

Dear family, friends, and law enforcement contacts,

Randi strongly advised, “No Christmas letter this year.” She said by now people have had enough of our fluffed up family preening. But as Liz (age 9) says, “Daddy, it’s a win-win affirmation of our ever-evolving self-esteem.” Well, OK, she didn’t exactly say it that way, but she did comment that she liked seeing her name in print, in places other than the Court Report.

All of the kids are older now than they’ve ever been. Andrew, age 21, is still in Engineering, and this year he gets his lantern along with his conductor’s hat. I advised him, “Don’t wear it in a thunderstorm.”

Hannah, age 20, is set to graduate college and head into the military -- Signal Corps branch. That’s communications, and given her many years as a teen-aged girl, she’s well suited for it. She will need to learn to add “Sir” after her “whatever” and “yeah, right.” And I’m not exactly sure how a Commanding Officer will react to eye rolling, no matter how much it’s hidden by her Dior ballistic eye pro.

Jon, age 18, started working at Target. His initial adjustment was a real struggle. The first several nights he tried to walk into the store, and he missed.

Joanna, age 18, is working in a preschool. Randi told her, “See, being a big sister helped you learn all about little kids and their childish behavior.” To which Jo replied, “Living with Dad has helped me a lot more.” To which I responded, “I’m rubber; you’re glue. Whatever you say bounces off me and sticks on you. No reversies.” I finished her off with, “How many of those kids have ever asked you to, ‘Pull my finger,’ huh?”

Sarah, 18, is in nursing. She loves it, except for a few minor things -- blood, syringes, dirty bed sheets, people coughing, hospitals, and doctors. She also has this obsessive fear of germs. But I told her, “Hey, lots of us have to ease into their profession. I didn’t like listening to people tell me about their problems the first ten or fifteen years as a psychologist.

Sammy, 16, is learning to drive. He’s our sixth driver under twenty-five. Through some creative insurance financing, we’ve got our bill down to about \$217.00a day. To further ease the burden we are considering informing all the children, “Due to unforeseen economic pressures, we are downsizing. We may have to let two or three of you go.”

Sammy is very thrilled that after a lot of hard work he finally got a part in a local Christmas play. He told me he plays a man who's been married 25 years. I encouraged him, "Sammy, that's wonderful. You keep persevering, and maybe next year, you'll get a speaking part."

Randi continues to home school, and she's started a new course for the younger ones: Real Life Deductive Reasoning. We're noticing the results already. Some weeks back, she purchased a cake for her mother's birthday. After the cake had been on the table for a couple of days prior to the party, James (age 13) asked, "Is that an ice cream cake?" Mary (12) was quick to mock and correct. "James, how could it be an ice cream cake? The candles would melt it!" Peter chirped in, at full belly laugh, "You guys are clueless. Grandma doesn't even like ice cream."

Next year, Randi will initiate a more basic course: Thinking 101.

My relationship with my adolescent daughter, Mary, continues to be strained. When our family therapist asked me why I hadn't talked to her for a month, I defended myself, "I didn't want to interrupt her."

Elizabeth (age 9) is becoming the young lady we always thought she could be. In her fourth grade class she graduated "Magna cum Loudest." And we finally found the solution to her speech articulation problems. After several years of little progress, of all people, Pete suggested, "What if she took the cigarette out of her mouth?" That's been a mixed blessing. Liz now speaks more clearly, but she's been a lot crankier.

Randi and I continue to work on our marriage. After attending one of those marriage enrichment classes (Randi went. I had three softball games that day), Randi asked that I show her more affection. So, now whenever we go to the Mall, I hold her hand the whole time. If I let go, she shops.

About three weeks ago, Randi's purse was stolen along with all of her credit cards. I haven't reported it yet. The thieves spend less than Randi.

As for me, I continue to cope with unending work-related stress. I average close to seven hours a week on the radio. Minus breaks, it still totals nearly 18 minutes. On top of that I have a pending workman's comp claim against the network. My orthopedist says I have a work-related repetition injury -- elbow inflammation from reaching over the microphone to grab my hot coffee. I

spilled some on my finger once, but my lawyer informed I wouldn't get more than a couple of hundred grand for it. Hardly worth the legal effort.

And so summarizes another action-packed year in the Guarendi household. My analyst says I have grown admirably in my ability to hold it all together, as I juggle my working out, softball games, buffet breakfasts, massages, relaxation training, tanning sessions and naps. Randi still refuses to work for a living, so once again, the effort falls totally on me. Last month I took it upon myself to fill out applications for her at Mason's Concrete Packing, Joe's Transmissions, and Harley's All Night Diner-- all midnight shifts, as she does teach some during the day. If she continues to drag her feet, I will be forced to see a client on either Wednesdays, Thursdays or Fridays, right now my much needed days off.

Blessed Christmas to you all. Hope your family life is as fulfilling as ours has come to be.

The Guarendis