

Dear Friends and Relations!



Well, here it is, that time of year again, or it would be, but we're late. Sue me for an abundance of caution, but we wanted to wait until President Obama had taken the Oath of Office a fourth time – just to make sure. Anyway, welcome dear friend, fond relation, and Gentle Reader to the eighth First Annual Holiday Letter. For those of you who may be new to the First Annual Letter, we keep each year's letter fresh and new by ensuring that each one is, really, the First one. Think of it as mental recycling and you'll be fine.

Well I'm sure you've all heard the big news this year – after 20 years of marriage, Julie and I got divorced this year. We still like and respect each other but we both have a lot of gay friends, and you know that's just death on a marriage. She's happy with the two co-eds she's rooming with down at the Y, and I'm enjoying my new journey of self-discovery with a guy named Steve.

Just kidding! His name's Pete.

The year started off well, though – remember the record-breaking jackpot back in March? We got in on that action, oh yeah. \$640 million dollars, it was awesome – until we had to split it with a bunch of other folks. The much lower cash option was divided up by a lot a winners, and then we paid the Federal lottery tax, and then the State lottery tax, and then it turns out the County has a lottery tax, and then there's a Postmaster general tax imposed for sending your check in the mail, plus the windfall dividend tax on big lotteries, and then we paid off the lottery sales agent and my parole officer (for looking the other way while I crossed state lines to buy more tickets). Anyway, our accountant says we can claim the loss on our Federal income taxes for next year. Still, it's better than the stock market.



The kids are doing great, as usual. Annalise got a set of false teeth as a “start of school” present – it's all about how much you love your kids, you know? Or in her case, how much you love your grandkids, because it's not like we can afford that shit ourselves – or I'd have a set of my own, for when I'm feeling bitey. She made her life simpler recently by outsourcing the task of actually playing with half her dolls to a bunch of other kids – definitely management material there. She's also discovered the wonder and fascination of death; for a while it was all she talked about. When she asked me about it, I had to repeat what a very wise man once told me at a party: “It's the ultimate in zip.”

Speaking of death... Let's just get this out of the way up front, shall we? No self-respecting Holiday Letter would fail to include a cathartic tale of grief and loss – and while this Holiday Letter has no more self-respect than a Republican congressional candidate from Missouri¹, we still want to share our annual outpouring of grief with you, dear friend, fond relation, and Gentle

¹ Or Indiana.

Reader². Here at our house, we try to keep mum about the new pets, because, you know, and so you may not have heard about the parakeet we adopted earlier this year. The kids decided to name him Keet the Meat, which was – oddly enough – how the cats thought of him, too. The cats are wonderful pets, but Flitwick is old, and while Albus is only 6, let's just say he channels his inner Chris Christie pretty heavily and is not what you'd call spry. So we enjoyed playing with Keet for a few months and the cats enjoyed dreaming about playing with Keet for a few months. When I realized that nature was going to need a little help running its natural course if we were going to make deadline for this letter, Keet and I played a little game I like to call "The Canary and the Coal Miner" and he helped me find where that gas leak was coming from.

Oddly enough, the cats seemed devastated – the kids couldn't give a shit. I think they've been reading this letter too long to care any more. Still, I feel better for telling you about it here. Not that Keet was the only one to die this year – there is currently a band forming in the afterlife with Davy Jones, Whitney Houston, Robin Gibb, Donna Summer, Etta James, Andy Williams, and Adam Yauch of the Beastie Boys. They've got a sound slicker than a Sha Na Na tape on karaoke night – and Dick Clark thinks they've got a good beat and are easy to dance to; he's giving them a 75. Also this year, Larry Hagman finally found out who shot him.

But back to the kids! Kate had a wonderful summer, her first as a teenager. She taught herself sewing, chin ups, and how to disassemble an upright piano, all of which were remarkable feats since she accomplished them all without violating the teenager's code, which is to say she neither spoke to anyone nor stayed awake for more than 3 hours per day. She also became a huge baseball fan, following the World Champion Washington Nationals³ throughout the regular and post seasons and with a fanaticism that bordered on obsession. When it finally started affecting her grades, we stepped in – until we realized it was affecting them for the better; she was getting straight A's. Since then, she changed her middle name to Bryce Harper – we're very proud, but we drew the line at the National's logo tramp stamp tattoo she was planning.

Connor's had a great year as well. He's created an on-line Minecraft version of Downton Abbey, pushing Moore's Law to its very limit, and he's teaching himself Java programming just so he can keep up the pace. He was very excited to have a 6th Grade teacher this year who really understands him, largely because they're both hardcore ADHD. Connor no longer sits at a desk in school – he sits at an ironing board. I've tried to send my shirts in with him, but no luck.

Julie grew a new kidney stone this year; it was much larger than yours. Not your stone, your actual kidney. She took it out herself, having been inspired by the main character in the Bollywood hit "Shank Vindaloo." Julie also had a great year in her continued quest to become the world's most optimized women, having surgically removed the valve that connects her esophagus to her stomach, since it wasn't keeping food down anyway. She postponed the procedure until she was a size 6, of course, and then let the doctors go in, remove the valve, and reconnect things by pulling her esophagus all the way into her stomach and getting it to stay there using an anchor hitch knot and half a yard of duct tape. As a bonus, they found her G-spot⁴!

² We all know that the primary purpose of holiday letters is to provide updates on the only real news that matters as we get older, which is wondering what or whom you've outlived – not that there's a damn thing you can do about it.

³ Sorry, just practicing typing that for next year.

⁴ No fewer than 42 readers just asked, "Did he make a Deep Throat joke in a Christmas letter? Hot damn, can you subscribe to this thing?"

In other news, and I know you might not have heard because it wasn't covered much on Fox, but our first Muslim President was re-elected in November. More importantly, the city of Denver, Colorado, finally managed to live up to the promise of its nickname. I've heard that it makes good Biblical sense that we Americans legalized both same-sex marriage and marijuana use on the same day, by the way – it says in the Old Testament that “If a man lies down with another man, surely they should be stoned.⁵” Shirley, they've been mis-interpreting those instructions for 3000 years! (If your name isn't Shirley, you can assume I didn't get the damn mail-merge to work right this year either.)

We have **new** new neighbors this year, every bit as wonderful as the old new ones. They might lean a little closer to Rush than Rachel, but they focus more on Miguel Cabrera than RG3, and that's OK in my book. Plus, they drink beer! The old new neighbors had themselves a baby, which Kate calls “babysitting to be,” and the old **old** neighbors never get old.

The big fun this year, though, was the party. My grandmother, who was last spotted on these pages sporting a “90 is the New 70” shirt, turned 95 this year, and the whole clan converged on Chicago – from points east, west, north, south, and overseas. I'd say it was dedication and love that brings us together, that compels even the farthest flung family flying for hours, days, and in and out of weeks, but really, there was beer. The wild birthday rumpus was just a good excuse. And you know it sounds awful, doesn't it – why to do we say she “turned?” It's like milk. I'm just going to tell people she's almost a hundred.

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 it just wasn't worth the hassle of trying to get the font that small. So, in accordance with the dictates of the Annual Holiday Letter, I will once again conclude by wishing everyone a wonderful 2013. May all your votes be in absentia, and may all your candidates be presidential!

WITH LOTS OF LOVE AND FESTIVE HOLIDAY FONTS,

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

⁵ Leviticus 20:13. (It actually goes on to say that their blood shall be on their heads. That seems a little graphic, even for my boyfriend Pete.)