



Dear Friends and Family,

As another year draws to a close I would like to, once again, spread a little holiday joy and let you know about the happenings here in the Maguire family. First off, let me tell you how lucky you are to be reading this. Since I wrote the Christmas letter last year, Lenny thought that he was going to write this year's letter. How silly. He barely speaks English! I certainly am not going to let him drone on and on boring you with his police stories and tales of his first Christmas in Germany, or Czechoslovakia, or wherever he's from. He didn't seem to understand that most people don't even like reading these letters in the first place, let alone reading one written by a pointy-eared monster. So I offered the only fair compromise I could think of. Tug of war. I won. And therefore you, the reader, wins.

2006 started off as another beautiful year. It was cold, there was snow on the ground, I wore my barrel with pride and Dad and Lenny were still out of town going to dog school. Lenny must be a poor student as they didn't get back home until February. Mom and I toughed it out on our own as Mom coached another year of forensics. Her team keeps improving and I think they owe it to all of her time spent with them when she could be home walking her dog.

This year has brought a great many improvements to the Maguire household. Some good, some not so good. Some genius decided to put wood floors in the front living and dining room area. Sure, they are beautiful and made the house look a lot better, but apparently four-legged family is not allowed on the new floor. Mom said she wants a 'dog-free' area of the house, but I think she is just hiding all of my Christmas presents out there. Mom wanted a new porch on the front of the house and Dad made the mistake of buying her a sledge hammer and telling her to break up the old porch herself. She did. Then Dad HAD to build a new porch. A couple days, some bad words, and several new power tools later, the front of the house looks much more presentable. Then came the big one. Mom kept harping about the old kitchen and Dad told her to go out and pick what she wanted. She did. And she bought cabinets. A few weeks, many more bad words, two new credit cards, and several more tools later, we have a BEAUTIFUL kitchen. Mom still refuses to pick a backsplash in order to finish the job, but it is amazing what some new appliances, decent cabinets, and a non-rusted sink can do for a place. I would actually invite my friends over for dinner now. What really got this job done was TONS of help from family. Smiling Tom's did another amazing job on our floors. Then Mom and Dad held Uncle John captive for many late nights in order to get the job done. Uncle John tried to teach Dad some new things but, as best as I can tell, Dad is still just good at fetching tools and swearing at leaky pipes. Down side of the new kitchen: we have another 'dog-free' room. Dad also put in a new system to filter and soften the water. After living here for only 2 years, our family now has clear water which doesn't stink. Now most people (outside of Tijuana) wouldn't brag about this, but around here you gotta claim a victory when you can.

Mom's big excitement this year was when she abandoned the family and jaunted off to Australia and New Zealand. She became an adult leader for a bunch of Michigan high school student-ambassadors in a program called People to People. In exchange for wrangling 30 random high school students halfway around the world, she got to herd sheep, swim the Great Barrier Reef and see all kinds of exciting things in the land down under. Dad got a didgeridoo... you know... one of those wooden pipe things that hippies blow into and make that weird buzzing sound. He hasn't learned how to play it yet. I got a bandana. It's awesome.

The rest of summer was not so great. It was hot and humid and those really aren't the best conditions for an alpine dog such as myself to showcase my talents. Dad did his best to try to keep up with the lawn. Mom was stunned to see that Dad did not weed her garden for the three weeks she was gone. Mom doesn't have a garden anymore. However, Dad managed to convince her that it would be easier to pick up leaves in the fall if he got a new lawn tractor with a bagger on it. The new John Deere mows, mulches, bags and has a cup holder. Lenny barks at it. Lenny barks at most anything which involves more technology than an Amish person would use. Our tractor came with a free hat which I think will look great on me next summer. It's awesome.

Along with falling leaves and temperatures, Fall brought the beginning of a new school year. At our house we call this Harp Season. Mom drags out her harp and bemoans the many woes of having to go back to work. Those of us who have been working all summer (it's not easy being this beautiful in the heat), try to feign sympathy for a day or two. This year brought about some changes as Mom is now teaching an honors English class. Apparently this falls into line with her debate and forensics nerd-herding curriculum. While it was been challenging, I think she really likes this new class. Since the students are mini-Einsteins, she gets to enjoy frequent correspondence from parents reminding her that she is lucky enough to shape the young mind of a future world leader. I am betting on lots of presents for dogs from her students this Christmas!

The school year also brought a new debate season. I hate debate. Instead of coming home to walk her beautiful dog, Mom spends her entire weekends traveling around the state listening to young people talk at lightning-fast speeds about things like community service leading to a world take over by organically grown fish. I know. It doesn't make sense to me either, but I guess it's a debate thing. Her team is doing well and even though she grumbles about the long weekends, I think she is just afraid to admit she kinda likes it.

Speaking of school years, Dad always gets busier in the fall too. Between home football games, and general hooliganism, he gets stuck at work pretty late most weekends. In fact, if it weren't for Grandma and Grandpa Maguire living so close, a certain beautiful St. Bernard might never get outside. Luckily, things are slowing down a little bit so Dad can finish the minor details on the kitchen and start the next project Mom comes up with. Dad's new kick this fall has been an interest in inflatable yard art. You know... the incredibly tacky blow up things people have in front of their houses? Right. Dad has expanded his collection so that he can have inflatables gracing our yard from the beginning of October, right through Christmas. Mom is thrilled.

~~Oh yeah. Lenny wanted me to say something about him finding bad guys who ran from cops, stabbed people, and had hidden drugs in his first few months on the road. Blah, blah, blah. I knew you wouldn't care.~~

Well, this letter is getting a bit long, and I think it's time for a comfy snooze in Mom and Dad's bed when they leave for work. I hope this letter finds everybody well and I hope that Santa brings everybody all of their holiday wishes. I'm pretty convinced he is going to bring me the pallet of treats and king size bed I asked for.

Merry Christmas,  
Beaumont, Patrick, Hattie

....And Lenny.

We were so glad we got to see you for the holidays. We really look forward to visiting you guys in the new year. Hope the holidays bring you lots of joy, happiness, and time to relax