



Maireann croí éadrom i bhfad. A light heart lives long.



Happy Ryan New Year to one an' all of ya's on the far flung frontiers of freedom! As the Chieftan of the still-Brussels-based little clan of Amer-Irish known far and wide as the Ryans, let me officially and ceremoniously welcome each and every one of you dear people to this year's episodic and sometimes epic installment of our Annual Wee Epistle (AWE-09) commemorating, as it does on this the first day of the seventeenth year of our children 2009 AD (Approaching Departure), the ever-impressive accomplishments of the tribe (i.e. offspring) during Ryan Year 08 (RY08). As this is Volume 17 of the Ryan Hysterical Chronicles, some who missed earlier tomes won't know, but long-time readers will know, that the birth of our children lo those 17 years ago abruptly ended any aspiration of ever sending Christmas cards on time, so we abandoned the practice in favor of this less congenial but more congenial inundation, which reminds me, and I'll say it before I forget it (I have trouble remembering I'm senile), that...what was it now? Oh, yes...we thank you from our very bottoms for the kind words and wishes imparted to us at Christmas. We really do revel in the many greetings and gratings sent by adoring and abhorring friends and acquaintances. But before Saint Patrick boisterously opens RY09 let me say that we do hope to encounter you and yours at some point in this festive year! Now, on with the story...



The family, as you can see at right, is more healthy, more wealthy and more wide than last year at this time (shoulders for the kids and well, you know...). The Volvo +4 holidays continued taking us to the heights of Austria for, you guessed it, golf! That's right, payback time Daddy style!!! In return for keeping the kids in the same high school they agreed to learn to play golf. They did amazingly well earning their PGA-BG cards (Please God Anything But Golf) and would've continued in the sport if not for the battle-on death march their first time out on a busy course. Austria was great, including the salt mines (literally). Check it out at www.siegitours.com golf and skiing together – A most perfect coupling!



Many trips to London, including the infamous market in Camden town, tickets to Monty Python's Spam-a-lot (hangin' outside the stage door pays off as we bagged King Arthur autographs and photos!), Sunday lunch at the RAF Club, and, of course, visiting friends out in the English countryside, which included Duxford and the 398th home drome. As good NATO and EU allies, we had to spend equal time in Germany and France (well, Paris) so Monschau to see the fuss, Cologne to see the cathedral (no, the Starbucks in the bahnhof), and Neumagen on the Mosel to see the bottom of



a glass with many a dear friend and comrade thanks to Sureshot and his Mrs. Wiesbaden became our new spot thanks to its well known cuisine, all-you-can-eat Sushi, and the seasonal European championships to which the young ones are ritually elevated due to incredible physical skills they didn't inherit. At those rare and precious few moments between high school activities the cat drug in and the wind blew in the most blessed and wonderful of gifts: friends and family (not necessarily in that order mind you). In particular a Boss Hog named Bob Mabus and his boss June as well as my wee sister Judy and her bossed Robert. The latter two came across to attend not one but two high school wrestling meets – now that's love of brother or at least nephew! We had a great time and they spent the week betwixt in Eire with Gloria's credit cards, which were attached to Gloria's hand, rejoining the formation at RAF Alconbury for meet #2. Thanks for asking: Yes Halloween was a particularly exciting event in the castle as someone announced Carissa's party over the school PA system – guess



who? Two syllables, sounds like a pretty Fiat: car-issa! So the costumed masses (at least I pray they were costumes) descended and devoured, toasted and timewarped, bobbed and bantered, then scared, skidaddled. It was a hoot of a haunt. A copious Christmas in the Ryan tradition preceded a snow day of all things on their first-day-back-which-wasn't and then the most hallowed and revered of all holiday happenings – a sixth Steeler superbowl victory! Saint's be praised, no Steelers be praised (we're not from Nawlins) – we must say this being, as we are, members of the Steelers fan club of Belgium (nation becomes Steeler's empire).



Ok, it's the moment you've waited ¾ of a page for, what in the world are the kids up to these days: Well, you know there isn't a great and glorious Broadway show tune called "Carissa" -- Yet! Even though she loves her teen past times like sleeping late, staying up late (correlation?), movies, music, dates and chocolate she has managed to eke out a few activities...All right, even though she's too humble to tell you how modest she is, I'm not – Crucify me if you will for fatherly pride but I've agonized over how to say this and there's just no other way, so hang on to your hats and shillelaghs: Senior class president, Captain of the tennis team and MVP, co-lead (Mommy) in the school play "Edward Albee's American Dream", Homecoming Queen, Editor-in-Chief of the Yearbook, Co-director of



