



Spring 2007

Kwajaletter" is:

A quarterly newsletter especially for people who enjoyed the experience of living in "Almost Heaven,"

Kwajalein Atoll,

Marshall Islands,

Micronesia

And for others who wish that they, too, had lived "Halfway between Heaven and earth."

This issue is especially

in remembrance of

Sue Lanier a cherished friend

(and always for my kids!)

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Yokwe Yuk from Jody

Dear Friends,

So help me, when I get this issue of *Kwajaletter* out, I'm going to make an appointment at the local spa and get my neck massaged for an hour! Then I'm going to come home, pop the cork on a bottle of champagne, sip some bubbly in the hot tub—while I hum "Tiny Bubbles in the Wine" in remembrance of Don Ho.

As I told you in the last issue, I've been having some very frustrating problems with my email—my entire inbox has disappeared a couple of times, and I haven't been able to retrieve everything. If you have sent me something and haven't heard back, please let me know. We will be changing to another server right away, and will let you know our new email address as soon as possible. Think I'll check into rehab—that seems to be the answer to all problems these days, doesn't it? Write me % Shady Pines Illiterate Computer Users Rehab Facility, but remember that email correspondence is not allowed!

We've been away from home so much since the first of the year that it is going to take us a while to catch up. We went on a **fun** cruise to the Mexican Rivera with son **Rick** and his wife Riesa. We laughed too much and ate too much—so you know we had a wonderful time. Ed gave me a few days to put clean duds in our suitcase, and we went to Vancouver B.C. for a week. If you've been there, you know what a great destination it is.

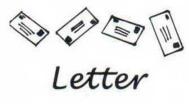
Had another laundry stop at home, and then we went to Seattle for Ed's second total knee replacement (minimal invasive surgery) on April 16th. Many thanks to Rick, Riesa and the kids for putting us up again for several days (that's the drawback with living closest to the hospital). This knee surgery recovery is amazing, even quicker than the first knee! We had a nice visit with son Mike and his family while we were there, too.

Speaking of visits, **Red Bloedel** stopped by on his way home to Sun Valley, Idaho, a few weeks ago. We enjoyed visiting with him and hearing about his recent trip to Dubai. In fact, we were hoping that he would be able to give his Dubai presentation to our Lions Club, but our meeting date doesn't coincide with his next trip through here. Red is hard to miss in his red car with the RedsMauihouse.com sign on the side. He is renting out the house they built in Hawaii when they were living on Kwaj. Going to Maui?

Hope you enjoy this issue. **Thanks to Shermie** for sharing his story and Kwaj experiences. I think many of you will recognize a few names and remember some good times listening and dancing to Shermie's music.

And, those of you in the Northwest...do try to join us at the get-together in Haden Lake in July!

Love and Hugs,



to the Editor

The community is invited to the dedication of both the Navy Memorial and the Military Memorial on Monday, 26 February 2007. The Navy Memorial, which is dedicated to the 11 Navy Nurses, crew and passengers who perished Ocean Side of Kwajalein, 19 September 1950, starts at 4:30 p.m. Transportation will be provided at Bldg 901 to take you to that service and also to take you from that dedication to the Military Memorial dedication

The Military Memorial (Memorial Wall) dedication will begin at 5:30 p.m. and this dedication is located across from the Veteran's Hall. This memorial was created to honor Military personnel and their families who have lived and worked on Kwajalein from 1944 to the present.

The American Legion will provide water and has invited the community to a BBQ at the Veteran's Hall, which will begin at 6:30.

Beverly C. Vencill USAKA Legal Secretary SMDC-RDTC-TEK-L P.O. Box 26 APO AP 96555 (805) 355-3436 FAX 5-8098 Beverly.Vencill@usaka.smdc.army.mil



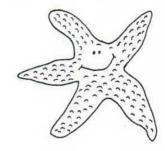
Kwaj Kid Rose Hunt (KHS 72) married Michael Wilkinson on January 20, 2006, in Modesto, Calif. Rose works in Modesto at E&J Gallo Winery as a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt-which Rose says is a bit of a cost savings consultant. Rose manages lots of high profile projects, and admits that it is not easy and not always fun, but is interesting and a super experience.

