



January 24, 2004

Dear Friends,

Someone mentioned I should write a top ten list of why my family's holiday wishes are so late.

1. Hugh agreed to write the holiday letter.
2. Hugh claims the cats ate the rough draft I gave him. I'm not one to question my husband's honesty – but this sounds suspicious to me. My cats hate paper unless it is soaked in meat juices.
3. Hugh is still trying to figure out how to open Word.
4. After he accomplished #3 his plan is to start the Word tutorial, so I was concerned that my 2003 holiday letter would be finished in time for 2005, and all of the 2003 news would by then be especially stale.
5. I wanted this card to be the first holiday card you ever received just prior to Valentine's Day. A sort of statement that holiday wishes really are not restricted to December.
6. Snowy holiday scenes on Christmas cards confuse me, as it never snows in Phoenix. Now does the rest of the world have snow in December or July?
7. The days are longer in January thus allowing me more opportunity to write letters.
8. Not only are the days longer, but also the days don't evaporate like they do in December. I've always wondered how a month with 31 days could go so quickly. July in Phoenix feels like it is twice as long as December.
9. I couldn't find a website that wrote Christmas letters. I managed to order all of my presents on-line from work, thereby cheating my employer of at least 1 hour of work time. Some computer buff needs to design an on-line letter-writing program. I have one client that sells eulogies on-line; I need to discuss this Christmas letter idea (before December 2004).
10. Very little happened in the DeKraker- Halbeck family in 2003, and most of it was just plain boring – no child graduated from Harvard, met and fell in love with Prince or Princess charming. Jean still doesn't wear a size 6. Hugh has yet to win a Gold Medal. All of the mundane things in life happened –

We lived, we laughed, we loved, and were blessed with good health and happiness. We give thanks each day for our many blessings – which include all of our friends and family.

Julianna is still in London, finished her degree, and Timothy started college in January. In a moment of sheer insanity last week, Hugh and I bought a new house in Anthem, about 30 miles north of Phoenix. The house is to close on February 16, my slow time of year. We will send you all our new address when everything is final.

May this New Year bring you all new beginnings, health, happiness, prosperity, love and good fortune. You all remain in hearts, thoughts and prayers, regardless of when we mail our holiday cards.