

This past year can be summed up in just two words, which our president-elect claims to offer us,

HOPE and CHANGE

But the message goes beyond politics...

All across the world, young babies who just messed their diapers have

HOPE that someone will **CHANGE** them ... soon.

With the current economic meltdown now approaching a rolling boil, everyone from the person who used to live in the house next door, to the corporate executive who can barely afford to fly to the Caribbean for lunch, have turned to tax-paying Americans like us, and they are

HOPING that you can spare some **CHANGE**.

But, don't worry. Somethings are completely **hopeless** and **never change**. It is in that spirit which we present:

The 2008 Lefton-Steinbart Holiday Letter

In 2008, we somehow decided that our house wasn't getting sufficiently trashed, so we got a kitten! Bo was enthroned in a simple, quiet coronation in early February. Our dog Madison and Bo get along well, and they have recently reached the grand master level in the new tag team sport called "chew-up-anything-that-has-a-smell,-is-wrapped-in-plastic,-or-looks-like-it-might-move." We now face a difficult parental choice of either sending our kids to college or keeping our family in socks and underwear.

Enid and Hannah visited Japan last summer. Hannah's girl scout troop had the opportunity to go, and Enid was a chaperone. Not that a bunch of 15 year old girls wandering around Tokyo need any supervision. They also enjoyed a hike up Mt. Fuji and a visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. At the same time, Lew took Monica and Natalie on a trip down to Key West, Florida. They enjoyed relaxing on sandy beaches, snorkeling coral reefs in both the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean, and sampling true key lime pie. Our other big trip this year was when all five of us headed to northern California to visit Lew's sister Irene (who is now back from Switzerland and happily employed for a new company). Trip highlights included a tour of Alcatraz (where Lew passed up many opportunities to embarrass his daughters with prison jokes), a tour of the Jelly Belly factory (where Lew passed up many opportunities to embarrass his daughters with Willy Wonka jokes), and a tour of wine country (where Lew passed up many opportunities to embarrass himself). In addition, the girls had a chance to briefly dip their toes in the Pacific ocean, which gave Natalie and Monica a claim to fame of having been in all three major bodies of water bordering the US during the same summer. Of course this will be easier to do in a few decades, after the effects of climate change, but why wait? In other travel news last year, Lew's sisters Linda, Charna, and Irene all visited us this fall. Enid also attended her sister Sylvia's surprise 60th birthday celebration.

Natalie and Monica are now 7th graders, and they are apparently the only teenagers in the ENTIRE WORLD without cellphones. Hannah is in 10th grade, has a smile free of braces, and is learning to drive. Enid and Lew are now officially the parents of three teenage girls, and they have perfected their martini recipe. Coincidence? You decide.

Musical Monica started the year with piano lessons, and she is now taking private flute lessons. She also plays flute in two School bands. Natalie plays her oboe in both these bands, too, one of which is a brand new,

invitation-only wind ensemble. Hannah plays saxophone in the Decatur High School marching band, and she had a band trip to Orlando last spring. Lew has helped to maintain the balance, by remaining completely tone deaf, thus demonstrating the law of conservation of musical talent.

All three girls are actively involved in various extra-curricular activities. They are all active in the church youth group, and they all babysit. Monica and Natalie both bridged to become cadet girl scouts, and they worked with their troop to build a really nice nature trail at a local campground. Hannah returned to Appalachian State University last summer for another three week session of camp sponsored by the Duke University TIP program. This year, she studied Shakespeare and came back telling us how the Lion King is just a re-telling of Hamlet! Natalie was on a local swim team last summer, and she also played for the middle school girl's soccer team. Monica participates in art club, and she even built out a small studio in a closet off her bedroom.

But wait! There's more! Hannah is the sophomore class secretary, and participates in both Key Club and Mock Trial. Natalie and Monica both took the SAT (yes, the real one) this fall, too. Lew started directing a teenage Improv group called DUCK, which performs around town, and both Monica and Hannah are regular cast members. Apparently, living in our house helps develop a sense of humor.

Lew taught Scientific Computing this fall out of his book, and he was honored in the Spring by receiving the single, campus-wide, Georgia Tech Administrative Service Award. In addition to directing the youth Improv group, he's squeezing in a little adult comedy here and there. STEMCELL, the Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics club he runs at the middle school, fielded three rookie Lego robotics teams (with a great deal of community support). The teams, one of which includes Monica, all walked away from the regional competition with trophies and/or invitations to advance. In September, Lew eliminated his last remaining shred of free time when he was elected to the School Leadership Team which is a governing board for Decatur high school, now part of a charter school system.

Enid holds the family together by providing a 24/7 support system on top of her full time job and personal life. She not only helps to make sure that we have food and clean clothes in the house, but also acts as chauffeur, counselor, tailor, logistics officer, and proofreader. She taught two seminar courses last fall, and she continues to advise students and work with the Georgia Tech undergraduate math program. This year she has spent time being an active Band parent, volunteering at numerous festivals and community events, being an elder at the church, and playing a monthly game of Bunco. Her secret to getting it all done is to instantly fall asleep whenever she is sitting in front of a TV.

We **HOPE** to see you in the new year.

If you **CHANGE** your address, let us know!

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May you and your loved ones year have a new year full of health and joy.

Merry Christmas!

Happy New Year!

Happy Hanukkah!