

Dear all,

4/11/16

I, too, am delighted that our family book is back in action again. It is difficult enough to keep up with all the 'going on' as quickly as they occur, but a year's activities is difficult to digest! We have some interesting family! Thanks be to god with work

The farm continues to be kept busy with work on many projects (barn extensions etc) the vegetable garden continues to grow and expand and our chickens continue to increase (and produce.) How I wish I were able to help, but my legs don't want to cooperate. Thankfully, I can still walk, and would love to greet you all when you care to visit this summer (vegetable soup included.)

Love,
Tante Claire


Dear Family,

May 4, 2016

Happy spring! So nice to hear the mostly good news going on with all of you! Rest assured, you're in our prayers always.

Things are crazy around here as you'd expect with a large, busy family with more than our share of pets. Somehow, our number of furry critters seems to be growing exponentially around here, both useLESS in the likes of dogs and cats, and somewhat more useFULL as we now have 41 chickens with all the new chicks. At least the hens give us tasty eggs and nasty roosters a hearty soup!

John is settling into his new job as maintenance supervisor at the Frost Valley YMCA, a 5,800 acre facility in the heart of the Catskill Mountains. A far cry from the corporate greed of Kohl's, and he's much happier for it!

Arianna, now 18 and with her own set of wheels, will be graduating HS in June. I can't believe we're nearing this milestone! All the kids have been together in the same school since we moved here in 2008! She's been working part-time in the gift shop up at Frost Valley (I wonder how she got that job???) and at present is planning on attending Ulster County Community College in the fall to pursue the Vet Tech program. We'll see what happens...

Kaylin, 15 and in 10th grade, continues pushing herself academically in all advanced and honors classes. She's also become quite involved in the theater club at school and to a lesser degree, FFA (future farmers of America) and of course the tennis team in the fall. Both Kaylin and Luke are involved in our local 4-H chapter. But of course, Kaylin's first love is her chickens! She is so devoted to taking care of them that she even won a \$1,000 grant for them through FFA! Needless to say, I know more about chickens than a girl from Queens should ever know!

Matthew, Mark and Luke are in 5th grade. School is tough for them. It's a hard age and so many distractions get in the way of learning from behavior problems to bullying, to lack of control in their classroom. I'm sad to say, in my estimation there's not a whole lot of learning going on. The worst part is that I've expressed my concerns to the teachers and they assure me that everything is just fine! Really? Enough about that.

The boys are all playing on the Marlins in Little League. Of course John got roped into being the coach which means I get to keep my title as dugout mom. Mark and Luke are also keeping out of trouble as the altar boys every Sunday at the 10:15 Mass. Matthew is still too nervous to do it.

Besides subbing at the school, usually on Fridays, and usually in the HS, I still try to spend as much time with Mom as possible. We faithfully go to town for 8AM Mass and errands every Wednesday.

That's a wrap on all the Lackawack Hill news. I hope you all have a fabulous spring and summer!

Love, John Lorrain
Arianna, Kaylin, Matthew, Mark & Luke
XXXXXX

2-332

5/25/16

Salutations, all!

Spring has finally arrived on LI, and we may jump into summer for the next few days. My tomato plants do need the sun, but I don't want July in May. Hopefully temps will revert over the Memorial Day weekend.

We're all doing ok. Ian made his move to Scottsdale, AZ. Always wanted to try life in the southwest. Bit of a mixed bag so far and will experience his first full summer there. We will try to visit him in the cooler autumn. Kate remains in Mexico - but continues to travel for her job. She'll be heading to Scotland, Montpelier, France and Spain in the next few weeks after a Cornell/Ithaca trip. But first, she will meet her new nephew. Matt and Carolyn have their son, Nathaniel Roland born on April 20 - 3 weeks early. We got the mid-night call and zoomed over to Maplewood to watch Claire during the birth. Mom and baby are doing well at the one-month mark. Carolyn did not have to have a Caesarean! Nate is growing fast (originally 6lbs 2 oz) and is a squeaky squirmy lad with a wee sexy cleft in his chin. Big sister Claire is on a learning curve of sharing parents and grandparents with Nate. Should be interesting for ALL of us.

