

Dear Friends and Relations!

Well, here it is, that time of year again. Merry Holidays and a Wonderful Winter Solstice To You All! Welcome dear friend, fond relation, and Gentle Reader to the seventh First Annual Holiday Letter. Seven seas, seven leagues, seven sons, seven years' bad luck – and seven years' bad luck describes your continued receipt of this missive, doesn't it? Well, we haven't lost your address yet – you'll have to hope these things stop coming NEXT year. Hey, it works for Cubs fans.



For now, though: The Holiday Letter. Because it turns out, the Nile **really is** just a river in Egypt.

Speaking of Egypt, this year we saw the pyramids! Between Giza and the Sphinx, and the rush and the sound of the bustle of Alexandria and Cairo, it's an amazing place. Or at least, that's the way the National Geographic special made it look from the comfort of my couch. Plus, it was followed by a show about the Radio City Rockettes – what more could a guy want, other than the room to himself and some tissues? Am I right? We're not getting out much lately, on account of there's a massive sinkhole in the front yard. We did take a trip this year, before it got too big – turns out, Constantinople is beautiful in the spring. Next year we're hoping to get to Istanbul as well, if we can get out past the sinkhole.



The kids all joined clubs this year, some of which were actually unrelated to the need to sell things to raise money, but no one remembers those. Connor sold 378 pounds of manure – it turned out that booked sales was the only metric they rated the kids on, so he told people he was selling pot and didn't worry about all the returns. Kate sold freeze-dried hypoallergenic cats to raise money for a local shelter supporting teenage Goth chicks whose weekly allowances have run out before Thursday, and Annalise did a Walk-a-Thon. She got pre-orders for nearly six hundred thousand miles, then outsourced the actual walking to hungry brown kids in 3rd world countries in exchange for 14 cents a day.



In much that same way, I ran the Army 10-Miler this year – by which I mean I gave it serious thought and consideration, then outsourced the actual running to my father, who is in much better shape than I am. He's in **way** better shape than I will be at his age, insomuch as he's still above ground and Lloyds of London wouldn't give me a life policy at the rate I'm going.

You know, every year we send out this missive to celebrate the season, to bring closure to the year, all that happy horseshit, and every year our lawyer yells at us for the things we leave out. So, without further ado and before I forget, let me state for the record that it is the policy of this Holiday Letter not to discriminate against any reader over 7 years old because of age, race (except Poles), religion (except Christopher Hitchens), IQ, color, handicap, sex, left-handedness, physical condition, developmental disability, hair color, blood pressure, sexual orientation, having sinkholes in their yards, political orientation, national origin (including Canadian), "latex issues," ethnicity, gender or lack thereof, martial status, ancestry, sexual deviancy, tendency to vote Republican, genetic information, physical disabilities, being dead, mental deficiencies, not being dead, past or present history of mental disorders, prior conviction of a crime, or other factors which cannot be lawfully be

the basis for busting someone's chops, unless there is a bona fide qualification for giving them shit. This policy shall include, but not be limited to, the following: making fun of them in the Holiday Letter; **not** making fun of them in the Holiday Letter; sending extra pages or multiple copies of same; recruitment for pimping out this letter to friends and family in the unlikely event you have any; using random words just because someone might have mentioned them; compensation for damages incurred during the reading of this Holiday Letter while eating, drinking, or becoming pregnant; or just general cussedness. Each part of this Holiday Letter is encouraged to be read in a fair and impartial manner, reflecting the positive, active spirit of the Holiday(s). There, ya can't sue me. And please don't read this to people under age 7. We've got to draw a line somewhere.

This year, Katy Perry showed us that pop tarts aren't just for breakfast anymore. We drove across the country this year, and Katy was with us every mile of the drive. Every blessed mile.

Being the big spender than I am, I dropped about 10 bucks on an iPad this year, and I promptly learned what an awesome tool it is for learning and productivity on the go! With the iPad, I can do all the things I need to do, and be very, very, productive. In fact, let's just say I have reached new levels of productivity with this iPad. Oh yes. Many new levels. In other news, the house continues to rise like a phoenix from its ashes, by which I mean it's being propped up like Tony LaRussa on game day. The neighbors help as much as they can, but the sinkhole ate the last two people who knocked, and we don't get much foot traffic anymore. This wasn't really a problem until we had to call the ambulance for Julie – she was nearly killed when a flying binder clip caught her in the gut. She's OK, but we lost an EMT down the sinkhole. Unfortunately due to the nature of her injury, she's been throwing up ever since – it's a real problem, and she's going to have a doctor do something about it just as soon as she's a size six.



In other news this year, we occupied Wall St. (I personally also OccuPi'd Wall St, since I am the 3.14159 percent.) The protesters eventually dispersed when they got sued by Robin Leech, Al Sharpton, and Don King for shouting at the top of their lungs with no actual message or reason – the plaintiffs claimed copyright infringement.

Did you hear the joke about the eulogy for Christopher Hitchens? “Well, Chris is up in Heaven now.” (Which is really funny, because he's not actually in Heaven – he's rooming with Gerry Rafferty down on Baker St.) And speaking of death, these holiday letters always include a cathartic tale of loss, so that the sender can feel renewed in the joy of life by making you feel like shit, just a little, during the holidays. This year, I'd like to note and grieve for the death of the hopes of all the Republican presidential candidates, and no, that's not a typo. Their loss is our loss, except for Conan O'Brian, Steven Colbert, and that other guy I can never remember.

While Julie and I feel strongly that two pages is not only less painful to read but cheaper to mail, upon careful consideration this year we decided, dear friend, fond relation, and Gentle Reader, that two pages was all you deserve. So, in accordance with the dictates of the Annual Holiday Letter, I will once again conclude by wishing everyone a wonderful 2012. May all your sinkholes be small, and may all your Friday nights be like last Friday night!

With Lots of Love and Holiday Pop Tarts,

- Doug, Julie, Kate, Connor, Annalise, Flitwick, and Albus the Gay
<http://www.dougandjulie.com>