

JANICEK CHRISTMAS

The more people we add to this family, the more difficult it has proven to become to get them all to stand still and look in the same direction.



We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Merry Christmas, y'all!

'Tis that time of year again when we all don our gay apparel and pray that Santa Claus didn't take notice when we screamed "YOU OUGHT TO TAKE THAT ***** PHONE AND SHOVE IT UP YOUR ***** CORNHOLE, YOU *****!"

while sitting in traffic yesterday. Or on every day that ended in a "y" this year. As always, we hope this newsletter finds you well, filled to the brim with holiday cheer and having already mastered the fine art of twerking.

I couldn't tell you the last time that I authored this Christmas newsletter while it was cold outside. I can report that as of right now, it is 33 degrees in Austin. For you fellow Texans and other southerners, brrrrrr. For you other folks who endure these temperatures with any kind of frequency, I just can't fathom how you do it. This past week we've had temperatures that dropped BELOW FREEZING! I'm talking upper-20's. And we had "frozen moisture!" Frozen moisture will completely shut a city like Austin down. I seriously thought that I

was going to have to migrate the family, but then I remembered that there are people who live in Canada. By choice. And if they can do it, so can I. I'll just have to get used to wearing my winter flip-flops.

This year has excitedly flown by. We celebrated Mara's first birthday this past April. Elise, Maly and I sat around the high chair, watched Mara as she shoved vanilla cake down her gullet and wondered where the year had gone. Today Mara is a little over a year and a half old and is in that toddler phase where everything that she does is adorable and innocent. Like when she runs, her legs move fast but her knees don't really bend. She is also learning the power and effectiveness of her voice and vocabulary. Excessive volume has proven to be a very effective way by which to express that the iPhone is "MMMMMMMMNNNNNEEEEE!!!!"

As you can see, Mara's red hair stuck. Elise and I have ascertained that this is because of recessive genes from both of our families. Between Mara's red hair, Maly's blonde hair, whatever color Elise's hair is at

the time, and my lack of hair that would ordinarily be nearly black, we look like a hodge-podge band of gypsies walking through the Trader Joe's.

Speaking of toothless vagabonds, Maly has been doing great. She is 7-years-old now and is halfway through her year in the second grade. Her teachers sing her praise and assure us that "this one will make sure that all of your wildest retirement dreams come true!" True to form she excels in most every subject, needs a little nudge in math, and totally loves to write stories and draw. Elise and I have very intentionally taken a backseat in letting Maly discover her own interests. When Elise was much, much younger (before the telegram and combustion engine), she was always a soccer player. As for me, I had to bat the ladies away as they were drawn to my superhuman strength, charisma and good looks. So we both had our natural talents and interests that we found in our own due time. We're doing the same with our children. When Maly was younger we signed her up for dance, t-ball and soccer. She hasn't expressed

much of an interest in any of those activities since then, so we're not going to force anything upon her. We do want to help guide her in embracing her natural talents, and we're giving her ample time to take the lead in figuring what those might be. If she can't figure out what those things are by mid-next year, I'm giving her a serrated knife, one of those energy drinks and setting her out on one of those spiritual walkabouts all by herself.

Maly's also lost a lot of her teeth this year. And by a lot, I mean all of them. I don't think she has a tooth in her head right now. I didn't know humans had that many teeth. I think she's lost about 40 of them. Every time I turn around there's a tooth falling out of her face and bouncing across the hardwood floor. You'd think our house was the Chiclets factory if you came over here today. The Tooth Fairy called me just this past week to let me know she's running low on cash and to ask if it'd be alright if she paid Maly in Bitcoins or bond certificates instead.

Now back to the important topic of pointing out how my wife is so much older than me. This past August Elise attended her 20-year class reunion at Valley High School in West Des Moines. Unfortunately I couldn't attend, mostly because I'm not a big fan of soft foods and I don't like being around the smell of Vicks VapoRub, but I heard it was a hoot. Old classmates reminisced about the days of dial-up modems while they exchanged glances at photos of their kids and their colonoscopies with one another on their iPhones.