Michael is the Fire Chief in Oakdale, Calif., with over 30 years with the fire service. They live in .Oakdale with their "two boys," Charles Brown and Cody Roadster (retriever mix and toy poodle). They love spending weekends at their cabin the beautiful mountains in Cold Springs, Calif.

Rose and her family lived on Kwaj from 1968-1975 (2 tours). Her mother Jean and brother Jim live in Yuba City, Calif., and her dad, Harold Hunt, passed away in 1999.

What's in the future for the Wilkinsons? Well, they plan to retire in exactly two years, one week and eight hours (as of 5/4/07) and travel around the country! This couple definitely plans ahead.

Editor: If you are curious about just what Lean Six Sigma is (like me), you can check it out on the internet. Very interesting.



A smile is a curve that sets everything straight.

- Phyllis Diller

Front cover:

Shermie and Friends

Shermie Wiehi's first band on Kwajalein in 1973. Members were Lonnie Smith (deceased), Shermie (seated), Lynn Winterstine and Tony Timas (deceased). Lynn and Tony were high school students. Photograph was taken on the bar side of the Yokwe Yuk Club.



Shermie Then & Now

by Shermie Wiehe 1772-78, 80-92, 92-97

Do you remember the piano player on Kwaj? I lived and worked on the Kwajalein atoll for the years 1972-78, 1980-90 and 1990-97, three tours. Growing up as the son of a tough and hard-headed German father, Kwaj was a picnic after leaving home in Kansas City, KS, September 1972 for my new challenge in life, my first technical job after graduating from Missouri Institute of Technology.

At the age of seven, Santa Claus left me a shotgun under the tree. It was that Christmas that I really started growing up and soon Dad was teaching me gun safety and taking me on his many hunting trips that I really enjoyed and treasure so many memories of. I found myself at Dad's side helping him with rebuilding truck engines, helping him at the car body shop, wet sanding and masking cars for painting, among many other tasks around the shop.

He was a well-known welder and often he would teach me many skills in that field, eventually allowing me to weld many of his jobs by the age of 14. He owned many rental homes and often I was painting, scrapping and assisting with replacement of roofs, repairing plumbing issues, etc. Our farm and garden business was another big responsibility for the family throughout the summer at our home-our truck stand on the highway and Kansas City market on Saturdays. In the fall and spring, I plowed gardens for people throughout Kansas City, earning extra income that would pay for my education after high school.

At age eight, I asked my Dad if I could learn to play the piano. We had a piano in our living room that had half of the ivory key tops missing. Dad decided to get me a teacher after he learned of my interest in it. I took my first lesson in March of 1960.

My first lesson was an unforgettable experience. Dad took me to the corner where the Leavenworth-Kansas City bus stopped. He gave me instructions how to get to my teacher's studio after I departed the bus in the city. I made a point to remember what he told me for I was on my own when the bus stopped. Dad informed the driver where to let me off and about 30 minutes later, I was stepping off the bus. I then walked to teacher's home for the first time only remembering what my dad had told me in getting there. I was so happy I made it to her home and was then focusing on my return trip back. I didn't remember much about my first piano lesson because I was still thinking about making the trip back home. After the lesson, I made the trip back without a hitch. I continued the bus trips and lessons for eight years. My



teacher was a true professional and performed with her friend Liberace in her performance years. She was a very strict teacher and I was to practice an hour a day. If Dad found I didn't practice, I had to practice two hours the next day, and if I was caught fibbing about practicing there was a spanking from a small branch off the front yard cottonwood tree. It didn't take long to know that practicing piano was a priority. Today I give credit to my teacher and my Dad for their determination.

By the age of 15, I was playing piano at the bars for tips, with Dad enjoying my entertainment. I also learned to play the drums in junior high and played them through high school for the concert and pep bands. I enjoyed the high school marching band. We marched yearly for the American Royal Parade and football games. Our band was the best in the state of Kansas. We even marched for a national televised Kansas City Chief's football game half-time show and I was filmed in a close up of me performing a dance routine with my drum. I played the piano for the high school stage band also. I played piano with Dean Brooks and the Rhythm Makers monthly for the Agriculture Hall of Fame along with playing many benefit concerts with the group throughout eastern Kansas for large audiences in the towns' auditoriums. I was invited and performed dinner music for several Kansas State Senate dinner functions. During the years 1967-1970, I practiced and memorized a four-minute piano and drum solo for the state music contest held at Kansas University. Each year I received A's for drum performance and C's for piano. I used to be nervous in my younger years performing at the piano in competition or recitals-but never playing in the bars.

