

God rest ye merry gentlemen. Well, all except for me, I've got this stupid letter to write and nothing happens (that I'm aware of) now the kids have bugged off. The year 2014 saw the next phase of family life for the Browns. No not early onset senility, Christine has been showing signs of that for decades. We have entered the wedding phase. Andrew and Erin attached the leg irons in October.

We had the wedding behind the house – a big tent but the bouncy castle was vetoed. Andrew thought it might be nice if there was a new deck on the house for the wedding. Something I've always threatened to build and of course he would help me build it. Which indeed he did, by staying out of the way. He was far too busy arranging the wedding, which I thought meant getting very drunk the week before and then turning up on the morning. Apparently there is more to getting married than that, who would have thought? His focus seemed to be installing a shrubbery, “A shrubbery!” with a door in the middle of the lawn. Yes, it does sound strange, but it actually turned out well. The bridal party entered the wedding through a door in a shrubbery. A Pythonesque way to start married life.

The beauty of having a wedding at the house was that there was a hard deadline to finishing the deck. I'm great at starting projects and ahhh, not so good finishing them. The deck was complete the day before the wedding. I claim it's just a mere coincidence.



Ellie is next on the wedding bandwagon. She and Bob are getting hitched in June in Brooklyn NY. They (she) decided that the traditional wedding is not for them. The most important things in life are friends, partying and dancing. That's my girl, well except for the dancing part, that's just stupid. They are renting a trendy bar in the hipster area of Brooklyn for the wedding. Yes, getting married in a bar – brilliant. The best part is that I get to walk the bride down the aisle past the taps and might just pause for a quick bevvy on the way.

The one minor issue is that Bob is a southern gentleman from North Carolina. Not that there is anything wrong with that except for his allegiance to sporting teams not from Boston. Yep, a serious issue that Ellie is a saint in overlooking. My only condition on granting my daughter's hand in marriage (for yes, I do have that power!) is that any offspring of the union have to accompany me to Fenway Park on their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday for a bit of cultural indoctrination. My lawyers have already drawn up the prenup'.

Stephen is still living in Virginia and strangely enough isn't getting married. He is hosting the family Thanksgiving this year. A quick 9 hour drive south, slop down some food and a quick 9 hours back to civilization. I suspect a typical southern menu, McDonalds turkey burgers and fries with Krispy Kreme donuts for desert. Sounds awesome.

Gregory is still ensconced in the basement. Christine and I decided to spend the summer in Maine and we left the house in the protective care of Gregory and his buddies, knowing full well the risks involved. On a rare visit home I noticed several fishing boats strewn across the lawn, a (well stocked) tiki bar by the lake, a fire smoldering in the fire-pit (24 hours a day I was led to believe). There were

random people asleep in various corners of the property, “don't worry, it's only Sneezzy D”, “Oh that's OK then”. In other words student heaven. Without the students. Gregory is putting his heart and soul resisting growing up. My favorite addition was the DJ booth permanently installed in the front room. I have to admit it went well with the disco ball above the fireplace.

At one of the parties, somebody fell off the half finished deck. Apparently I should have been there, it was wicked funny. Luckily there were no deaths, lawsuits or police raids and only a single visit by the fire department (for a burning boat). The neighbors still have that wary look about them.

Come September the summer fun was over and the house was returned to us back in reasonable shape. A few new stains and interestingly a lot of missing forks. Yeah, I know, forks? What the hell did they do with forks? I don't think I want to know.

No funny Christine stories this year – she's very proud of the fact she hasn't done anything memorably documentable this year. There again I'm getting deafer as I age so she probably did and I didn't hear. It's got so bad she can't determine if I don't hear her or I'm ignoring her. “You need to acknowledge when I speak to you”. “But it wasn't a question”. “It doesn't matter, just show you heard me”. So I decided to acknowledge with an oink. “I had a good day at work”. “Oink”. “I hope the weather is nice tomorrow”. “Oink”. I know, pathetic and immature, but Christine just loves it.

Have a merry Christmas and a great 2015, oh and yeah, leave my damn cutlery alone.



Mick, Andrew, Stephen, Christine, Ellie, Gregory