

2006 Season's Greetings from the Illinois Dooleys

Dear Family and Friends,

Even with doing a fairly good job of keeping our photographs and correspondence organized during the year it is still impressive to look through them at this time of the year and see all of the things that we have done and all of the people we have seen or heard from. We still relish this point in the year when we take time out to do some special sharing and in particular wish each and every one of you the kind of holidays that you want – whether bustling with activity of family and friends or of the quieter, more relaxed sort. We extend the same wish to you for the new year – 2007 – where has the time gone?

One of our joys is that my mother has had a good year and is doing better than we ever expected after Dad's passing on December 6 last year. Jeff and Carol have been absolute troopers with my coming and going. I have been in Maine with Mum for 17 weeks of the year. Jeff and Carol were with me over Spring Break and for a week at the end of July. My sister Jane, sometimes by her self and sometimes with her family, has been in Maine an admirable amount given her work schedules – she is in her second year of teaching in a Brooklyn NY public school. At the end of January Mum moved to a nice room at Foreside Harbor – assisted care -- about a 7 minute walk from the house. The room is nice, and the meals and staff are great. Substantial family support is still needed and when Jane and I have not been there cousin Betsy and Nat Warren-White, Martha White Burns, and Mum's brother and sister-in-law John and Molly have all been superb in helping. We can communicate fairly well with Mum when we are not there with postcards and faxes but it is not comfortable trying to use the phone due to her deafness. She does not seem to get notes or letters written in spite having been quite a good correspondent in the past.

Jeff is still working as an athletic trainer at Lake Forest and in addition to having the long drives each day his partner has been out on maternity leave most of the fall. We are thrilled for Jen and her growing family that everything went well and Jeff will also be pleased when she is back at work full time...

Jeff continues to be involved with the Naval Sea Cadet program here in Aurora, being webmaster for a unit in California, and helping with various regional and national trainings. He completed his three year tour as Aurora Division Command-

ing Officer in March and was piped out in a nice change of command ceremony. He is now doing administrative paper work and web work for the division. He was the medical officer again for a training at Great Lakes and our Sarah was one of his assistants.

He also went with Carol on her first Habitat for Humanity trip through our church youth group. He has been with each of the kids on their first trips with the program. The group went to White Plains, Missouri for a second year, and made more progress on a house than they have in any of the past years.

Sarah is now a college graduate! Great for her and oh my gray hairs. She got to walk with her class in June because she had completed all of the basic requirements and one of her majors – Music. She went back this fall for one more term to complete a needed course for her Biochem. Major. She got a letter yesterday confirming that she had made the Dean's list for her final term. Knox has been great for her but she is ready to move on – which is going to take some time as her dream is still medical school but with the late graduation she will not be able to start until the fall of 2008. In the meantime she is working again at Carson's, is enrolled in an EMT class for the spring, and will probably do several other medically related items in the interim. She is also getting involved with the Naval Sea Cadets with Jeff. She spent a week as Jeff's assistant medical officer at the summer boot camp. Sarah and Carol have been busy with a few remodeling projects to make sharing a room more bearable.

James is in his 3rd year at the Coast Guard Academy and has chosen Marine & Environmental Science as his major. I got to go to Parent's Weekend this fall and it was a thrill to go to classes with him. At this moment he is on a train returning to Chicago from St. Louis. He went down yesterday to attend the St. Louis area All Academy Ball with a fellow cadet and we will go as a family to the Great Lakes AA Ball at the end of the week. He is doing well in his class work, has made some very good friends, and has taken up rock climbing which he is enjoying very much. He has also returned to martial arts and will probably have a black belt in the academy club's style by the time he graduates. In March he went to Louisiana with a church group to spend a week working on Katrina clean up – an eye opening and good experience.

Carol, Carol, Carol ... she is now as tall or perhaps a titch taller than I am and is doing very well in her sophomore year in high school. In addition to her regular classes she is in the Thespian (Drama) Troupe and has had roles in both of the school plays this year. She is also in the wind ensemble for band. Her big news is that she will be spending her junior year as an exchange student somewhere. She has been accepted in the Rotary Youth Exchange program, all of her paper work is in, and she should know her country by late-December to early-January. This is all rather unexpected but in September she went on a Rotary Youth Leadership Weekend and met many students who have gone on exchanges and are here now as exchange students and knew it was something that she wanted to do. During the 'year' she will live with three different families but attend the same school for the year. We are going to have to do some fiddling here for her to meet all of Illinois' graduation requirements but where there is a will there is a way.

I guess that the major theme of my year has been travel and visiting. In addition to and in conjunction with my Maine travels I have been to Springfield Illinois several times. On one of the trips I got to see the 1858 Sangamon County Map that my gt gt grandfather Billington drafted and for which we have his diary from that year that chronicles the map, family, and doings in Springfield. We were all at Sarah's graduation in June and had a good time. The commencement speaker was Stephen Colbert, originally from Comedy Central's Daily Show and now on the Colbert Report, and he talked to them about the importance of being able to improvise through life as we can only control so much of what we encounter as we maneuver along. I returned to Champaign-Urbana in September for the celebration of the life of Jane Anderson. She had a long, full, and service filled life. And one of her gifts in life and in passing was bringing people together. On Saturday July 15 Melissa Clark visited from Ohio after taking her daughter to O'Hare. She is living in Ohio now. At Beloit we were in Anthropology/Archaeology together and shared a house with others senior year. A wonderful day. Then on July 16 Nancy Myers, a Billington cousin from Arizona, and her husband were able to visit for a few hours and she was thrilled to see the 1858 diary. On September Harding cousins from Australia were able to spend a night at the house in Maine with us – what a treat!! – and we splurged a bit and called other cousins back in Australia; they left the

next day for more of their travel; I left to visit James at the academy for Parent's Weekend; on Saturday I picked Jane up at the New London train station, we visited with James for a few minutes; then drove to Needham, MA to visit her Mathew at Olin – a very interesting school – look it up on the web, then on to Maine for a visit with Mum. There have also been two good visits with Doris Pierce, a Billington cousin who lives in Maine.

I am not sure that Jeff or Carol have forgiven me yet for our July trip to Maine ... we re-roofed the garage. It strained us all but we formed a pretty good team and with the help of cousin Adam Blackwell got the job done. Mum was pleased with our work and our visit and we got to have a bit of fun going lobstering with Uncle John White.

On a sadder note, we said good-bye to Duke, our sometimes dog-sometimes floor rug, this year. We had many good years with him but it was finally time to say good-bye. We still have Curley and he is very pleased to have his family home for the holidays as he goes from bed to bed for sleeping.

Well we now know that my 'note' is longer rather than shorter but we are a busy, on the move, coping with life's ups and downs, family of 5 (or 6). Every part of our lives has its blessings and its challenges and we are trying to do some of what we want to do and take in stride what we have to do.

Thank-you, every one, for being part of our world. I could go on for several more pages ... to cover our contacts and doings with family and friends from all stages of our lives but enough is enough for the moment.

Again – All best wishes for your holidays and 2007 as we all make our way through this glorious and messy life. We pray for a very just, revised, world order to start to emerge from all of the chaos of the past few years and try to do our small part.

*Hugs and love from Jeff, Anne,
Sarah, James, Carol, and Curly
Dooley*

News Flash: Carol has learned that her Rotary Exchange country is Thailand!!!