

JULY 2006

Dear friends and family,

Well, this will come as a shock to you all, but I have now decided to try a summertime letter for a change! I know that you are all panting to hear from me again, so I thought this would be a good way of "getting my butt into gear" - as the saying goes!!

First of all I want to thank you so much for your great letters and cards to me, which have been so interesting, and given me so much encouragement. It's wonderful to hear news from so many different places, and I have enjoyed reading them over many times! Now that we can keep in touch by email as well as regular mail, it opens up so many more opportunities for meeting people as well!

Now as you know, I thought I was due for spinal surgery early this year. Ha! Ha! I was not reckoning with the long-winded Health Care Service here. I was told by the Toronto neurosurgeon last October that it was quite urgent.....and here we are, 9 months later, still waiting! They did finally book me for a myelogram in May, which puts dye in the spine and takes pictures of it. But since then - nothing. I've given up expecting anything to happen now, and as I can walk around quite well with a cane, I'd just as soon leave well alone.

As some of you know, our family was saddened last month by the death of my stepson Wayne. He passed away quite unexpectedly; he lived in Thunder Bay, and had been in touch with several of his brothers and sisters in the couple of days prior to the event. He was only 53 years old, but he had suffered a previous stroke many years ago, and it was found that this was another in the same area of the brain. A very moving memorial service was held for him, at which his urn was surrounded by flowers and photos.....and his fishing tackle, which was his favourite means of relaxation!

Michelle was unable to attend the service, as it happened during the last week of school, when there were exams to mark and reports to write. So she and Marko kindly paid for my flight up to Thunder Bay, to represent our family here. It felt quite strange and exciting to be travelling again after all this time, but the trip was not a happy experience of course. I only stayed two days, so didn't get a chance to look around my old "stompin' grounds" much.

However I did meet many of my grandchildren, who have somehow grown up from being cute little kids into being tall and good-looking young men and women!! Quite a salutary experience for Grandma!! Jennifer, the only girl in the group, sang a lovely hymn in the service, and quite blew me away! She has a lovely voice and is a most poised young lady.

I couldn't help thinking of her baby photo where she is peeking out from under a blanket!! How the years have flown!

Well on the same subject, two of our other granddaughters are getting married this year!

Last Saturday, Wendy's daughter Lindsay was married to Dave Christen in a beautiful outdoor ceremony at a place called Country Wedding Gardens in Erin, Ontario. The sun shone most obligingly for them (after a forecast of thundershowers!) The grounds sloped down from the house, making a lovely path for the wedding party to walk along. A perfect setting for a wedding! I was lucky enough to get a ride with Michelle and Marko, so I didn't have to battle highway driving!

Paula's daughter Erin will be married in August at her parents' home in Thunder Bay. Erin now lives in Australia, but is coming home for the wedding as all the family are here. I am really hoping that I may be able to arrange a ride up there with my friends Leottia and Gavin, who also have friends in Thunder Bay. It would be super to see Erin as a bride! She is now a very successful business woman 'down under'. Hard to believe that I used to babysit her when she was just a tiny bundle!!

Another piece of news is that I'm going to be on the move again! Now that Daniel is growing up, Michelle and Marko feel that they need extra room in the house, and will make a family room in the basement. So I've put my name down for a senior's apartment in Luther Manor in Waterloo, but it has a long waiting list and the manager thinks it will be about three years before I can get in! Plenty of time for me to downsize and declutter!! I will need to do lots of this as it's quite a small apartment and I do still have lots of 'clutter'! I'm a born pack-rat, and sentimental too - I hate parting with my treasures!

Daniel has graduated from Junior Kindergarten with flying colours! He's playing soccer again this summer - the teams look very cute in their long shirts and regulation soccer shoes - like miniatures of the grown-ups! At least they seem to know which way to aim for their goal now! The most enthusiasm is shown (naturally) for the freezies or fruit snack at halftime!!

I hope you all have a great summer, with plenty of time for rest and fun! It could do with being a shade cooler here - the Humidex is up to 46 today! But one shouldn't complain - it will soon be snowing again!! With very best wishes from

Lola and Sunshine.

January 2007

Dear friends and family,

Warmest greetings to you all in this wonderful New Year, and best wishes for good health and happiness in the days to come! It really is exciting to think of all those brand-new unopened days coming hopping along, filled with new experiences and challenges! I'm not usually one to tempt fate by making resolutions that I won't be able to keep, but you will all be glad to know that I do intend to take a course this year, called "End Procrastination Now" !!! So you never know, you may get an early letter next Christmas!

