

Disclaimer: We usually try to make our holiday letter a fun read. Not like that other boring letter from those people you hardly know anymore which came in the mail last week. You know who we're talking about. However, this year we wondered if perhaps it might be in poor taste to write a humorous letter in light of the sadness and tragedy in the world. Then we thought... NAAAAAH. Nevertheless, we have decided there will be no jokes about September 11 (too tragic), Osama bin Laden (too easy), or the war in Afghanistan (too current). This won't be too restrictive however, since we still have George W. Bush. So let's get started.

2001 Lefton-Steinbart Holiday Letter

The majority of our life these days is filled with rather mundane things that don't make for good holiday letter material. We eat meals, do laundry, run errands, pay bills, watch videos, etc. Our lives sometimes seem like we're just acting out a script.

Act 1. Scene 1.

The family gathers around the dinner table to enjoy Mexican food. Natalie and Monica are fighting over the Peter Rabbit plate. Hannah is sneaking chopped tomatoes with her fingers when she thinks no one is looking. Enid and Lew enter from the kitchen. Enid has a glass of white wine. Lew is wearing a Linux T-shirt.

Enid: Has everyone washed hands since touching the mail? The rule is no anthrax at the table!

Natalie: (getting up for the 32nd time) I washed my hands in 1999, do I have to do it again?

Monica: (eating the remainder of the tomatoes) Since I'm just going to go to ballet tonight, I don't need to wash my hands. Because they'll get dirty again touching the barre. Besides, I'll have to walk all the...

Hannah: (Interrupting) I've washed my hands just like you asked, so can I pleeeeee invite a friend for a sleepover tonight? PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE I haven't seen my friends for almost three hours!!!

Lew: Hannah, No to the sleepover. Natalie wash 'em again. Monica, great dancers take care of their whole body and that includes hands. Enid, I changed my mind. I think I will have a glass of wine, too.

OK. So it's not Shakespeare, but Act II is going to get really exciting with screaming, crying, hair pulling, and girls running around in their underwear. That's right, it will be called "School Morning".

News about the Kids We have achieved single school nirvana: all three kids dropped off and picked up at the same location! Hannah is an energetic third grader now, and Monica and Natalie are happy little kindergarteners, in separate classes. Natalie has discovered the joys of reading and can sometimes be found curled up with "Nate the Great." Monica knows she wants to be an artist, but is now trying to figure out whether she'll concentrate on drawing cartoons, painting signs, or sculpting nudes. Hannah enjoys performing, and her stage presence was noticed at the church where she was cast in a recent play as the voice of God. The girls are all getting involved in individual activities like soccer (Natalie), ballet (Monica), and softball (Hannah). All three have joined the local girl scout group as Brownies and Daisies.

News about the Grownups and Lew: We're both still on faculty at Georgia Tech. Lew continues to enjoy being an "IT Director" because, heaven knows, IT needs some direction. He is also working on a text book with a colleague. Enid still teaches one course and has submitted a research paper this fall. As the Undergraduate Mathematics Advisor, she is either the undergraduate's best friend or worst nightmare when it comes to math courses. This fall we decided not to send one of our girls to college so that we would have enough money to buy a second Georgia Tech parking tag. It's worked out well: Enid, the morning person drives to Tech early and leaves campus in time to pick up the kids from school. Lew gets the kids off to school in the morning and comes home from work later. We're both very active in the PTA. Lew has done very little stand up or improv this year, but he hopes to get back on stage soon. Enid ~~turned 40~~ had a nice birthday.

News about the Pets: We share our house with several animals (not counting crickets in the basement). A new addition to the family this year was Furball, the gerbil, who usually lives in Hannah's room. The exception was when Dione stayed in Hannah's room during her visit over Thanksgiving. Then we moved Furball out to the hallway. This was not so much out of consideration for Dione as much as it was for Furball's own protection. Coco is now a contender for longest surviving goldfish in Georgia (1.5 years and still swimming). We believe this is due to his completely random feeding schedule. No food for a week, then 1/3 cup all at once.

Other News: Our neighborhood elementary school continued its renovation over the spring and summer. It was supposed to be ready for fall, but instead we had several obligatory meetings with outraged parents and apologetic contractors. We finally moved in at the end of the first quarter. Fortunately, we did not hire that same contractor to do the renovation on our house. We are adding a large screen porch and deck off our kitchen, and completing an unfinished family room. And while were at it, we're replacing the asbestos room. And since, we're replacing the roof, we're going to fix the low ceiling at the top of the stairs. And the HVAC on the first floor really needs to be replaced... We're now down to one kid in college. There's yellow tape and a port-o-let in our front yard now, but it will be great if you come to visit later in the spring!

We took a trip through the Midwest again this summer and saw Enid's brother Neal and his family. We also visited Ram and Roni Ben David and their new baby Tamara. The main goal for the trip was for us and the kids to visit Enid's mother Agnes in Omaha. The trip highlights included a spectacular Fourth of July display from the tenth floor and a coincidental visit with the Nakas, friends from New Orleans. Of course, a big plus for the kids was that Agnes has cable TV! Despite being physically weak from chemotherapy, Agnes continues to impress us with her positive attitude and inner strength. Having both lost our fathers at the end of last year, we naturally had many emotional extreme points this year. We want to thank you all for your support. It was especially nice to have visitors in our new home. Lew's sisters all made a trip to Decatur this year so they could love their nieces to pieces. Enid's sister Stephanie and her family will spend Christmas with us.

As 2001 closes, we feel fortunate compared to the many who suffered such devastating losses due to you-know-what. Not Voldemort, but something far more disturbing, because it's real. But we have also seen incredible strength of the human spirit and we are hopeful for the future. We hope and pray that you are all well and we wish you a happy holiday season and a new year full of peace.