



Christmas 2008

Hello from Edmonton! As I am composing this letter the current temperature is a balmy (NOT!) -37 degrees Celsius with the wind chill (-34 degrees Fahrenheit for recipients of this letter in the U.S.). We are now paying for the fact we had a very nice and extended fall. Hope that Santa Claus has heated seats in his sleigh!

Trips, Trips, Trips!

In order to warm myself up (at least in my thoughts), I will begin with some details about the Chowaniec travels past and future. In March, Joe traveled to Vancouver for work and Rami came along for a break from winter and to do some shopping. Las Vegas was our next destination to celebrate Joe's 40th birthday in style. Robin Williams made us almost fall out of our chairs with laughter one night and we marveled at the acrobatic stylings of Cirque de Soleil's production of Love (based on the music of the Beatles) on another. A family birthday celebration made the trip extra special. In June, we found time to travel to Kananaskis and Banff for a relaxing weekend of golf with friends (already planning a repeat visit). Our next trip focused on watching golf not playing. We traveled to Atlanta to watch Mike Weir and others participate in the PGA Tour Championship. Joe found time to collect some autographs (which were auctioned off in support of the Ilsa Mae Research Fund) while Rami followed Mike Weir each day. We determined



on the last day that Rami had walked the equivalent of a marathon (22 miles) over the 3 day event (she felt like it too!). Madonna's world tour pulled us to Las Vegas again in November (like we needed an excuse!) when we realized it would cost us less to see her there than in Denver. While waiting for Madonna to take the stage (she was an hour late), we determined many other Canadians had made the trip south. People from Newfoundland, Calgary and Edmonton were seated all around us. Our next trip has been a long time in the planning. We have been saving Aeroplan miles forever to use to travel to Australia! We leave Valentine's Day for a 3 week tour around the continent. Stops planned include Kangaroo Island (to see wildlife in the wild), Cairns (Great Barrier Reef snorkeling), Gold Coast (sunbathing and relaxation) and Sydney. Just need to stuff a few bikinis, shorts and the like into our suitcases and off we go! I'm feeling warmer already.

Furry and Fabulous

We will miss Bela, Ruckus and Odo while we are in Australia but they will be well cared for in our absence. Bela and Ruckus reside at Country Kennels Bed and Biscuit when we travel (we call it puppy camp). They get 3 walks per day, play in their own exercise yard and have "jump on people time". Our neighbours, Danielle and her parents (Linda and Steve) dote on Odo while we are away. One of Danielle's first words was "ODO". Ruckus is learning to be a

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calmer 75 lb hyperactive Vizsla when Danielle comes to visit. Ruckus is currently taking intermediate obedience classes where he has shown himself to be a quick learner. With the cold weather, Rami is happy to have all her warm animals snuggle with her on the couch.

When We are Not Relaxing ...

ESAA relocated this year from an office tower downtown to a newly built office condo located 5 minutes from our house (if Joe drives really slow!). Joe spent the first few weeks in his new location installing laminate floors. The finished office was shown to an admiring public last week at a Christmas open house. Joe continues to spend a large chunk of his time organizing the highly successful conference *RemTech* held in Banff each October. This year's theme was *RemTech 008* which included a James Bond casino night. Joe looked absolutely smashing in his tuxedo! Next year's theme is Monty Python. Knight costumes might be a little harder to procure.

Rami continues to expand her role as a Certified Diabetes Educator Pharmacist. She now spends 2 days per week providing diabetes education for



patients of 5 medical clinics in Spruce Grove, Stony Plain and Wabamun. Rami was recognized this year by the Alberta College of Pharmacists and the Alberta Pharmacist's Association for her achievement in becoming

one of the 1st fifteen pharmacists in Canada to be granted additional prescribing rights. This allows her to write prescriptions for her patients in collaboration with their family physicians. Rami also had the opportunity this year to be a speaker at the Canadian Diabetes Association National Conference held in Montreal. Rami's presentation on medication adherence was well received by over 400 diabetes health professionals.

And the Fundraising Continues

The Ilsa Mae Research Fund continues to grow! It is now over \$84,000. This money will be put towards funding research to find a cure for SMA as soon as it reaches \$100 thousand. ESAA's annual golf tournament and the casino night and silent auction at *RemTech* added \$33,000 to the fund this year. During *RemTech*, ESAA received

the Muscular Dystrophy Canada (MDC) Community Award. This award is presented annually to a business or organization that has supported MDC through direct or indirect financial contributions, and has shown excellence in the any or all of the areas of fundraising, public relations, services, education, chapter development and advocacy. One award is given out in Western Canada each year. Well deserved for all the time and effort ESAA (and Joe) have put into raising funds for and awareness of Muscular Dystrophy! Canada

Safeway designated August as "Make Muscles Move" month. This exciting new fundraising and awareness effort by Safeway raised over \$1.2 million for MDC!!! Rami was involved at her store in fundraising efforts including a silent

auction. This is an ongoing campaign that will occur in August each year. Can't wait to see what is raised in 2009!

I'll end this letter with a heartfelt wish that you and your family have a joyful and safe holiday season (stay bundled up!).

Rami, Joe, Odo, Bela, and Ruckus

P.S. If you would like to learn more about the comings and goings of the Chowaniec family please visit thechowaniecs.com or look us up on Facebook, Dogbook and Catbook.

