

An amazing thing happened this year, I no longer have any children. No, I didn't do anything violent; the youngest turned 21 - they are now all adults and totally capable of taking care of themselves without any monetary or emotional support from their parents. Hah! I suspect that in the modern age kids reach adulthood around 45. Just another 20-odd years of pauper hell to go then.

By the way, if you had any doubt whatsoever, it's Christine that provided the emotional support. Talk about stating the obvious.

When I say they are all adults, I of course don't include Andrew, 26 going on 12. The Peter Pan of the family, without the green tights and fairy fixation. At least not that I know of. Xbox and sport fixation for sure. Work fixation, well, not so much. As long as the Red Sox and Patriots are winning and he can afford FIFA 2010 then life is good. And life is pretty good right now.

The big news of the year is Ellie getting her first real job, and more importantly her first real paycheck. She's very excited that she can now afford luxuries like food and heat (luxury! I remember sleeping in a paper bag in middle o' road and eating warm gravel for breakfast blah blah.) She's working in the Big Apple, The City That Never Sleeps, The Capital of the World. No, not Salem, the other one, New York. Actually Brooklyn, famous for the Brooklyn Bridge, Hot Dog Eating Contests, a baseball team that moved to California and now for being the home of the world famous Ellie Brown.

She's sharing an apartment in a trendy neighborhood with two other girls. I've never been a fan of NYC but her place is really cool. The subway is at the end of her block and there's lots of great restaurants, delis, and bars, all within a few minutes walk. Unfortunately they are all full of Yankee supporters so she has to avoid them. Not that it's a problem, she is a first year teacher so she doesn't have time to do anything but work anyway. She teaches in a school in the other (not so salubrious) side of Brooklyn. An interesting place as long as it's light and you are heavily armed.

Stephen is still studying in Virginia. Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus and he's giving Stephen a graduation in May. Hopefully. He's heading for a degree in economics, the dismal science. Perfect for getting a job in the dismal economy. Of all the kids, I worry the least about Stephen. I'm not sure whether it's because he's so far away, or his supreme self confidence that the world is his oyster and if someone doesn't hire him it's totally their loss and they must be complete idiots anyway. Jerks!

I have no doubt he'll go far in America.

I'd like to go on record by saying how proud I am of my kids Andrew, Ellie and Stephen, not one of them has a criminal record. If I had to put money on which of my kids would be the first (hopefully the only) one to be arrested I'm pretty sure I'd have gone with Stephen. Well Stephen has surprised me by not getting caught – what a good boy he is. Unfortunately the same can't be said for Gregory the jailbird. Perpetrator of the most heinous of all crimes against humanity. Yes, drinking beer when only 20 years old. It cost him a night in the big house and a whole heap of p**s taking from the rest of the family (well, OK me). Luckily drinking beer is the most un-terrorist of crimes so he should escapes indefinite internment at Guantanamo Bay.

A bit of a party animal is our Gregory by all accounts and a night cooling his heels in the chokey didn't seem to dampen the passion for excess alcohol. Just like his mother (except for the jail time, we all know there ain't no jail big enough to hold Christine). He's still playing soccer at college but unfortunately he had to decline an invite to the USA squad for the World Cup. It's just a bad time, what with all those end of year exams and especially those end of year parties to attend. Maybe

following World Cup when the USA will enter as champions!

Speaking of the World Cup, I'm getting excited already. My goal is to watch every game (a mere 64) while drinking a beer from at least one of the countries playing. I've tried it before and it's really hard. Not the drinking beer part, that's fairly easy, but finding beers from some of the countries. Some games are a piece of cake, USA v England, I can go to the fridge right now and do a few combinations of that one. One side effect is that I must be the only non-German to root for Germany to progress. And as for France beating Ireland, Come On! I've got a fridge full of Guinness! The problem comes with Algeria v Slovenia or North Korean v Ivory Coast. If anyone knows of some Algerian or Slovenia beer, and better still, a package store in the greater Boston area that sells a six pack then let me know. Extra credit for finding a North Korean beer.

My favorite story of the year involves Christine (of course). We were headed up to Nova Scotia in February (yeah, a great time to visit Canada!) and were going through Canadian immigration with Christine driving. The Immigration Officer asks if we have any weapons; nope. "Any other items for personal protection?", "What, you mean like condoms?" replies Christine. Condoms! How the hell do you fend off a mugger with condoms? At least it gave the Immigration Officer a laugh; but I'm surprised he let us into the country. Her parents must be very disappointed at her non-Catholic method of personal protection.

Have a great Christmas and New Year.

Christine--Inmate 495-----



Andrew-----Ellie-----Stephen-----Mick

I bet this is the only Christmas letter you get containing the word "condom".