

Welcome to our Christmas letter, fa la la la la la la la la,
We were hoping to do better, fa la la la la la la la la,
Forgive us if it shows up late, fa la la la la la la la la,
Sing now with news from the Waites, fa la la la la la la la la!

You like us, you really like us! We got an interesting email recently stating that one of our Christmas letters ("This is a test" from 2002) was featured on a web site about how to do a Christmas letter after an article in "Women's Day" magazine. We had so many hits of people viewing that letter on our web site that our site got temporarily shut down. Apparently, we are trend setters for annual letters. The only conclusion we can draw from this fact is that we are all doomed. If that's not enough evidence, many people reported that they not only read Barry's recent election guide, but they followed it and shared it with others! Don't you people know not to listen to politicians? With that said, tune up your voices and sing along with us.

Oh Christmas Tree

Oh fish pond, Oh fish pond, your fish are ever dying
Now matter how many chemicals we add, your water is always oh so sad
Oh fish pond, Oh fish pond, your algae is multiplying

For years, we've wanted a pond in the backyard. Nothing elaborate, just a little something. One day, we started digging a little hole outside the back door. It was very easy to dig in the sandy soil. Then it got to be a bigger hole. Below the sandy soil was clay. It was very hard. Some hours later amidst much wailing and gnashing of teeth, we had a lovely 42 inch deep pit to make into a pond for cute fish. Little did we know just how many fish and water plants would meet their doom in that pond. Margie no longer names each fish. Barry now has a pond chemistry set. Add five drops from bottle "A" and two from bottle "B." Green is good and red is bad. What if it turns blue? Uh oh. After months of tinkering with chemicals, filters, awnings, cleanings and incessant prayer, some of our fish now live as long as a month. Progress!

Away in a Manger

A day in the Waite zoo, another puddle to be found
In spite of the trouble we love our new hound!

This summer our several year old beta fish, Sparks, was found floating in his tank and was buried in the yard. David made a fine grave for Sparks. Then Nicks dug him up and had to be chased around the yard to drop him. Who's Nicks? She's our new puppy we got on the 4th of July. At Christmas, she'll be seven months old. She's a pure bred Labrador. Margie thought our old dog, Monster, needed a friend. Monster now spends her days growling something that likely translates, "Get away from me kid, you bother me." At puppy class, the instructor says things like, "Let me demonstrate this with Nicks. If she can do it, anyone can." She's a very friendly pup. She gets so excited that she pees on everyone she meets. Come by sometime so she can pee on you. It would make her very happy. Then again, maybe it's better if we stop by your house without her. Maybe she'll grow out of this someday.

Silent Night

Good Times camp, Good Times camp, all the rules, no true fun
Round their counselor they must stay, no time for the kids to play

This summer, the boys went to a YMCA day camp called Good Times. They had a field trip each day. Doesn't that sound like fun? Sadly, Good Times was misnamed. It should have been called Hard Times. They started the day in a school cafeteria with lots of games to play with. Except

that they took the games away because they didn't like the way the kids were playing them. And there was an important rule: no eating in the cafeteria. And on the excursions, kids had to stay within ten feet of the staff and agree on everything. That meant lots of bickering and no fun. Sunscreen was applied on a specific schedule. One day, they were dutifully applying their SPF 97 before starting an activity. That would have made sense if the activity had involved the sun. It was ice skating. After a few weeks of such fun, Mom and Dad forfeited the deposit for the rest of the summer and let the boys stay home instead. Money well spent.

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Joined the marching band for fun
Practice daily in the sun
Doing halftime shows each week
What a blast to be band geeks

Summer ended with five weeks of band practice for Alex as he started high school. Yup, high school. He goes to the same school Margie's dad graduated from in 1944. He's the tallest one in the family and expected to grow another six to eight inches. We know this because the doctor analyzed his growth while reviewing his broken arm. That's another story. Band practice was up to eight hours a day. Compared to Good Times, it was great! Plus, the band is excellent and does amazing halftime shows. Hey, what's the football team doing out on the band field? David thinks it's a blast, Margie sewed the huge backdrops for the field shows, and Barry works in the snack stand at the games. It's about time he did some real work.

Thanks for singing with our letter. We had tons more songs and stories to add but knew there was a limit to your patience (we probably already passed it about a half page ago). Look for the extended re-mix special edition on our web site. <http://home.earthlink.net/~waite>