



Beagán agus a rá go maith.
Say little but say it well.



Well, we finally maed'it all d'a way to th'Emerald Isle this year, in diss da thirteenth year of our children, Anno Dominat'em, tanks in no small measure to all the good wishes we receive from all of you at Christmas time, and this year was no exception. Many thanks. As you know, the period BC (before children) ended in 1991 (along with our sending Christmas cards) and thus began the Ryan Hysterical Epoch, which is summarily chronicled at St. Patrick's day in our Annual Wee Epistle (AWE). Now as RY04 draws to a magnificent close and RY05 looms large (not as large as my waistline!) it's time once again to bring you up to snuff, as it were, on the ever-broadening (again with the belt sizes?) comings and goings of the little clan of AmerIrish known as the Ryans with this our 13th epistle, AWE05.

As there is only one St. Patrick's Day, we decided to spend the 364 practice days perfecting our technique. Brussels being what it is, we opened Spring Training in Dublin, Ireland. Yes, as you might have guessed, we found Ireland. Investing our time share in a lovely apartment overlooking Dublin and the bay (right), we spent a glorious week in city and country alike calling in at the highest pub in Ireland, Johnnie Fox's, the most beautiful garden, Powerscourt, and the center



of human civilization itself, the Guinness brewery. During our first day, which was said to be "dry" by the locals, we experienced bright sunshine, light and heavy rain, sleet, hail and snow, but mostly drink. Sunscreen in Ireland is obviously meant to filter out the precipitation. Nevertheless, it was marvelous! At one Irish watering hole and forgetting where she was, Gloria put our name on the waiting list by spelling it out for the young man, as is her habit, "Ryan, R-Y-A-N." To which the slightly stunned fellow replied "Yes, I know". It's a common name there you see...



Les Ryans next disembarked in Normandy for the 60th anniversary of D-Day where we rejoined a merry band of brothers from the 398th Bomb Group. Alert readers will recall that the kids' grandfather was a B-17 navigator with this outfit. Mike served as official translator for their ceremonies marking their heavenly contribution to the liberation of Courselles-sur-mer by the Canucks. It was stressful for Mike because his bilingual friends the Ericksons were there meaning he couldn't make anything up! The subsequent "vin d'honneur" is evident at left. The day was overwhelming as re-enactors by the thousands swarmed the area in a sea of olive drab and stars & stripes followed by

fireworks all along the coast. Since there t'weren't narry a hotel room to be found, we rented a quaint 16th century farm-house nearby. Darn the luck! And thus continued the Volvo+4 (and two cats) holidays on the continent...which as you might have guessed, took us back to Oberammergau for Waldfests, Strassenfests, und Bierfests. You might say we had an in-fest-station (OK, so it's late). Speaking of stations, we took the Chunnel train to London's King's Cross.

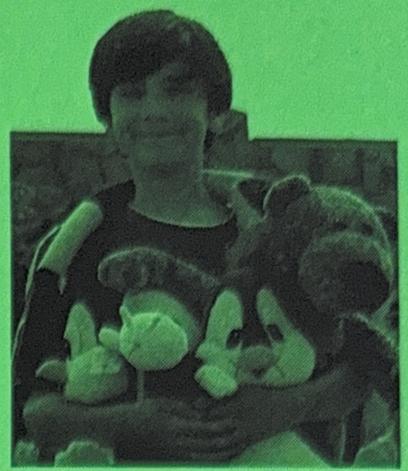
Carissa, the avid theater-goer that she is, spends each birthday with Dad going to a show. What better place than the West-End and what better show than her favorite POTO! Now, you're stumped aren't ya? Phantom of the Opera! (Yes, we saw the film severeeal times as well) Dad also convinced Michael he'd like London with a visit to Hamley's the famous toy universe and Gloria too with a sumptuous Sunday supper at "Mike's club" (I've always wanted to say that) the Royal Air Force Club on Picadilly just across from Hyde Park (See results at right). Not to be constrained by Dad's attachments to the European Union, the smarter three Ryans joined a "Club Beyond" trip to Camp Darby in Italy for fun in the Italian sun. Kids were mad at Dad though as he wouldn't let them do the 18+ hour bus ride and made them fly for 1.5 hours. They did bus around Italy though to quaint villages like Rome and Venice where Carissa got her first tattoo...whoa...a what? Dat's what I said...turned out to be a temporary "Hella" and to me it sure was a hella...



Gloria, the Bellydancing Brunette Bombshell of Brussels, (see at left doing the housework) is the queen of fashion in our little community. She's combined her loves of Paris, of shopping, of cooking and of eating (which results in a love of Pilates) to organize more than a few "Ladies Days Out in Paris" taking the ladies to "relookage" appointments at Printemps the Paris department store. In her spare time, she's tutoring kids in French and German, doing Pilates, joining the NATO ladies who lunch, and searching the travel brochures for someplace warm. Saturdays is bellydance class day. Every so often, her teacher organizes a recital and as a good supportive husband, I trudge along to show how much I love her (and to commemorate the event on film!). Gloria is also fulfilling a life-long dream by taking piano lessons with the kids and she's doing remarkably well. One day I came home and she was playing Bolero...I'm sorry, where was I? Oh yes, Bolero...on the um, piano...in the, ohh...um...did I say Bolero?