Well, we are having an amazing winter here so far! About a month ago we received the usual snowfall for December, and I have photos of Daniel enjoying wild toboggan rides down the hill at his school! But soon afterwards it warmed up and all the snow disappeared - and has stayed away even up to today, with only the odd showers in the forecast. It's quite unbelievable - but of course I'm not complaining! I'll take this weather right through till Spring comes! The only problem is that all my daffodils in the bed beside the house are half-up already. They will get their little noses frozen if we go down to very cold temperatures again.

Last October a long-anticipated event took place for me! I was visited by a very good friend, Grania and her husband Brian who live near Boston, MA. You will be able to understand how thrilling this was, when I explain that Grania and I studied together at the Occupational Therapy School in London, England50 years ago!! And we haven't seen each other since!! Of course we hadn't changed a bit! Still as good-looking as ever! And Grania, who is Irish, still has her lovely soft brogue! You can imagine how much chatter went on that evening, and poring over old photos, and trying to remember the names of people we said we'd never forget!

Of additional interest was the fact that Brian had worked in Waterloo many years ago, so we drove around to see if we could locate his workplace. I was able to find the general area, but then it was Brian who remembered the streets he used to walk down, and 'voila!' - there was his company's building, right where he left it!! (I'm sorry I forget the name of it, Brian.) That was pretty exciting!

As I mentioned in my summer letter, our second granddaughter Erin was married in Thunder Bay in August, at her parents' home. Unfortunately I was unable to attend it, but saw lots of photos later. Their house is in the country surrounded by lots of trees and grassy areas. So they had a beautiful park-like setting for the wedding, beside a lovely creek which runs through their property. The sun shone most obligingly for them, providing many photogenic opportunities. I sure wish I'd been there!

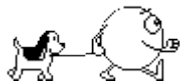
Back in April my 'chauffeurs' Leottia and Gavin drove us all over to Stratford (Ontario!) to witness a most unusual sight. Each Autumn the swans who live on the river Avon (of course!) are taken into protective winter quarters in the town. Then on the first Sunday in April they are brought out and parade down the main street on their way back to the river!! They are preceded by the local bagpipe band, and hundreds of people come from all around to cheer them on!! An elderly gentleman, Bob Miller who is known as the honorary "Keeper of the Swans", blows a whistle at 2pm. to start the Parade! The birds are obviously delighted to be free again, and march along so proudly! There must be 25 to 30 of them, among whom are several black swans, and various breeds of geese and ducks who join in the march too. We were all amused by a small brown duck who decided it was his job to lead the parade! Another poor duck got sore feet, and had to be carried part of the way! It was a real joy to watch them! Needless to say I took lots of pictures!!

Another interesting trip we took was to the Cheltenham Badlands, which is actually not far from Kitchener, although one seldom hears about it. When you first see the area it looks like the surface of the moon! It consists of bare reddish-coloured rock in wavy contours, as if rivers have flowed through and gradually eroded it. Which is actually what happened many eons ago, when the Great Lakes were covered by a sea, and the Appalachian mountains were starting to rise up to the southeast. It is part of the Niagara Escarpment, and is one of the best examples of Badlands topography! See how famous we are, and didn't even know it!!

My smart grandson Daniel has developed a keen interest in space, and the solar system in particular!! So I resurrected a Solar System mobile that Doreen, his aunt, made for a science fair in Grade 6 !! She put an enormous amount of work into making it to scale - you'd be amazed at the size of the sun in comparison with the planets!! Anyway, Daniel was quite fascinated by this, and my trusty friends helped me fasten it to my bedroom ceiling!! Now, being fussy, we will repaint some planets - and we've lost Mars altogether so we'll have to figure out the size of bead for that!! (Red of course!) See Rebecca, you're not the only one keen on astronomy!!

Down to Earth, Daniel helped me decorate some gingerbread men, and construct a gingerbread tree for Christmas!! He's enjoying Senior Kindergarten, and taking Karate lessons in his spare time! So I have to watch out that he doesn't practise on me!!

Well, those are some of the fun things we've done this year! Stay tuned for the next thrilling instalment of "Lola's Adventures in Wonderland" !



With much love from

Lola and Sunshine.