

Season's Greetings 2008 from our nest to yours! Doug is wrapping up Year 26 at the CT Dept. of Environmental Protection. Every other Thursday at work is Donut Day. Last week, the Donut Day Scheduler made the following observation involving Doug: *"Carl remembered to bring napkins, unlike many other members of the donut club (me included). A certain other member of the donut club, who shall remain nameless, said "That's why we have sleeves." When I described this incident to my wife, she expressed sympathy for 'Mr. Donut Sleeves' wife. Personally, I think his remark was very much in the spirit of reduce, reuse and recycle."* For my part, I was gratified that after countless "Poor Doug's," someone has finally acknowledged the "Poor Bet" part of the equation.



Like many, we got jackhammered by the tanking economy. It was painful to watch our 401K shrivel into a 201K, but we're hopeful things will improve for everyone over time. My beautiful diamond engagement ring joined our lost assets. The frantic search involved dismantling the washer and dryer; pumping out the drywell; and metal-detecting the trash, laundry and cat's butt, all to no avail. Doug was very sweet about it. He romantically re-proposed on bended knee while delivering the sparkly replacement. He reiterated the commitments he made when we originally got engaged in 1991, including being faithful, keeping my feet warm, and fixing all the things he expected to break. Impressively, he has fulfilled every promise. (For those who wonder, I *do* know how lucky I am.)

Speaking of breakage, Doug finally had his separating shoulder repaired. They IV'd 18 different drugs into him during surgery. When he got home, my plan was to keep him unconscious (and therefore uncomplaining) for as long as possible. I fed him lots of what I thought was just a stronger version of Tylenol PM until I found out it was actually Oxycotin.

Our friends & neighbors' house caught fire in February. Since we had plenty of room, the five of them came to stay with us for about a month during de-smoking and initial repairs. It was fun and sort of Mormonish to be part of a bigger family for a while. We were the real beneficiaries, as my clothes were folded by my 'co-wife' like never before (since I never fold anything), and it felt good to be able to provide a little assistance to people we care about. The only glitch was when one of their eatomaniac dogs wolfed down 50 lbs. of birdseed (bag included) and proceeded to fill the back room with fragrant mounds of 'Sunflower Surprise.'

In March we went on a "once-in-a-lifetime" (as in "we will never go back") trip to Kearny, Nebraska for a North American Bluebird Society conference. It's a frigid, non-charming flatland, but we did get to see a gazillion migrating Snow Geese and Sandhill Cranes. We also met a Nebraskan birdwatcher in his 70's who grew up in a one room sod house with six siblings. He said they played outside a lot. Doug managed to get frostbite on his thumb while playing outside on a NH ice climb. The black color eventually went away, but the feeling has not returned. He's gearing up for another trip north before global warming strikes.

Our big adventure was 21 days in Nova Scotia. Since the RV only gets 8 mpg, we scheduled the 1,800 mile trip to coincide with the record high gasoline prices and record low value of the U.S. dollar. We had a wonderful time, despite a snafu at the border. Doug neglected to mention to customs officials that he had stowed substantial emergency reserves of alcohol in the Pleasure Palace, ala *"If it's worth doing, it's worth overdoing."* We were detained and searched. His booty was confiscated as punishment for not paying the Canuck Tariff. I complained that I was just the innocent spouse, but the G-men said I was guilty by association. After that, we had loads of fun hiking, playing scrabble and cards, museuming and lounging around.

Sadly, Peanut the Goat went on to meet her maker this year. A lonely goat is a difficult goat, so we were relieved when her goat buddy Butter adopted our ducks as her herd. One of those ducks is cranking out green eggs (goes good with ham.) We decided to let her hatch some, hoping for more green-shelled egg layers. While brooding, the formerly friendly hen's hormones went berserk, and she morphed into Psychoduck. Whenever we approached her nest, the possessed avian hunched up and ran around in circles while making horrid exorcist noises. It was scary. Since 2002, our bluebird trail has fledged almost 1,000 birds, including bluebirds, tree swallows, chickadees, nuthatches and titmice. Tenzing's mousing skills are improving. There's nothing like waking up at 2 a.m. to a yowling cat in your bed dangling a mouthful of live rodent over your face.

We still volunteer a lot, and I write a weekly newspaper column (copies online at www.ourbetternature.org). I'm in 1st place in the football pool at Doug's office, due to my superior knowledge of teams such as the Denver Horses and Tampa Bay Pirates. So far, Doug is in last place, managing to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory on a weekly basis. My favorite (albeit disturbing) movie was *No Country for Old Men*; best (albeit crude) web video is the *Drunk History* series (funnyordie.com). Doug was split between the sensitive *Lars & the Real Girl* and action-packed *The Dark Knight*. I'm still wishing for a book I can't put down. But most of all, when snowflakes fall, we wish *you* health, wealth and love!

