

## Guarendi Greetings

To all,

Seasons Greetings. Happy Holidays. Jolly Winter Solstice. For years my analyst has been hounding me that I need to be more inclusive and less narrow and insulting. So this letter will reflect the new me. But to those of you intolerant, neanderthal, knuckle draggers who still believe this holiday celebrates the birth of the Christ, Blessed Christmas to guys and girls, I mean, female person types.

The past year in the Guarendi household has witnessed dramatic passages. Andrew (18) graduated high school in the top 100% of his home schooling class. The ceremony was bittersweet, though. All the meaningful people in his life were there -- his teacher, his mother, Randi -- except one, his probation officer. One would think after the several year relationship he's had with Andrew, he'd at best swing by. The judge did, and he's only met Andrew six times. Jon (age 15) taunted Andrew that his juvenile case worker came to his graduation, and that was only from sixth grade -- last year.

Hannah (17) is looking forward to leaving for college, and Randi has dealt surprisingly well with her eldest daughter's fleeing the nest. She's agreed to let Hannah go away to school, so long as she is back by Three PM every day. Career goals, too, are narrowing down for Hannah. It's either fashion design or military intelligence. She's leaning toward both and even plans a book about her experience: "Full Dinner Jacket." I suggested, "Patton Leather."

When I asked her what branch of military intelligence, Hannah replied, "If I told you, I'd be forced to eliminate you." That's our Hannah, total dedication to her pursuits.

Our son, Jon, will be sixteen in a month. Randi remembers how she once hoped his name would be a help in his toilet training. It isn't helping at all. Maybe it's the spelling. When Jon learned Andrew was in Engineering at Akron University, he asked him, "Do those trains really look as big up close?" He's always been deeply involved in his big brother's interests.

Joanna (15) and Sarah (15) have taken up a second language, and I am totally impressed at how quickly they have become fluent in it. Just the other day I overheard Jo tell Sarah, "Oh, like really, I mean right there cool and stuff." To which Sarah replied, "No way, like you know. Dad is totally dude on it." I understood "Dad." It seems they've finally taken to heart my preaching about how important knowing a second language is to success in the international marketplace.

Both girls are also learning to cook from their mother, and it's been a little nauseating. The other night James chipped a tooth on one of the bones in Sarah's pancakes. Peter now wants to say prayers after we eat. And Mary and the dog fight over the Alka-Seltzer.

I tell them, "Kids in China don't have this food." And two days ago I found Mary downloading travelogues to China.

Speaking of culinary, Sammy is taking career management training. He's focused on several diverse settings: Golden Corral Buffet; Cici's Italian buffet; Hometown Buffet; and the Hong Kong Buffet. Cosmopolitan is his new career catchword. As a thirteen-year-old boy, Sam is on a new diet. He will eat anything that doesn't eat him first.

We also did some vocational testing for James (10). He qualified for several positions: Bible study leader in a correctional facility; Shepherd; Viking. We are delighted at his academic progress, too. On his English test, Randi asked him, "What comes after a sentence?" He said, "You make an appeal."

Peter (8) still is talking priesthood. Randi and I are pleased, but I tested his resolve the other day. "Peter,

you realize you'll have very little money, no woman to support you, lots of unappreciative people around you, and you'll have to follow orders happily." He said, "Dad, you do it." Good point.

Perhaps Randi and my biggest about face this year concerns Liz (6). We've finally come to realize after 67 relatives and 31 friends have commented on our slacking standards that we need to tighten up. Initially we felt sorry for Liz because she's gained ten to fifteen pounds in the past month or so. But the pediatrician reassured us that it's perfectly normal for someone to gain weight after quitting smoking.

One example of our new discipline resolve. The other night Liz threw a three hour fit because we told her she needed to eat her cookie before she could finish Mary's ice cream sundae for her. I'd had enough. Liz needs to know we mean business, so I told Randi, "Don't take one smiley banana from her sticker chart. Take two." At this rate, she won't earn her Corvette until she's twelve. Sometimes life has to teach kids the hard way.

Speaking of Corvette, some people think Randi is a top model of a woman. "She's a saint," they say, with no acknowledgment whatever of the effort I've put in for years to shape and mold her personality. For example, this past year I've entered semi-retirement, so Randi had to pick up a full-time job, both for extra income and health benefits. Shortly after she started working, I noticed the kids' homeschooling started to suffer some, and Randi started showing her age. Even with simple jobs, she now takes more "breaks." Last week she had to sit down after shoveling only half the drive. I don't nag. I tell her to make herself a nice mug of hot chocolate and just rest for a few minutes. I also remind her to go easy on the whipped cream, if you know what I mean. And while she's at it, she can make cups for me and the boys, too.

I think the aging process is starting to play with Randi's head. Last night, she sat me down and for two hours complained of how I don't understand and listen to her. Or something like that, anyway. I guess I really have only myself to blame. Years ago everyone warned me, "Don't marry any girl you meet at a 'kick the cocaine' support group."

Well, once again, I feel I've crowed a little too much. We hope your family life is as rewarding as ours is. God keep you.

The Guarendis