



Christmas Letter 2008

They say we are more likely to remember recent events easily and that time clouds our memory. They are obviously not over 60 because we have great difficulty remembering what happened ten minutes ago, let alone yesterday. When what we are trying to remember is a thought, like why did I come down to the basement, the memory is gone before we hit the first landing. That all being said . . . aaa . . . ah . . . now I lost my trend of thought. You can see I am nearing that age of failing memory, mobility and manliness. (Not necessarily in that order.) Hearing and sight losses are already making themselves evident. For some our age, this note might be the highlight of the season. For the rest of you who are not completely senile, I hope it at least brings a smile on a cold night as you take it to that comfy chair and enjoy a cup of hot cocoa. OK, make that 2 cups.

In past chronicles, I have started at the beginning in January or chosen a more creative start with perhaps a March or May entry. This year, I'm starting with the end of the year because it is more relevant in everyone's mind (that's where that first sentence was leading) and the recent revelations bring me hope for next year. I have thought of writing a new short story, "handcuffs to hope – the story of a governor". Actually, this is the story of about ½ the recent Illinois Governors. I am not surprised he tried to sell the Senate seat; he has been selling off Springfield one piece at a time from the time he took office. I understand he has been renting out the Governors Mansion and plans to turn it into a bed and breakfast. It was reported, by me, that he closed down New Salem several days a week when he found Kentucky wouldn't buy it for the Lincoln Bicentennial celebration. There were rumors he had contacted the same moving company that moved the Iles House and the more recent Maisenbacher Home, to see if they could move Lincoln's Tomb to Grant Park in Chicago. Fortunately for Springfield, it would not fit under the overpasses on Interstate 55. Yes, my friends, taking the governor out in handcuffs, was not the low point in Illinois politics, it was a sign of hope for a better 2009.

Now, to answer the burning question, "What have the Sriners done in 2008 while waiting for the arrest of Governor Rod?"

This year started in January as so many of them do and we started January in Florida as we so often do. Our friends in Florida, the Dershimers, offered us free room and board for a week or so if I would build on a new guest wing to their house. I think they were just being thoughtful making us feel at home with the "pay to play" politics. As it turned out, I was unable to complete the guest wing but I did get them some good shots of a guest's wing in their back yard. I saw and photographed a beautiful Pileated Woodpecker. He was too fast for me to get a clear shot. I chased him all over the neighborhood trying but after a ride back to the house in the local squad car, I decided running through back yards with a big lensed



camera was probably not a good idea. We decided it might be better to spend a few days at Sanibel Island photographing the numerous birds there. The sights there were awesome and I would like to go back. At right, a Great Egret stands motionless in a reflecting pond.



We returned to our free lodging only to learn that Florida Light and Heating had not paid their heating subcontractors and someone left the north door open. Without the heating blowers, it turned cold. They had record low temps predicted; so, I had to do some northern winterizing to protect plants and water pipes.



It got so cold that Cypress Gardens celebrated Halloween early, decorating some of the sculptured bushes in ghost costumes.

The following is a slight exaggeration, thousands of local men brought out their shaving cream to cover low growing plants. It was quite a sight. We decided if we were going

to be freezing, we might as well head home where we were more prepared for the weather.



March brought with it a 40th anniversary party surprise. The surprise was that nobody surprised us with a party. Perhaps we will have better luck with our 50th. My April 18th birthday was an earth shaking event. I woke up trembling from head to toe. I thought it was either the Lord calling me home or a wake up call from the heavens to go get my Golden Age Pass. As it turned out, it was neither; the earthquake epicenter was in southeastern Illinois and Kim felt it even more in Carbondale.

After this foreshadowing earthquake, we bought a new home less sensitive to the shaky ground. It has an open architecture with a bedroom wing at one end while the family room and kitchen share the other end. The toilet and shower also share the same space. They don't share the same space as the kitchen/family room but with each other. It is very convenient. Did you ever get up undecided if you should start with a shower or spend time on the bathroom throne? That is no longer a problem. Do both! Just don't forget to cover the toilet paper. Did I mention the new home has two wheels and a connection for a tow vehicle? It is very small and easy to tow and we love it! We lived in it for 10 days at Cades Cove in the Smokies and with the Old Age pass, camping 10 days cost only \$70! Love these new benefits. It was sad to have to put the camper to rest for the winter. You can be certain I'll





be getting it ready to go again early in the spring.

The picture at left was from the loop road at Cades Cove. The sunrise fog gave a surreal look to the landscape. The Smokies can be a one-day drive so it will be on our itinerary more often in the future.

Now, you might ask, “Why no mention of the kids and our grandson?” The simple answer is, “I left the best for last.” As they might say on *Dancing With the Stars*, “In no particular order of importance” the kids are doing great! (Note to the English teachers out there: I am using “doing” here as a state of being rather than an action verb. The kids are great not greatly. I explained that great; didn’t I? I am feeling very goodly about myself. Remember that the next time you feel badly about something. If I lost you on that, don’t feel too bad about it, you are in the majority. Should that be badly?. . .)

Krystal and Steve have their house up for sale in Plainfield. When it sells, they will buy a new home here in the Springfield vicinity. They have come home! Can you feel the joy in that statement? Steve is still working with ICON but working from home. Krystal is teaching school in New Berlin just west of town. They are currently living with Steve’s parents. Actually, you might just say they are sharing a house with them because the elder Oh’s are on “restaurant time” and if you know Krystal and Steve, you know they live on their own time; usually about 45 minutes behind standard! Their times at home seldom overlap during the waking part of the day. We pray for a sale of their house so they can truly start their life here with both sets of grandparents. Krystal plans to complete her Master of Fine Arts Degree in Creative Writing this summer. We plan to go to the graduation in Boston.



Kimberly is doing well with her studies at SIU Carbondale. (English is confusing, isn’t it?) She also expects to graduate this spring but will be going directly into a masters program to complete her counseling degree. Her typical day seems to me like 8 hours working in the Psychology Lab doing a research project almost by herself, 4 hours working in the SIU School of Medicine office keeping them organized, 6 hours in actual class, 4 hours taking care of her

new puppy and current roommate and studying. That gives her 2 hours for sleeping. Note: roommate and puppy (Sasha) might be similar but are not the same entity.



The newest arrival to our family is Joshua. As you should recall, he is our first grandchild. He certainly steals the show at all family events. While turning only two last October, the cool kids month, he is stealing the hearts of all the sweeties at day care. He is precious and we look forward to our weekly time with him and his Mom.

With full or partial retirement just over the next hill . . . and around the bend . . . and down the hill . . .

and Let's not talk about retirement. Considering all the drops in the stock market, it is tempting to cash in our 401K and go get a good meal. Then we wouldn't have to worry about losing another \$10. The Bible says, "... and the last shall be first." My retirement strategy has been to wait for the flip; then work my way up from there. You can see now why the recent state of the economy gives me great hope. I could go on for hours; actually, for the slow readers, I already have but it seems time to call an end to 2008 and prepare for a better 2009.



To all our family and friends out there who give life a purpose, thank you for sharing our journey. May the light of this Christmas Season resonate within your soul and light the flame within. May we all leave 2008 behind us and embrace the coming New Year with added hope and an awareness of life that can bring us peace and spiritual prosperity.



Love and Light,
Dulany & Pat Sriner

