

Christmas Letter 2011



It was 6:30 this morning and I heard that all familiar sound from my cell phone. I got up to check and found a message from Siri. She wanted to tell me my snoring was keeping her awake. Now if you don't know about Siri, she lives inside your I-phone 4. You can talk to her and ask questions or have her call or text someone for you. She is your own personal assistant right there in your phone. Normally she would not start a call on her own, but I guess if she needed her rest and I was keeping her up, it is understandable.

There is only one problem. I don't have an I-phone. I have an Android phone. I'm wondering if perhaps she was just visiting my phone and decided to spend the night. What is the gestation period for little Andrapples?

Before I could get back to bed and pull the covers up over my head, my phone went off again. This time it was a different ring tone. I got up again to check. This time it was my Android; he figured that since I was up and neither of us was going to get back to sleep, perhaps it would be a good time to start the annual Christmas Letter. I tried to get additional information from my phone about what had just happened, but his screen went blank and he reset himself. I'm guessing he wanted to wipe out his short term memory before he spilled the beans.

So, my friends, here I am. It is 6:45 AM and I am starting to put thoughts on paper. Have you ever wondered who is in control? Is it you or your electronic devices? I used to laugh about getting up to go to the bathroom and checking e-mail before returning to bed. Now, I have my phone reminding me that I should pay a bill or wish someone a happy birthday. I appreciate the help remembering, Lord knows I need it, but whose life is it anyway?

Pat is still working for the Secretary of State but is nearing retirement. Knee surgery is also in her near future. I am still House Doctoring in a semi-retirement mode. My body/mind wanted to retire long ago but my fiscal needs have not allowed it.

So, where should I start? If I followed the norm for social media, I would start with the most recent. I guess I did that with the opening, but for now, I'll just be old fashioned and start with January. Did you ever wonder why the year starts in January? It's winter, the days are short, and it's cold. Why not start with a natural beginning like spring? What if we all started our own personal year on our birthday? Then we could go around saying, "happy New Year" all year. But I digress. (What's new?)

January in the Srinier household is the code word for Eagle watch, and we did our share of that this year. We spent many hours at the Havana Nature Center, resting inside while we scoured the skies for the majestic Bald Eagles. As they glided toward our sanctuary, we all headed out like bugs from a burning log. Cameras scanned the skies and shutters clicked in rapid succession. Then it was back in



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for picture viewing and comparisons. The more the river freezes, the more the eagles congregate around open water at the locks. We have had sightings in Keokuk of trees filled with over 50 eagles. What a sight. At times the branches bend under the weight and it would be easy to reach up and grab a lucky eagle feather. Unfortunately, doing so, might get us a stay with Governor Rod in a limited access federal housing facility.

With my 65th Birthday just around the corner, I had decided that a birthday gathering for all our classmates who would be sharing this Medicare Mayhem would be super cool! The date was set and Pat and I started the planning. What started as a simple "gathering," somehow swelled into a \$5000 class event. By March, we were so stressed out; we needed to get away for a while. Pat and I met up with Kim in New Orleans for a southern shores spring vacation. We traveled all along the coastline camping as we went. We saw the great golden moon rise along the beach in Destin while we were visiting Nancy and Bill Dillen along with a few other classmates; then we drove across Florida to meet up with Karen Waters and Bryan in Jacksonville FL. It was an awesome trip and we got to see many old friends. Sometimes I wonder how they got so old!



May brought with it a new sprout on the family tree. Emily Seunghee Oh jumped out, hair first into the world. She quickly stole our hearts and continues to dominate the Oh family gatherings. Joshua turned 5 and he is a super big brother to Emily. Steve has a new position with a previous employer ICON. It was an advancement and now he works from home. Krystal is still teaching English at Pleasant Plains HS.

