

'Tis the month before Christmas and all through the house, not a creature is stirring apart from Christine clattering and banging away in the kitchen. Why do women always make so much noise when they are cleaning up especially when there's football on TV? I would never dream of clearing up during a game, or any other time for that matter.

In the past 27 years of bringing up children we've never had any of them spend a night in hospital. Pretty amazing really. Until this year when Gregory decided to make up for lost time. Over the summer he started complaining of a bad headache. "You shouldn't drink so much" was the caring advice from his caring mother, "Take some more aspirin". Immediately followed by a week in hospital with meningitis. The next month he complained about a stomach pain, "You ate too much sweetcorn, you've got gas" was the expert diagnosis from Christine Nightingale. "Mom, what are the chances it's appendicitis?". "Zero chance, go and sit on the toilet". When he went into the emergency room to have his appendix removed the nurses greeted him like an old friend. "What did your mother diagnose this time? Ha ha".

Still, he's no worse for wear apart from being appendixless (you never know when one will come in handy). Of course, Christine rushes him to the doctors if he so much as snuffles now. The other result is her relief in his recovery, "he's okay, let's buy him stuff". I suspect he's planning on a couple of illnesses next summer too.

Gregory played his last soccer game for UNH last month. He's gone from training 20 hours a week and traveling around the country to having ample time free for some serious studying (ha! Serious partying more likely). I'm predicting 4" of extra waistline by the time he graduates.

Stephen . . . . Gregory . . . . Mick . . . . Andrew



Ellie . . . . . Christine

Stephen graduated college in May and got a job down in Virginia. He's now running the extensive global marketing department (just him) at a VW dealership in Springfield VA. Sales have skyrocketed since he joined and it's all to do with him – he's the man! Or so he tells me. Nothing like having a bit of self confidence. He bought a GTI which he's in the process of *stylin'*. Lowered suspension, cool lights, subwoofer you can hear from New Hampshire. He loves his car. He also passed his car salesman's test so he can get a feel for the salesman's job. “Dad, I found you the perfect car, an 09 BMW 335i, yours for only \$28,000”, I knew one of my kids would end up as a used car salesman, and deep down I knew it would be Stephen. Anyone that wants a car, let me know and I'm sure Stephen will get you a sweet deal, he'll just have to talk with his manager to get approval first.

All the kids came back for Thanksgiving, my favorite holiday of the year. Stephen picked up Ellie in Brooklyn on the way, even let her drive the GTI part of the way (after she paid a security deposit). Ellie is settling in to NY life fine. Her job is still pretty stressful and time consuming but she's getting into the teaching groove and her life is calming down somewhat. She has time to socialize more and has even been out on a few dates. Obviously the guys aren't good enough for her, no one is.

Andrew is still living close to home and working whenever he needs money to fix his car, which is pretty often these days. He's going back to school to get some technical training so he can get a big boy job and hopefully be able to one day buy a used car off Stephen. Whenever Andrew and Gregory get back together they revert to puppy dog mode. It usually starts with the phrase “the best thing about wrestling is only one has to want to wrestle”.

Christine and I decided that on the off chance that Sarah Palin becomes the next president of the United States, we need to plan a nice 4 year sabbatical in Mexico. Step one, learn to speak español. Now, nosotros estamos aprendiendo español los martes. Pretty impressive huh? No I don't know what it means either. Neither of us are natural linguists, learning American is challenging enough, so progress is slow. Hopefully Sarah won't run until the following election giving us an extra 4 years of much needed studying. The running class joke is that at the start of each lesson el professor asks Christine the time and she can never remember how to say “6:30”. All week she is mumbling to herself “es son seis y media, es son seis y media” and as soon as she's asked she replies “Damn, I know this it's errr, ermmm... Damn stupid language!”. She'll get it one day, right before the class times change.

Feliz Navidad and a happy New Year.