

The Year 2005

This year, contrary to popular belief, there was no January through July and we started our fun in August. You remember how hot August was in Michigan, which is why my family thought it'd be great to drive to the desert southwest where it was even hotter. We headed to Sedona, Arizona and ran about the desert in search of the famous vortexes said to provide mystical experiences, life transformations and put all who enter into a peaceful and relaxed state. Thing is, we got lost trying to find some of the vortexes, inadvertently entered at least one from the wrong direction, and found ourselves transformed into raisin-like creatures and in a mystified state of confusion. The tarot cards, psychics and crystal palm readings didn't go well, either, and several thousands of dollars and an enviable crystal collection later, we headed to the Four Corners area where kindly Navajo Indians that do not sweat in 120-degree heat charge families \$12 to park in the desert, take photos at a slab of concrete on the ground, use teal-colored port-potties and buy hand-made Indian goods.

Several thousands of pieces of jewelry later, we drove to Mesa Verde, which is where the Navajo ancestors hung out way, way, way back when. They were called Anasazis then, a name derived from a female Indian named Sazi who, suffering from a hideous heat rash, was thrown off the limestone cliffs, which caused her nephew to yell "Antie Sazi! Auntie Sazi!" which echoed across the land far enough for white man to misinterpret. What's remarkable is that the Anasazis left Mesa Verde to--get this--move down into the flat lands around the Four Corners and New Mexico and other dry, hot areas. Parched as it is at Mesa Verde, we give this national park two very-burned thumbs up, due to the tours provided, the conditions of the ruins, the antelope-sized jackrabbit, wild horses, a vole chewing off a blade of grass, an owl swooping down at me to verify my deathly state, two types of chipmunk-like creatures, stars as far as the eye can see, and interactions with Indians, some of which were alive.

We left southern Colorado and headed into the mountains for the last few days of our two-week vacation, wondering why we ever went to the southwest in the first place.



Arthur, 18, was captured by several green and white Spartans shortly thereafter, an event we revered until he discovered that the busses from MSU bring him back home quite handily...and often. Shortly after he allegedly left, there appeared under our deck a fuzzy creature with white paws, emitting a hoarse mew-type sound. Two days of Tender Vittles later, I reached out and shoved the creature into a portable cage, took it and its lice and fleas inside and called him Purrkins. He is now bug-free and the size of a small bobcat. His favorite activity is playing in the toilet, a habit we've capitalized at night by flushing and then running into our

bedroom so he does not follow.

As if Purrkins needed a pal, I saw a white rabbit with black eye liner while riding my bicycle in October at the nearby Rose Lake wildlife area. While he ran off in a snit, nearby, was gray and white rabbit, which I strolled up to, grabbed, stuffed in a box I happened to have in my car, took home and put in a cage. Moments after Mark saw the rabbit, I found myself back at Rose Lake with fish landing nets and several friends who sacrificed their skin and their clothing to net these and several other released rabbits from what was likely a 4H project gone wrong. My favorite rabbit round-up event was with my mother, who, dressed in her white tennies, occasionally called out from the parking lot with, "There's one!" All said, we ended up with 5 rabbits, found homes for 4 and kept Magic, who now has supervised play time with Purrkins.



In other news, Holly, our swimmer, turned 16, ending our contribution of dangerous drivers to Michigan's roads and highways. Becky is working on a M.S. in mechanical engineering in--get this--Arizona, and says she misses the seasons. Willi did a stint on an organic farm in California over the summer and recently found a fulltime job with the Tri-County Mental Health, where she gets more time off and has a more flexible schedule than a state employee. Mark is still professorializing at Alma College and is currently in the process of going through his pre-tenure sucking-up.

In May I joined my mother, Godmother (Pat), and Arthur on a road trip to see my brother and niece perform alongside Peter Schickle in THE event of my brother's musical career, a PDQ Bach concert in New York. I got to watch Emma play the violin and Lloyd play two key-boards and a homemade calliope interchangeably, a fact that still awes me because, in comparison, I only mastered the triangle. Lloyd also played the bicycle.



My sister, Aby, is on the verge of publishing an e-book for scrapbookers, which you and all your disorganized friends should look for on Amazon.com or simplify101.com soon. On Labor Day my mother walked the Mackinaw Bridge with me and tens of thousands of our closest friends. My father continued to skeet shoot and, between competitions, spent considerable time trying to figure out why his marksmanship did not rub off on me.

I remain a dedicated beurocrat for reasons that are unclear to me...until the bills come. I've been working on a book about raising ducks and can report that one of my subjects flew into my wintery backyard the other day to eat corn and sunflower seeds. The other resident ducks couldn't figure out how to land on the same spot I've put

corn for years now, so I'm delighted that some of my genes got passed on to my duck, Picnic, and that sitting on that egg for 28 days in 2004 paid off.

May your heating bills be low and your spirits high during this holiday season.