

Well, another interesting year with a few speed bumps in our God given right to pursue happiness. It all started well enough. Last New Year's Eve, Christine and I went to New York City to stay with Ellie. She was busy with a real party (people under 30) so we booked a cruise to see Manhattan and view the fireworks over the Statue of Liberty (pretty damn American huh?) A strange thing happened, our daughter was worried about our ability to navigate back to Brooklyn using public transport. A complete role reversal. For 25 years we changed her diapers, packed her lunch and fussed over her and now here she is worrying about our ability to get on the right subway train. I tried explaining that a combined 100+ years of life experience might help, but the first step in fogginess is complete; our children think we're doddering old coots.

We did actually manage to get the correct train and make it all the way across the city with only a couple of muggings. And they were hardly worth the effort, I only made a few bucks!

There was a big snow storm in NY and we had to dig our way into a parking spot. A few days later Christine complained of a sore back. A week later she is in severe pain and bed ridden for quite a while. The doctor's suggestion is "Take it easy, you have a bad back, it'll get better". Yes, thanks for that. A couple of months and crates of painkillers later they finally did an MRI and found an infection in the spine. "Well, that's not very common, maybe we should have done an MRI sooner". Doctors – snake oil salesmen in white coats. Another couple of months of daily IV cured the major pain. You think she had it bad, I had to look after her! I can honestly say that I'm not a natural caregiver but I try my best. "Can you get me a painkiller now?" "What, right now? It's the bottom of the 8<sup>th</sup> with 2 out and Ortiz on third!".

She thought curing the infection would return her back to normal but it turns out that like lots of other people she has a bad back. A chronic condition she has to deal with for the rest of her life. Controlling it involves yoga, exercise, rest, swimming, black magic, chicken entrails, and offerings to Saint Hillary. Whatever works. I guess this is another step on the road to fogginess.

The kids are all doing fine, Andrew has a big boy job creating web sites, Ellie is still teaching in Brooklyn NY, Stephen is wandering the wilds of Virginia wearing various Boston sport franchise garb, and Gregory is in his final year at UNH. One more semester of college payments to go. There is light at the end of a very long tunnel. In fact it looks like a pair of lights, I'll just stand here like a deer and stare at them, what's the worst that can happen?

We had Thanksgiving last week and for the first time all the kids had a "significant other" in tow; of various degrees of significance. Obviously none of them are good enough for my angelic children, except of course for Stephen. Anyone who can put up with him for more than a few hours deserves a medal, or maybe a large dowry. Now we are kid-free we upgraded to a nice off-white sofa, never more to worry about teenage furniture abuse. "Stephen, get your shoes off the sofa". "You're kidding right?", stomp, stomp, stomp, "Ha, ha, ha", Argghhh!

Thanksgiving was an interesting time. Me sitting at one end of the table telling embarrassing stories involving the kids. Christine at the other end talking non stop like the little mechanical bunny with a new battery. The kids yucking it up and the poor boy/girl friends sitting stunned wondering how to escape. As the meal progressed and with wine diminished, the volume and language increased. In a previous year, in order to keep the language in check, Christine came out with the phrase that lives in Brown family folk-law "No f\*\*king at Thanksgiving". This gets repeated many times over the course of the meal to Christine's obvious delight. It goes with the just-as-famous "No laughing at Christmas" which the kids claim I allegedly uttered a few years back but I'm sure they're mistaken. I mean, it

doesn't sound like something I'd say at all!

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



Ellie.....Christine

We are all going on a family road trip to see Stephen in a few weeks and to take in the Patriots v Redskins football game in DC. Christine is dying to see his new apartment and I'm looking forward to stomping my size 10s all over his new couch. Stephen is planning the day by starting the tailgate party at 9:00am for a 4:00pm game. The chances of seeing the game are about the same as the chances of seeing it double. I think I'd rather sit at home watching the game on my gigantic HDTV in front of a warm fire supping a few cold ones and then mosey up to bed around 9:30 with a hot water bottle. Yes, another nail in the fogeneity coffin.

I hope like us, you have a great Christmas and a healthy and less fogeneity 2012.

And for all of those of you left in suspense . . . Ortiz did reach home on a Youkilis double off the Green Monster.