

“Do you want to play this game with the rest of us or not?” “I’ve gotta get going on this letter.”
“Well all of your children are here *now!* This is your chance to spend quality time with them.”
“Hey, good idea! I can interview them for what they all want us to say about them in the Christmas Letter!” “The Christmas Letter?! What are you talking about? It’s not even January!” “I know! But it’s time for

CHRISTMAS 2003
THE YEAR IN REVIEW -- VOLUME XXI -- “PLUS CA CHANGE!”
The Tisdale Family Christmas Letter ®

Boring stuff first: We are all alive, in reasonably good health (all things considered), and relatively happy with our respective life situations. That is, **Doug Sr.** is continuing to enjoy himself as President of **Tisdale & Associates LLC** (“Thinking Globally; Acting Globally”®), a Denver-based law firm with outreach to the far corners of the planet (“Doesn’t anybody in *Denver* have legal problems?”) **Pat** is thriving as a partner at **Holme Roberts & Owen LLP**

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.... That’s as far as we got in December of 2003. We’d never said “we are all alive” in the Letter before. Seemed an okay way to start. You know: like good newspaper stories. Get all the important stuff in the first paragraph. And what’s more important than being alive? {“That depends upon your perspective, don’t you think?”} Then, a few days later, the world turned upside down. But before focusing on that, let’s return to our regularly scheduled Christmas Letter. {“Oh, great! Get everybody on a nice ‘downer’ and then go for a chuckle! Is this your first Letter or what?!”}

Vicki spent almost a month in France this summer, enjoying the culture, the scenery, the people. A lovely stay near the French/Spanish border became eventful in the marketplace one day when a gypsy accosted **Vicki** and stole her wallet. Upon discovering the loss, **Ninja Vicki** swung into action, tackling the female felon and demonstrating a familiarity with martial arts, and with the sort of language that would make a sailor blush. Her reaction reminded us of **Doug’s Mom**, who (armed with a broomstick) once got into a fight with a rattlesnake in the Arizona desert. {“Observers said, ‘Ya gotta feel sorry for the snake: if he bites her, he’ll die.’”} **Rambo Vicki’s** outcome was similarly victorious: wallet retrieved; gypsy vanquished, slinking off into the bowels of the French sewer system, licking her wounds. Happily, the rest of her time in France was crime-free and experience rich! *Merci beaucoup* to the **Fernandez Family** of Montpellier, who very graciously hosted **Crocodile Vicki** for the home stay portion of her visit and provided comfort after the “Gypsy Episode.” {“A warning to our younger readers: Kids! Don’t try this at home! **G.I. Vicki** is a trained professional who has spent years developing her combat skills!” “That’s not true!” “Don’t matter: it’ll cut down on any potential lawsuits.”} Along the way, **Vicki** managed to direct one play (Found a Peanut), star in two plays (The Wiz, Caucasian Chalk Circle), work tech on four other shows, spend dozens of volunteer hours working with infants and toddlers at Cerebral Palsy of Colorado, organize school dances and the “Brain Brawl,” and apply to five colleges. She will graduate from St. Mary’s Academy High School in May of 2004. {“2004? You should say, ‘*this* year.” “Shhh! We’re trying to keep up the literary fiction that this is actually a 2003 Letter!”} She has a very tough choice now, having been admitted to The George Washington University, American University, New York University and the University of Southern California. Stay tuned for her Big Decision!

Speaking of New York University, **Maggie(!)** focused on the business end of her career at New York University, scoring an internship with ABC's One Life to Live last year and with Live! with Regis and Kelly this year. But it wasn't all fun and ABC for **Maggie(!)**. She repeated her achievement of making the **Dean's List** for the **Tisch School of the Arts**. The summer was spent directing children's theatre productions at the **Mizel Center for Performing Arts**. And over the course of the year she developed a very serious relationship with her boy friend, **Marty Schettler**, an exceptionally nice young doctoral student in mathematics at Johns Hopkins University. {"If I hear her say, 'when you were my age, you had been married for a year' one more time, I'm gonna knock her right into next year!"} **Maggie(!)** will graduate in May, with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Dean's List each year) and is looking for employment in the TV industry, on the production side, in Washington DC, Baltimore New York or Los Angeles. Prospective Employers: Her e-mail address is mtisdale119@yahoo.com.