June marked the premier showing of the new TV reality show, "It must be Friday". The pilot episode aired June 1st and 14th. It started with me at my Primary Care physician's office. He is looking into my right eye saying, "This is completely black". This is followed by a flashback to a recent encounter with my previous optometrist who is saying, "No, you don't have to worry about cataracts. You are a long way from needing surgery." At this point we scan forward to the surgeon who would make the final decision regarding my ever-darkening vision. The third scene took us to the surgery pre-op. Draped in the

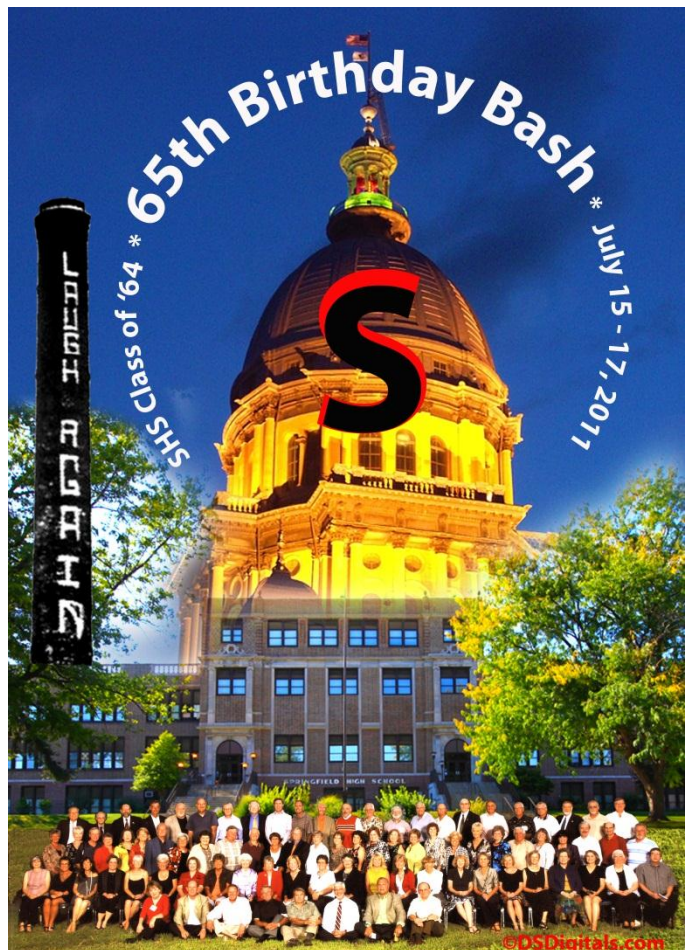
customary hospital garb, I am shown getting the first of many eye drops before surgery. The camera zooms in and goes into a slow motion as the first drop hits my blinking eye. The drop bounces off the eyelashes and makes the first splash on my cheek. As the procedure continues, subsequent drops follow similar paths until there is a raging waterfall down my face and torso only to end up somewhere in that black hole known as the belly button. Then, I watch the walls speed by as I am catapulted down the hall into the operating room. In my semi-conscious mindset, I look up at the surreal picture where the stand of doctors and nurses look like a dense forest of tall trees. The bright sun above looks almost heavenly

and I hear a voice from the distance. "I don't like the looks of this! He isn't dilated at all!" There was a pause as I drifted deeper into the drug induced bliss. The last thing I remember was a short discussion regarding the wisdom of continuing the procedure. With that the scene ends with the caption, "To be continued."

The second half of the pilot shows the next day in the doctor's office, I was asked how I was. I replied, "Fine, except that I can't see out of my new eye." One check of the eye pressure explained the problem. The pressure was 49 compared to my normal of around 17. Homeland security classifies this as explosive. One bump and I could blow up the entire clinic. The Doctor looked and said, "I don't like this!" I told him it was a lot worse from my side. He described the next procedure in medical gobbly gook, but I got the translation. He was going to put a needle in my eye and draw out some fluid before I exploded and took half the city block. That ended the two part pilot. The show has continued the rest of the year with regular Friday appointments trying to fix the screw-up. I have had slits in my eye and excessive inflammation even down inside the eye. Every procedure seems to end in a lot of prolonged pain and irritation. We have been preempted most of this month for seasonal programming, but I will be back on next month with another "two slits and we are done" episode. I'm hoping this will be the last procedure.