Warning: Only 17

the Talent Show, Track Team Captain, NHS, Mu Alpha Theta, Delta Epsilon Phi, FCA, Lector and Eucharistic Minister, Academic Games Team Captain, Creative Connections (sculpture), AP Scholar Award, 1800+ SATs, recieved Matt Reimann Spirit Award for Track, Varsity letters in track, tennis, and wrestling (manager), first-ever 4-year wrestling manager at BAS, placed 12th at track European Championships for the 800m improving from a 24th ranking, anchored the sprint medley team there and ran a historic come-from-way-behind leg, and if that weren't enough, she's now sporting a 4.0 GPA. Obviously, she takes after her mother. All I did in high school was play golf. (And, I didn't tell ya's everything...otherwise, who'd a believed it...) She's off to the largest Irish city in the world next year – Boston! Lest we forget the Sacred Family: in loving memory of dear Stripes, Squirrely of course carries on as do many a hardy veteran voyager now lost in a sea of clothes and jewelry that once was a bedroom. You should know that the Dziugas was replaced by something called a Boone (with or without the “doggie” I don't know...)



Michael's no slouch (if you don't count hours hunched over game consoles and computers like WoW (that's World of Warcraft if you didn't know – I didn't) and others. Mr. Ripped won a 6th place medal in the defense schools' European Wrestling championships this year as his six-man team captured the championship for Division IV schools (5 medals among them). This scholar-athlete improved to a record of 18-6 with 28 takedowns, 14 pins and a quick pin winning “most improved” honors on the team. He also ran track (100m, 200m, sprint medley and looooooong jump can he!) and cross country all of which is to stay in shape for wrestling. You may recall Mr. Pink Cast in one of our Christmas photos...well he's

happy for you to know that Emily removes any doubt you may have harbored regarding his intent to carry on the family name (*Buidheachas do Dhia!*). Michael also surpassed the 1800+ SAT plateau, earned NHS honors, and is pushing his 3.85 toward fours as he learns the ins and outs of AP classes (mostly he's in and wants to get out) but his native German language helps his grade as does his uncanny charm with older women who look after him. Both kids were blessed as were we with a variety of visits, both long and short, from a variety of heretofore unknown siblings all happily adopted, if only for a time, into the tribe not the least of which was the fair young Megan – a perennial favorite and a pure delight!



The graciously gallivanting and gloriously groomed Gloria (gratuitous? gratefully!) continues with all that you've read before in these not-too-humble accounts of the most evolved of all Adam's ribs. Cooking in Flemish, pampering in Paris, loitering in London (with intent to buy I might add), wherever she goes the economy goes boom!



Her organization of the “spouses' dinner” for the NATO Ladies Who Lunch club was masterful, as was her daily nay hourly pampering of the aforementioned and soon-to-be mentioned courtiers to the queen of our castle. Regular jaunts to Paris and Farmington NM to see Paris (not Hilton) and Mom bring her the best of two worlds, worlds apart. Gloria is committed to saving animals but she's a little slow off the mark and is only able to recover their fur, she saved a mink and a fox this year. Well done! She took a home decorating class with a friend only to discover that Mike's endless rearranging of the furniture actually had method in its incessant madness (it's nice to be understood – finally!). Gloria is her kids mom, and the cat's mom, and...

Speaking of the cat, Gato the Alpha male is less incontinent now that he's the one and only (“until this year's kittens arrive” Carissa says), he's still tail-less (apparently they don't grow back) and he eats!



Speaking of eating Mike made more than a few trips to Munich and Bavaria (note the spaghetti eis in the “smiling” picture at bottom left) as well as a jaunt to Ljubljana (don't try to say that if



you've been drinking), and to Geneva which is where they make milk chocolate watches. Mike's compulsive collecting finally netted an antique Tula Samovar (after a global search he found it at the base thrift shop no less!), Ebay brought him together with young William Ritcher, son of Geoff (13-3), who, it turns out, is a neighbor! The Flying Legends airshow at Duxford was remarkable: 9 Spits, 6 Mustangs, 3 B-17s and a heavenly host of warbirds all flying – Thanks Sureshot! Mike is now the semi-official sports photographer for the school because he has the biggest lens; however, basketball is the new craze. Each Sunday afternoon the forty-eight and fiftyteen year olds lace 'em up to shoot hoops. If you're in need of a good laugh, stop by. Speaking of stopping by, if you find yourselves on a plane and in need of beer why not come to visit Brussels...it can't be worse than Cleveland...



Speaking of speaking of (the last time I promise) we speak of all of you often, so much so, Michael knows all the stories by heart! Finally, as is our custom please join us in inviting our Lord to watch over our coalition troops as they go into battle today! Godspeed. -- Mike, Gloria, Carissa & Michael Ryan +32 (0)2 782 0535 www.ryans.be

