



That's all for this year. If you're like me and the rain or the holidays get you down, or stressed out, don a snowy wig and liberally apply holly lipstick – it helps.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

In addition to Christmas, the end of the year is a time of reflection and a reminder to pause, breathe, listen and relax—a time to close a chapter and start a new one. It's so easy to let the world pile up around us while we focus on work or school. When the dishes, the clothes and the phone messages add up, I always think there will be time tomorrow. Tomorrow soon fades into weeks into months and into years. As a year-end promise to myself, I thought I'd do something classy and send letters to catch up on all the times I thought of you.

Starting from the beginning, here's some highlights from this year's chapter. Hopefully you'll enjoy it so much that you'll revisit your own and remember all that you've forgotten.

Easter weekend, James called me around 9pm Friday evening and told me that instead of talking, I could just be down in California. So I talked my boyfriend Joe into taking the weekend off and by 10pm we were on the road, headed for the homestead. Mom & Dennis were a little surprised to see our car drive up the lane just after sunrise the following day. Together we enjoyed quite the Easter feast...it was great to be with the family.

My college friends Erin and Melissa were brave enough to visit Portland mid-April and remind me how to party. (I may only be 23, but sometimes I feel much older.) By July, I decided it was time to move again (it'd been a year). So, I relocated with Joe into a spacious duplex, only a few neighborhoods south. We decided that having a roommate really cuts down on costs.

Three weeks later I flew back to the heartland to help Melissa get through her pre-wedding jitters (or thought I helped). After Nebraska saw no rain all month, wouldn't you believe that the outdoor wedding moved inside due to rain? If you're ever in Nebraska, you should definitely check out the new Botanical Gardens in Omaha.

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This year was certainly a year of the visitor, vs a year of traveling. Tricia, a cousin, was driving up the coast from San Jose and surprised me for a dinner and quick tour. Mom and James came up for Mom's first visit since Oct, 2000 when she & Dennis helped James and I move out of Nebraska. Paul hosted a wonderful barbeque and everyone agreed that Mom & Paul were riots!

Sometime in September the universe decided I needed pets since I'd shown such a great improvement in the plant-keeping department. So, 2nd weekend in October, Joe and I drove through the Sierras to Berry Creek with plans to enjoy a sunny weekend with the crazy family and adopt 2 of mom's baby kitties. Little did we know we'd love them all! By Monday morning, we had four tiny, tiny kittens in 2 cat carriers ready to embark on the long 10 hour journey back to Portland. Since that fine, foggy autumn day, they've already quadrupled in size, managed to kill several plants, severely damage the Christmas tree and still win my heart.

Just 2 weeks past, I hosted a Mlnarik family get-together. James drove his new coffee colored '79 Ford Ranchero to surprise us late Monday night and later that week, dad and his girlfriend Shelly flew in to join us. I had no clue anyone could drink so much coffee! High on caffeine, we enjoyed the cool, sunny days with trips to the water falls, Chinese garden and Powell's giant bookstore.

And that brings us to today, Friday, December 20. Without snow on the ground, or any snowfall all year, the 25th stealthily slips into the cracks between Thanksgiving and New Years. Today we had our holiday party at work and it finally hit me—this really is Christmas and I'm really staying in Portland. It'll be weird not going anywhere to visit family or friends.

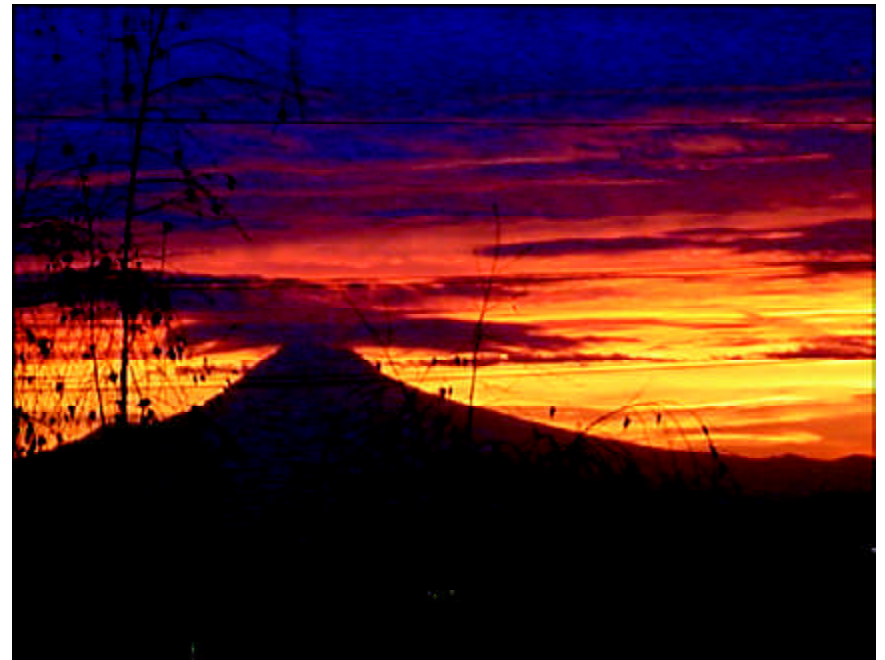
I hope you enjoyed your Christmas & have a wonderful start on a new year! Thanks for being great family...without you I certainly wouldn't be here, in my basement on a Friday night, typing away at my computer.

