

Christmas Letter 2008

Dear Tim,

Yeah, we're back. Time keeps right on passing, with or without you, so you might as well get on board. We're here at the Cabin once again, and glad to be. Here's the scoop from the last year. Actually, we'll start with 1998.

Read 1998.

Now for this year. On the news front, 2008 was quite a year. A transgendered man gave birth to a baby girl, and he's pregnant again; a Belgian beer company bough Anheiser Busch; George Bush dodged flying shoes from an Iraqi reporter; gas hit \$4 a gallon only to now drop to its lowest price in five years; the economy has seriously tanked; the good news is that mortgage rates are low low low; 400 children were seized from a polygamous sect in Texas; snowfall was detected on Mars; Proposition 8 passed in California, denying marriage rights to gays and lesbians; the auto industry is in big trouble; there were violent attacks around the world, including India and Kenya; there was a major earthquake in China, and damaging floods in the US; Michael Phelps broke all-time swimming records at the summer Olympics; the Iraq war winds down, while things heat up in Afghanistan; Cleveland is struggling to recover from an onslaught of foreclosures; the Browns are, well, the less said, the better; the Indians are in their 6th year of rebuilding; our greatest hope is with the Cavaliers. In politics, Ohio turned blue as we witnessed the most historic election in our lifetimes. Change has come indeed.

We bid farewell to Mark Felt (the Deep Throat guy), George Carlin, Cyd Charisse, Bo Diddly, Bobby Fisher, Jessie Helms, Charlton Heston, Heath Ledger, Bernie Mac, Paul Newman, Patti Page, Suzanne Pleshette, Robert Rauschenberg, Tim Russert, Yves St, Laurent, Howard Metzebaum, Stephanie Tubbs Jones, and Bill "Smoochie" Gordon.

And now to the family. We'll start with the kids – Janet.

Liz – wintered in Jackson Hole where she found out that some guy had borrowed her snow board without asking and then proceeded to ride it on gravel and totally mess it up. Turned out to be Jason, who has turned out to be her boy friend. Turns out that Jason also just happens to own a restaurant on the Jersey shore, so Liz waited tables for breakfast and lunch and hit the beach in the afternoons all summer. Jason also got her into fantasy football, so she can now talk draft picks and punt returns with the best of the boys. Always the adventurer, her latest trip took her to Honduras, where she has perfected her Spanish and fallen madly in love with little Marcos, a toddler in the orphanage where she is volunteering for a few months. Hard to keep up with this girl – she's full of surprises, but always lands in fun places for her family to visit!

Matt – has been luring cousins online for scrabble for more than a year now. Beware those of you who have not yet fallen. He will make you a friend on Facebook, innocently invite you to play scrabble with him, and then repeatedly beat you, Aunt Laura style, until you just can't play with him any more. Known victims so far are Liz, Cara, Janet and Bobbi. Who knows who will be next. Our Matt also joined a fantasy football league with with Mike, Justin, Andy and recently gained new responsibilities at his job. He is now the coordinator of vacant and abandoned properties for Cleveland's Stockyard neighborhood. As a side gig he is also trying to relocate all the chickens and goats he confiscated from his old job and regroup them to start an urban farm. He even has a nice, new clean white pickup truck, a prerequisite for farmers of any kind. 2009 may be the year he really becomes a homeowner – it's definitely a buyer's market out there. Matt's real pride and joy is Mateo

Mateo – is as busy as ever. Now in second grade, plays soccer for the Ironmen, plays baseball in the summer, and loves to skate. He loves Sponge Bob, his I-pod, his game boy, hangman and using the remote to start his dad's new truck. And, following in the footsteps of his dad and aunt Laura, he also loves scrabble. Watch out though, he already knows words that start with Q and don't need a U.

Kyle has come out of retirement and will return to foot ball for his sr yr at kenston. He is very busy cruising for girls (in his new **2002 Eclipse Sports Car**) between Hockey, Lacrosse selecting a college. He leads his First Place KHS Hockey team in points and they have finally achieved beating **Chagrin!!!**

Between football, fencing, lacrosse, baseball and skiing, **Drew, our scholar child**, has also kept himself busy. He has been moon lighting as a basket ball player and plans **to take up hockey** in 2009 so his parents will still have something to do on weekends once his older brother graduates...Thanks, Drew, we were really worried about that!!!!