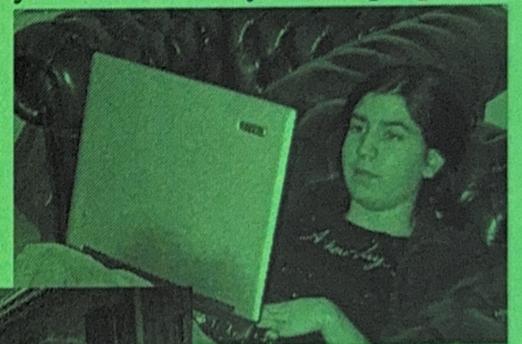
☘ Weeds! Growing like weeds! Michael is skyrocketing and we'd love to have a "used blue jean sale" but he outgrows them before he wears them! Michael, to his great credit, has taken his playstation skills out into the real world of amusement park games (see results at right), of sport—soccer, basketball and baseball, and of music—piano, where he's become known to us as "the entertainer". His first baseball season was marred by Dad's attempts to help. Mike took a bag of tennis balls in order to pitch batting practice to Michael to get him used to watching the ball. Well, Dad certainly threw AT Michael...good thing he's quick! And it's a good thing Dad has a day job. Michael's the power forward on the basketball team, he



runs without touching the ground (I don't know how he does it, but I have way more gravity than he does), and his grades and work habits are impressive. He's reached "First Class" rank in Boy Scouts and regularly camps in places like the Ardennes and central Germany. Enroute to the latter location, his bus had a small altercation with the Polizei, the German police. Michael quickly translated them out of a ticket mixing Blarney and Bavarian with amazing skill. Michael is also the first string Sunday 11:30 alter server. Why? He says it gives him something to do during Mass!



☘ Caris, as she's truncatedly known to her friends, expanded her thespian repertoire at the holidays in "A Christmas Carol" wherein she collected for charity from Mr. Scrooge, a part she's been rehearsing with her Dad for sometime. Evidence of her success can be found in the latest news about Carissa's Sacred Family. Long-time AWE recipients will be fascinated to know that the aforesaid family has gone digital. That's right, cyber buddies all. Persistent negotiations finally resulted after 7 years in delivery of a laptop. So, Carissa can be seen chatting away (photo at right) all over the house. The deal is that Dad has to see her! No locking herself in the north tower. For her part, she's keeping the bargain, good grades, violin and piano lessons, and a sport...she's picked track. Dad's thrilled.



Now, Daddy's little girl can outrun the boys! Yes! And she needs to...in one Ryan year (dat's da time twixt epistles don't ya know), her braces have come and gone much to the masculine delight of many! While Carissa

☘ studies French, Michael, Spanish and Gloria, Flemish, Dad is still trying to decipher French with his tutor Violette, which gives him, believe it or not, two guaranteed hours of sanity per week. Mike is one of the few Americans who can spell "EU" so his business card says "Have briefing, will travel". As the hired gun, he's had the chance to fill in for the Ambassador giving a speech to the Luxembourg European Forum (picture at far right with Gloria—but we got the Ambassador's room at the hotel!) but most importantly, he was invited to speak about his perspectives by the 398th Bomb Group at the annual reunion, this year in Fairfax, Virginia. It was a singular honor to address such a distinguished group of Americans and it meant a great deal (Thanks Wally and Alan – text available on the AWE website). Benefiting as it were from the close proximity to his point of origin, Mike spent some time at home with KZ (aka Uncle Dan--surrogate dad) and rediscovered golf. Back in Europe, Mike lead the family, less Michael, to the semi-annual degustation chez Maxims in Paris in the fall, where we, and on behalf of friends, came away with 44 cases of Chateau La Mothe de Haux and a significant dent in the children's college fund. We'll need it as the PTB (Powers-that-Be) decided amongst themselves that I'm needed more working at the US Mission to the EU than in France, so we'll be here 2 more years. C'est la vie. Needless to say, Mike still speaks at the NATO School (read skis in the alps) and this past January he did just that where he ended one day and started the next as the lone skier on the entire Oberammergau piste! A most cherished accomplishment was the production of the DVD "Danny Boy's Collection" featuring 38 songs played by the master of embellishment-by-ear Daniel Connell (aka KZ), which Mike collected on video surreptitiously and titiously over the last 20 years. The CD should be out by Grammy time.



☘ In a never-ending battle to keep his waist size below his age, Mike likes to take Gato (right) out for walks on his leash, but Gato had a better idea: he got cat liposuction! (a big benign hairball tumor plucked from his chest no less...he's all better now). Stripes, (left) is still Carissa's princess. Feline revenge is best served cold and it's very cold at night so Stripes likes to wake Carissa up at all hours! You go girl...Well, time to finish the Ryan Year (i.e. 17 March to 16 March) by singing "So fill to me the parting glass, good night and joy be with you all" and dear Lord, please watch over our troops as they go into battle today! Godspeed -- Mike, Gloria, Carlissa and Michael +32(0)2 782 0535 Ryan.Michael@skynet.be