Elise had a great time at the reunion and told me it was good to see many of the folks with whom she'd attended school. She has been in Texas for the past 17 years, so it was nice for her to be afforded the opportunity to catch up with old friends and acquaintances. When asked, she informed folks that her husband had to stay back at the ranch in Texas to make sure none of the damn liberals stole our firearms, horses or the tumbleweed statue of George Bush (Sr. or Jr.).

While I wasn't able to attend the class reunion, I did make it up to Des Moines the following week to help Steve and Joanne pack up 30 years of family history from the house on Sunny Hill Drive and move to their new townhouse in West Des Moines where a vase is a "voz" and the "T" in Home Depot is silent. I know it was hard for them to say goodbye to so many precious years of memories. I know it was equally hard for Elise as that was the home where she spent her formative years. Elise's brother, Eric, was of his typical stoic demeanor and the move really didn't affect him. That, or he's just grown accustomed to masking his emotions.

According to Steve and Joanne, the decision to make the move was multi-faceted. They wanted to "downgrade," which, while their new home is actually larger than the last, all of their daily needs and accommodations are on the top level. They have a "walk-out basement" (to you Texans, a "basement" is a large part of a home that's actually UNDER the house. We might use this space to store beer, firearms, ammo, VHS cassettes and venison meat.) that has two bedrooms, a full bath, a living area and a covered patio. They also wanted to have the freedom to pick up and come down to Austin during one of the 11 freezing months they have up there, without the worry of shoveling snow or general yard maintenance, and dote upon and spoil their granddaughters.

Elise and I are both doing quite well. Elise has scaled back on her photography in an effort to raise the little redheaded child. Between

keeping up with a toddler and a second grader, her hands have been pretty full and she's hard-pressed for much spare time.

We celebrated 12 years of being married this past September. While we're beyond buying each other fancy gifts or paying an exorbitant amount of money for small plates of food, we recognize and appreciate that each year is a gift and a symbol in and of itself. Each year represents a strengthening of our bond, like that of a ring in a tree's trunk. And like the giant oak, we both grow wider, our bark's grooves are deeper and more defined, our exteriors weathered, our interiors hardened and our limbs move slower and creak a little these days. And we'll stand here, roots dug deep into the ground below us, providing comfort and protection for our girls until they cut us down and turn us into a parking lot or a voz.

As for yours truly, I have had a great year. Seventy five percent of this year afforded me the opportunity to take Maly to school every morning. In late August I embarked upon a new exchange of my time for money on the same day that Maly started the second grade. I really miss taking her to school in the mornings, and I hope to have that opportunity again in the very near future. This summer I decided to start paying a little bit more attention to my health. I've become a lot more conscious of what I put into my body and I started running. I never thought I'd ever find myself running for fun and leisure again, but once I was able to find my wind and stride (which I'd abandoned nearly 20 years ago), it's a habit that has been a welcome reprise. I've even signed up to run a competitive 10K this upcoming Spring. I will be positioned at the start of the race somewhere between the Kenyans and other people who either run like they take running very seriously, or are being chased by the Girl Scouts who stand outside the exit door at the Lowe's.

This year we'll be flying up to Des Moines to spend Christmas with Elise's family. According to this app on my phone (I really wish the son-of-a-bitch behind me would quit honking), the temperature in Des Moines is supposed to get up to 25-degrees on Christmas day. Thankfully the winter flip-flops will be worn in and warm.

We hope that this holiday season is filled with warmth, laughter and love for you and your family. We wish you joy, happiness, healthy gums and great hair in the new year. And remember, it's not the moments that take our breath away, but the breaths in the life of the moment that make the guy be able to fish on his own and feed his family for a lifetime.

Big hugs & smooches from our family to yours,

Josh, Elise, Maly & Mara

