

Christmas Letter 2009

Dear Friends and Family,



That's me ^

Nothing much happed this year but I still wanted to wish you and you'rs a Mary Christmas and Peachful and Prospending New Year. I prey all is well with you and you're family.

Love and Light,
The Sriners

Why didn't I ever think of this before? I didn't even need Pat to proofread it. I'll just add a couple personal notes here for my special friends who look forward to my slightly exaggerated and definitely unusual look at the year gone by and I can have them (the letters, not the friends) making their way through cyberspace before the middle of the month.

I just wanted to add a couple extra thoughts meant just for you,

[To personalize this letter, please insert your name here] After the new year, our attention

turns to those majestic visitors from the north. This year was no different; although



we did see more eagles than ever before. We always look forward to our weekend treks to the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers; but the more we see, the more it takes to excite us.

Seeing a white head across the river perched far from clear eyesight isn't worth our time to stop. We are looking for that one-in-a-thousand picture. One year it was a pair of eagles together on a branch within 100 yards.

Another was a swooping eagle catching a fish; but this year, we got the first video with sound

[Click on the picture above for video](#)

of a group of eagles in a tree within 50 feet. We just sat there in the car and listened. We went back to the same spot two weeks later and where we had seen literally hundreds of eagles, there were none, zero, nada! What a let down. I think many of the nests were in foreclosure and the eagle couples just left them and went back to the north woods. Wow, my hand is getting sore handwriting this; I should have printed it. Guess I will get out the typewriter to finish up.

In May, we headed to Carbondale with our newly acquired German Shepherd, Kira for a relaxing 3 day weekend. This was graduation weekend for Kim. It turned out to be a graduation to remember. You might recall that Kim's first semester in college was in Florida; that was when she learned firsthand about hurricanes. Now she had finished her final semester in her undergraduate studies at SIU-C and was to learn about "inland hurricanes" **firsthand!** I had made it 63 years and had never heard of an "inland hurricane" and I was not alone! But like Kim, I learned what 90 mph sustained winds can do, **up close and personal**, as we stood at the window and watched trees topple and blow away like garbage cans on a windy trash day. One of the residents apparently wanted to take an evergreen home for Christmas because it was lying on top of her car. I'm sure the tree looked much smaller until she put it on top of the car. You couldn't even get in the door. After the storm had ended, we negotiated

nearly blocked roads to get out to the campground and see what if anything was left of our home on wheels. We spent more time off road than on it. Residents were too busy trying to get trees off their homes that they didn't notice us driving across their yard and patio. One family was cooking hot dogs on a campfire because all the power



was out. We grabbed a couple on the way by and left them a cold Coke in return. We didn't have time to get the proper condiments because they were on the far side of the picnic table. With Gods help and the Jeep's 4 wheel drive, we made it to the secluded campground. Somehow our camper was spared. The park had lost power, so we moved the camper up to Kim's apartment parking lot. I had left my generator at home thinking, "We will have electricity; why carry a generator?" I won't make that mistake again! Krystal and Steve had to bring it down to us when they came down for graduation ceremonies later in the day. We powered the camper and Kim's appliances with it until after the make-shift graduation ceremonies. We were the only ones with cold beer, so we were the hit of the complex. People all over town were having wild hurricane parties cooking up food before it spoiled. SIU students will use any excuse to have a party!

That afternoon's Graduation ceremonies were cancelled and subsequent ones were abbreviated. It was a little strange. We sat on downed oak trees, made into chairs and watched the graduates fall up the unlit aisle. I should have brought my generator and one of my old theater lights to properly spotlight Kim. There were no speeches



just a list of names as graduates made the memorable walk across the makeshift stage lit by fireflies and flashlights. Kim is still down in C'Dale doing graduate work. That girl with the tree in her car probably is too.

As some of you may recall, we had planned to spend over 3 weeks in the Northeast this year. We headed east the latter part of June; but being at that age, I found myself stopping to check out almost every restroom between here and the Illinois border. It took what seemed like days to just get out of the state. We checked our GPS and the state of the economy (ours and the country's) and decided to go to [Shenandoah National Park](#) in Virginia. Our rendezvous with Wil and Elizabeth did not materialize due to a family emergency but we still enjoyed a week of rain soaked sunshine and a close encounter with a mama bear and cubs before we decided that if we didn't head out of these mountains, we would need a snorkel and underwater camera equipment.



