

Since I've yet to find a "real" job (according to Dad) I have decided to defend my Communication degree by writing another Christmas letter for the Brown family. In the spirit of American commercialism I've decided to write this at the beginning of the Christmas season: November 6th. In true Brown fashion, this will probably reach you sometime in February. Oh well, just blame it on the postal service.

Gregory is, in one word, adopted. I have come to the conclusion that there is no way someone like Gregs came from my parents. In fact, I'm not sure he even came from white parents. Gregory's new thing is to be as "gangsta" as the rappers he hears on the radio, which makes him almost impossible to understand. The worst part is that he tries to teach Dad how to speak Ebonics, and if there is anything worse than a 51-year old white man trying to speak Ebonics, I'd like to see it. When he's not impersonating a rapper, he's impersonating an athlete, and is trying to decide whether to play soccer (yes, soccer, not football) in college. I keep telling him to try out for the MLS because he's basically guaranteed a spot, but he says he doesn't want anything that won't challenge him. Typical.

When anyone tries to explain Stephen, the only thing they can come up with is "he's, well, Stephen." To put it in perspective, Mom actually told me that she doesn't worry about Stephen being away at school like she did with Ellie and me, because "Stephen's...well, Stephen." See what I mean? Between coming back from England and going to school, Stephen got a job working for a pool guy. Stephen will also be the first to let you know that no, it's not the same as in the movies. He worked for Larry, who, politely put, could talk. Stephen actually believes that Larry would have had most of the conversations regardless of whether Stephen was even there, and people who've met Larry tend to agree. For some reason, though, Larry decided that Stephen was his long lost son, so if Stephen "pulls an Andrew" and fails out of college (or gets a Communication degree), he still has the pool business to fall back on.

Ellie is halfway through becoming a psychologist, or so I'm told. I'm not sure I can imagine her as anything besides the President of the United States, but I guess Mom's push for a female President (for the love of God don't ask her about Hillary Clinton!) seems to have failed with her daughter. Ellie is still at George Washington University down in D.C., which means she can keep an eye on Stephen, although what "keeping an eye on Stephen" entails, I'm not so sure. Every time I talk to one of them they're in New York or some other city with terrible sports teams. "Oh, we just took the train." Since when did America get a public transportation system?

In Ellie's defense, at least she's not graduating with a Communication degree. Or that's what I've heard...more than once (thanks Dad...got it...fry cook). Regardless, I should be graduating in May with my Communication degree in hand, and then it's off into the real world to be a....I have no idea. Maybe I should get into the Christmas letter writing business.

After I wrote the Christmas letter last year, Dad decided that the two of us should write a book. So after careful consideration (read: a few drinks) we came up with the perfect topic: Mom. I mean, c'mon. Who better to write about than Christine Brown? Even though we haven't even come close to starting the book, every time Mama-dukes does something decidedly hilarious (which can be quite often), it results in someone in the family yelling "Chapter 6: Mom and Computers!" or something along those lines.

Instead of writing a book, Dad and I decided to do something much more productive this year,

so we built a bar. Since it wasn't my money we'd be spending to furnish this bar, I admit I had to do some convincing to get Dad to realize the many advantages of having your own bar in your basement. If you know Mick Brown you can imagine how much convincing I actually had to do. The moral of the story is that we now have a fully stocked bar in our basement, complete with a kegerator, which (for those of you who don't know) is a small refrigerator with a beer tap on top made specifically to hold a barrel of beer. How sweet it is. Hey, there's an idea. Maybe I should be a personal bar installer.

Mummy dearest. For those that don't know her, you either live somewhere outside of hearing range (Russia) or in a coma. As loud and boisterous as ever, Mom has taken the saying, "50 is the beginning of your second life" by the...er...neck. Harking back to the days when we still rode the big yellow bus to school, I've decided that Mom will once again celebrate when Gregory finally goes to college the same way she celebrated his first day of school...with mimosas. She still owns her little Montessori school, except it's not so little anymore. Trust me, I had to do the landscaping all summer. She's even managed to brainwash my girlfriend into becoming a Montessori teacher, but I've yet to see Erin bring home any electroshock equipment (whew!). She now has Gregory to focus on since the rest of us have moved out, and every time I go home Gregs seems to have a frightened puppy look on his face (even "gangstas" fear Christine Brown). "Have you done your homework yet Gregory? You have? Good, go get me a beer from the bar downstairs." What a life.

Well, as strange as it may sound the Browns have gone a complete year without having anyone (i.e. Me) failing out of school or crashing cars (i.e. Stephen). Hope everyone's year went as smoothly, and we hope the holidays find you in good spirits. Merry Christmas!