



Happy Holidays

December 2002



Yes, it's another year already. Roger Pyes was disappointed he missed my last holiday letter. But his help this summer was appreciated and could not go without mentioning.



Once again, this picture is of my students. It's probably the smallest group I've had since I started working at Indiana University in 1985. Even if it's a small group, it's a mighty group. These kids are always fun to work with.



Instead of a foreign country, my travels took me to Alhambra, California this summer. My task was to help my mother sell her home, the home I grew up in, and move her into a retirement community. It took a long 2½ months, but we sold the house for a nice "California"



The house I grew-up in, Alhambra California.

profit, sold the van, and moved some of her furniture into a retirement community named Bridgecreek in West Covina. The rest of the property was sold in an estate sale.



My mother's new abode, living (↑) and bedroom (↓) areas at Bridgecreek.



Louis Rodriguez, my mother's favorite plumber, bought the van for his family.

Mom is now happier than I have seen her in a long time. She has a lot of friends to visit with each day.

Long-time friend, Patsy Dougherty, helped us move and buy some new furni-

ture. Patsy now lives only about five miles from Mom and visits her regularly. See more of the move at

<http://www.totemvizslas.com/trip.html>





Totem at 14 weeks

It was not a good dog year. We lost Totem to old age before we left for LA, in June. She was a frail elderly dog at 15½ years old. Flick and I miss her on a daily basis. Please read a tribute to her at: <http://www.totemvizslas.com/totem.html>



Totem at 10 years old

To make matters worse, in August, Flick was diagnosed with a genetic eye disease that is extremely rare in Vizslas (PRA=Progressive Retinal Atrophy). In fact, he is currently the only Vizsla of record to have the disease. His retinas will deteriorate until he goes completely blind, which one of his ophthalmologists predicted will be March 2003. I have all the confidence in the world

that he will adjust to the house and the yard. But, for Flick and the hunting aspect of his life, this disease may be devastating. He lives to hunt. In addition to hunting, we compete in the bird-dog field trials. This is a significant part of his live as we are hunting, working out, or competing almost every month of the year. I am not sure he will be able to survive without hunting. It is so sad to watch him deteriorate when his desire is as strong and youthful as ever. At seven years old he is in his prime, or at least, he should be. We probably had the best hunting season ever this year.



Flick, on point.

And it may very well be his last. He's so close to finishing his field championship and other field titles, but that, too, can never happen now. It's ironic that a year ago, he placed the highest, for a dual dog, in our national dog show and field trial, but now will never have an opportunity to repeat it.



Flick wearing his new goggles to protect his eyes in the field.

I am making every effort I can to allow him to do some form of bird work as a blind dog. He will still be able to use his nose and as long as I don't let him bump into a tree or fall in a hole, we should do OK. He's got a pair of goggles for blind dogs which should protect his eyes in the field. He's practicing wearing them before he goes completely blind.



Dart, Dart, Dart.

Now, the year is not ending as bad as it appears. We have a new puppy named "Dart". She was born two days after Totem died. Sometimes it seems like Totem is "coming out" in her. She is delightful to have around. Flick plays with her as best as he can as blind dog. Although she will never replace Totem, she renews the *spirit* we need around the house. She is now six months old and progressing nicely in her bird work. She found a bird everyday of our five-day hunting trip in Southern Illinois. We'll start showing and competing in the field after the first of the New Year. She can't wait.