Milo, our professional fisherman, is doing very well in the first grade and seems to make friends with everyone. He is the youngest player on his **Geauga Maple Leafs Hockey Team** and is off to a great start! Between, football, baseball, basketball, skiing, fishing and hockey, Chochie is doing his best to keep Daddy young and in shape(?)!

With the price of ice time and travel costs, hockey is a very expensive sport....but leave it to our **McKinley** not to be outdone by her brothers! **Mighty Mack** has fallen in love with horses and **she now costs Dad more than all three boys together!** They say it's amazing that, at only 6 years old, she's such a natural! She truly loves the barn. McKinley also loves hanging out with her friends and Mom and it looks like she'll be taking up soccer next fall (so we might not go broke after all!)

We are glad our Sam – could make it here today, in spite of being in a pool of college applications. That's right, the first of Cregar kids is soon to leave the nest. He voted this year too! Probably the biggest clue to his newfound independence was in his Canada trip this summer, which Jim did not attend, yet Same sniffed out more fish than any other time where he was relying on his dad's tutelage. This past summer when gas prices were at their highest, that is about the time Sam bought his first car, a green corolla. Well after the initial excitement about the purchase wore off, Sam mentioned a few times to Heidi and Jim that it seemed like he was spending too much money on gas. They basically ignored his observations, probably because that was the same complaint most of the country had about then. That is until Sam left town and the car's entire gas tank leaked out onto the driveway. Turns out the tank had been leaking for months. Sam was thrilled when Jim and Heidi sheepishly offered to replace the tank for him after all that time.

Kelly – officially became a teenager this year. She babysat like mad to pay for a trip to California with her friends, where they went camping on the beach. Here at home she kept busy with volleyball and volleyball camp, and hanging with Annalee, with whom she is still attached to the hip after all these years. She misses her weekly riding lessons with Cloud and KC for sure. But it seems she has developed a hankering for the martial arts this year to make up for it. "mom, I just had a tiquando!" she said. "huh?" said Heidi. "You know, when you see something that it seems like you've seen before!" "Oh, you mean de ja vu?" "yeah, that!" she said. Despite such moments, our Kelly was voted by all of her teachers to be honored as the Kenston 7th grade class's student of the month in November. Way to go Kelly!

Henry – started kindergarten this year and the teacher has only called the house with issues once so far. Apparently it had the intended effect though. After Heidi brought that first incident up with him, he was surprised and dumbfounded at the forces at work. Now he comes home from school every day and Heidi asks how his day was. "why, did my teacher call?" "well Henry, why would she call?" "Mom,

I didn't mean to push her, I promise!" he exclaims. Henry also enjoys karate, Tball, and the admiration of Preston every time they are at the cabin together. That is a plus, being the youngest of us after all. He went to Disneyland for the first time this year too.

Mike – has been bouncing around between Haiti, Belize, Africa and Pompano Beach for work. He also brought several family members into the Cross International fold for a gala fundraising event in Cleveland. The real fundraising happened most recently though, when a multi-million dollar grant he had been working on came through securing him work for another three years. He also hosted a week-long family vacation in Pompano Beach and still finds time to go fiishing, watch the Browns lose and host a fantasy football that Andy and Matt participated in and attend a weekend-long bachelor party here in Cleveland. And speaking of gala events, wedding planning is taking up the rest of Mike's life right now. His main role seems to be go-between for Michaela, Laura and his future inlaws. We all can't wait for the party next week, that's for sure. And the rest of us cousins are glad to have the pressure off of us in the marriage and settling down front, too. Thanks, Mike!

Justin — 's life couldn't be much further from gala event planning. Though it was not for galas or weddings, lots of planning he did do though - the boundary waters trip w/ Andy and the boys, Canada in June, staging the weekend-long bachelor bash for his brother which included paintball and a Browns game among other things, Hosting the annual Griswald christmas party and several memorable shed parties. When wasn't plotting parties or working day and night shifts between Invisible Fence and school cleanups, you could find Justin in a tree on quest for the Hartford Buck to keep company with the other one hanging on his living room wall. Our Justin, in his own words, says he "finds himself still single". It is not because of a lack of effort from grandma Norma though. She is now picking up chicks for him by getting phone numbers from cute nurses at her doctors appointments. We'll keep our fingers crossed that someone will come along once he finally gets that damn motorocycle up and running.

