

Merry Christmas

Christmas 2007

Dear Friends/Family:

It seems like just a year ago I was writing one of these. Time flies when you are, well it just flies. This has been an eventful year; let's see if I can get you filled in.

Let's start with hockey. I'm still going to the U of M women's games. They just missed making the national tournament for only the second time in team history. This year, they are promising to make up for it. I've only been able to make it to a couple of Minnesota Whitecaps games, but hopefully I'll be able to make it to most of the rest this season. I haven't made it to a Minnesota Wild game since late last December. I made it to a couple of U of M men's games at the end of last season and to one this season. Last spring I went to the WCHA women's semi-finals and watched a couple of afternoon games. Then that night I went next door to watch the men's game. At the women's game, my camera worked just fine. At the men's game, it didn't work anymore.

I bought a new camera. I've gone digital. I guess it's alright. I'm just not sure how much of a photographer I am now. To me, photography was always how the light reacts with the film. The better you could get them to dance the better you were. Now, there's no film. But it is what it is. My set up is pretty good for most of my needs, landscape, baseball, etc. It is lacking a bit for hockey, but I'm trying to adapt. I need a faster lens, but until then I'll get by. I do take a lot more photos now. Since April 1, the first day I used my new camera, I've taken 39,554 photos.



If you look really close, you can see my reflection in "the Bean" at Chicago's Millennium Park



Tyner Tyme! Jason Tyner gets back to first.

I made it to a few baseball games again this year. I went to 60 Twins games, 3 Gopher games, and I even made it down to Des Moines twice for a total of four Iowa Cubs games. I was hoping to make down there one more time but it didn't work out. It wasn't quite the year us Twins fans were hoping for, but at least we were better than the White Sox. It seemed a little strange without Brad Radke (he retired) and now I guess we will have to get used to not having Torii Hunter. If we can pick up a good center fielder, I like our chances. And Gardenhire always has his team ready to play, so I think there is reason to be optimistic. There were positives this year too, I got to see Nick Blackburn make his major league debut, Matt Guerrier get a chance and pitch well in a little more glamorous role, the 1987 Twins reunion, and Matthew

LeCroy's return to the Twins. I didn't add any new stadiums to my list this year, but next year I hope to add two. It will be the final season in Yankee Stadium and Shea Stadium, and my cousin Ryan and I plan on checking them out. I'm sure we'll do more than just ball games as there are a couple of hot dog stands I want to check out as well.



Elk on the side of a hill in Custer State Park.



Bison running for...I don't know why, they are just running. I did not make my annual Sturgis Rally trip this year. Instead I decided to go out in late May/early June. Like usual, it rained. The only day without any rain, was the day I came back. A couple of days, it was only sprinkles, but there were at least drops on windshield everyday but the one. I was able to make the most of it. I drove around and did most of my shooting (photography) out my window. I did learn one thing while I was out driving around on the back roads, without the



I'm not sure there is supposed to be a waterfall here, but there was this time.



I'm driving through the Black Hills when I see this sign.



Then I see this sign. It's not that big a deal because I don't have a cell phone. Then I start thinking, am I close enough that a cell phone would set off a blast? If so, that's probably not cool. Then I do a little more thinking, is this why people who have been telling me I should get a cell phone want me to get a cell phone? Don't worry, I was driving away when I was thinking the thoughts I was thinking, though I did drive past these same signs again a little later.

sun, I completely lose my sense of direction going around the curves and all. I of course did not realize this right away. It wasn't until I was heading back to Rapid City, that I figured that out. I was straight west of Rapid City (I was straight, the roads were not), which of course meant I had to east. I thought I was until I saw the sign for the Wyoming state line, which meant I was going west. I pulled out a map and figured out where I was and then headed back, going east this time. While I was out there, Spearfish Canyon got seven inches of rain. Bridal Veil Falls, which sometimes is just a trickle, was gushing so



To answer questions some of you who saw my TV appearance this summer, no I did not get the glove. It was the guy next to me.



Yep, I was that close.

much, even the locals were out taking pictures. Ryan and I even found a waterfall that doesn't normally exist.