I played little league baseball from age eight to 16 as a pitcher. I enjoyed sports

and I helped my father in the fabrication of three baseball diamond backstops. I learned a lot of my welding skills from Dad when fabricating those backstops. Dad donated his labor, welding, and materials to build the baseball park near our home.

After graduating from technical school, Dad and I had a communication break down and I left home. Leaving home, my first job I had an opportunity through a friend to work in a funeral home for about a month, followed by working as a welder for Darby Corporation. After welding railroad boxcars for three weeks, I received a Kwajalein job offer to work at Kwajalein, Carlos Island, for William Patton, Telemetry section. I accepted it.

Previous to the welding job at Darby's, I had followed up on an ad for a job with Kentron, Hawaii, Inc. Ltd. and interviewed with Jerry Brewer and Red Wilson at the Kansas City Airport Hilton Inn. They both worked at Kwajalein for the Communications department. I had a great interview.

In knowing I was leaving for Kwajalein, I returned home to spend about five days there. Dad gave me a big going away party at his General Motor's Union Hall and I played piano for it. During the week I was at home, I took my Dad to Darby Corporation to show him where I was welding, and to his surprise and mine, he informed me Darby's was the first place he worked when he left home. We both followed the same paths at the start of our ventures into the labor market.

Soon I was flying to Kwajalein—taking my first airline flight and getting my first view of the ocean. I remember how nervous I was flying to Hawaii and seeing the wings move up and down from turbulence, fearing I might not make it. When the wheels touched the ground, I

was relieved. When I stepped off the plane, I saw the beauty of the islands.

During my overnight stay in Hawaii, I met two men going to Kwaj and spent a fun night with them in downtown Honolulu. One of the men was **Richard Suggs**, and a few years later he became my brother-in-law. The following morning at Hickam AFB, we were informed that the MAC flight was canceled for the next three days, and the aircraft were being used for evacuation of personnel due to a typhoon somewhere in the Pacific.

While at the airport, I was approached by Roger Hines, FAA leader at Kwajalein, and he asked me if I would like join him and his family to tour the island of Oahu. It was such a blessing to meet Roger and his family, great people and we had a wonderful time together. During the tour of the island, we stopped at a Shakeys Pizza in Pearl City for lunch. There I treated the customers and Roger's family to some piano playing entertainment. The management loved it and we all got free pizza for the owner thought I was Roger's son. A high ranking officer and his wife from Hickam AFB enjoyed the piano music and offered Roger's family and I a place to stay. Roger, his wife Elaine, and two

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Opposite:

Shermie and his group playing for a dance at the Yokwe Yuk Club. Do you recognize the dancers?

Above:

Left: Harry "Mungo" Kalahiki., 60s-80s. Harry passed away in 1991. Center: Kalani Kaiminaauao, Shermie and Ed. Hamblin. Right: Elika Kaiwi. daughters, Cheryl and Kelly, were my new Kwaj family and my visit of Oahu with them will live in my memories. In the years to come, I often would visit Roger's family, play their piano for Elaine who loved to hear me play. I could not have met a nicer family. Roger had a nice boat and he often took his family and me out on boating trips to snorkel and ski.

When I arrived at Kwajalein on my first DC-8 flight, I met my supervisor, William Patton, at the airport and within the hour we were flying off to Ennylabegan (Carlos) in my first helicopter ride. It was an 11-mile trip. When I arrived I soon got to meet the 31 men that lived there. We had a little club, shuffle board table, weight room, pool table and a dining hall. I lived in a one-room trailer with a roommate, more than twice my age. I was the kid of the island and soon I became one of the range rats of Bill Patton. While living there, I enjoyed my friendship with Jim Shillings who also came from the Midwest. Jim is still a resident of Kwajalein. I remember the names of people I worked with such as Jim Reed, Emery Kingery, Bob Horn, Warren Stepp, Dick Tracy and Lenny Meyers. I enjoyed the Thursday night Carlos shopping boat trips to Kwajalein each week. I enjoyed life on Carlos although it was very remote. I kept busy, even if I was crawling around the jungles looking for war artifacts. I made friends with the Marshallese, enjoyed the freedom and beauty of the island. After leaving Kansas, no matter how remote it was, it was a big vacation to me.

