

Dear all,

8/28/12

I'm happy to be writing you in 'cursive' (tho my penmanship would never pass muster with my 1st grade sister at St. Michael's) just imagine - our younger grandchildren will never be able to read this, since cursive is VERBOTEN in public schools today. Ah! progress!

In Ken's absence, I've been tethered to our very productive garden this summer and look forward to our May family party next summer.

Love, & all God's blessings
Gene Clark

Dear ever growing family ☺,

September 10, 2012

The great news is that the kids started school Thursday! Ahhhhh! Now I can finally finish a complete thought or task without being interrupted a hundred times. Hence, here I finally am!

Overall, things are well here. The kids had me so busy this summer, I could hardly keep my head on straight and as a result, I unfortunately wasn't as available as I would have liked to have been with helping Mom in the garden. However, Mom is a real trooper and plodded along nevertheless! And oh, that fresh tomato sauce is so good...

Arianna is in 9th grade, an official freshman. She has come a long way in the past year and finally has a terrific therapist as well as a whole team of support. Over the summer she's been involved in gymnastics (now just for recreation) and voice lessons as well as, of course, a busier social life than me. She and Kaylin are now also singing alongside the guitarist at Mass every Sunday.

Kaylin is in 7th grade. Over the summer she and the boys all took swimming lessons through the town. I was at the pool the entire morning every day for 6 weeks straight between all the different classes. She also took tennis lessons over the summer through the same parks and rec. and has now joined the school tennis team. She plans to join 4H and FFA (Future Farmers of America because she wants to be a vet) as well as "Stageworks", the theater club that she's been involved in over the past few years. They will start in October and put on a production in mid-January. Then, in spring softball will start up again. And the cycle continues...

Matthew, Mark and Luke are again all in different classes for 2nd grade. Mark is the only one who wanted to play soccer this fall, but now Matthew and Luke are sorry that they didn't sign up! However, they will have no choice but to play basketball in the winter as it will be a good way to get that exercise in when the snow is falling outside. They also all play in Little League in the spring. This coming year they will be making their first Reconciliation and First Communion. CCD starts this Sunday, for me too as I continue to teach the 8th grade Confirmation class.

This summer we kept things pretty low key with traveling. We just visited friends and had company here. We spent a weekend on LI where we went to Coney Island and the aquarium, Jones Beach and The Bronx Zoo, a weekend in Connecticut where we went to Dinosaur Park, and I also took the kids to Dorney Park in PA for one day sponsored through their swim classes. The kids also had fun bringing friends to swim in Blue Hole which is in the Peekamoose State Park only about ten miles from our house. Cold, but beautiful and loads of fun for the kids! We even went to the Ulster County Fair!

John is good. Kohl's keeps paying the bills so we can't complain too much. He spent his summer "vacation" doing handyman duties around the house, the biggest of which was fixing the back deck. Now he's heading into busy season. Hard to believe the holidays will be here before we know it!

Love to all and keep the good news coming! ☺ *Arianna, John, Arianna, Kaylin, Matt, Mark & Luke*

Greetings from Long Island! Autumn finally arrived today with cool temps and rain.

I'm still on duty at the library – officially assistant director now, and George will start coaching track again next month. He was a master gardener this summer (not in the same league as Lackawack Hill, of course) and every night we ate something from his garden. It was a good year for tomatoes. Travel came in short trips – one to VT and one to VA. Saw historical sites for Jefferson, Monroe, Wilson and Coolidge – and sampled 6 microbreweries' fare in VT. Medical concerns kept us local for a few months as George's mother was treated for breast cancer. Mrs. Dreher is 92, so outpatient surgery was the only treatment done. So far, so good.

The "kids" are good. (38, 34 and 30!) Matt and Carolyn are the travel champs: made trips to Argentina and Chile, Budapest and Vienna (with Uncle Frank!) and will travel to Spain and Morocco in November. I'll be visiting Kate in CA soon.

Not much else new. We're one of the quieter branches of the family right now. Always good to read everyone's news; life is certainly full of ups/downs and earthquakes! Hope that all are in good health and spirits – especially Aunt Rosemary. Welcome to the May Family, June, Tim and Billy!

Apologies for the delay in getting out!

*Love to all
- Barbara + George*

10/16/12

Dear one and all,

I was so glad to hear everyone's news. I vowed not to hold on to the letter too long this time....I have had it one day and here I am☺. My thoughts and prayers have been with you Aunt Rosemary since I received your email. I hope you are doing well now. I kept reading about all the college bound and recent graduates and thought, where has the time gone, aren't they all my cousins little kids??? Then I thought some more and realized our granddaughter, Ashley is turning 15 this month and has already started driver's ed. YIKES!!! As Madeline mentioned, our son Michael is getting married one month from tomorrow. Since he is still home with us until then we figured it was time to downsize so we have also put our house on the market and are looking for a new place. Nothing new to report yet but between the wedding and moving and working at Kohl's (Christmas has been set in the store for over a month already) the days are flying by.

Since it will be a while till you hear from Madeline again, I will let you all know that Ralph is doing well from his cancer surgery on his nose, HOWEVER, on his birthday (8/14) he was trimming a tree and one of the rungs broke and he fell on the driveway and broke his knee. A week after the swelling went down they did surgery and he is just now able to start to put a little weight on his leg. He has just one month left now to get back into his dancing shoes!!