I didn't go to many concerts this year. I just went to one. It was the Gin Blossoms, the Pretenders, the Stray Cats, and ZZ Top. The Gin Blossoms were okay, but they didn't inspire me to go out and buy their CD. The same with the Pretenders, and I really didn't need to hear Chrissie Hynde give her little animal rights speech. The Stray Cats were the reason I went, and they were awesome. If you ever get a chance to see them, I highly recommend it. I was also looking forward to ZZ Top and I was a little disappointed. I think if they had gone on before the Cats, I would have enjoyed them more. The Stray Cats were a tough act to follow, and ZZ Top wasn't able to match the energy level. I didn't go to the Taste of Minnesota this year. I didn't

feel like it and there wasn't anybody there that I got real excited about, so I didn't bother.

I had some "fun" with my car this summer. My transmission acted up. I took it in and they couldn't find anything wrong. I picked it up and drove it for about three more days and it started acting up again. After about \$500 in diagnostics, they decided it needed to have the transmission oil changed. I thought they had done that the first time I took it in, but I guess not. It runs now at least. Of course that caused other headaches (and I mean literally and not just figuratively). The first time it was in the shop, my sister gave me a ride home from work. As I walked up to my house, I realized that my house key was on my key ring with my car keys. Yeah. And the garage had just closed about five minutes earlier. Yeah. We called the garage, but no answer, we drove by there in case somebody was there, and nobody was. So we borrowed my neighbor's ladder and some tools, and I proceeded to break into my own house. Did I mention it was sprinkling? I took all the screws off of one of my screens and was able to take my screen off, at which point I cut my one hand open on the side of the frame. Yeah. Then, with my hand wrapped in a bandage, I managed to open a window. Not actually being a burglar, I wasn't exactly sure how you were supposed to climb through the window. And of course it is my window that won't stay open on its own. I stick one leg through, then I get my body through, and then I realize just how high that window really is from the floor. I'm leaning on my towel bar as I am trying to step on my toilet seat so I can balance myself out again, when the towel bar gives way and I fall into my house, banging my head on the vanity. Yeah. Fortunately I did not break my vanity or my head. I cleaned up the cut on my hand and everything turned out all right. I guess the moral of the story is if your car isn't working right, put some type of step stool in the bathroom.

Of course all of these "disappointments" and "bad news" are quite trivial in the grand scheme of things. Unfortunately, not everything was quite so



With my friend Phil on the Jumbotron a few years back.



This year was my hometown Sinai's Centennial. They had a parade, heat wave, all sorts of fun stuff. Here I'm driving the float for the Lake Sinai Dive Club. Dave Tvedt, the creator of it, is riding inside. Our friend Maricel Olson, put a video of it on youtube.com, just do a search on Sinai parade. On the right is our family's float.

trivial. In June one of my best friends, Phil Thompson had a heart attack and died. We spent a lot of time together at Twins games and hockey games and other various sports related activities. The last two Wild games that I went to, I went with him. It seems strange not seeing him at the Dome and hockey games.

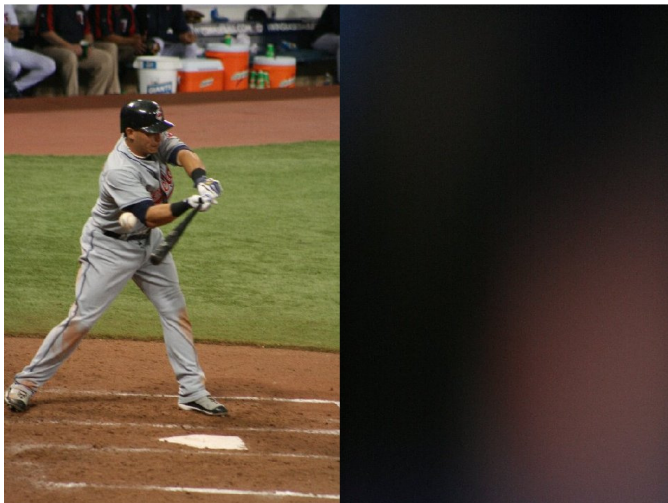
With this being a Christmas letter and all, I don't want to end on a sad note; there was happy news this year too. In July my brother and his wife went to Guatemala and picked up my niece Ana. She didn't care too much for me when I saw her at Thanksgiving time, so that shows you that she has extremely high intelligence.

With that it is time for me to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy 2008. I also need to make my annual shameless plug: Whenever I go to Rapid City, I always make sure to stop by Boston's The Gourmet Pizza on 620 East Disk Drive. Be sure to ask for Ryan K. Mentioning my name will do no good, but compliment his shirt, he likes that.

-Neil



Ana



This is what a foul ball that is just about to hit your hand looks like.

This is what it looks like when get hit by a foul ball on your hand.



Twins win!!!

