

A very jolly Christmas is in store for the Brown family this year, especially for Christine who always enjoys the season better under a Democratic president. She did her part for the elections by housing Obama campaign volunteers from out of state. We had dozens of the buggers running around the house munching granola, practicing yoga, hugging trees and all that other liberal nonsense. We had so many I couldn't keep track of their names so referred to them as Obama Chicks and Obama Dudes (and one Obama Babe!). Christine thought it disgraceful not to call them by their names but even she resorted to Obama Chicks at the end. They were all deliriously happy at the election result but I did point out that Salem went Republican so they in fact were complete failures. I wonder if any Republicans put up Mitt Chicks, or do they just stay at the Marriott?

It's Thanksgiving next week, a traditional day of eating too much turkey and falling asleep in front of a football game. Last year I experimented with a deep fried turkey. Fried turkey tastes much better than roasted but Christine missed the smell of cooking turkey that permeates the house for the whole day. So this year it's two turkeys, one for eating and one for smelling. How decadent (America, the only country to go from barbarism to decadence without the intervening civilization), but you know what, decadence is pretty damn good if it's you that's being decadent.



Gregory                  Stephen    Christine    Andrew    Ellie                  Mick

The whole family went to England for Ian (nephew) and Rachel's wedding and a fine time was had by all. It was the first time the whole Milligan clan was together for 20 years. It was thought for many years that there was a UN mandate prohibiting such a gathering due to possibility of violating the international noise abatement treaty. A great occasion, although I did learn a valuable lesson at the reception, don't put your credit card behind the bar and tell your kids about it. Stephen gets very generous after a few beers and treated everyone he met to a drink, "don't worry my dad's paying, here have two". One day he'll buy me a beer, probably in an alternate reality.

In the summer months I commute to work on my bike and in July I was happily biking back when a 16 year old Asian girl in her mother's SUV rammed me from the side. Nothing too serious, a few scrapes, sprains and a broken elbow. In California it's known as a case of DWO, Driving While Oriental. Surprisingly it's the first broken bone in the family. It's amazing how a broken arm affects other parts of the body. For months I was unable to get my fat ass off the sofa to get coffee/beer/wine/food/crystal meth or anything. Even now, many months later I still have problems getting off the couch, in fact it's even worse since football season started. "Mick, pass the TV remote." "What, with a broken arm!!!"

Andrew is still working and living locally. He's getting a bit of a reputation for destroying cars. His Oldsmobile rusted to death so he borrowed the family's old Taurus which then rusted to death, so he borrowed my truck which rusted to death. Now he's bought himself an old truck which looks mighty rusty to me. Christine won't even let him sit in her car, just in case. As Gregory put it, "Andy Brown, where good cars go to die".

A tough year for New York City, it survived hurricane Sandy and Ellie Brown. Ellie moved apartments and now lives in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn without any room mates but with a cat. An ominous sign living by yourself with a cat. I can see her in 50 years time rocking in her chair wearing a crocheted shawl surrounded by cats and complaining about how the country has gone to the dogs. Yes, she takes after her mother.

Stephen also moved apartments to Arlington VA, closer to DC and has a new job in the marketing department of a company that manages golf courses. He's now a golf expert and can kick my ass in golf any day, which isn't that difficult since I don't play the stupid game. There's tension building between Stephen the golf pro and Gregory the natural athlete which might culminate in classic game of golf to the death. I see myself playing the role of Tiger Woods' wife and destroying Andy's rusty truck with a 5-iron. That's about the only way I could enjoy golf.

Gregory graduated from college this year and found a job at a medical manufacturing company about 5 minutes from home. He is ensconced in the basement, at least for now, our first boomerang kid. We enjoy having him around but I suspect living in your parent's basement isn't his long term plan.

Gregory is in the quality department of the company makes tubing for multiple medical uses. He claims he personally tests every catheter before shipping. I keep telling him it could be worse, at least his job's not a pain in the ass.

Christine is still the dutiful wife you all know, who always does everything I say, unless she disagrees with me of course which is quiet rare; I'd estimate no more than a mere 100% chance. Interesting news from her school last week, they found a family of rats had made a home in the kids' outdoor play area. They don't tell the kids they are rats, "little animals" or some such, but whatever you do don't stoke them or pick them up. I volunteered to get rid of the al Qaeda backed rodents in true American style, blow their tiny little brains out with a semi automatic assault rifle (well I guess an air strike from an unmanned drone would be preferred, but might take out too many neighbors). Christine called an exterminator instead, afraid I might waste a couple of the kids as I sprayed hot lead across the playground. A damn shame.

I can't finish without a Christine story. We were in Portland Maine having a good time listening to a local band play (Paranoid Social Club – that's the band, not the venue). It was packed with a younger crowd and the guy standing next to Christine asked her if she was the mother of one of the band members. Now most women would be mortified but she thought it was the funniest thing she'd heard. She told the barmaids, the club owner and when the band finished she went on stage and told them. The singer told her that his mother was younger which she thought was even funnier.

Have a great Christmas and New Year.