

Greetings and Salutations! It seemed like we Z's spent much of 2009 in the No Fun Zone. We didn't even get to celebrate National Hairball Awareness Week. I was away for over four months, auditing environmental programs in CA, CO, CO, NY, TN and WA times 8. I knew I was flying to excess when airport employees started calling me by name.



In between, we did enjoy two weeks of camping for our tenth anniversary. I have known Doug for 27 years now. I realize my (100% true) tales of his escapades may not always cast him in the most flattering light. However (to quote from *Hell on Ice*), I also realize that "a truer, nobler, trustier heart, more loving or more loyal, never beat within a human breast." Even while I contemplate strangling him, I cannot imagine life without him.



We had great fun visiting Hershey PA (where I nearly OD-ed on chocolate), and then playing corn hole and 'sploring the hills of West Virginia. We hiked a lot this year. More often than not, these outings turn into what I like to call "Doug's Desperate Day Hikes and Death Marches," as Doug tends to underestimate the distance and terrain, and overestimate my abilities. Doug wisely declined a fifth attempt to summit Mt. Robson. His buddies had to turn back due to bad weather and a hernia. Unbeknownst to them, they were within 450 ft. of the summit.

I had a lovely R&R visit with my mother in Florida. Then Doug and I went to NC to celebrate her 80th with siblings John and Tina. It looks like 10 years in Cuba with dial-up Internet and no real toilet paper have finally pushed my sister over the edge. She plans to move to Manzanilla, Mexico next year. During the molten month of July, we went to Texas with Mom & Dad Z to niece Stephanie's wedding, where we got to eat little cornbreads shaped like cacti. Doug and I attended my 35th High School reunion. Alumni piled into the stands for a once-in-a-lifetime photo opp. Doug took six pictures. Unfortunately he had the camera turned around backwards, so all the photos were of his own face.



Doug made his annual visit to the emergency room. He decided last year's shoulder surgery made him bionic, enabling him to fling himself on the ground with impunity. After a dislocating do-over dive on the softball field, I screamed "**WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH YOU?!**" His response was, "*You can't tame a lion.*" His cousin Michael explained the root cause of Doug's bad judgment, and belief he is invincible. Apparently his formative years were spent watching Wile E. Coyote Super Genius.

I told Doug's teammate Dr. Jerry that I had an epiphany after this latest event. If I couldn't get him to stop breaking body parts, I was probably wasting my time yelling at him for a decade about over-filling the ice cube trays. Jerry's reply was, "It took you 10 years to figure that out?" It took 42 consecutive years of ball for Doug to figure out that it might be time to hang up the cleats. He did not blubber ala Brett Favre. However, he did get a bit teary-eyed earlier in the season when the ump awarded him the game ball for an unassisted double play (which of course involved flinging.) On the subject of sports, Tenzing the Cat is currently in third place in a football pool. He is a fan of Michael Vick; and Lions, Bengals and Jaguars (*Oh My!*) I wanted to hatch more ducklings this spring, but Doug said ten ducks crapping in the barn was fowl enough.

I finally went in for gallbladder yankage. After a sleepless night of projectile vomiting and the cat using my incision as a trampoline, Doug woke up whining that his ear hurt because it got bent funny on the pillow. An argument ensued about which was more painful – organ removal or shoulder surgery. I was disappointed when the doctors I surveyed later agreed with Doug. Shoulder trumps gallbladder. He'll get to experience it all over again next March.



Doug attended the inaugural meeting of the CT Geological Society. While I was tempted to go to the lecture on the permeability of Mesozoic-era redbed formations, I decided it would be *much* more fun to watch NASCAR while poking myself in the eye with a sharp stick. The best movies we saw were probably Gran Torino, Doubt and The Girl in the Cafe. For books, I liked the macabre Dexter series. I thought Andrew Bird's CD, *A Noble Beast* was magical.

Doug continues to conceptualize deconstruction of the back room of This Old House. On the 25 step project plan I prepared, he has progressed to step 2B. (Step 2C is lifting the house so he can install new sills.) While ripping up the floor, he unearthed a skull with pointy teeth near a wormhole of unknown depth excavated by a large-diameter creature. He poured several gallons of ammonia into the abyss just to be safe. We hope *you* have a safe, swine flu-free holiday and 2010. As part of our commitment to going **green**, we will be recycling our New Year's resolutions - same stuff as 2009, just a larger font.