



“...One sword at least thy rights shall guard, one faithful song shall praise thee.”

Top o' the marnin' too y'er! The emerald file before y'er eyes means taht' anuther y'er has come and gone in Ryanland and 'tis time, once again, to catch up on the blessed comings and goings of the wee Ryans in this our annual epistle of Ryandom. First, a wee Hello to all of you our beloved friends and chieftans. Thank you from the bottom of our jug o' punch for your prayers and greetings at Christmastime -- we thought on each of you fondly. This year has truly been the busiest and most blessed of our lives (they just keep gettin' better and better...as Uncle KZ says "that God guy really knows what he's doing!"). In addition, congratulations to Ireland for becoming the 26th nation to join NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program and for the hopeful signs of the Irish peace process. Now, on with the show: As a clan, the Ryan's traveled this year in a "Volvo X-Country" convoy with friends through the Czech Republic, attending Easter mass in the great cathedral of the provincial capital "Brno" before continuing on to Prague where we stayed in a "renovated" socialist high rise "hotel" that gave plain concrete a bad name -- nevertheless, extremely adequate (i.e cheap) lodgings and a wonderful city. The winter excursion found us in Italy's beautiful Madonna di Campiglio (don't worry, I can't pronounce it either) ski resort for a week of hurling ourselves downhill in a vain attempt to catch the kids...we also lunched on the shores of Lago di Garda, bought Bardolino wine in, where else? Bardolino, and climbed the stairs of the Roman coliseum in Verona at sunset. Our TDY (for non-military read "paid") vacation was to Brussels where the kids enjoyed the "Atomium" which Mike Sr (as he is distinguished here from his more popular progeny) also visited as a child.

☘ "Chief" Ryan had another successful year teaching wayward millions how to look at the world from the Russian point of view...(seek first to understand)... "Chief" had the great good fortune to be put in charge of the 10 most talented people on the planet from seven different nations (and it takes that much talent to keep him out of trouble)...while still teaching "European Security Cooperation" he now has to organize "deployments" of courses (hopefully to Ireland now that they've joined PfP) and do other "supervisory" tasks (like think -- no Dilbert cartoons please!) More importantly, he decides when the department goes skiing, drinks beer, has parties, etc.etc.etc. Also this past year, Mike attended an official Russian language course, traveled with the class to Saint Petersburg, and became a full-fledged Russia Foreign Area Officer, which along with \$1.50 will get you a coffee at your nearest Stop & Rob store.



Mike also had the great good fortune to be travel agent, driver, and tour guide for the most wonderful group of geriatric month-long visitors imaginable (ages 74-80 years!). The highlight (after Oktoberfest) was a week-long van-borne excursion to Italy including Venice, Rome, Pisa, and Florence. It was payback for a lifetime of love and support, yet Mike still got more from these loving relatives than he gave ("senior moments" included) -- I guess life is like that...[ask them for pictures of Uncle Jack stuck in the tub!] Other visitors to the Ryan Isle during the year included our niece Kim and girlfriend (train to Paris by themselves first time ever -- requires beer for retelling), our lovely dear friend Malinee who had to play piano for her supper, Cathy Coles (twice) with an assortment of family each time, and "Ma" Barber who jumped off the tour bus in Oberammergau long enough for a hug and lunch (or was it a "jug of punch"?). Certainly looking forward to many visits from many others in the future! And now on to Gloria, Katzen Kinder, and "learning to curse in German"...

☘ Due to a democratic selection process, Gloria is now the "President" of the NATO School Women's Club. As you might imagine, this is to the very great benefit of our wonderful community. She began the "Ryan year" (which officially begins on 17 March) by taking a month-long German language immersion course in order to be able to keep up with the kids who are now, both linguistically and chronologically, at a point where they are exploring the meaning of words otherwise known as "learning to curse in German" -- they didn't teach that in Gloria's class but fortunately, the kids still have to ask us in English to explain the physical activity described in the German phrase...Gloria went home over the summer to visit Abuelita (her mother) and to help her younger sister Elena adapt to the joys of twins. "Smith & Weston" are real pistols (actually their names are Russell and Weston and they are in fact "boys" with pistols -- careful changing those diapers...). Back at home, Gloria continues her quest to "drink all the beer in Bavaria" yet remain within the confines of her current wardrobe. Gloria also made a financial decision to work in the NATO School's Coffee Shop as it pays more than teaching in the local American Military School (So much for a Masters Degree in Education!!!!)... We have also discovered the joys of "internet commerce" to Visa's great delight!

