the service, after he got home he built the house mostly by himself, during a time when construction materials were impossible to get.

Here are few photos showing the home as I first saw it; during exterior fix-up and caulking, and after I finished giving it a much needed coat of primer and paint.



This is the front of the house just after I added a little mulch to help control some of the weeds.

There is a covered concrete front porch and steps on the left with wrought iron railing.

As you can see, I did some stucco work, repairing minor cracks and smoothing out some indented areas where previous work had been done.



This is the view of the back. The door was previously moved from the outlined area to its right and leads into the kitchen.



This is the only picture I could find of the finished front of the house. We have more exterior plans for later on down the road.

Know you know how I entertain myself, hi hi. Nothing like making monster bubbles to while away the hours.

Although barely visible, the home in the right background is less than 3 years old and typical of new home construction here.

We have a new addition to the family. A little stray 7 week old Beagle puppy made its way to our back door one night and spent the whole night outside in the cold and rain.

We had a frost that night and didn't see how this little puppy survived the exposure. But she is just fine and loves playing with Myrrh.

We spent a week knocking on doors within a 3 block radius trying to find its owner, put a big sign on the mailbox, etc. all to no avail.

Ruth fell in love with the pup and named her Lacie!



Behind the house is a garage, originally Delbert built it as a two car garage, then removed the left garage door and made a regular door entrance. His intent was, a number of years ago, to turn the garage into an apartment for Debi, but codes wouldn't allow it.



Anyhow, I wanted to give you an idea of what my office looks like and what was entailed to make it an office. But so far, I cannot locate the photo's Debi took.

Like most garages, this one was used for storage, rather than someplace to put a vehicle, and after 60 years, it has become quite full, hi hi..... I was busy sorting loose things into smaller cartons.

I did find this one picture, taken in the direction of the corner of the garage where I built my new office. The window in that picture is the window immediately to the right of my desk. It looks toward the back yard, where I had landscaped and built two new storage sheds.

So, for lack of a better picture at this time, I will close this portion of my message with,

I feel a draft!

Could somebody PLEASE close the door.

Merry Christmas to ALL!

Love Gary & Debi

