

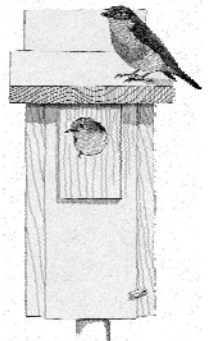
Season's Greetings! We hope you had a stellar 2006. If you've seen the film *Groundhog Day*, you'll know what I mean when I say we had a Groundhog Year. Last year Doug separated his shoulder diving for a softball. This year Doug separated his shoulder diving for a softball. (The orthopedists' bottom line recommendation on how to avoid a recurrence was "Stop doing stupid sh*t.") Last year we bought a rental house and renovated it; this year we bought another rental house and renovated it. (Fortunately last year's psychopathic renter who sued us for \$4,200 [because the basement flooded after he disconnected the sump pump] lost in court. Now we have delightful tenants.) Last year I got Lyme Disease from a tick bite; this year I got Ehrlichiosis from a tick bite. One night I was lying in bed, aching and wailing "WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME!?!?" when Doug suggested that perhaps I had swallowed a Screech Owl.



Time for fun was constrained by rental renovations and an endless to do list for our own place, since nothing works in an old house but the owner. Also, every mechanical thing we own broke. I flew around a lot for environmental audits, while Doug cranked away at DEP. Despite hours of scouring stats and studying injury reports, he finished last in the office football pool. On the other hand, I made the playoffs, as a result of a highly technical analysis of whose mascot could beat up the other team's mascot. My methodology was inspired by the lawsuit over the Armadillo v. Barney incident at a Texas baseball game. This landmark case was brought by the parents of children traumatized after the Armadillo ripped Barney's head off.

We did indulge in a few adventures, including a 2,000 mile camping trip to the Gaspésie Peninsula in Canada. We scootered from the spectacular Cobscook bayside campground to the easternmost point of the U.S. (Lubec, ME). Doug dressed as a jester for a neighbor's medieval-themed children's party. Unfortunately he somersaulted into a stabiddy rosebush and emerged with a facefull of thorns. We made a scarecrow with friends at Sturbridge Village, and flew a kite while RVing in NC. The last time I flew a kite I was probably about 8, and it was made from a paper grocery bag with a tail constructed from my father's favorite tie.

For my 50th birthday, I dragged Doug to a national bluebird conference in San Antonio. Doug had been to there before, but forgot the Alamo. We flew First Class with my audit-earned miles. Doug was thrilled by the unlimited free alcoholic beverages, with service that started while we were still on the tarmac. Although we were less impressed with the city (too much concrete and heat), we enjoyed the Riverwalk and exceptional guacamole at Boudro's. The most entertaining part of the conference was "Bluepardy," a bluebird-themed game show we invented while imbibing on the plane. Doug was host Wink purpleMartindale, I was Vanna Blue, and our proud sponsors were House Sparrow Depot and Eggson Mo'blue. The highlight was a fight that broke out between the contestants over nestbox monitoring protocol. At home, our 54 nestboxes fledged 176 bluebirds, tree swallows, titmice and chickadees.



Various injuries curtailed Doug's climbing opps. The boyz did attempt a 16 hour traverse of the Presidential range in whiteout conditions and 86 mph winds. At the American Alpine Club annual meeting in NH, I had a beer with 93 year old high altitude doctor Charles Houston, author of *The Savage Mountain*, about life and death on a 1953 K2 mountaineering expedition. Meanwhile, Doug got frostbite on a backcountry ice climb. (Which part of this sport is fun?)

Later, at a lower altitude, there was Death in the Valley. Five out of six newly acquired ducklings were whacked by a gang of raccoons. The lone surviving quacker suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome after witnessing the carnage. Doug orchestrated a sting operation, nabbing six of the no good goons. He was itching to make dem swim wit da fishes, but was persuaded to humanely send them to The Big Sleep. With bobcats, fishers and coyotes roaming around, it's amazing we still have four ducks left. Tenzing turned 4 because he stays indoors. Even though he's ugly, Doug thinks he's a great cat because he doesn't pee on the toaster. (A man with low expectations is the perfect match for me!)

All Z offspring, out-laws and the one and only granddaughter got together to celebrate Doug's parent's 50th anniversary. Doug and I are still honeymooning after 7 years. But there are differences between us, including this year's choice for best movie. I went with the remake of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Doug picked *The Aristocrats*, where comedians deliver 100 disgustingly different renditions of a single dirty joke.

Here's wishing you health and happiness in 2007. We hope for the gift of news from you: (860) 974-3020, ezd@charter.net. And remember, although goats have two stomachs, you only have one, so don't eat too much over the holidays.

