

# Merry Christmas & Happy New Year from Pennsylvania!

The outside Christmas lights are up again. The flimsy light-covered arch from the arts & crafts store is blinking on and off causing passersby to wonder, "I thought bordellos weren't allowed in Buckingham Township."

We are still living on the outskirts of Doylestown in the house with the unfinished kitchen-remodeling project started in 2005. Thanks to global warming (or climate change?) we had less than 20 inches of snow last winter. But a horrendous ice storm last February left a four-inch coating of ice. Summer and spring were mild with plentiful moisture. Our tiny garden started with three intentionally planted tomato plants and finished with an additional forty volunteer plants sprouting from the compost that Mike worked into the garden soil.

Last spring Mike and Jean flew to Columbus and drove to Wittenberg University, Springfield, Ohio to see Gretchen inaugurated into Phi Beta Kappa and presented with one of Wittenberg's Presidential Scholarships for outstanding students. Last summer she worked part time entering customer data for one of Mike's business clients. Last week she finished all the requirements a semester early for graduation from Wittenberg with a B.A. in English. Mike flew to Columbus to help drive her car back home to Pennsylvania in sleet and rain pulling a U-Haul trailer containing furniture from the off-campus house she rented with two other girls. Gretchen is still very focused on becoming a writer. She is not interested in traditional career paths for English majors such as teaching, journalism, or graduate school. After the holidays she plans to look for a some kind of job.

Paul is in his senior year at Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama majoring in consumer science. He stayed in Alabama last summer taking courses to earn an additional 15 credit hours. He plans to graduate next summer. He has gotten accustomed to the 20-hour Amtrak trek between Anniston, AL and Philadelphia. He enjoys Alabama with its warm climate and southern charm. Last fall he landed a major role as Inspector Blore in a production of the Agatha Christie play, "And Then There Were None",. Mike and Jean flew to Atlanta and drove to Jacksonville to see him perform one night. He did a marvelous job in the role and the humor he injected was a big hit with the audience.

Jean continues to work as a cataloguer for the Bucks County Free Library system preparing new books for distribution to 18 libraries. Most days she spends time with her mother, Margaret (84), at Lakeview Assisted Living playing cards, filling bird (actually squirrel) feeders, and tending to medical and personal needs.

Mike got rid of his braces after 18 months. He still works half time as the business manager for Neshaminy Warwick Presbyterian Church. In January he started teaching evening classes in information system for adults as an adjunct professor at Strayer University. He taught one graduate and four undergraduate classes and earned certification to teach online classes starting in 2008. In February he began helping a heating and air conditioning company organize its customer database, create a website, and launch pinpoint direct mail marketing campaigns. He is heavily committed to the Bucks County Choral Society where he sings tenor, manages the patron database for marketing and fundraising, and serves on the board of directors.

The other important members of the family are Rupert (11) and Otis (5). Because of the way he is, we sometimes call Rupert "Loopert" and "Toofless". He doesn't mind because he's deaf. His top priority is food. He starts his alto hound barking for breakfast as soon as Mike awakes at 5:00 a.m. Even though Otis is younger and smaller than Rupert, he is the alpha dog . We sometimes call him "Odie" and "Otis Pedoughtis". His top priority is three-mile walks. When Mike reaches for the leash, he starts his baritone alpha-dog bark and bounces in tight spinning circles. Rupert eagerly greets everyone while Otis hides under the kitchen table when a stranger enters the house. However, Otis will climb into your lap, smell your breath, and snuggle while Rupert will only sit in front of you watching you with a vacant stare that says, "Are you going to feed me?"



Vacation in 2007 consisted of taking naps and reading books in the old rope hammock stretched between an oak tree and the basketball pole. However, the daily routine was broken up by college and family-related trips to Ohio, Alabama, and Minnesota and by quarterly visits from Jean's sister, Layne, who flew to Philadelphia from St. Louis to visit Margaret and offer Jean some respite. In November Mike and Jean flew to Minneapolis and drove to St. Cloud, Minnesota to attend the wedding of their lovely niece, Nicole, and her new husband, Jason. The wedding offered the first opportunity for a family reunion of Mike, his mother (81), stepfather (86), four brothers, and two sisters since the funeral of brother Dave in 2005.

Other items during 2007 included a conference on autism spectrum disorders at the University of Pennsylvania in February (on the same day as the ice storm) where Mike and Jean were presenters on a panel discussing family experiences with Asperger's Syndrome. In June Mike and Gretchen attended part of the Philadelphia Writer's Conference in the historic section of the city. Mike and Jean continued to attend Covenant Presbyterian Church in Buckingham and participated in the small group ministry there. The focus of the church is outreach. In early 2008 the church will move into its new facility built on a site only a mile from the house.

***We feel blessed and we hope that you and those you love will be greatly blessed in 2008!***