

'Twas the night before Thanksgiving and all through the house not a creature was stirring not even a mouse. I sat down with my pen and my paper so fine to write out the yearly Christmas letter line by line. Enough with the rhyming I decided at once, let's just tell the story of this past wonderful year.

We began as we always do with our trip to New Orleans. Jay is certain that Mardi Gras would not be the same without him parading! I am sure he is correct as this year he and the group he rides with had without question the ugliest float in the entire parade. Kudos to them for standing out! The Harold and the Purple Crayon float will forever live in infamy. We came home in our normal blizzard. Had to hire kids to dig our car out of the snow! Remind me again why we travel in February???

March and April were busy with showers and getting ready for Tom and Melissa's wedding. Yes, despite the Las Vegas bookies saying it would never happen, Tom did indeed find the woman of his (and our) dreams, proposed and on May 15th they entered the state we call wedded bliss. They have been very busy trying to figure out how to share closets and dresser space, who has to be sure they don't run out of toilet paper, and all the other wonderful adjustments married life entails.

July brought about near tragedy. Jay collapsed in Clinton. To make an incredibly long story short he went into renal failure and had something called rhabdomyolysis which is a fancy term for "muscles made of jello". He insisted on returning to St. Louis so 3, yes 3 times I had to pick him up off the floor to get him dressed. I am now considering trying out for the Iron Woman competition! With help I got him in the truck and drove straight to the hospital where before you could say "insurance card and photo i.d." they had him hooked up to i.v.'s, monitors and all kinds of bells and whistles. Thankfully

he is making a full recovery and now has a very expensive pair of canary yellow hospital socks that he can show off.

Fall brought the annual Deer Camp which everyone looks forward to. James spent a lot of time making a really nice deer stand. Unfortunately, really nice deer stands do not seem to attract deer-- at least not until James has left to go home! He did manage to get an outstanding case of poison ivy to take home as his souvenir of the season so if you see James walking around with socks on his hands you will know that he is not making puppets! Brent, our hunter who never fails, managed to get a really handsome buck. It is so good looking he plans to take the head home and have it mounted. We are making bets as to whether or not it is his head or the deer head that gets mounted!

As always we give thanks for our wonderful family: our two amazing sons, two bonus daughters who light up our life and the amazing Miss Morgan who we love to the moon and back and then some! We are blessed to have wonderful family and friends and we thank each of you for being part of our life--our life is better because you are part of it! We wish you a very Merry Christmas and the happiest of new years.

Jay and Pat