

NICKERSON CHRISTMAS LETTER 2008

CAT CARES, CAT-ASTROPHIES & OTHER CAT-EGORIES. On a cold day in February a kitten appeared in our barn. We already had 3 cats so we found him a new home. In August we acquired another kitten. We found her a home too. 3 days later our big, fluffy cat met his fate by automobile. Nola had always wanted a Persian cat so she found one advertized in the paper. Her owner had died. She is 12 years old and named Zoe. We usually call her "cranky cat" because she definitely wants things on her own terms. Jesse's cat, Milo, disappeared. She is known to go MIA when she gets mad at our cat Silver. After 2 weeks we thought the worst and bought a Birman kitten..... guess who came home? Yes, Milo came home after 3 weeks of being gone. Russ knew someone who wanted a cat so she found another home without other cats. The kitten is the life of the party (& it's always a party). His name is Puff-n-Stuff. The two older cats aren't always happy with him but the kitten could care less and tries to play with them constantly.

We had a usual Minnesota winter. By April we thought it was over. What were we thinking? Between April 5th & 6th we had 23" of snow. On the 10th we had 12" & on the 25th 12 more inches! The fishing opener in brought us another snow storm! One rainy afternoon Nola got a wake-up call when lightning hit a tree close to the house! The only damage, other than her heart skipping several beats, was the electric fence, the heater to the garage & the freezer shut off. Luckily, we realized it in time to save the food.

We are trying to scale down a bit on our animals. Problem is that every time we sell an animal or give one away we seem to acquire another or some have babies! We sold 3 dozen chickens & we butchered quite a few but then a couple hens decided to hatch chicks. We still have about 30. We sell the eggs so that helps with feed cost. The 3 turkeys will become our main course at dinners soon. The horse population just went up by one more so that makes 5: Ace, Dragon, Dixie, Loragwyn & Millie, the donkey. Jesse's rabbits, Phantom & Hexxus, still abide in the barn. We still have pond fish which live in a plastic wash tub in the garage for the winter.

November brought just enough snow to make the ground white. That was good for the deer hunters. We both got bucks the first weekend. Then the weather turned cold and windy so it wasn't nice for the rest of the hunters or the deer. Nancy (still a nurse after about 28 years) & Amy (graduated high school this spring & now off to college) both got theirs the last day. Russ's family got a few too. Kevin got a moose as well as a deer. Unfortunately, he hit the deer with his pickup. There is lots of meat to go around.

FURTHER NOTABLE FAMILY FUNCTIONS. Sara, Rick, Trista (12 years) & "little" Ricky (7 years) live in Bertha, MN where Rick is a teacher & coach & Sara is a volunteer fire fighter & a first responder. She is also going to school for law enforcement. Trista & Ricky are busy with sports, sports, and more sports. Trista got her first deer this year while hunting with Grandpa Don. Nephew, Jake, is in Colorado helping an Uncle build his house. Nephew Ryan (& Carrie) had a baby girl. Nephew Jason (Kayla & big sister) had a baby boy. Niece, Amber, who has 3 young children, lost her house in a fire this summer. She was unable to get rebuilt before winter so is living with her parents until spring. Daniel & Peggy are busy with work, the farm and all the grandchildren. Vicky is still working & Gordy is retired now. Their Grandson has gone through several surgeries for "Cherub's Syndrome" and is scheduled for another soon. Lissa, Brienne & their hubbys still live in Bemidji. Both Shelly & Wayne's and Roxanne & Randy's boys are off to college. Mike Jr. & Tammy moved to Arizona very near where Russ's Parents are living.

The highlight of Jesse's summer was, of course, summer. He helped install security equipment as a summer job. He was also very excited about the Hubbard County Fair. It was the last year he could participate as a 4Her. His goal was to win Grand Champion Market Chickens, which he did, & sold one on the auction for \$300.00. That was a good end to his 4H "career". He is now in Grand Rapids, MN for his 2nd year of Business Management.

In August Nola got a job working at a gift store. She is still doing the lawn care for ACS during the summer months. While not at work she keeps busy tending to the animals, scrapbooking, gardening & hunts & fishes occasionally. Russ is still employed as a supervisor with Arvig Communications Systems (ACS) in Walker, MN. He is a township supervisor (recently re-elected), plays on a pool league, cuts & bales the hay off of Aunt Nora's farm to use for our animals & he tries to find time to do some hunting, fishing & curling. He also likes to drive his 1975 MGB on nice days. His new venture this year is singing Karaoke.

THE MACHETE INCIDENT: Russ has numerous certificates that he has received over the years. Some of these are for completion of educational courses & others are performance based. Some of the areas in which he has received certificates are Technical Training, Achievement, Recognition, Teamwork, Performance & Safety Training sessions. Yes, Safety Training sessions. Of all those certificates there are none where he has passed Machete Safety 101. If he would have done a little studying before wielding the weapon, he would have learned that the machete is the most popular non-fire weapon used by bandits and outlaws in South America. Bandits & outlaws, not civil people trying to put meat on the table! Upon further study he would have learned that the "Zombie Survival Guide", introduced to us by Jesse, describes the machete as being the weapon of choice for decapitation of ghouls. Ghouls, that is, not chickens! Indiana Jones used a machete against thick jungle vegetation & greedy villains. Jungle vegetation & villains, not jungle fowl! But Russ had to go after the chicken in full Rambo-Style, using the machete but the result was a severed limb. It was only a finger but an emergency room visit, 8 stitches & an expensive bill was enough for us to never let Russ help with chicken butchering again! Maybe that was his idea after all? Shhhhhh, don't let Russ know that it was Nola that had it sharpened!!! The finger healed just fine & Russ wrote safety rules as a reminder (see page 2).

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year to all!.....Russ & Nola Nickerson

Machete Safety 101....BY RUSS

1. Do not swing a machete at a chicken that is running for its life.
2. Machetes do not need to be sharpened like a razor.
3. Do not use a machete to shave.
4. Always swing machete away from your body and not in the direction of sensitive appendages.
5. Do not test machete for sharpness by running finger down the blade.
6. Never run while carrying a machete.
7. Never re-enact scenes from Indiana Jones with recently sharpened machete.
8. Never think that a chicken will cooperate when it comes to its own beheading.
9. Unless you are a Ninja Warrior trained in machete arts, there is NO NEED to own a machete.
10. If you ever see a machete, act like it didn't see you and keep walking away.