

17 December 1999

Hey,

Merry Christmas already...you gotta problem with that?

All right, so I started out a little on the testy side this year. So why is that? Well, I was just looking over copies of Christmas letters I have written over the years. I keep them in a folder. This folder is stuffed, I mean jam packed full of not only many years worth of paper and ink (in some cases color ink) but also the fruits of countless minutes of inspiration and creativity, some blatant plagiarism, my 1979 Tax return, and half an old Oreo[®] cookie (Double-Stuff[®]). As I read over some of that stuff and munched on the cookie (it was still pretty good...but I had to soak it in milk for about thirty minutes to soften that puppy up), I came to the realization that, in spite of my best efforts, no one has ever sent me any Christmas letters. At first I rejoiced in my good fortune. But then I began to read some of the ones I wrote. I was overcome with emotion. Back in 1990 I actually wrote a C program that enabled you to display a customized Christmas letter on your computer. Man...I was so ahead of my time...I was so on the cutting edge of Christmas letter writing technology that none of you had computers to read the dumb thing. But did that stop me? No. The following year I sent out the “shredded” Christmas letter. You were encouraged to re-assemble it and send it back. Did I receive anything back? No.

We'll skip over 1992, 1993, and 1994 (I can do that, this is my letter). Then in 1995, at great expense and personal risk to my admittedly less-than-stellar reputation (a topic for another occasion...actually it's none of your business so forget I even wrote that), I created the TCCLC. In it I offered a great service providing back issues of Christmas letters. Did I receive any orders? No.

After the debacle of the TCCLC (I assume you read about the failed IPO in the WSJ the following June), I formed the TCLCYC (same concept...I just rearranged the acronym a bit and added a letter...unfortunately it did not fool the fine Chapter 11 folks). In it I offered, nay, *begged* to write Christmas letters for you. Surely you could have seen through this ploy as a thinly disguised crying out for a Christmas letter. But did I receive any orders? Did I receive any casual inquiries? Did I receive any formal inquiries? Did I receive underwear with your faces ironed to the rear? No, no, no, and surprisingly, yes.

As a direct result of your lack of support...I was forced to sell TCLCYC in 1997 to no less than aliens. Personally, I found that episode to be one of the lower points in my career. Can you imagine having to explain that to your children (and with a straight face)? All was not lost. We took the profits that year and bought each of our children a shoe. Times have been fairly good since. We hope to have enough saved to purchase a second one for each soon. But did I receive any words of encouragement during this trying time? Did I receive a post card of support? Were there any attempts at a white

knight take-over? Was I thrown a golden parachute? Once again, no, uh-uh, nope, and not that I'm aware of.

There seems to be a pattern here.

So what's my point? Why did I skip over 1998? (well...it seems it doesn't really fit in with the theme or the point I was trying to make so I was hoping you wouldn't notice). I've done some pretty high quality whining for about a page now but it's helped me come to the realization that there are possibly valid reasons you haven't sent me any Christmas letters. I believe it is because of one or more of the following reasons:

1. you lack the time to write one.
2. you lack the expertise necessary to construct a truly boring and obnoxious Christmas letter.
3. the dog keeps eating your letter.
4. the dog keeps eating your printer.
5. the dog keeps eating your computer.
6. you're trying to find a good taxidermist
7. those new self-adhesive postage stamps keep sticking to your tongue.
8. you're waiting to grow a mustache (an interesting yet possibly valid excuse for many of you).
9. you got caught running with scissors.
10. you've just downloaded the entire Internet and you're not done reading it yet.

I think I can help (especially with the boring and obnoxious part).

Enclosed you will find all the necessary tools to create your very own Christmas letter to send to me and others you have likely ignored over the years. I am revealing to you here for the first time my secret to writing successful Christmas letters. And trust me folks...it works...it has made me what I am today...a little over 45. Use it wisely, use it judiciously, use it flagrantly, use it for a bird cage, but use it. However, I suggest you use proper judgment when choosing your recipients (i.e. refrain from sending this to anyone who has any degree of control over your ability to generate income).

The instructions are pretty simple. Choose the appropriate response for each section, cut it out and paste it in the blank. You may note that most of the responses will not physically fit into the small blank provided. You may also note that I don't really care about that. Just keep in mind the one true reason for writing Christmas letters...it's your one chance each year to get away with printing all the boring and meaningless stuff you've done on really tacky paper.



Tim (a relative of yours)

17 December 1999



Dear _____ ,

Favorite Relative

Tim

Sorry it's been a _____ since we've sent a Christmas letter to you.

while

few years

few decades

actually, we've never sent one to you because even though we receive Christmas letters from you, we haven't a clue who you are

You see, it's really not our fault. We've been meaning to send you one over the past _____.

while

few years

few decades

actually, we've never sent one to you because even though we receive Christmas letters from you, we haven't a clue who you are

but I've _____

fallen down

been washing the cat

been looking for a dirty cat to wash

been placed in a witness protection program

converted to Judaism (I'm allergic to cats)



and _____ .

I can't get up

time just got away from me

actually, now we remember who you are. Please stop sending us those boorish letters

Please accept our _____ as a token of our deep regret.

heartfelt apologies

very clean cat

yarmulke (look it up, you ignorant Gentile)



These past _____

✂
few months

✂
few years

✂
few decades

✂
actually, we don't care how long it's been because we haven't a clue who you are



have been _____ for us.

✂
challenging

✂
unique in a strangely odd sort of way

✂
lost due to the electric shock therapy we've all had to go through

✂
none of your business because we haven't a clue who you are

Our house _____

✂
has been put on the Super Fund list

✂
house? We have a house?

✂
was sold by a neighborhood ad hoc committee (over some minor dispute involving an un-planned pig farm we had started)



so in addition to this festive holiday greeting, we were wondering if _____.

✂
your house is also on the Super Fund list

✂
you have a house

✂
your house has been sold by a similar militant neighborhood committee

Please let us know as we are interested in relocating fairly soon and would like to take advantage of your often expressed sincere offers of hospitality.

Our children _____ .

✂
are being FedEx'd to you over-night

✂
are in a different witness protection program than we are so we don't know how they are at the moment

✂
children? We have children?

✂
are none of your business because we haven't a clue who you are

This past year we enjoyed _____ .

✂
a week away from the children (it was supposed to be three weeks but the pesky neighbors...who refuse to mind their own business...relented and told them where we were)

✂
Disney World (too bad it was cut short by a few weeks)

✂
being let out in the exercise yard for one hour a day

✂
flea markets





Next year we hope to enjoy _____ .

✂
another three weeks at Disney World... with the children

✂
testing our newly purchased paper shredder

✂
a different salad dressing

This past year we bought _____ .

✂
a bigger TV than yours

✂
a more expensive car than yours

✂
a faster computer than yours

✂
a better lawn mower than yours

✂
a smarter clock than yours

✂
a better calendar than yours



Well, that's all the news from us that we care to tell you about.

We hope this letter _____ .

✂
makes you seethe with jealousy

✂
clears your blocked sinuses

✂
finds you healthy (for those of you we plan to visit soon)

✂
finds you

✂
doesn't fall into the wrong hands

✂
isn't posted on someone's bulletin board again



Until next year, have a happy 19__ .

✂
00

✂
01

✂
02

✂
03

✂
04

(Author's Note: oops...not Y2K compliant...better finish reading this before the 31st)

