SEASONS GREETINGS!

Could another year have passed already? According to the calendar on the wall, yes, it most certainly has! And as we prepare for Christmas 2007, I have finally done what I have been threatening for years… to make my great Christmas Tome digital, yes-n-deedy, if you're reading this than you too are "netizens" of the 21st century and have internet access and can now enjoy my lengthy missive in all its graphical glory! So let's begin….

January rolled in as it has for the past couple years with me working diligently on the **14th Annual Red Ribbon Dinner & Great Art Auction**. After two years of serving on the committee as a "worker-bee", I was conned, er-uh, I mean convinced into being chairman of the event. The event takes place each January, but the planning and "begging" begins in March and continues right up until the night of the event.

In 2007, our local weathermen conspired against us and threatened the entire Quad Cities region with some diabolical "ice and snow storm of the century". They spent the days leading up to that weekend bemoaning the travesty that lay ahead for all those in the path of the storm, lo be anyone who did not battened down the hatches and stocked up on canned goods, extra firewood, beer and cigarettes! I probably don't need to tell you, we all survived, they were wrong… as usual, but they did manage to scare people away, even a number of people who had paid for their reservations and still didn't venture out. For the record, it did snow, about 3, that's THREE, inches. The faithful came anyway and we raised a record $100,000.00 plus in gross receipts for the event. And BTW, for anyone who thought it was unsafe to be out, you should have told our friends Doug, Richard, David and Daryl who drove up to the QC's to attend... from Kansas! I did hear from a "little bird" that the drive home was, shall we say, exciting? Well, at least according to the passengers, the driver was quoted as saying, "snow, what snow? Full speed ahead!" They arrived home without sightseeing in any of the roadside ditches… thank heavens!

Dick & I had a respite after the dinner and with no particular winter travel plans we settled in waiting for spring to thaw the icy landscape. Winter here in the QCA was actually quite tolerable, with the singular exception of our actual February Ice Storm 2007. This storm, which the weatherman unfortunately did got correct, caused havoc throughout the Midwest, there were some places in the rural counties that were without electricity for more than a week, maybe two. Not a good thing when were talking temperatures in the 10's and 20's. We had but one branch of any size come down, but wouldn't you know it, that ONE branch managed to fall directly on one of our newer trees we had planted since moving in and snapped the leader of the tree right off. DANG! And is if that little tree hadn't suffered enough, at some point during the winter season, a deer (yes we do occasionally see deer in our yard here in the middle of Davenport) had rubbed patches of bark off with it's antlers. But back to the February Ice Storm 2007! We lost power mid afternoon, first for just a few minutes, then it came back on, but then it went off again, on again and back off again. "Oh, not good," Dick said. As many of you know, Dick is well-educated in the field of electrical power distribution by benefit of his dad working an entire career with Iowa Light & Power in Cedar Rapids, a.k.a. Alliant Energy today. As Dick explained to

me, if the power is off, but comes back on and then goes off again a moment later… “oh, not good.” The power distribution system has tried an automatic reset and failed, this implies a major problem and can lead to hours without electricity. He then kicked into D.I.Y. mode. You see our geothermal heat in the house requires electricity, but or back up system, the original steam boiler only needs 12 volts to keep the gas valve open and run the thermostat. So he went out and bought a simple power inverter, that provided two benefits: (1) the power coming out of the inverter is 110 volt AC so we could plug a lamp in for light and (2) we hooked up the regular transformer for the boiler to the “juice” so the valve and thermostat would work as designed. Voila! Heat and lights! Fortunately the power was only out in our neighborhood for about 6 or 7 hours.

