



We were fortunate to enjoy another happy year at the Z household. We spent Years Eve 2003 drinking champagne at 3425 feet, after hiking up Table Rock in NC. We had the 360° view of the Appalachian sunset all to ourselves. This summer we also RV'd, moped and kayaked at Williamsburg, and Assateague VA, where wild horses generate a plethora of ploppers. I also visited my mother in North Palm Beach. At 75, she's still pretty spunky. Lots of laughing during our visit.

Doug spent a flawless 2 weeks climbing granite spires and domes in Yosemite's Tuolumne Meadows. Despite the hard work, the boys still managed to lift a tasty beverage at the end of the day. While Doug was off summiting, I bon voyaged to France with excellent travel companion Karen D. Had an amazing time in Paris and Avignon, though I never did recover from \$ticker \$hock (but that \$23 chocolate mousse *was* the best ever). I took photographic evidence of the one and only occasion when anyone understood my French, after I finally figured out how to request ice water. (Apparently I'd been asking for water with ice cream in it.) It was heart-wrenching to visit Omaha Beach in Normandy, where so many were willing to die on their feet so we wouldn't have to live on our knees.

Doug also traipsed through history on an ice climbing trip in period clothes and equipment. The following month, he and Bob rescued a buddy who shattered his ankle in a fall while they were ice climbing on Mt. Washington. Fortunately they arrived at the hospital in advance of the 72,384 kiddie snowboarders with broken limbs.

We didn't really spend all our time on vacation. At home, Doug worked hard on renovations, while I labored over his "to do" lists. Photos of our house won slots on the 2004 & 2005 Quiet Corner calendars. The bathroom reconstruction project is nearing its 1st birthday, after an extended period of stalling during the plumbing configuration "conceptualization phase." (Doug attempted to veto use of the term "stall" here. After five years of marriage, he still hasn't figured out that *I'm* the executive branch :-)

Doug calculated that he's logged 10,000 miles running since he saw a photo of himself with man-boobs in 1993. He realized he would not be picking up many women looking like that. He never did figure out that the Skyhawk (the "k" fell off) wasn't a big draw. Speaking of the Bick (the "u" fell off), it finally met its demise. I put the kibosh on renewing the registration after the clutch went. By that point, the body was 99-44/100% rust, a come-along system was required to pull the doors shut, and there were some other minor safety issues involving brakelessness. Throughout the winter, it languished in the driveway while Doug mourned. At last I arranged to have our Honeymoon Transport Vehicle "recycled." Poor Doug. (By the way, why is there never a "Poor Bet" scenario? Aren't I the one who suffers a sore throat from screeching at Doug when he uses a steak knife to stir food in a Teflon pot?)

As usual, I worked more than planned. Doug is in year 21 with DEP. Unlike other CT state employees, he didn't get any limo rides to strip joints or kickback swimming pools. We also volunteered a bunch. His geriatric softball team actually made the playoffs. The umpire awarded Doug the game ball after a spectacular dive and tag move clinched a win. Please note that this year on the collage there are more pictures of Doug than the cat.

Typical modus operandi, we didn't do a very good job of staying in touch with friends. We did go to my 30th high school reunion, which was traumatic. Unlike some of my classmates, I am not an anorexic plastic surgery recipient. I also experienced unpleasant flashbacks of being a sullen, heartless, even more sarcastic witch back then. Doug was a sport about attending, and frequently reminds me that one female attendee noted that he was "adorable."

On the subject of looks, we can't count the number of times people seeing Tenzing have asked "What kind of cat is that?" to which Doug replies "It's an *ugly* cat!" The bluebird trail fledged 114 native birds, including 26 blues. We got a batch of six girl ducklings. No one wants to eat their eggs though. Maybe it's our motto - "*Straight from our ducks butt to your table.*" Mac the Goat had a near death experience from eating too much, but recovered after \$253 of Pepto-Bismol. Apparently extra medication is required for creatures with two stomachs.

Best movie was between Kill Bill 2 (especially the "gargantuan" scene), Winged Migration, Eternal Sunshine, and Touching the Void. Most books I read were easy to put down, but I did like The Longest Day. Please be better than we are at staying in touch, and have a fun, safe and healthy 2005!

