

Holiday Season, 2007

Dear Friends,

Although I promised myself to be timely in my holiday greetings this year, once again procrastination reared its ugly head. I haven't received terribly many greetings from y'all this year, either, but there's a reason for that: you have been sending greetings to my former apartment, silly people! The Post Office has been forwarding your cards to me in its own fashion and at its own pace. And, so, I am forced to devote part of this missive to some personal information.

I have moved! No more apartment dwelling for me! No more cold showers! No more dealing with an uncooperative plowing service that routinely dumped everyone else's snow behind my car! No more having to use headphones after 9 P.M.! Everyone tells me home ownership has its headaches, and I'm sure it does, but they'll be different headaches, and I feel as though I'm more in control of the situation. The big one, right now, is shoveling. I don't have a service; I have to shovel my own walks and driveway. But, I'm only shoveling fallen snow, not the plowed snow that the "service" used to dump behind my car, so I'm actually spending less time shoveling, not more! So far, I've had to fix a broken toilet and two broken light fixtures, but I did it! All by myself! (And the second time, I even remembered to pull the fuse before I started!) I had to fix a minor plumbing problem, too, which was beyond my ability, so I had a student fix it for me. The students have also weeded my garden, swept my floor, done my dishes, and all sorts of things. Never underestimate the motivational power of a charcoal grill! And, since my house is three blocks from campus, I still walk to work, and I'm close enough to walk downtown.

So, update those records! I am now at:

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Today's holiday story is about Sir Sanctus Festivus, the only knight in service of Rome who noticed the Star of Bethlehem. Many fans of The Christmas Story have often wondered why certain Eastern astronomers noticed this strange new star when no one else did. Rome had astronomers, too; where the heck were they? The answer, of course, is that it was cloudy over the Roman Empire during that twelve-day period. Very cloudy and very rainy and cold. No one wanted to go outside, and, if they did, they weren't looking up, and even if they did look up, there wasn't a whole heck of a lot to see.

However, Sir Sanctus wasn't in Rome at that time. His extended family had decided to congregate in Gaul to avoid the holiday traffic. And somewhere between the Saturnalia boar and the eggnog, Sir Sanctus took a little walk to get a breath of the clean, fresh, pre-French air and noticed that strange, mysterious Star in the sky, and reasoned, as the astronomers did, that the Star had to herald the birth of the King of Kings. At first he wasn't terribly impressed because, after all, it was hard to find a woman that Jupiter *hadn't* fooled around with, but the Star was so impressive that he ultimately came to realize that this was no ordinary virgin birth. And so he began to sing praises at the top of his voice, rivaling even the angels in his enthusiasm. Alas, the only people in earshot were inebriated, and all he managed to do was irritate a family of swine who had been trying to celebrate in their own way and who were obliged to gore him to death in order to quiet him down, rendering Sir Sanctus a silent knight, holey knight.

OK, I know it wasn't as good this year, but maybe you'll like the song on the back a little better. I debuted it at The Iron Inn in Negaunee, Michigan on Tuesday 31 July 2007, Harry Potter's birthday.

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The Ballad of Harry Potter
by Andy Poe

Lost both his parents in the Wizard War.
Started using magic at the age of four.
Then he went to Hogwarts, trained with Dumbledore
To fight the final battle 'gainst Lord Voldemort.
HARRY! HARRY POTTER!
The boy who had no peer.

His first year at Hogwarts, it was kinda swell
Played Seeker at Quidditch and he played it well.
To save the Sorcerer's Stone, he cast many a spell
To find the villain wasn't Snape; it was really
Quirrell!
HARRY! HARRY POTTER!
The Dark Lord was getting near.

His second year at Hogwarts was quite a hook
With giant snakes and spiders everywhere you look.
To clear Hagrid's name, a flying car he took
And he rescued Ginny Weasley from a cursed book.
HARRY! HARRY POTTER!
Saved by a phoenix tear.

His third year at Hogwarts, well, it wasn't slow
Even though to Hogsmeade he was forbidden to go,
But a bunch of new people he got to know
Like his god-dog, a rat-fink, and a Seeker named
Cho.
HARRY! HARRY POTTER!
The hippogriff makes us cheer.

His fourth year at Hogwarts, he couldn't hide
From his duties as a Champion and he had to confide
In Myrtle and in Dobby, and though he really tried
To vanquish the Dark Lord, still Cedric died.
HARRY! HARRY POTTER!
The Yule Ball's his greatest fear.

His fifth year at Hogwarts, couldn't find his niche.
Kicked off the team, couldn't catch the Snitch.
And though writing lines made his right hand twitch,
He still saved Hogwarts Castle from an evil witch.
HARRY! HARRY POTTER!
That prophecy was mighty queer.

His sixth year at Hogwarts, how could it be?
Draco fixed the Cabinet, set the Death Eaters free.
He watched Dumbledore die and his murderer flee.
He vowed to take a year off with Ron and Hermione.
HARRY! HARRY POTTER!
His quest was hardly mere.

And in his seventh year, he was really pissed.
His NEWT examinations, he certainly missed.
“Horcruxes, not Hallows,” his friends did insist.
And Voldemort died; one more corpse on the list.
HARRY! HARRY POTTER!
The end is finally here.

And so the Harry Potter series comes to a head.
Good triumphed over evil, just as Dumbledore said.
Now it's time to relax, put the children to bed.
There can't be no more books—'cause everyone's
dead!
HARRY! HARRY POTTER!
Enjoy your last butterbeer!