Katie – had a year of transitions. She graduated from CSU in the spring, recently obtained her license for social work, and is nannying as she continues the social work job search. She also moved out of mom and dad's house for the first time, landing in Justin's bachelor deer-themed hang. Justin said she has taken the shower curtain with the huge deer on it, the deer bathroom rug, and the mounted deer head on the wall in good stride. Alex and Katie had a kickin' joint birthday party at Mustang Sallie's this past spring, where the bravest guests tried bull riding and took the floor for line dancing. The place became a regular hangout for several folks after that. And if you ever find yourself stuck around Cleveland with a flat tire, call Katie. She knows how to fix them now! You'll have to ask her or her dad for more information on that story though.

Andy – 's year was rocky to start. First the lease on his house ended before he found one to buy, so at 31, he moved back in with mom. Then he bought a house in Twinsburg, and a few months later lost his job. KC provided plenty of marketing and design work that Janet had been slacking on during his between jobs time, and he soon landed another job as well, traveling all over the eastern seaboard installing and trouble shooting energy systems. He impressed us all this year by becoming a big brother to Preston, who has accompanied him to the cookouts, family parties, ball games and more. It makes a lot of sense, since he has so much practice at being a big brother already. And rumor has it our new home-owner cousin was a daily visitor at the Home and Garden Show, checking out kitchen utensils, vacuum cleaners and patio furniture. And have any of you seen the grill on his porch? Bought at a major discount for being slightly damaged, it boasts counter space, multi levels of racks, thermometers, a rotisserie, and apparently it sings and dances too. But Andy's third season of nearly full time deer hunting has landed him, let me see, zero deer. C'mon Andy, the grill does a lot but it won't catch the meat for you! We are really starting to wonder if he and Justin are actually spending all that time in their tree stands texting each other about party planning, because what they did great this year is throw parties. Two of them in particular, the annual Henry Halloween party and the new solstice suora, are still the talk of the town. That's our Andy!

Janet —, following in her mom's footsteps, is becoming more and more full time with the nonprofit organizational development work, even landing a two-year directorship contract with a long-term client, Kismet Rock Foundation. As professional as that sounds, this climbing bug still seems to take up an inordinate amount of time for her. Her other "job", as a "sponsored athlete" with Mountain Hardwear, took her to Argentina, India and California for photoshoots, design meetings and slideshows. She and her Freddie have certainly carved out a life of travel and adventure, making their work, work with them as they go along. They celebrate five years together this month, but what may be more impressive is that they have lived together in a 12 foot by 12 foot cabin, with no plumbing, for nearly two years now. Freddie is most amazed, after that amount of time, at Janet's ability to unashamedly pop a squat ad pee, literally anywhere. As romantic as the little cabin on thirteen acres of woods sounds, sometimes it is anything but. By far the biggest challenge, besides management of space, is the mice: in the cabin, in the gear tent, everywhere, all year long. Just last week she found a well-established nest in one of her ski boots. Then there was the nest of hours-old newborns they found inside the cabin. Just what does an ethical person do with a nest of unwanted newborn mice anyway? These are the types of pressing questions Freddie and Janet are asking themselves these days. That and what to do with the field they are clearing this winter, which was supposed to be Cloud the horse's retirement home. Ah well, the best-laid plans of mice and men, right? By the way, Janet and Freddie welcome visitors to New Hampshire, but it may be more comfortable in their 'shabin' if you show up while they are out of town!

Bobbi – moved into a new house by the zoo on the west side of Cleveland earlier this year. Her bed alone is bigger than Freddie and Janet's house and her place even has a yoga/art studio on the third floor. Her poor car didn't make out with the new location so well though. It was stolen from her driveway on Thanksgiving morning and was found just this week stripped of tires, head rests...all but its six CD changer. Bobbi is on the tail end of nursing school and still pulling 32-hour work weeks at the hospital. She makes time for all-girls camping trips, visits to New Hampshire and Cape Cod and also completed a year-long training to become a leader of her church. And then, a couple of months ago, Bobbi made an announcement. She told her mom that she had a boyfriend. "you mean you went on a date?" KC replied. "no, mom, he is my boyfriend. We made it official on facebook today." So there you have it. We welcome daryl today...and congratulate Bobbi for boldly bringing a significant other into the the family for the first time. Welcome, Darryl.

