

Oliva Family News

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Overcoming Adversity...

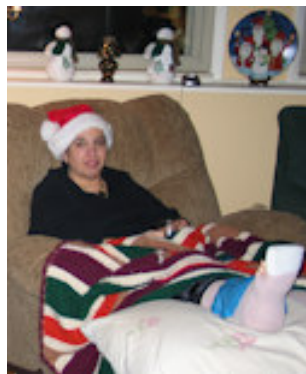
By Brian Oliva

In last year's newsletter when I said that 2006 was a roller coaster ride for the Oliva family, I was wrong. Compared to 2007, 2006 was just a kiddie ride. Welcome to the 16th edition of the Oliva Family Christmas Newsletter. Once again, we will do our best to share our year with you, our friends and family, as best we can in two pages. Frankly, I could easily make this a full 24 page newspaper, but then I'd have to charge for it, so here is the Reader's Digest Condensed version. Also note we will forgo our usual format of trying to highlight each individual's events and accomplishments, since 2007 was moving too fast and we were all riding together!

Slip, Slide and Crack!

As you know from the last minute insert we put in last year, 2006 appeared to have ended on a positive note, with the engagement of Christine and Ronnie. Wrong again. The first significant event affecting 2007 actually happened on December 24, 2006; (a week after last year's newsletter went to press.) The family had just pulled into the church parking lot on our way to Sunday Service. As Jan was getting out of the car, her foot slipped out from under her

causing her to fall squarely on top of it. The crack heard 'round the world was a fracture of both leg bones where they meet the ankle. We drove to nearby Jewish Hospital where they threw a splint on it in record time. Jan's foot doctor wanted to operate to get things realigned quickly, but God had other plans and surgery was not to be, but we'll get to that in a minute.



The Holidays Go As Planned!

Christmas arrived as planned and in the traditional Oliva fashion included lots of food, family and friends. The one big difference was that with Jan's broken foot, Christine was drafted to be Chief Chef. (We figured with her getting married soon, it would be good practice!) She did a tremendous job and saved the day. With Christmas and New Year's out of the way, we thought things would start returning to normal. Wrong again. Jan was scheduled for surgery several times over the next three weeks, but each time her blood oxygen level was not good enough. When the accident happened, she had been recovering from a bout of bronchitis, but even as that cleared, the O₂ levels

were all over the map. Jan cycled through a variety of medications including anxiety drugs and enough inhalers to cure asthma to no avail.

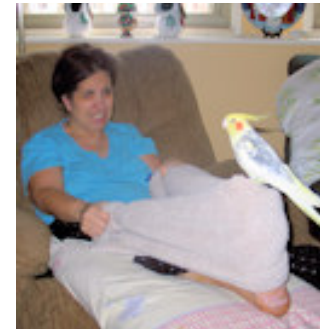
Grounded

In the meantime, Janice was forced to eat, sleep and live in my reclining chair (for four months!) since she could not navigate the stairs to the rest of the house. One of the key things that allowed us to survive the need for me to assist with Janice's daily care was the management at GE that allowed me to work from home for nearly the whole month of January. That allowed me to only be "out" four days instead of 20 or more! Michael was also a big help. As a musician living in his artistic time zone, he was able to help a lot in the middle of the night. Other friends also pitched in making meals and helping to clean the house. What a blessing our church family has been!

Death Takes a Holiday!

With a gut feeling of how bad she felt, and possibly with a bit of frustration at the lack of progress, Janice convinced one of her doctor's to have her scanned for blood clots. Much to their surprise, they found a large blood clot in her leg, and when a CT scan was done at the hospital, they found hundreds of clots already in her lungs. That marked the end of any attempt at surgery. (The ankle, with God's help healed very well on it's own.) Jan was admitted for several days and put on a number of blood thinners. Had she not been admitted that day, she likely would not have survived until the next morning. God was in control! The remainder of the year was

a lot of work with rigorous physical therapy to help the ankle heal without surgery, but Jan was heavily motivated, because there was a wedding to plan!



Kirby closely supervises as Janice does her stretching exercises.

Countdown to the Big Day

Christine and Ronnie set their wedding date for August 25, 2007. Most weddings are a challenge when you have over a year to plan. We started with eight months and a mother that essentially was ordered to six months of bed rest. Like that was ever going to happen! Thank God for the internet, wireless connections, and free long distance! It solved two big problems: 1. It gave Janice something to do to pass the time, and 2. It let her be productive by letting her Google and investigate every reception hall, flower shop and musician in the greater Chicagoland area to help the kids out. As the summer moved on, all the pieces seemed to drop nicely into place. Christine found a nice church, an Italian Restaurant and Banquet Hall for the reception, reasonable hotel accommodations for out-of-town guests, all within a convenient distance to O'Hare airport. Nearly all

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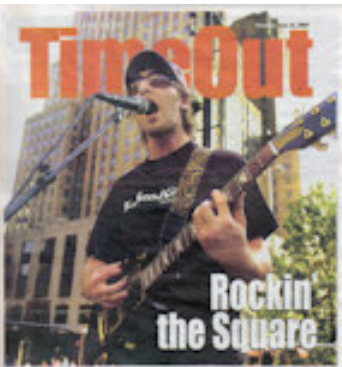
Overcoming Adversity...