On my first shopper's night visit at Kwaj, I visited the Yokwe Yuk club and ended up playing the piano at the bar. It was exciting time for me and the people at the bar got so excited hearing me. A tip jar was put on the piano and filled up fast. The few hours went by fast performing at the piano and before I knew it I was heading back to Carlos, my pockets full of tips, and I was happy to know my piano entertainment pleased so many. I made many friends that night and soon the news spread that there was an entertainer on island. Jerry Brewer, one of the men who I interviewed with in Kansas City, was surprised to hear me play. He mentioned during his talk with me and others around the area how I had an oversized suit along with very dirty finger nails and heavily

callused hands when I interviewed. He knew I was a hard worker from Kansas. The oversized suit belonged to my Dad.

Eventually, during visits to Kwaj, I met Lonnie Smith who worked for KMR (Kwajalein Missile Range) as a civilian at the terminal building. He was an evaluator over security for Kwajalein. He and I became friends through music and he wanted to form a band where he could play guitar and sing with me. Lonnie, his wife



Boots and daughter TL, lived about thirty steps across the street from Roger Hines who I met in Hawaii and visited often on Kwajalein. Now I had a second family of friends to visit and enjoy my music with. Soon Lonnie and I formed the band and we were performing in the Yuk Club, giving the Lock, Stock & Barrel band on Kwajalein a little competition. The band members of my first group were myself (piano & singer), Lonnie Smith (guitar & singer), Lynn Winterstine (bass guitar & KHS student), and Tony Timas (drums & KHS student). Other band members who followed were Jim Burns (bass guitar & KHS student), Mary Couture (singer), Lauren and Gretchen Rodecker (singers), Brian Buckley (steel guitar), Harry Kalihiki (bass guitar), Bob Sanders (drums), Bob Thornton (guitar), Terry and Mark Covington (keyboard & guitar), Kalani Kaiminaauao (guitar & singer), Elika Kaiwi (uke & singer), Ed Hamblin

(bass guitar), Curtis Young (singer & bass guitar), Bob Klauser (sax), Mel Sanchez (uke & singer), Harold Lakabun (singer & guitar), Milung Anitak (singer & guitar), Elwin Poun (drums, guitar & singer), Mara Laina (singer & bass guitar), Gina Hubshman (singer, now deceased)—I wish that I could remember the names of all of the others who played or sang with my band over the years...I remember all of their faces and talents!

After two years working at the Carlos, Gagan and Roi-Namur telemetry sites, I transferred to work for the Optics section under the supervision of **Tony Utz**. This position allowed me to move to Kwajalein from Carlos where I could have more opportunities at entertaining. While working at the Optics, I provided technical support for the RADOT, SUPER RADOTS, BC-4 and Spectral camera systems. I also worked at Meck Island on the Optical systems at the launch site.

Life was good at Kwaj and now I was a resident of the Reef BQ for the next five years, rooming with Bob Reinker, Brian Buckley and Harold Heintz—all great roommates.

Eventually musicians in my band PCSd and then I decided to team up with the Marshallese musicians, two of which I had met on Carlos during my stay there. I learned to play guitar from the Marshallese boys on Carlos and made contacts there with musicians, not knowing I would team up with them later. Soon I was buying instruments and training the new local musicians to new tunes and we began playing for the island parties. They were quick learners and Harold, Milung, Elwin and Mari became my Marshallese brothers in music and friendship. We played on Saturday nights at Joba Kubua's theater before the show for hundreds and the Marshallese people loved our group. We played both American and Marshallese songs. Soon we were off to Ponape, now called Pohnpei, to play at the Palm Terrace for Phil Ching. We had a blast and I have many good memories of that visit, along with meeting the girl I would be married to for 19 years.

Along with playing music at Kwajalein in 1974, I took a home-study course for piano tuning and repair. I finished the

course in 14 months and received authorization and approval to subcontract piano tuning and repair of government and private pianos at Kwaj. I maintained all the pianos on Kwaj from 1975 to 1997.

