

Dear Friends and Relations!**Merry Holidays and a Wonderful Winter Solstice To You All!**

Well, here it is, that time of year again. Welcome dear friend, fond relation, and Gentle Reader to the fifth¹ First Annual Holiday Letter™ from the Langs. Saying that something is a fifth of its kind implies a quintessence, a certain magic that flows from the Law of Fives: a fifth symphony, a fifth Amendment, a fifth of Scotch, a fifth First Annual Letter. A kind of magic, and I'll have mine on the rocks, please.

We had a great time this year meeting ~~people more important than you are~~ the new neighbors. The White House dinner with Michelle and Barry was wonderful, the parties for the Nobel acceptance were amazing, and hanging out with JK Rowling was magical. I still think signing my book would have been easier than getting a restraining order, though.

You know you're getting old when you realize you've stopped raising hell and started raising hellions. The kids are great, as usual. The big ticket this year was the fantastic summer camp they attended, Camp Intervention. They came back singing Amy Winehouse's "Rehab" and some Britney Spears crap. They all achieved "junior counselor" rank, but Connor really outdid himself – he is now tobacco, alcohol, sugar, reality, caffeine, and salt free, and lives entirely on ketchup and legos. Having turned nine years old, he's also moved from "cute" to "ridiculously good looking:" we've had to fight off three girlfriends, a boyfriend, and a paternity suit from some 3rd Grade class hussy named Billy Jean. We were out of town that weekend, and Connor's lawyer says "my client doesn't go to sleep-overs anyway."

Connor's shining moment at camp, though, was show-n-tell. He walked to the front of the room holding nothing at all. The cute young innocent intern, a little perplexed, asked what he had to show and tell for the group. Connor faced the class and said, "I have a loose tooth. It looks like this..." and pulled it out with his bare hands. Blood all over; the intern is still in therapy, and he was recruited by two rugby teams on the spot.

Annalise is growing up; it's always nice to see a little girl making friends. Her best friend this year is a girl from school named Anna Falaxis, with whom she shares three classes, her lunch money, and 16 allergies. (They also have seven alleles in common, but that's not important right now and I don't want to talk about it.) This year, since everyone has figured out how to pronounce Incontinentia Pigmenti, Annalise was diagnosed with Eosinophilic Esophagitis. She's had multiple endoscopies to double check, whereupon it was discovered that she's pink on the inside, too. She was thrilled. Pictures are included, because nothing says "Holiday Letter" like an endoscopic scan of someone else's guts. Also, not to be outdone by Connor's ketchup and lego diet, Annalise now subsists only on pink liquid sugar – she's added "Baroness of the Hummingbirds" to the list of her royal domains.



Julie and I have had a long time to do some serious blamestorming on all of Annalise's problems, and we've decided it's all YOUR fault, dear friend, fond relation, and Gentle Reader. Every time Annalise is diagnosed with something new and bizarre – that is to say, each month – we mention it to all of you well wishers, and you then teach yourselves how to say it! As soon as a majority of the readers of this letter learn to pronounce Annalise's latest condition, she sprouts a new one. So please, while we don't mind that you read "eosinophilic esophagitis," when you say it out loud for goodness sake just call it "Thingy Disease." In fact, just shut up. Please. For her. And remember, the fact that you're reading this is proof that I know where you live.

There was some action in the Case of the Missing Kidney, though – Julie found it! Annalise still only has the one, but if you look hard enough there's no telling what you'll find. Over the course of poking and prodding every inch of Julie this year, we've found that she has not one, not two, but three kidneys! Since she and Annalise balance out, I've declared a new Law of Conservation of Organs. Now, if I could only grow something useful, like a new liver.

It was a big year for Kate, as I'm sure you heard in the news – she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Literature for her riveting account of her first car accident, the duration of which took less than three seconds and which she can narrate in no fewer than 90 minutes, reaching dangerous concentrations of poetry and quoting everyone from Hemingway to Shakespeare to depict the emotional landscape of a distracted teenaged driver. ("I KNO RLY!")