After more than 6 months of planning, the SHS 65th Birthday Bash took center stage in mid-July. I was quite proud of the success but very relieved it was over. It started on a Thursday night with pizza at Gabatoni's and went into full swing Friday morning with a golf outing. I spent the morning in a golf cart following the golfers around trying to police their play. They explained to me that it was OK to use multiple balls on each hole. I also found out that if the foursome agrees, your T-shot can be a "Gimmy". I didn't understand all the new rules for friendly tournament play. I did learn how much fun they had.

We finished Friday's festivities with a casual mixer at the Comedy Club. Saturday started with an early morning behind-the-scenes tour at the Abe Lincoln Presidential Museum. Local ALPM members were able to get everyone in free. This was an unannounced bonus. At noon we migrated over to Cozy Dog for lunch and then out to the Elks Club on the lake for the afternoon and evening. Dinner included prime rib and a dessert cake with the now famous 65th Bash Logo!



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The final event was a breakfast at Wanda and Dave Keil's house Sunday morning. We played an adult version of hide and seek – stalker edition for a while, but with limited hiding spots, it was difficult.



With the Birthday Bash, also known as “Medicare Mayhem”, fresh in our minds, Pat and I decided to take the party to the mountains and had a mini-bash



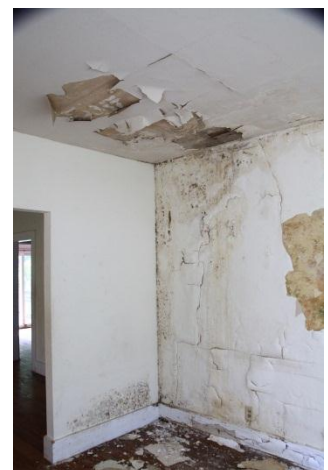
at Rocky Mountain National Park. We were joined by Carl Crouch and Jay and Joyce Kesinger. Kim joined us on this trip too and we had a great relaxing time.



There were several other gatherings for the SHS class of 64, including one for Dianne O'Keefe home from California with her family.

Our Christmas Gathering pictured at left was well attended and enjoyed by all.

Somewhere around mid-year, Kim decided she would return to Springfield after graduation in December from SIU Carbondale. She would have her Master's Degree in Counseling. She planned to move into Gram's house, next door. The house, having been empty and unheated for 3 years and rented for 3 before that, was in complete disrepair. I made plans to buy the house and get it ready for Kim. This has been a true labor of love; OK, it is also an investment, but I don't think I would have worked so hard if Kim were not moving in. It got a new roof, new drywalled ceilings, repaired plaster walls



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along with electrical and plumbing work. To cut costs, I have done all the work. Something about a 65th birthday party and carrying 90 pound bundles of shingles up onto the roof do not go well together. I called it my reality based stress test. Actually, the real stress has been the paperwork needed to complete the title transfer. It is still in limbo. My sister, Sue passed away the first week in November.

Andrew, Kim's boyfriend will be spending part of his holiday break with us. I hope his hand fits a paint roller. He is finishing his Doctorate internship this summer.

Steve and Krystal, not to be outdone, also needed help finishing their basement. Throughout the year between other work projects, I found myself laying ceramic floor tile, installing molding, electrical and plumbing. This is another project not quite complete. But just like Kim's, it is now at least partially functional as am I!

This brings us to a close of 2011. As I look back, I see two major themes for Pat and me. One was a lot of hard work. The other was a year filled with the rekindling of friendships. In early youth, it is all about ourselves; in school, it is all about our friends. As we mature, it is all about our families; and now as we age and our kids are on their own, we find time to return to the old friends we had. For those who also find themselves in this period of life, enjoy every minute with friends and grandkids, because the next phase takes us back to the beginning. We do have an advantage our parents didn't have and that is the ability to use the internet to connect with friends thousands of miles away. We can text and tweet, e-mail and skype. We can exchange thoughts with the speed of light through the social networks. It is amazing. So, whether you follow us on Facebook or one of my blogs, stay in touch. The love of family and friends is the only thing that can last throughout eternity. It is our wish that all people realize that we are all headed for the same ultimate destination; only our travel agents are different. To each and every one of you we wish you a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah or whatever blessing your faith embraces. May your new year be filled with Peace, Joy, good health and prosperity.

Love and Light,

Pat and Dulany