Being much like my father, I carried my work ethics to Kwajalein where I stayed busy working at my fulltime job, also working at the Kwaj TV shop, repairing TVs on Ebeye, repairing medical equipment at the Ebeye hospital, tuning pianos, teaching piano, practicing and performing with the band and playing softball and basketball. My Dad and stepmother visited Kwajalein during the 80s and I had a big party for them during their two visits, providing music, food and drinks at the VFW club. Dad was a WWII Veteran, Navy Seabee, serving in the Marshall Islands, Saipan, Okinawa and China. My mother, Eileen, visited Kwajalein and met long-time Kwaj resident and my friend, Jim Oakley, who was the bar manager at the time at the VFW Club and worked for Aviation Supply. He and she hit it off and in about a year she returned to marry Jim on island. They are enjoying life in Kansas City where Jim enjoys retirement, keeping the house and yard up, along with raising roses that he enjoys. Jim also spent many years in the Kwaj pharmacy starting back in the 70s.

In late 1978, I moved back to Kansas City with my new wife, Matea and my three step-children, Andreas "Derson" (6 years), Catherine (4 years) and Sonson (1.5 years). Raymond, my son, was born January of 1979. While in Kansas City, I worked for Storage Technology Corporation. After two years of working in Kansas City, I received a call from Chick Dry informing me they had a position to lead the Computer Maintenance team. After a few days, I made the decision to return to Kwaj knowing I would have more time with the kids. Luckily in the two years we were in Kansas City, the kids really picked up on their English skills, thanks to Sesame Street.

In late 1980 we were on our way back to

Kwaj. When I worked for Computer Maintenance previously I worked with lead personnel **Jim Shelby**, **Bill Turvey** and **Jim Enking**. I enjoyed working with the computer maintenance team at Kwaj and some of the names are as follows: **Jake Koller (CDC)**, **Charlie Zambon**



(CDC), Dave Roderick, Wes Sato, Paul Ackerman, Wayne Whitby, Frank Edwards, Jeremey Toby, Joe Johnson, Paul Kamps, Gene Rambo, Kevin Schorzman and Skip Gallant.

My family and I returned to Kansas City in February 1991 to take on a farming opportunity offer from Dad that did not work out. In September 1991 my family and I returned to Kwaj with my new job with GTE, ALTAIR site, Roi-Namur. I was responsible for maintaining the computer systems at the radar facility. In 1992 GTE lost the contract to Raytheon. I enjoyed working with the ALTAIR. Some of the names I remember are Steve Chapman, Joe Zisking, Steve Hunt, Tom White, Norman Larivere, John Giarantano and Wil Pierre-Mike. ALTAIR was my favorite working challenge at Kwajalein.

In 1997 I departed for a new assignment with Raytheon in Sudbury, MA, where I was assigned to the IT team. Raytheon was converting from Lotus to WindowsNT and my experience in that area allowed me to help and train the IT staff when I started my position there. It was a big change but went smoothly.

After working three years in Massachusetts for Raytheon, I changed jobs and worked as a sales engineer for 2nd Century Communications and seven months later they went out of business. A few weeks later I interviewed with Intel and I began working at the Hudson (MA) plant in September 2000. In January 2001 I was relocated to Santa Clara, Calif., to work nine months at the D2 fab facility. I returned to Hudson the first week of September just before 9/11. I worked at Hudson until January 2005, and then Intel moved me to Colorado Springs F23 fab. I purchased a condo three miles from the Garden of the Gods plant, such a beautiful area to live, only several hundred yards from the base of the mountains. I really like it here and the location.

I'm certainly proud of my kids. They continued their education after leaving Kwai

and now all are working and enjoying life. Sonson joined the Navy in early November 2006 after working 10 years for contractors as a journeyman electrician working at Kwajalein, Sea Life Park in Oahu, and for several contractors in the US. Raymond was in the Air Force for five years (three years in Germany) and now works for a

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Above:

Shermie during a recent appearance at the Antler's Hilton Hotel in Colorado Springs. During any typical month he may play at several events, i.e., an open house, a high-class hotel, a wedding, a restaurant—he's a busy guy!

Opposite:

Bob Klauser playing the saxophone at a Kwaj function.