Spring did arrive, finally, and flowerbeds were planted and the yard tended to. The past two years we had had construction destroying yard and or flowerbeds, it was nice to get back to a more tranquil setting. In the end of April my oldest brother Bob made a trip home to see friends and family and stopped over for a night’s stay here in the QC's before venturing on up to Clinton. Before he left to return to Virginia, we all made our separate ways over to Rock Falls, Illinois, to have a mini-family reunion of sorts with our Aunt Gloria (my mother’s sister) and Uncle Ralph. We had not been altogether to see them as a family since the Sorenson boys were young teenagers… quite a few years ago! Several of our cousins were able to stop in (Corrine & Dino) and share a piece of Aunt Gloria’s lemon meringue with us. We also had a chance to meet a few of their children previously only know via notes in Christmas cards. The kids of course feigned interest, just as I am sure we did when we were their age and OUR parents dragged us to see some “relatives” who WE did not know so they could visit. Life comes full circle!

In May we hit the road for Memphis to see Dick’s sister and her family. While there we celebrated his nephew Ryan’s eighth grade graduation and a belated eleventh birthday for his other nephew Kyle. Unfortunately, this was also the same weekend as my niece Melissa’s junior college graduation party in Virginia, being the elder of the two celebrants she had to be understanding and suffice with a well-wishes sent via flowers and a card. Her Grandma & Grandpa were in attendance and did an admirable job of representing the Iowa based branch of the Sorenson family!

As the weather warmed our handyman/carpenter/painter/plumber/jack-of-all-trades Curt was able to (virtually) finish the outside painting on the house. As you have been reading about for 4 years plus, the exterior of the house when bought was encased in aluminum siding. Not the look we wanted and as we examined and removed the al-U-mini-um siding we found the original siding materials underneath were in very good condition and were therefore released from their cocoon and revived with a fresh new coat of many colors! Lest you think the work is done, don’t be silly! We still have the garage to deal with and lot of the floors inside the house are still awaiting refinishing. The kitchen is done... almost, still haven't gotten new counter tops, but all in good time. On a side note, the interior central hall has been fully redecorated with new paint (thank you again, Curt!) and new wallpaper (thank you Mark!) Also in mid-summer Dick & Curt worked together to sand down and refinish the upstairs oak flooring, the stairs down to the landing and the landing itself, but alas, there is quite a few square feet of floor which remains untouched!

Not having had a winter get-away, it was time to take a vacation this summer. First up, we took a quick extended weekend trip out east expressly to ride the train from NYC to Montreal and then back down

through Vermont ending in western Massachusetts. From there we rented a car and drove a couple hours north to Maine to visit with old friends Dr. Ken and Walter in Portland. After that whirlwind trip we came home to recoup for a month or so before setting off on an extended English vacation. We spent 9 days in England, mostly in London, but with many side trips out of the city. Both of us having been there before it was amazing we found quite a number of places to visit which neither of us had been to before. Most notable of these was a day trip to Portsmouth, England and a quick ferry ride to the Isle of Wight to tour Osborne House, Queen Victoria's favorite home and were she ruled England from the vast majority of time as she did not care for Buckingham Palace in London. And speaking of Buckingham Palace, it is open for less than one month a year for tours when the Royals are "out of town" for the summer. Our trip, not coincidentally, fell during this time and therefore led to another significant tour, Buckingham Palace's State Rooms (which means the "public" rooms where dignitaries come in and receptions are held.

This summer corresponded with the 60th wedding anniversary of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip (Lillabet & Phil to there friends). They had a display in honor of the event including her wedding dress, the prince's dress uniform and dresses their respective mothers wore, plus assorted wedding gifts they had received on the occasion. Now, I know I stated above that the royals are out of town during this time frame, but I swear I saw Lillabet (yes, I said Lillabet... we are friends) shuffling down a hallway in a housecoat, fuzzy slippers and with her handbag hung over her arm which held an empty tumbler with what appeared to be the remains of a Bloody Mary, clinking the ice cubes. It's not easy being the Queen, especially when the commoners are let loose in your home.