Love Always,

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*Meanwhile, it was autumn. "Old melancholy October" I called it.
There's something olden and golden and lost,
in the strange ancestral light.
There's something tender and loving and sad,
in October's copper might.
Missing something sad sad sad.
End of something old old old.
It was beautiful with falling red leaves aching
and then old silver November moved in.
Bringing fainter flavors and grayer skies.
Snow you could smell.*

*-Jack Kerouak
from The Vanity of Dulooz*



Portland Sunrise silhouetting Mt Hood.
View from YMCA track insanely early in the am.

hearing the “Messiah”: “I had my eyes closed and was listening intently. . . . The diction was a little vague, and what I heard was, ‘Surely he hath worn our briefs.’ I nearly laughed out loud.” Let’s hope the chorus actually was singing, “Surely he hath borne our griefs.”

“Crimson & Clover”

Moving far from the classical realm, Maggie Powell, writes, “About 30 years ago, my brother Robert, who was in middle school, was walking through the house singing ‘Christmas is over, over and over.’ “ If you suffer from the same confusion, the Tommy James & the Shondells song actually is, “Crimson and clover, over and over.” No wonder it’s heard so infrequently in December.

“Silent Night”

Finally, as a parting gift, I have combined all the new and old mondegreens I’ve ever received for the Christmas classic “Silent Night.” Make a note: These were never, ever the correct lyrics:

Solid night, Hold me tight
All is calm, all is bright
Brown young virgin, mother hen child
Holy “infantso” tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly pee, sleep in heavenly peas.

Since I have no children & I feel a strong urge to keep up the “crazy cat lady” image, I just have to share pics of my “babies”.

Zelda



Reeces



Samsonite



Darby





HOLIDAY HYMNS

Chance are you're receiving this card after Christmas, but hopefully it's not quite New Year's and you still have room for some seasonal laughs.

Christmas Mondegreens

(taken from Margie Boule's column in *The Oregonian*)

For those of you new to the tradition, mondegreens are misheard song lyrics. Last year reader John J. Mathews suggested the disorder be called "dyshearrhea." It's not just fans of rock music who hear the lyrics wrong. Many of these were incorrectly deciphered by children, but plenty of adults have seasonal hearing problems, too . . .

"We Wish You a Merry Christmas"

For years, Sharon McCoy's in-laws could not figure out why anyone would want "some piggy pudding." The correct lyric, of course, calls for "figgy pudding." Both of which are far more polite than "bring us some friggin' pudding," which is what one reader thought he heard as a child.

"Winter Wonderland"

"In the meadow we can build a snowman," people sing. Reader "SJS" thought the next line was, "and pretend that he is sparse and brown." Actually, he is "Parson Brown." A few years ago reader Alesia Zorn admitted, "I was 20 years old before I learned the line was 'Later on, we'll conspire, as we dream, by the fire . . .', and not 'Later on, we'll perspire . . .'" And, of course, Alan Zabin was utterly wrong when he used to finish the song, "Walkin' in our winter underwear."

"God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen"

Jimmy Lee Neeham says he thought the next phrase was "let nothing you display." In fact, it is "let nothing you dismay." Good to remember.

"The Christmas Song"

Make a note: "Chipmunks" are not roasting on an open fire, as Janice Paulsen once sang. "Chestnuts" are roasting. Not only that, Jack Frost is "nipping at your nose." Jack is not "ripping at your clothes."

"Twelve Days of Christmas"

Richard Adamson was understandably startled as a kid, when he first heard the gift for the sixth day: "Six geese a-slaying." Of course, the nonviolent geese actually are "a-laying." Another reader believed the partridge in a pear tree was "a part of a juniper tree." What, the guy's too stingy to give a whole tree?

"O Christmas Tree"

Kristy Aserlind, of Portland, writes when her son, Christian, "was very young, he sang 'O Christmas tree, o Christmas tree, how lovely are your Bran Chex.' He's now (13) and Bran Chex is still one of his favorite cereals." The German version of the same song causes problems for folks, too. One reader thought "O tannenbaum" was "O atom bomb . . ."

"Feliz Navidad"

But then, foreign languages often confuse us. *Oregonian* columnist John Terry says his nephew, as a child, thought the title of this song was "Police shot my dog . . ."

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

Latin is a special challenge. But let's be clear: "in excelsis Deo" is not "undigested bagels." Nor is "dona nobis pacem" "no more obese possums." Candace Noel wrote that as a child when the Christmas congregation sang, "Hosannah, Hosannah, Hosannah in the Highest," she was singing along: "O Santa, O Santa, O Santa in the highest."

"Messiah"

Even in English, George Frederick Handel's masterpiece provides a slew of misunderstandings. Reader George Robinson says for years when he heard the lyric "All we like sheep . . ." he thought the lyric was, "Ah, we like sheep." "As in actually really liking sheep, because they're cute," he says, sheepishly. Remarkably, two readers believed "He is the King of Glory" was actually "He is a good little doggy." Reader Suzanne Williamson now understands the correct lyric is, "And the dead shall be raised incorruptible." Years ago a friend of hers thought it was, "And the dead shall be raised in a rubber boat." Finally, a reverend remembers