Following her acceptance speech, she reprised her mountain girl role by hiking the Colorado Rockies, scaling sheer rock faces and facing down rattlesnakes using only a stick of chewing gum, her own bad attitude, and a busted iPod. Kate also switched schools this year – she's now attending a local public magnet school for Children Who Think They're Ever

¹ This letter also constitutes a coupon for one free box of tissues and one free package of Depends, good at all participating stores in the Atlanta, GA, area. Have clerk scan code: 

So Much Smarter Than Their Parents, And Whose Test Scores Unfortunately Bear That Out. She spends her evenings studying constitutional law and its application within the WebKinz, Build-a-Bear, and NeoPets website communities; she's also started programming PHP and MySQL scripts for them in her spare time.

Speaking of news – this just in – you're not going to believe it, because almost none of the major outlets covered this story, but Michael Jackson died this year. You heard it here first, folks. And in the feel-good story of the year, my father learned what a MILF was, and was happy to realize that he'd been sleeping with one for over 40 years.

It was another good year for reading: It's been a while since we deciphered Da Vinci's code, but this year we got to find Dan Brown's Lost Symbol. I wasn't going to give away the ending, but God did it. Also, in a plot twist so bizarre that only Dan Brown could pull it off, Albus Dumbledore dies on page 397. There, I've once again saved your illiterate ass \$15 bucks and nearly 3 hours.

Speaking of illiterate, the neighbors we don't like have been mostly quiet. The neighbors we do like, on the other hand, are wonderful. Our neighborhood is so gosh darned chalk-full of love, some of them have gotten divorced, booted the spouses, and are now engaged – his and hers houses! We're surrounded by love!

Last year I mentioned killing the pet hamster (to ensure we could include a touching story of loss), and instead of "thanks for sharing that cathartic outpouring of grief," we just got grief. Look, life is just one of nature's tricks for keeping meat fresh – sort of like trapping those mammoths in the ice flows, but more mobile. Besides, it's not a holiday letter if nothing dies, and this year was no exception! (Michael Jackson doesn't count.)

This year the kids were after me for a new pet, something with longer fur than the cats, cuddly with big feet, but a carnivore so they could watch it kill smaller things and eat them. They argued and argued for a badger! They'd wash his cage and take out the bones and walk him and all the shit kids promise when they really want a pet. I used every counter argument I could think of, up to and including "Badgers? We don't need no stinking badgers!" Finally, they used the big brown puppy-dog eyes on me one time too often, and I gave in.

That's right. They puppied me into a badger.

We got him a nice big cage and named him Bogart. I have to admit, Bogie the Badger was a great little pet; we bought him a leash and a toy marmot, and he had every squirrel out of our yard in the first 3 months. Conveniently, he died last week trying to mate with one of Annalise's Barbies – not pretty, but he's in a better place, and we feel better having told you about this cathartic story of loss in this letter!



We still don't have a pool in the house but we are under water, if you get my drift, and so we've been trying to bring in some extra cash. I'm selling signed first editions on eBay – the Michael Jackson books I signed are going for hundreds! – and we've gotten into the flavored-LSD market. I've included samples on a few of these letters; let me know what you think!

Work's great, although it turns out they think I'm important again – yep, another Blackberry. Turns out it's also a decent drink holder, if you need a place to set down your Scotch. "There's an App for that!"

Julie had a good year also and is enjoying spending time with her remaining organs.

While Julie and I feel strongly that two pages is not only less painful to read but cheaper to mail, upon careful consideration this year we decided, dear friend, fond relation, and Gentle Reader, that if you want to stuff multiple pages into an envelope, you can go stuff 'em yourself. So, in accordance with the dictates of the Annual Holiday Letter, I will once again conclude by wishing everyone a wonderful 2010. May your co-pays be small and all your surgeries be laparoscopic!

With Lots of Love and Holiday Co-Pays,

- Doug, Julie, Kate, Connor, Annalise, Flitwick, and Albus the Gay
<http://dougandjulie.smugmug.com/>

P.S. Just when you thought it was safe to get back in the water, it is our pleasure to announce the Return of the Doug & Julie Show! We are once again making the precious memories of our lives available for download (while you wait) at <http://www.dougandjulie.com/>. Plus, back issues of the First Annual Holiday Letter!