✿ Carissa, (score: 8+) the girl wonder, is more magical every day (Here she is making a toast at a recent dinner party). To keep you up to date on her "sacred family" she is now completely enamored with her latest furry friend "Sussi". Unfortunately for Sussi, she is a living breathing cat in the care of a girl with a history of loving "stuffed" animals to extinction. For example, "Carissa, where's so and so?" "Oh, she's in the bedroom having 'beanie baby brain surgery' with the other animals – Here's your lolly...see you next visit". Among her many activities [violin lessons, tennis team, modern interpretive ballet (she insists on the term) and recorder (itsa flute—I didn't know)], Carissa finds time to put on her make-up, wear her Mother's dresses, and lament the fact that she has "work to do". (Does anybody have a pill to slow the growing process? I know they have a pill for scared fathers – it's called valium) Her hair is still growing for this year's Passion Play as is her younger brother



Michael's: (Score 7+) Pokémon has come to roost in Michael's brain and there is no dislodging it, so if anybody has a "rare 3-D holographic anything with 120HP" please send it at once so I can find out what it is...Michael's Pokémon name is now "Hugalotofus" as it was a sneaky parental way of increasing physical acts of affection (Hug a lot of us) and it works!!! In addition to Pokémon, if such a possibility exists, Michael plays piano and playstation, but only when he's not playing computer games...if that weren't bad enough, his grades are outstanding and he (like Carissa) is a delightful child (I think that he has figured out

that if he does everything well we won't punish him by taking away the Pokémon cards and / or the playstation) and so it goes...I'm sure I'll tell him some day, but for now...both kids are ski bums now having lived in the Alps for 18 months – Michael took first place in the NATO School's annual ski race (Carissa was at tennis). The only reason I can keep up with him is that I haven't bought him good skis yet and I keep putting molasses on his current skis. Michael too is father, friend, and fiend to HIS cat "Gato" (which is Spanish for "cat"). Parents note: When Santa promises one child a cat, don't take the other child with you to "pick out ONE" kitten – I should've seen it coming...Nevertheless both Gato and Sussi are wonderful additions to a "Wonderful Life" here in Oberammergau. Both Michael and Carissa will be paid handsomely for their "rent-a-crowd" scenes in the Passion Play and are endlessly rearranging their future bank accounts for each new toy that comes along. Other highlights for them this year (and for us) include seeing the Total Eclipse of the Sun, the brightest full moon in 103 years, and numerous ski club trips to Austria.

✿ Let it not be said that Gloria is a "wuss". She has been an absolute star this year for jumping right in and skiing with the troops even though snow does not make her personal "Top One Million Favorite Things" list. She's done so well that it's easy to forget she has limits. On one particularly snowy day, at the top of what promised to be a "tremendous challenge" Michael and Gloria shared what shall forever be known as a "married moment" which resulted in Gloria walking back uphill to the Cable Car in order to ride down and Michael blissfully skiing "glorialessly" downhill. Amazingly enough, we still do things together: for example, we've begun weight training together in order to combat the affects of the mountain air (when one inhales here beer, schnitzels, apple streudels, and all sorts of things fly in one's mouth) which can cause unplanned expansion of the epidermis. Gloria has made tremendous progress so far...Mike hopes that he can keep up. We are also fulfilling a marriage-long goal by taking ballroom dancing, but, as of yet, I have no plans to quit my day job and I promise I won't send anybody tapes from my



singing lessons either. Well, sorry I didn't have the time to write a short letter, but through the wonders of smaller fonts, it's still only two pages.....We often think of all of you fondly for we treasure the people in our lives more than any other riches the earth can bestow. As the famous Irish poet Billy O'Shake'a'spear wrote: "For thy sweet memory such wealth brings that then I scorn to change my state with kings." And so to all of you, Good Luck, Godspeed, and may God hold you in the hollow of his hand...Please pray for our dear little friend Jarod McMullen (age 6) who is pulling off a miracle with God's intervention – his inoperable brain tumor is now down 50% and with your prayers he'll get even better! All the best...