Shermie - cont. from page 7

company maintaining hospital equipment. He is presently on a training assignment in Holland and makes his residence in PAF. Derson received his education in diesel mechanics and heavy equipment and is working for a construction company near the cape in Florida. Catherine received her law degree from Tulane University, worked in Pohnpei for the FSM as the assistant attorney general for several years, followed by getting her BAR for Hawaii, moving to Oahu where she works for a law firm in Honolulu. She married a wonderful man, Jason Aubuchon, and they are expecting their first child this August. They are happily settled in their home in Kaneohe, Hawaii.

Kwaialein was a wonderful place to work and live. I cherish all the friendships I made there, both American and Marshallese. I enjoyed raising my kids there and knowing they received a wonderful education from the staff of excellent teachers that taught there. My family and I enjoyed the sports and activities that Kwaj had to offer each year, including the fishing. I enjoyed the bowling league fun along with being the secretary of many leagues. I also enjoyed helping the Vets Hall by keeping the books and records for them monthly. It was nothing for me to jump on my bike and go down to the Vets Hall and play piano and sing for the visiting Australia and American Air Force crews when they arrived for a stopover. I have especially cherished my friendships with Paul Ackerman, Tom Daly, Nate Jackson, Ed Hamblin and William Patton.

I plan on making a CD in the future of old music collections I made while playing on Kwaj from the 70s-90s to share with others in the future and keeping the Kwaj memories alive. I enjoy updating my personal website (Shermie's Placewww.wiehes.com) and the Kwajalein Community Webpage (www.wiehes.com/ kwaj.html). I also appreciate receiving the nice email correspondence and help I receive in keeping the Kwaj Community Webpage current. The website is getting an average of 5,500 hits a month. If you would like to be added to the Kwaj email directory I maintain, drop me an email at: Shermie@att.net or shermie@wiehes.com. I'm always open to suggestions.

Jill, my girlfriend of two years, and I enjoy our time together and have taken some nice vacations and love to travel She is my agent and currently has me playing for a fund raiser for Al Wilson from the Denver Broncos on June 8, 2007. It should be fun with a lot of Denver Broncos and other pro athletics there. Jill also got me playing at the Golden Bee, a piano bar at the Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado Springs..

I'm presently working for Intel at the Garden of the Gods Fab 23 facility. Unfortunately Intel is closing the plant August 4th. This fall I'll begin seeking another technical job in Colorado Springs

Kwajalein was definitely a great place to work and live. I will never forget my 23 years of life there and I cherish all the friendships I made there. I loved entertaining for the parties and dances there. The Kwaj rumors will live on. I remembered starting a few for the fun of it.

Special thanks goes out to Jody for her work in keeping all the Kwaj family connected through her wonderful paper, Kwajaletter. I remember watching ball games at the Little League Field with her late husband, Bob Ragan, as far back as my early days on island when I made my weekend visits from Carlos—and now that field is named for him, Ragan Field.

Almost forgot, I provided a party at my home for Jody and her husband Ed on their visit to Kwaj in 1994. Keep up the good work Jody!

Editor: Thanks, Shermie. Certainly one of the main highlights of Ed's Kwaj visit in 1994 (mine,too) was the party on the beautiful patio at Shermie's home. Everything was going great and everyone was having a wonderful time—when the cops showed up! Had a complaint about too much noise...

Not like the old days, folks, when there were no home television programs or DVD movies to interrupt...and the sounds of music and laughter in the neighborhood were welcomed.

2007 Northwest Kwaj Picnic Friday& Saturday, July 20-21st

At the home of Jerry and Debbie Cross 15104 N. Shenandoah Dr. Hayden Lake, ID 83835 208 762 4608

Events:

Friday: 3PM:

Happy Hour & Heavy Pupu's

Saturday:

ALL DAY POTLUCK

Bring a dish to share - (kitchen available), reconnect with Kwaj friends, swim in the lake, sit in the hot tub and enjoy KWAJ BINGO with real Kwaj prizes!

See you at the Lake!

Questions/Directions: baldfox@icehouse.net

Shermie just moved the party inside and the fun continued. Great party and I still remember all of the delicious food!

*** Plase Note ***

We are going to change our email account soon. If I have your email address, I will let you know as soon as we do so. In any case, I'll list our new email address in the next Kwajaletter.

Also, please everyone, go to Shermie's community website and list your email and directory info—and keep them up to date. I will no longer be listing email addresses in the newsletter. Shermie and I plan to link our websites in the near future.