So - we are doing weekly visits again to help out and play. I had my Medicare birthday yesterday, so I now get senior fare on LIRR and NJT. Woohoo! George finishes his track coaching in 10 days, and then he'll be totally flexible to go over. I am still full-time and swamped at work, so it's a little harder for me. In August we will start Monday/Tuesday stints each week in NJ to help keep Nate out of daycare until he is 6 months (just as we did with Claire).

65th birthday was celebrated with all the sibs and some of the nieces and nephews - so who can get worked up about passing that dubious milestone? Bunny, Eileen and I had some rare quality time together - an added bonus.

Last summer, George and I visited Aunt Claire for an overnigher. It was great to sit on the porch and catch up with the Kleins and Christensens, watch the chickens, meet Kenny's Wiglaf, swim in the pond and eat a delicious home-grown dinner. We highly recommend it to all!

So the May family grows ... and ages. The stuff of life! May we all be safe, healthy, grateful and gently joyous.

Barbara, George, Ian, Kate

7/11/16

My dear family,
I can't believe this letter has been in circulation for over a year already!!! I am sorry to say that I am guilty of blogging the letter for way too long. I received it the day before we left for a 2 week visit to DC for a grandson's HS graduation + introduction to our new great-great-nephew. The letter made for good reading on the 3 hour flight!! Like Maria, we are also expecting a new grandchild this summer. Michael + Kelly are expecting their first, a boy, the beginning of August. We are all pretty excited since our last grandchild is 6 1/2 already. This will only be our 11th grandchild though, I am sure Maria will be keeping the lead.

Madelaine + Ralph were able to make it up for the baby shower on 6/6 and then last week we were able to visit them at their cabin here in N.C. before they headed back home. It is such a blessing that we are now able to see each other several times a year.

Wishing everyone a safe, happy + healthy summer.

Love, Ronnie + Anzie

7/15/16

Hi from Milwaukee... Where it's the best time of year, at least in one respect: The swimmin' hole is open! The main reason I've stayed in my current apartment for 25 YEARS is the outdoor pool, and as usual I haven't missed a day, except for the two weeks in late May/early June--time well spent getting acquainted with little Claire and littler Nate in Jersey; seeing Bunny's son Danny graduate from Princeton; and of course catching some Yankees/Mets activity. There'll be more Yankee-fying during a week back east in August, on top of the usual 30-ish games I'll get to out here. And of course there'll be plenty of time at the many summer festivals Milwaukee has to offer (yes, there's a German one); seeing some friends' musical performances around town; and enjoying the chance to, um, socialize outdoors at my wonderful Irish bar.

But first and foremost, there'll be the daily visits to THE POOL--- in the morning to swim, in the evening to loll and read. The place is only available until Labor Day or a little thereafter, so the time MUST be well spent!

Happy summer and fall to all!



July 22, 2016

Dear Family,

The letter arrived close to two months after we celebrated Mom's 90th birthday at the end of May. Alan and Deanne came to Virginia for the long Memorial Day weekend, and on Saturday, nine of us converged on Monica's nursing home to have lunch and cake in observance. Afterward, all but Monica went to dinner in Williamsburg.

While she was off chemotherapy for over a year, Mom's hemoglobin counts have dropped slowly, and the Waldenstrom's numbers have inched up. In March, the hemoglobin count approached the action level (8.0) and we had a frank discussion with her oncologist about the future. Mom decided that she does not want to go back to the twice-a-week chemotherapy, and will go forward on a plan to deal with the effects of the cancer, rather than fight it. In April, (just before one of our vacations) her hemoglobin dropped to 7.9 and she received a transfusion the next day. Six weeks later, her hemoglobin had dropped again to 7.8, and she received another transfusion. However, after another 8 weeks, her hemoglobin only dropped only to 8.4. It appears that she will continue on this course of receiving transfusions,



at a non-regular frequency (depending on the potency of the particular donor's blood each time), until they are necessary about every 1½-2 weeks. At that point, transfusions will cease, and the focus will only be to keep her comfortable.

Monica has had her challenges as the battery charger on her wheelchair failed, and she had to use a manual wheelchair until the charger was replaced. After replacement, it was found that the recently replaced batteries were also failing, and she had to limit her movements around the facility, and carry her charger, so that the batteries could be topped off every time she stopped for more than a few minutes. The batteries were replaced again in May, so she was back tearing through the halls and terrorizing the other 'inmates', until the charger failed again. I sent her a new one, and she's rolling again.

