

Family & Friends!

Christmas 2008

Hope you like our new Christmas Card – *we decided to switch from fire arms to power tools!* The scene behind us is a totally redone bathroom that took a year to finish – the original estimate was three weeks! We learned more than we wanted to about drywall, pvc, ceramic tile, and installing a shower floor!

The house is now open for you to visit! You can have your own room & bath (*at reasonable off-season rates!*). If you've never been to Niagara Falls or Watkins Glen – you'll enjoy them both. Lyons is pretty well located and only a few hours from each destination. We'd love to see you!

Oh, and yes, Domenic is now taller than me – *even without the hair!* He's a sophomore, enjoying playing the clarinet in the school band (its a BIG band for a BIG high school in Boulder, CO), and he'll turn 16 in February – how time flies! He'll also have his drivers license then – *which is a relief for driving-with-a-suspended-license-for-eight-years dad (more on that later!)*.

Continuing with our annual barnyard fowl raising – we hatched five baby chicks using our own incubator. Watch a video of the 'boys' on YouTube:

Search for “box-o-baby-chickens” or (click on the “watch in high quality”)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zTqsRjW0-U>

We did have a tragedy with the chicks: It was Dom's last day here (always a bit somber) and we were packing to go to the airport. The chicks were in a coop area with about a 4 foot fence (we never left them out unless we were home during the day). I'd already called a local farmer and was going to bring him our chicks the next day to join his 'flock'.

Dom suddenly calls from upstairs and yells, “Dad, there's a dog in the chicken coop!” We both ran out and a neighbors husky (*which should have been on a leash and who's been reported for being loose before*) had jumped the fence and had killed four of the five birds – we were lucky to save one, Curly!

It was awful! I was broken up about it and Dom was in tears. Such a pointless tragedy and what *perfect timing!* *After a while we could 'sorta' laugh about the bad timing. You can bet that next year we're planning a chicken coop that could withstand an attack from Godzilla!*

I'd hoped to report my '88 Van had crossed the 300,000 mile threshold, but we are on a 'hold' at about 299,000! As many of you know I've had a suspended license for years due to the child support mess I'm in. The local 'authorities' had been aware of this for some time, but finally decided to bring it to a halt in a 'firm' manner with an unexpected arrest and a couple of weeks in the local jail (if you want more details: <http://www.AKidsRight.Org/>)

Anyway, the car is parked, the plates turned in, and I'm trying to make a legal effort to get this stuff sorted out – but in the meanwhile, I'm enjoying walking! As many of you know I've been in jail before, but it certainly seemed strange to find myself in handcuffs and shackles in my own home town and on display as a prisoner in the village court.... *where were things going for me?*

I may be getting 'better looking', but I'm not getting any younger and only 10 years from 62. I laughed when I got the Social Security estimate of my pension, about \$1100/month and that's it – not really the 'nest egg' I'd been hoping for and I've worked pretty hard my entire life.

You have more time than you want to think about this stuff as you are 'walking' home on a cold day, carrying the groceries to a dark house, and wondering, "is this as good as it gets or can things get even worse?" *Boy – if you haven't been there already, make sure you make a visit to <http://www.despair.com/>*

But you know, I knew someone who had traveled those same sidewalks before coming home to that same dark house – my father! I imagine him in 1952 – he had just turned 60, the oldest of his siblings (who were mostly married and had families). He was living alone, didn't drive a car either, and was getting too old to keep hammering spikes for the railroad. What type of future did he or others see for himself? *Could have been pretty bleak....*

Who would have guessed his life 'beginning' at 61 when he married my mom. That he'd be a father at 64 and filled with joy having a son to raise and many happy years surrounded by his family until he passed away at 97!

He was always a man of deep Faith and trust in a loving God & Father. He knew how to enjoy life and never stopped praying & believing (thankfully for me!). So many people wonder how I can be 'upbeat' and it's pretty easy, especially during the Christmas season. As it was for my father; having a son is my greatest joy and everything else is 'fluff'. It's also nice to rely on the kindness of others and be able to thank them for the help they give you in difficult times (I think my Dad knew that also).

We wish you all the best for Christmas! We're looking forward to a nice time together and the chance to see family & friends. It's funny, but it takes me back to a Christmas in 1971. I was 15 years old, parents on social security, and we didn't have a car until I got my license at 16 – it was a great time!

Love,

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