We returned to the colonies, uh… I mean the States and resumed life in the Midwest. Our summer was pleasant over all, not extremely hot and sufficient rain that things did not burn up as they did a couple years back. The occasional trip was made to Cedar Rapids and Clinton to see family and celebrate birthdays. And speaking of family gatherings and wedding anniversaries, Dick's parents, Jim & Alice Mae, celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary. All family members gathered in C.R. for a family dinner on Saturday night and then on Sunday, Jim & Alice hosted a buffet dinner for their entire church congregation, their extended family and special guests. All told certainly numbering over 100 people, a truly joyous occasion! Late in the summer I got to enjoy a day riding roller coasters in Chicago with my brother Doug, something neither of us had done in… well, quite a few years. We went mid-week to avoid the crowds, but the vast amount of time was still spent waiting in line. Was it worth it? Oh Yes! The summer of 2007 also marked the biennial Davidson/Peterson Family Reunion (Dick's dad's family) which was held in Cedar Rapids this year affording them the opportunity to have a picnic just north of Cedar Rapids in Coggan, Iowa at the the YMCA's Camp Wapsi where Jim's mother had been a cook for many years and where Dick & his sister both went to summer camp (many-many-many years ago!) I of course had never been there prior to this visit, but I would like to say if anyone is looking for an extended summer camp to send their little ones off to, I can't imagine a much nicer, more serene setting than Camp Wapsi (seriously, they book up each year, call early!) Late in summer I managed to have a "senior moment". On the scheduled weekend of the Sorenson Family Picnic, I called my brother Doug to see if he was going to be able to make it, and he seemed puzzled why I was calling him on SUNDAY, the picnic had been the day BEFORE! In my own defense, the picnic had been regularly held on Sunday, albeit not in the last two years, but still!

With the onset of fall we took a quick weekend trip down to Kansas City, MO/KS to see our Kansas friends. Aside from a wonderful dinner party at Doug & Richard's, we also attended a fundraiser for the Heartland Men's Choir. The evening's entertainment was Leslie Jordan. Now, most people don't know him by name, but for anyone who watched and enjoyed "Will & Grace" on NBC, you will know him better as Karen Walker's society nemesis, Beverly Leslie. Saturday while eating lunch down on The Plaza in KC, who should appear in the same restaurant…? None other than Leslie Jordan! I couldn't resist, he was eating lunch by himself, so on the way out, we stopped to say, "Hello!" and tell him we would be enjoying his performance that night. Mr. Jordan is just as petite as he appears on TV, standing not more than maybe 4' 10" and that voice is not a character voice (like Karen Walker's), that is just how he talks. And his one man show, what a hoot! BTW, not only did we "have lunch with" Leslie, but sitting immediately behind us at lunch was professional golfer Tom Watson!

In November, between birthdays (there are a lot of them in November you know, both friends and family) DeAnn, Dick's sister, flew up from Memphis the weekend of the Iowa High School Girl's Volleyball tournament to be honored with her induction in the State Volleyball Hall of Fame as a member of the State Champion C. R. Kennedy Cougars volleyball team of nineteen-hundred and... click-buzz... sorry we lost the connection there for a minute, did we miss anything, I guess not. ;)

Thanksgiving this year had a special treat as my brother Bob came home again (twice in one year!) from Virginia and we enjoyed a delicious dinner at our folks house (I made the pies!) And with Thanksgiving over and the ensuing shopping season beginning, the Holi-dazed season is fully upon us. It seems quite winter-like outside, but we can't complain. It was slow getting here with October and most of November warmer than normal. As I look out the window we have a mere dusting of snow on the ground, but it's nippy and blustery. The garlands are up on the staircase, the wreaths hung and the tree is decorated. A smattering of holiday wishes are starting to come daily in the mail. I will be adding my contribution to the mail service as well, but only a quick note for obviously you have found your way to the world-wide web to read this new 21st Century Holiday Letter, ala Mark.

To one and all, a Merry Christmas

&

A Happy New Year!

Mark and Dick