Dr. Sara was awarded her medical doctorate from the Creighton University Medical School in May, an event witnessed by **The Two Proudest Parents in the World**, along with **Three Proud Siblings** and **Pat's Mom and Sisters (Mary Frances, Audrey and Jean)**, who journeyed to the Heartland for the event. And then she matched! {"Explain that! People will think she was a victim of **Dolly Levi!**"} She was "matched" in the mandatory nationwide system that assigns medical doctors to their residency programs. "Matching" remains the last officially legal form of slavery in the United States. She is now in the midst of her first year in the Creighton / University of Nebraska / Children's Hospital of Omaha Pediatric Residency Program. She has developed greatly as a diagnostician and clinician.

Doug Jr. successfully concluded his supplemental academic coursework and his student teaching at St. Mary's Academy, earning his elementary school teaching certificate in May. He moved up to Longmont, a pleasant Boulder County community that contrasts with the atmosphere on the University of Colorado campus in Boulder (CU's Motto: "Give Us Your Poor, Your Tired, Your Viagra-Deprived Athletes, And We'll Give You A Larry Flynt-Inspired Orange Bowl-Bound Team!"). He is substitute teaching in Boulder, pending permanent placement. **Doug** ended the year by finishing rehearsals for his critically acclaimed starring role (as **Mr. Green**) in Clue – The Musical at the Longmont Theatre Company, a show in which the critics said he triumphed. He is now preparing for another appearance in the Rocky Mountain Regional Harmony Sweepstakes competition with his a capella singing group, The LoDo Air Band (one of eight competitors out of hundreds of applicants!).

To celebrate their children's academic achievements, **Doug Sr.** and **Pat** took **Doug** and **Dr. Sara** to San Francisco in May. Yes, they all enjoyed: staying at The Stanford Court on top of Nob Hill, cocktails at the "Top of the Mark," Beach Blanket Babylon, Alcatraz, Chinatown, a nostalgic trip (for **Doug Sr.**) to Walnut Creek, Peking Duck at The Mandarin in Ghiradelli Square, a preview performance of Wicked (the new smash hit Broadway musical), and three days in the Napa and Sonoma Valleys, with a wine country balloon trip specially arranged by **Pat**, and a three-bottle champagne lunch at Domaine Chandon instigated by **Doug**. ("Who's the designated driver?" "We'll kidnap some kid from the local high school. Tell him he can keep the car when he gets us back. What the heck, it's a rental!")

Pat joined **Doug** at the Hyatt Tamaya resort between Santa Fe and Albuquerque for a Hospital Trustees Conference in June, where a number of the Vail Valley Medical Center trustees (the **O'Briens**, the **Wenzels** and the **Ecks**) gathered to learn and luxuriate together. **Doug's** cousins **Michelle Tisdale** and **Phil Jaramosevich** joined them for a lovely and memorable evening. ("Are your children as challenging as ours?" "More so." "Really?" "Really." "Is there life after middle school?" "Yes, but it definitely helps to have the benefit of mood enhancing drugs in your bloodstream.") **Pat, Vicki** and **Doug** went to San Diego for the annual bankruptcy judges' conference this Fall, including a special tour of USC for potential student **Vicki**, as accompanied by the incredible **Pat**. October saw the whole family together in New York, where **Doug** was a sponsor for the **Tisch** Gala 2003 at NYU, with the **Tisdals** meeting and dining with **Alec Baldwin, Bill Cosby, Billy Crystal, Clive Davis, Wyclef Jean, Robin Williams** -- and all as accompanied by close friends the **Bob Bernsteins** of Connecticut and the **Jerry Jameses** of Cherry Hills Village.

The **ROLL OF HONOR™ FOR 2003**: Time to honor those stalwart souls who sojourned out to see us in Colorado during 2003. This year's Honorees are:

--**Doug's Aunt Laurie Battani** and Cousin **Donna Madaus**, who came out for **Pop's** funeral in February (**Chuck Tisdale** passed away last January. See Vol. XX.).

--**J. Thomas McClain, SJ**, the President of Regis High School of New York City, and soon to be director of Campus Ministry at The University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

--**Patricia A. Brennan, Pat's Mom**.

--**Tom (Sr.) and Polly Brennan** and **Ray and Lori Brennan** came by for a very pleasant visit with **Pat** in our home when they were traveling through Colorado this summer.