Alex – might seem sad or aloof today, because he misses his girlfriend Meghan. Not to worry though, at the end of his time here over Christmas he won't have to wait for any buses or rides back down to see her, he can simply get in a car and drive. That is because she has been missing him so much – he is living in Columbus and she is in Dayton - that she asked Santa, or dad, for a car for Alex for Christmas so he can visit her more often. And boy did Santa deliver! Alex showed up in Chagrin Falls this week, title in hand, in a silver convertible! Despite his heartache without his Meghan in Columbus with him, he continues with a full course load at OSU, studying history. He lives in a huge apartment and works as a valet driver at the hospital, and made many trips up here throughout the year for the various events and parties that Justin and Andy planned for him.

Our **Michelle** sets the standard for all the other Henry women, you know. She's really amazing, feeding and shuffling four kids and their many friends all over Geauga County and beyond in her new best friend, her van. And she still moonlights at Corrosion Resistant Technologies three days a week. And host parties for Derby Day, Thanksgiving dessert, and the like. She even managed to play golf twice last year. Michelle is so incredibly busy with her family that it's been hard to find time for anyone else. But, alas, she has figured out how to squeeze in some time for herself and her girl friend. Yes, she and Doodles go for 5-mile walks four times a week! You go, Michelle!

Now **Scott** has just never been busier. While Kyle's high school hockey career is winding down, Milo's is just beginning, and, as rowdy hockey parents go, the only difference between Scott and Sara Palin is the lipstick. His Janet Henry Golf Tournament presented a new challenge this year when a power outage caused some last minute course changes, so to speak. And he pulled together a Canada trip as usual. Much to KC's trepidation, he announced he would join the Chagrin Valley Rotary, although it seems he has not embarrassed her too much so far. After being rejuvenated by a family trip to Playa Del Carmen, he volunteered himself as a fund raiser for a new Kenston sports stadium – and has had to call on his best bull ** bleep** skills to counter this lousy economy. After reflecting on all these various and sundry activities, Scott figures he can retire at, oh, about 75, give or take a year or two. Way to go, Scott!

Well, well, well – **KC** had a busy year. Business is good and growing. We won't discuss the little insider trading that goes on between her and her kids, who fill in as her employees at various times in exchange for meals and laundry rights. She and Chris made an inspiring pilgrimage to Ghost Ranch, New Mexico, and visited cousin Mike in Santa Fe for a few days. On a very sad note, her beloved horse, Cloud Nine, had to be put down. While KC was out of town, her kids were wonderful caretakers, and a very difficult time was managed very well. This year took KC to Turkey, where she was so inspired that she came home and made a specially brined turkey for Thanksgiving, which has nothing to do with therapeutic riding in Turkey, but so what? Speaking of Thanksgiving, you know how KC makes everyone go around the table and, groan, say what they're thankful for? Well, granted she's had three glasses of champagne, but when it was her turn, KC announced cheerily that she has come to realize that Bob is not just her friend, he is now her BOY friend. The good natured Bob accepted his promotion all in good stride. Do you suppose he knows that that means attendance at wood cutting parties and shed clean ups is now required? Good luck, Bob!

Now our **Norma** is truly an amazing woman. Once Mike started working for Cross International, Norma immersed herself into the wonderful world of charities and benefits, successfully chairing publicity and fundraising for Cross's party in Akron. Now you know they already signed her up for next year. She also arranged for

Christopher to be a DJ for a day at Akron U. Honestly, this woman has connections. She's a soccer grandma, too, following Adrienne's team to any game she can get to. And she joined Rick and Laura and family in Florida to celebrate Mike's 30th, and made -- guess what -- lasagna for the whole crew, including many friends. Watch for a return visit to Florida from Norma, as she thoroughly enjoyed herself. You go girl.