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weddings have something go crazy eventually, but this one seemed different. Everything seemed to be going according to plan. That probably should have been an omen.

The Music Continues

In the meantime, Michael continued to work on his music. He successfully got a three piece band together, "The Harlequins" and, after a premier gig at the US Beer Co. in Chicago, has spent the year playing clubs in Cincinnati and north-



Mike and his band The Harlequins played Rockin' the Square in Cincinnati's Fountain Square last summer netting Mike the June 14th cover of the Cincinnati Post's Entertainment Section "TimeOut"

ern Kentucky such as The Mad Frog, The Poison Room, The Southgate House, Northside Tavern, and The Comet. You can check out the band's music and tour schedule at www.myspace.com/remembertthatband.

The Long Hot Summer

The summer of 2007 in the Cincinnati area was a hot and dry one. The lawn was dead before the end of May, but it was a perfect year for using the pool. It was a nice and cool place to exercise, and Jan got good use of the warm water supplementing her physical therapy to get her ankle back in shape before the wedding. It

wasn't until August that the weather patterns returned to "normal" which included occasional brief thunder storms.



The pool got a good workout all summer, including a surprise birthday party for one of the teens from our church.

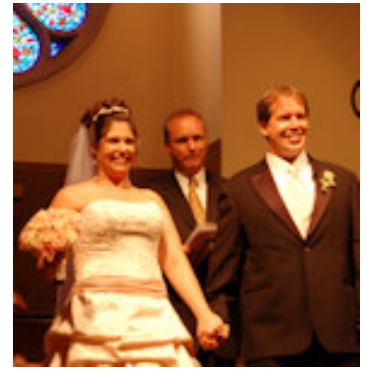
The Winds of Change

The week of August 19th looked like it was shaping up to be perfect for the wedding. The weather was still hot (but the church had air conditioning—everything was planned for) with predictions of being mostly sunny all week. Perfect. Most of the immediate families had migrated to Chicago early in the week with most of the out of town relatives were due to arrive Thursday and Friday. Thursday afternoon, a strong line of thunderstorms shot through the area. It only lasted 20 minutes, but during that time several inches of rain fell, and hurricane strength winds knocked down hundreds of trees and branches. The area worse hit: Des Plaines. Wedding Central. The next couple of days were total chaos. High water from the Des Plaines

River blocked key routes creating a maze of detours. Power was out at several key locations, including about every third traffic light and the hotels where guests were supposed to be arriving. O'Hare was a disaster area due to hundreds of cancelled flights. And although we didn't find out about it until Friday afternoon, the restaurant where the wedding reception was supposed to happen was also in total darkness. Thursday it was just an inconvenience. By Friday evening power was back on at every important location except the reception hall. They kept telling us not to worry. By Saturday morning, with the power still out, the few people that knew about it were starting to get panicky. (The Bride, having enough on her mind was kept clueless until after the wedding ceremony was over. The Groom wasn't so lucky, having stumbled into the darkness Saturday morning when he went to drop something off.) As noon came and went with no progress in negotiations, things started to get ugly as the restaurant owner tried one last time to walk away from the contract. With a few threats from a now enraged mother-of-the-bride, and a lot of prayers, a new banquet hall was located at 12:20 that agreed to do *everything* in time for the 6:00 reception. That included simulating the original menu to the



Brian, Janice, Ronnie, Christine and Michael at Ronnie's parents' house in Topeka, KS.



Mr. & Mrs. Ronnie Wachter take their first steps as husband and wife.



Christine throws the bouquet at the "Reception that nearly wasn't"

greatest extent possible, baking the cake, getting everything else set up, and executing the party of the century! And they did! When it was all said and done, the wedding went perfectly, and other than the last second change of address, no one would have known the reception was moved and executed in under five hours.

Final Thoughts

The remainder of the year was quiet in comparison. I had some problems with tearing of the retina in one eye but it is doing fine now after three minor outpatient laser surgeries to patch them up. Jan is still recovering from the ankle ordeal, but is getting around well when she doesn't over-do it. And we're still blessed to be relatively healthy and have what God has given us. We had a great time visiting the Wachter family in Topeka at Thanksgiving. The bottom line is that in spite of all the adversity, we had a great year! We hope this newsletter finds you in good health and spirit. And that's all the news fit to print in two pages!

Brian Oliva and Family