Love to all Rosemary & Auzie

Hi Everyone,

10/29/12

- I'm writing this a couple of days after escaping New York just ahead of the hurricane. I wound up getting 11 days out of what was supposed to be a two-week vacation, and had a great time seeing nephew Danny at Princeton, niece Kristen at her (new) Jersey apartment, and all the siblings' families as well as dropping by DC for a couple of days.
- A few weeks earlier, I had the wonderful experience of joining nephew Matt and his wife, Carolyn, on a trip to Budapest and Vienna. What a delightful time with delightful companions! I have three words for everyone: Budapest Wine Festival! Carolyn aimed for it in her extensive planning, and it was worth it! A bathtub night, a hilltop view of the Danube, the famed "Chain Bridge" and Parliament building bathed in lights, a band playing dreamy jazz--oh yeah, and a lot of great wine! If you ever have a chance to go, by all means do it!
- Vienna and a side trip to Bratislava were terrific, too. I'm so grateful to Matt and Carolyn for taking the chance that a geezer uncle would work out as a traveling companion.
- Now it's time to hunker down for the lo-o-ong Milwaukee winter. Of course there'll be a Christmas visit back home and a trip to see niece Kate in California sometime after that. And then just counting the days until baseball returns.

Happy Holidays to all!

Kate

November 3, 2012

Dear Family,

While decidedly different from the year, 2012 has certainly not been calm and uneventful as we might have hoped.

First and foremost, in August, **Mom** was diagnosed with Waldenström Macroglobulinemia, a rare type of slow-growing, non-Hodgkin lymphoma that affects the blood-producing bone marrow. The primary effect of the disease is the reduction of blood production and resulting anemia / fatigue. The treatment of choice for the condition includes traditional chemotherapy and the use of the drug Rituximab. Because of her age, the doctor did not want to administer the traditional chemotherapy, as the side effects would likely overwhelm her. Therefore, treatment of four doses of Rituximab was scheduled. During the initial period after diagnosis, mom's blood counts fell three times to a point where transfusions were necessary. After the third dose of the Rituximab, she suffered some kind of event that caused a change in mental status; she became confused, disoriented, lost memory, and suffered weakness. However, after a week, she returned to normal. The doctor was flummoxed by this response, since it is not a known side effect of the drug, but no other cause could be identified (MRI was done to ensure she did not suffer a stroke). Since then, in spite of not having been administered the last dose of Rituximab, her condition has improved greatly. Her blood counts are improving and her mental and physical condition is better than it's been in months. Unfortunately, because she didn't *initially* respond to the drug as quickly the doctor expected, and lymph nodes are inflamed, she underwent minor surgery to remove two lymph nodes for biopsy. That biopsy showed that she also has a related lymphoma, that is slightly more aggressive than the Waldenström's. We are currently evaluating treatment / monitoring plans.

Danie decided to 'step aside' for the summer from her job at Quilter's Corner to allow room for the owner's (incompetent and uncaring) daughter to slide into the rotation and to give her more time to pursue her hobbies (that was the plan). She returned in September, but with the increasing needs of our parents (multiple doctors' appointments and procedures for Mom, as discussed above, and caring for her father (bills, doctors appointments, some shopping)) using up much of her 'free' time, she hung up her logoed shirt for the last time just a few weeks later. From what she's heard from 'spies' at the store, it's just as well, since conditions for the workers at the store are declining (partly *because* of some of the new workers).

Claudine & Laughton continue to do well. Claudine found a new job as the office manager for Fahrenheit IT, which provides contract IT personnel to companies. She joined the company as they were being taken over by a larger company, and moving to the Innsbrook office park, right around the corner from my office. The company will be branching out to provide all types of temporary help for companies. So far, she is MUCH happier working at this new job.

Chris & Kristy are also doing well. Both are stable in their current jobs. We don't hear much more than that.

Monica received a grant from the KofC to have her power wheelchair overhauled, so she is a happy camper.

The second half of the 2011/2012 **Bowling season** went about as well as the first . . . not so great. The most important part of bowling remains the visit to Friendly's (ice cream parlor) after the games. One notable accomplishment is that Danie was given the '(un)Sportsmanship' award for her relentless verbal and physical abuse during the season (*Ah, my sweet, sweet bride . . .*). This season hasn't been much to write about, so I won't.

Similarly, the St. Michael's Defenders coed **softball season** was unspectacular, but enough pizza and beer was consumed to compensate. I must admit that at 59, I probably still have the best batting record of the team.



We had plenty of excitement on June 25th, when a '**supercell storm**' exploded over the Richmond area, resulting in straight line winds of between 85 and 100 mph. The winds sliced the tops off of four trees on the property behind our house and caused another to break near the base, and fall onto a sturdier white oak that fortunately prevented it from falling on our house. One tree on our property broke where the one main trunk split into two branches about 30 feet from the ground. The branches slammed onto the main roof of the house, then rolled over onto the garage. The result was four holes in the roof, all over what was Claudine's bedroom, where her old bed mattress served as a big sponge to take a lot of the rainwater.

I sat out the storm in our office, which has a large open atrium bisecting the building. Most people (including mostly engineers (!)) gravitated to this area, where there is LOTS of glass forming the roof and walls, to behold the rain and debris roaring past the glass wall at the end of the building. Amazingly, aside from the large number of leaks caused by wind-driven rain, none of the buildings in the Innsbrook office park sustained any significant damage.

As soon as I could safely leave my office, I came home and worked to mitigate the damage by removing water saturated insulation from the attic and the bed from the room below. Power was out for three days.