Pat and **Doug** had a splendid time over the holidays, even though **Pat** had emergency gallbladder surgery in December. {"Preserving the great **Tisdale Family** tradition that *something* has to complicate Christmas each year!"} Surgery went fine, but **Pat** couldn't ski. Had a great time shuttling between Cherry Hills Village and Vail over the holidays. Everything about the time was perfect, from the VVMC Dinner Dance with **Maggie(!)** and **Vicki**, to the 31st Wedding Anniversary Dinner at The Palm-Denver for just the two of us {"**Pat** brought the Wedding Album to dinner." "The waiters kept wondering who the funny looking guy with the long hair and the definable waistline was."}, to a surprise New Year's Eve Dinner for us at the Grouse Mountain Grill in Beaver Creek, to a Law and Order marathon on TV, to ordering new tile to be installed at our home in Vail, to a movie with **Vicki**, and on and on.

And then, suddenly, unexpectedly, the music stopped.

On Sunday, January 4, while we were in Vail, **Pat** suffered a massive stroke to her brain stem and cerebellum. I can't tell you why. The doctors can't really explain it, other than to say that such a thing happens perhaps once in 100,000 stroke victims and maybe to one in a million women. It should not have happened. There were no warnings, no symptoms, and no reasons. It was very fast. By the time they airlifted her from the VVMC to Swedish in Denver on Sunday afternoon, she had slipped into a coma from which she never awoke. It was the most miserable Sunday of my life. This great, fantastic woman – my best friend, my biggest fan, my soul mate – left us on the Epiphany (January 6th), with only her many magical mystical memories to keep us

warm. A love as deep, abiding, strong and tangible as ours comes along only very, very rarely. To have it challenged in this way is very difficult.

We celebrated Pat's life in a wonderful way at her Funeral Mass at The Church of the Risen Christ on January the 10th. More than 1,200 people – family, friends, colleagues, adversaries, admirers – gathered there to give honor and praise to **Pat** in a mass concelebrated by five priests (including Fr. Ed Poehlmann (our pastor from Vail) and Fr. Ed Maginnis SJ (who presided over our wedding in 1972)). A police escort and honor guard was graciously provided by the Lafayette Police Department, with the cortege from the Church to the reception at St. Mary's Academy being watched over all the way by the entire Denver Police Department. The memorial was repeated at the St. Hugo of the Hills Stone Chapel in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan on January the 31st with **Tom McClain SJ** presiding. Another 300 people, consisting of family and friends from Michigan, gathered there. Over 500 people who could not attend either service have sent cards. Nearly \$100,000.00 has been raised in **Pat's** memory for the designated charities: The Patricia C. Tisdale Memorial Endowment Funds of St. Mary's Academy (Cherry Hills Village), the Vail Valley Medical Center, Denver Catholic Charities, Mt. St. Vincent Home (Denver) and the Colorado Neurological Institute Stroke Program (Denver).

Yes, **Pat** was special. Yes, you knew that. That's why you have received this letter. Our only request as her Family is that you hold in your hearts the goodness that is **Pat**, the saintliness that is **Pat**, the splendor that is **Pat**. Help us keep her alive through all time, until that time that all of us are together again, when we may celebrate forever her memory and the fundamental reason for this Christmas Letter: the celebration of the birth of the Christ Child and the promise that His birth held for all peoples. In the darkness of winter, made darker by the extinguishment of our family's Most Shining Light, it strengthens us to focus on the Light of the World. May your year ahead be one that is warmed and illumined by that Light, here on earth, and then on into eternity! Celebrate "The Life of **Pat**" not with tears, but with laughs and smiles and the passing on of the legend that *is Pat!* That is the best way to honor our most wonderful **Pat!**

We love you, Sweetheart! And we shall always treasure your countless great gifts to us and the privilege that we enjoyed by loving you!

The Douglas and Patricia Tisdale Family:

Doug Pat♥ Doug Jr. Sara Maggie(!) Vicki
4662 South Elizabeth Court, Cherry Hills Village, Colorado 80113-7106
Telephone: 303.789.0758 Telefacsimile: 303.789.1557
doug@tisdalelaw.com or doug@tisdalecherryhills.com

PHOTOS:

Row 1: Pat's Holme Roberts & Owen LLP photo; Pat and Doug in NYC at the Tisch Gala 2003
Row 2: Tisch Gala with Marty and the Girls; the Vail Valley Medical Center Family Dinner on December 28 (Pat's last photo)
Row 3: Dr. Sara and her sibs at graduation; Pat, Doug Jr. and Sara on top of Coit Tower in SFO
Row 4: At Geyser Peak Winery; Aunt Laurie Battani and Cousin Donna Battani Madaus
Row 5: Pat and Tom McClain SJ in NYC; Pat and Vicki at the Coronado Hotel
Row 6: Vicki and Sara at The Palm – Denver; Maggie at The Plaza Hotel in NYC