



(From left: Sean, Val, John and myself, taken on Thanksgiving Day 2008. We are smiling at a camera on a tripod! Where are my glasses? Hm-m-m.)

Holiday Greetings!!!

We made only one short trip this year -- to the Chesapeake near Chestertown, MD, so we are dreaming of far away places for next year. We kept up our tai chi chih exercise class until mid-summer. Otherwise it's been mostly walking.

The November election was exciting. Hopefully our country can grow and heal from the horrors of the past eight years.

It's a good thing that I finally convinced myself to keep a journal, or much of 2008 would be a blur. I have read a lot of books, including four that are connected to me. I don't think I've ever had any book related to me so it's been strange encountering four. The most recent **Walking Beans Wasn't Something You Did With Your Dog: Stories of Growing Up in and around Small Towns in the Midwest** by Jean Tennant, contains a story written by my sister Joanne Dyhrkopp Schar that involves our grandfather Lindgren. **Little Heathens**, chosen a best book last year, is a memoir that takes place in Benton County, Iowa. The author's relatives lived about a half mile from my great-grandfather and two great-uncles in the 1870s. Our local library's book club discussed it in September. Although most participants had never been on a farm, and probably half had not been west of the Mississippi, they loved Mildred Armstrong Kalish's memories of an Iowa childhood in the 20s and 30s. Much of what she experienced was still true in the 1950s. **Dewey**, published this fall, tells about Spencer, its library cat, and Vicki Myron, the librarian who cared for him. It is still on the New York Times' best seller list. Vicki was even at our local Borders in Maryland for a book signing. See also www.deweyreadmorebooks.com. The fourth is an old book: Lawrence Welk wrote in his autobiography **Wunnerful, Wunnerful** about "a very lovely blond Danish girl named Billie Sorenson...." She was my father's first cousin. One summer at Lake Okoboji she danced with Welk more than once and won a beauty contest. He was quite smitten with her, but she was Lutheran and he, Catholic so they went their separate ways with good memories of an enjoyable summer at the Lakes.

I continue to spend many hours working on family histories. Recently I attended a genealogy workshop at the Swedish Embassy that explained the use of the online Swedish church records. I may be able to contact living relatives of my maternal grandfather. Won't they be surprised! I now have Dyhrkopp and Larsen/Larson websites (for families of my paternal grandparents) that all are encouraged to share. We can post photos and stories that only invited members can see. Let me know if you would like to join in.

John still enjoys reading and writing poetry. Neither he nor I like to cook. Sean is busy with his work and Ph. D. studies at MIT in biology and engineering. Val came to stay with us in the fall after receiving a wonderful fellowship at the Smithsonian American Art Museum where she is writing her dissertation on mid-20th-Century American artists. Sean came to spend Thanksgiving and now the Christmas holidays. He and Val love to cook; they prepared our Thanksgiving dinner. Lucky us! As I write, they are visiting Val's family in Houston.

We lost three of our family members this fall: My cousin Gary Dyhrkopp, my cousin Louisa's husband Cecil Vallee, and John's nephew Paul Molanphy. They and their families are very present in our thoughts.

May you have a good year in 2009, *Donna*

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Dewey and I enjoy a moment on the library floor in Spencer in 2005. Pretty silly pose. I was trying to get a good Dewey shot when a librarian offered to take this. I had no idea Dewey was famous and would become more so. We had often competed for the microfilm chair.

