

Family & Friends!

Christmas 2010

We have links below to pictures. To get a version where you can follow the links go here:
<http://www.murtari.org/family/christmas2010.pdf>

Hope you like our "photo" card -- there were no waterfowl hurt in its production! The year began as many recent years have started, with me spending time on the "[County Vacation Plan](#)" -- many of you call it the "local jail". Rooms are cold & small, concrete floors, hard beds, you can't see out the windows, and awful food! I really need to find another travel agent!

I continued my [NonViolent actions](#) for Family Law Reform until March. There were a lot of arrests and charges, but in the end everything was dismissed. It was good to see a few newspaper stories and it was nice to have a few parents drive all the way to Lyons to participate in some "quiet walks." I wish progress would come sooner, but it's worth the effort! Domenic was due for Spring Break and also for our six week summer vacation and I suspended my actions for a while.

If you remember last year's Newsletter (*I'm sure you keep notes!*) -- I had to shut most of my business down because I couldn't drive. I planned out some funds that would allow me to go on "County Vacation" for a few months and then I knew I'd have to get back to work.

Dom (now a Senior!) and I had a nice time for Spring break. The weather was good and we got some early vegetables planted. We also made a visit to Fort Drum (*at least Domenic could drive*) to visit an Air Force buddy of mine and his wife (hi Scott & Vickie!). We had a great time. Vickie is a true Southern Belle and a great cook! Dom and I came home stuffed! Scott is a Lt. Colonel (former fighter pilot) and now works with the Army on getting bombs dropped in the right places -- he just went to Afghanistan for six months of duty and we all pray he returns safely.

After that I polished up my resume and was ready to work! Even though my license was suspended for being a "dead-beat" I could still get a "restricted" license to go to/from work (normally used for people with DWI type convictions). I went to DMV and was told I didn't qualify because I was a "threat on the highway" -- wow! It took a few months of digging through the bureaucracy to find out why since I've always had a very safe driving record. The reason -- I'd had several tickets for driving with a suspended license in past years (which was the problem I was trying to solve!).

I even went back to Family Court to try and get their "suspension" lifted (*strangely enough, if the Child Support agency lifted the suspension, I would be okay to drive!*). I didn't get anywhere there either. I was told they could remove the suspension as long as I signed a document "confessing" that I owe over \$100,000 in back support. Now... they already have legal judgments against me for all that and I just couldn't say something I felt was a lie. I've done everything I can for Dom, mostly spending a fortune on travel expenses -- but all that doesn't count. I made another attempt to negotiate something with Hiromi (who has remarried), but we haven't made any progress.

Because of my qualifications I had some "head-hunters" call me and offer me some great paying jobs -- *sorry, I can't get there right now!* It was very frustrating. Dom is getting ready for college and I'd really like to be able to help him out. He's fortunate to have some very good grades and test scores -- so he should get scholarship help. In the last bit of "irony" I told Dom he would qualify for some great financial aid since his Dad was a "financial basket case." I found out *that wasn't true* after talking to Financial aid at a local college. Since I'm a "non-custodial" parent, my income (*or lack thereof*), doesn't matter. I don't appear on the forms. *Wow, an idea! If any of you have any kid's in high school who need help with college. I'd be happy to adopt them for a year -- just make sure they have a driver's license and like Italian food!!!*

Anyway, I'm lucky to be able to find some contract jobs over the Internet where I can work from home and try to keep ahead of the bills -- it's been quite a race! I talked to DMV, in June of next year (2011) I will no longer be a "threat" and will qualify for the restricted license!

During the summer we really got into farm animals, rockets, and gardening. We hatched Spruce, who we thought was a Goose, from an egg supplied by a local farmer. After hatching we were told Spruce was a "he" and he bonded to Dom and I as his "real" parents -- so much so that we couldn't leave him outside by himself!

He loved to tuck in beneath us as we lay on the floor. *He did a pretty good job of preening my beard for any pests -- he also picked out a few nose hairs!* His poops were manageable when he was small, but getting larger... The internet came to our rescue! We found a site that sold diapers for waterfowl! For pictures check our on-line photo album (<http://picasaweb.google.com/jmurtari>)

Dom and I were both skeptical, but desperate, so we placed the order and unbelievably -- they worked! Spruce really enjoyed watching TV with us and would follow us around the house. People visiting were amazed and that gave me an idea. The Rochester FOX affiliate sent a team of three to Lyons (a one hour drive each way) to cover this amazing event! The funny story they like to use at the end of the "real" news. You can see the TV video: (<http://www.youtube.com/jmurtari>)

After the TV another farmer let us know *that Spruce was not only NOT a Goose, he was also a **she** duck!* We still had our loyal lion head rabbit Leo who discovered he liked duck food better than rabbit pellets.... And then to complete our animal menagerie, we began feeding a very lovable stray cat. This led to more complications when she began to "show". We decided to let nature take it's course. At the end of Dom's summer visit she had suddenly "deflated", but no sign of kittens. Oh, I almost forgot to mention, Leo discovered cat food was even better tasting and Spruce agreed -- *who wants to eat chicken feed when you can have tender nuggets!* Had to keep them apart at meal time.

Several weeks later she showed up with five kittens! I made them a home in the garage and Mom supplied them with tasty Bluejays and Squirrels -- *they like their meat red, bleeding, and still twitching!* I knew we couldn't keep them and the SPCA was willing to take the whole family after they were weaned. I spent time with them each day to get them used to people and handling -- they really became a lot of fun. I talked to Dom and we decided it was worth \$100 to get "Kitty" spayed so we could keep her as a pet.

It's amazing Dom is a Senior now and ready for college. I don't know how to describe my feelings of relief and joy. The divorce occurred when he was so small and so far away that I always lived with the tension of losing contact (as I've seen happen to others). There were so many decisions to make and hard choices. I'm relieved all has turned out well for the things that are really important! We were both tired of "counting days" till the next visit. **Our special thanks to so many of you who came to visit, shared your homes, took the time to listen and cared....**

Next summer a new chapter begins. Dom is interested in engineering and we visited a few local colleges and took tours. Applications are in to about 7 different schools and we'll see what happens!

I'm still concerned about keeping ahead of the bills, but having just that as a bother is certainly a luxury in life. This is always a good time of the year to count your blessings -- and Dom and I have been very fortunate. To have good friends, loving family and one's health, what more can you ask for -- money is pretty much on the bottom of the list.

Love,

John & Domenic Murtari

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More pictures: <http://www.Murtari.Org/>

P.S. After Dom left, diaper changing Spruce three times a day was a bit much. She is now comfortable at a nice "rescue" shelter for farm animals, <http://www.CrackerBoxPalace.org/>