Danie remains busy and stressed taking care of her Father. In January, he started complaining that something in his apartment was beeping, and waking him up at 7AM. He thought it was the phone, then the medical alarm, then the neighbor's alarm clock, then a car alarm. This went on for weeks. Every step of the way, Danie tried to prove, or disprove his theories by moving the phone and alarm base station, checking with his neighbor, and asking if others heard alarms outside. Then, on a whim, she called her father's cardiologist and asked if his pacemaker could, by chance, make a noise. The answer was, "YES! ... get him in here!" Turns out that a 'non-essential' wire from the pacemaker to the heart had come loose and the device was alarming. The man could not tell that the sound he was hearing

was coming from his chest! A month later, he was scheduled to have the pacemaker replaced, and was prepped and anesthetized, when Danie was informed that the surgery would not happen because the previous surgery in the operating room went a *little* long, and the standby surgeon

(cardiologist does the work and the surgeon is there 'just in case') didn't have time to hang around. Needless to say, Danie was pissed! The surgery was rescheduled to August 9.

Claudine & Laughton are doing well. Changes in how the IT department at Capital One (where Laughton works, and Claudine provides IT contractors) is organized and will be utilized has them both a little nervous. Contractors, that Claudine's company provided directly, will now go through a different company that is processing all contractors. Claudine's company will still provide the IT contractors to the other contracting company, but her role will diminish considerably.

Chris & Kristy are also doing well, having just passed their seven year anniversary. Like Claudine & Laughton, they have been working to upgrade their condominium, so that when the time is right, they can sell quickly.

Me: Over a year has passed since I walked out of the office for the last time as an employee of Dominion. In a move that I didn't think possible, the company is reducing staff, particularly in Nuclear. So, if I had stayed for another year, I would likely have been able to walk out with 14 months pay, and a larger pension. But I have no regrets, as the mind-numbing stuff at work, and the increased needs of our parents would have made the last year impossible.

Aside from the significant time we spend caring for our parents, we have become members of the Botanical Garden, which we visit frequently, got VA Resident passes to Colonial Williamsburg and make fairly frequent trips to wineries. And, of course there are those pesky home projects. One really fun activity that I managed to partake in this summer, was an 8-lap drive around the 3/4-mile Richmond International Raceway in a NASCAR style race car. I cashed in, and upgraded a 'ride along' gift certificate given to me years ago by Claudine & Laughton, to the driving experience. I managed to reach 105 mph with lap speed of 88 mph.

We had several meet-ups with Kathy & Wayne, who spend several weeks a year nearby in a mobile home park in Ashland, VA and hosted Ray for two nights so that he could run the Richmond Marathon (Kathy & Wayne came to visit as well).

Getaways have been more numerous and frequent because of my new employment status (*NOT employed!*). We enjoyed a road trip for about 1½ weeks in mid-June 2015 to the Northeast, where we saw Maria in a stage production, met friends and family on LI, in CT, and ME, and visited Bar Harbor, Acadia National Park and Lowell, MA. In August, our old friends from Williamsburg joined us as we took a land tour / cruise starting from Calgary, CN and ending at Anchorage, AK (same cruise, but different land tour from the one we took in 2006). We took another 1½ week road trip starting on Thanksgiving weekend, visiting Gatlinburg, TN, Asheville, NC and on the way home, had a wonderful visit with Ronnie & Augie in Mooresville, NC. We then took an Eastern Caribbean cruise in February out of Ft. Lauderdale with Ed & Janet Ebert. Finally, in April, we took Amtrak into Manhattan and stayed for 10 days, rediscovering the city after 37 years. Claudine & Laughton joined us for 4 days in the middle of the vacation. We were able to meet up with Maria (including Robert & Mark), Alan (including William & Alysha, Gillian and Shannon), Danie's brother, Richard and his offspring, Matt and Nicole, and two of my OLPH Class of '67 classmates. Unfortunately, the growing number of doctor appointments we have to take our parents to making it difficult to schedule time for future vacations. We're trying to keep a two-week period open in September, for another Northeast road trip, and we have a 12-day Southern Caribbean cruise booked for late February. We'll see it either or both actually come off.

Eric & Danie