Fortunately, when we returned home, my [bear experience](#) was written up in the Outdoor Section of the local paper rather than the Obituaries. I did learn one thing: Bears do not respond favorably to uninvited guests at their dinner table when the cubs are home. I also found that a one-second "Hail Mary" is not impossible

even for a non-Catholic. As I look back, the experiences of beauty and utter peace we had along the [Appalachian Trail](#) (when I wasn't wearing scuba gear or soiling my pants) were worth the trip. Someday I would like to be able to say, "I have hiked the entire trail from Georgia to Maine;" but until I can make that statement honestly, perhaps in my next life, I'll just say, "I have enjoyed every mile walking on the Appalachian Trail that goes from Georgia to Maine."

Our next trip was to [Alley Springs](#) National Riverway in Eminence, Missouri. It is on the Jack's Fork which flows into the Current River. We were again faced with rainy weather. We made the most of it and enjoyed the clear, spring-fed waters swiftly moving across the multi-colored pebbled river bottoms. The surreal deep blue springs accented by the deep green plants made beautiful Photos.



When the vacation ended, (We actually left a day early) we were ready to go home and dry out. Sure glad we were not still in that "travel light" tent camping mode!

The year was speeding by and now it was time to turn from travel mode to preparation for our upcoming 45th class reunion. I had 40 bazillion pictures from as far away as New Zealand to somehow make into a presentation for the Opening Night Mixer. I have learned procrastination from my two daughters but after many late nights, the deed was done and guests started arriving for the festivities. Pat's best friend, Jackie, from Texas, came up and stayed with us for the weekend. With lunches at Maid Rite and Cozy Dog and evening events at the Firefighter's club and Island Bay, we all had a delightful time. Sunday morning, we had the group over to our house for world famous Mel-O-Cream doughnuts. By midday, we were exhausted. We needed a vacation!





So, as summer started giving way to Fall, we took another trip Northeast. This time it was mostly north. We were on a quest to see the fall colors of Door County, Wisconsin. From our vantage point high on a bluff overlooking Sturgeon Bay/Green Bay, we could see a beautiful array of gold to reds along the opposite shore. They were contrasted against the soft white snow. Did I mention it was COLD and windy? No, I'm not referring to our friends Nancy and Hans; but to the weather hospitality we found in this frozen finger jutting into the northern part of Lake Michigan. I think I know what finger it was, and Door County was **giving** it to **us**! It warmed up after we left; again prematurely! Sorry Nancy for leaving you with a five course dinner in the crock pot.

Krystal and Steve bought a new home on the far west side of Springfield; about 20 minutes this side of Jacksonville. I think they used Joshua's little red wagon to move their stuff because it took almost all month. The house is in Pleasant Plains School District, where Krystal is now teaching high school English. Steve changed jobs as well and is Director of Research with Springfield Clinic. Our grandson, Joshua, turned 3 on October 23rd and celebrated his birthday with his preschool classmates and friends at Chuck E Cheese.



Pat finished her 9th anniversary with Secretary of State on December 1st. She still works in Archives' Records Management and looks forward to retirement in the year....? With savings amounting to enough for a Big Mac and fries, retirement is a long way off; like in another lifetime!

I lost over 50 pounds before our reunion, so I wouldn't have to pay for an extra seat at the dinner and I have kept it off. I am still House Doctoring to pay the bills so I can buy better photography equipment. I would like to retire from the construction work before I am 80 and enjoy my equipment. No, the photography equipment! I would like to expand my photography work to include more event photography to go along with my nature and architectural work. Also, I am still doing web design and hosting several websites.

The other day I had to reload the toilet paper holder. I noticed the paper was about 1½ inch narrower than the holder. I thought, "Our butts are getting wider but our toilet paper is getting smaller." This reflects the state of our society, it is getting harder and harder to clean up our messes. Under the guise of progress and prosperity (usually their own), the greedy are destroying our world faster than technology can fix it.



May the God of all mankind bless us with the understanding that, while we must follow differing paths of understanding on this journey of life, we are all headed for the same place. May your journey be hard enough to allow you to learn and grow and easy enough to allow you to enjoy the walk.

*Love and Light,
Dulany and Pat
& Kira*

(below right) Grandma and Joshua decorating our tree.

(below left) Kira in front and Kim's Sasha behind.