Yes, **Heidi** is still just non-stop, busy busy busy doing things things things. In between going to Kelly's volley ball games, keeping tabs on Henry in kindergarten, and visiting colleges with Sam, our Heidi works part time for a real estate office. The family headed to Marblehead for a summer camping trip, and Heidi orchestrated a family trip to Disneyland, complete with months of everyone pitching in to save and plan. We're not revealing our sources, but we heard that when the big Disney parade started, and the magical voice of Walt Disney's came on the loud speaker, Heidi filled with emotion and cried like a baby. That's our girl. This year the sickly apple tree in her back yard went crazy producing fruit, and now Heidi has a freezer full of her yummy crumb crust apple pies. We're thinking Heidi ought to start a little food business featuring her signature dishes, like seven layer salad, cranberry bread, baked apricot Brie, and rum cake. Ah, I can taste it now. She could sell them on Ebay, of course. Go for it, Heidi.

Now **Jim** had a great trip to California to visit his other family, and it was just in time, as his surrogate dad, George, passed away a few months later. Jim's best friend Todd came in from Chicago, and Jim showed him the best of Cleveland by taking him to a Browns game. Funny, he hasn't heard from Todd since. In spite of some tough back problems, Jim remains active in his church, working on an extended international search to find and keep the perfect Presbyterian minister. And Jim has become so comfortable in his 6th year of teaching in the hood that he has risen from the ranks of his fellow teachers to become the union representative for his school. Anyone need some help negotiating a raise, or some time off – Jim's the guy to call. Maybe we should send Jim to talk to Le Bron? Atta boy, Jim!

Our **Laura** started the year with an Invisible Fence conference in Las Vegas, where she convinced her colleagues to give her the big

Invisible Fence award, which was a trip to Puerto Vallarta in February. Always trying to get to a warm, sunny beach, she was thrilled when Mike and Michaela decided to have their winter wedding in Florida. She then went straight into party planning mode. The house in Chagrin was taking too long to sell, but never mind, she just added on instead – another pool room, another bedroom, another bathroom, and while she was at it, another whole house at Roaming Shores. Good sport that she is, she braved freezing, snowy, miserable weather to plan a tailgate party to watch the hapless Browns. What really got her through it, though, was the vision of herself in her newly beloved hot tub at home on the deck. Finally her life is complete. Happy soaking, Laura.

As Laura was leaving Las Vegas, **Rick** was arriving one week later for the American Fence Association trade show. He and Laura celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary in August – truly an accomplishment! They are so settled in, Rick did his ___ annual trip to Gettysburg with his buddies this year. Rick loves to hang behind his bar, puffing on a cigar and overseeing the patrons in his new billiards hall. Word has it he's turning the pool table into a pay to play activity to help finance the new house in Ashtabula. Rick's getting up there, you know – he actually traded in his ski boat for a pontoon boat. You know, those things are big enough for a pool table – not a bad idea, Ricky. Oh, and by the way, Rick's biggest news is that, after years of his assistant Gail printing out his email messages for him from her computer, he now has his own computer, in his office, on his desk, and he emails! Next thing you know, he'll be googling, and then it's Rick with a page on Facebook. That Rick – he's just full of surprises.

Robyn continues to be the ultimate Alaska girl -- backpacking in the Wrangel St. Elias Mountains, kayaking in Prince William Sound, and even slipping in a ski trip to Tahoe. Rumor has it that Robyn was at the anti-Palin rally in Anchorage in September. She was the one in the polar bear costume, holding the sign that said "Sara Palin -- The Alaska Disasta". Politics aside, Robyn's big news is that after years of looking for just the right deal, she bought a house -- a duplex to be exact. Never mind that neither side has heat or running water, that's a minor detail. It's a foreclosure that's been empty and stripped, man, what do you expect? Undaunted, Robyn's looking to moonlight at Home Depot, where she can learn the ins and outs of plumbing and

heating, and get in on all the discounts along the way. Keep an eye on this girl!

Now **Betty** is quite amazing. To accommodate 40-some people for a wintry Easter celebration, she simply plowed trails in the snow with the snow blower. She decided her car needed a makeover, so she got it painted and de-rusted and all gussied up. She got a new hi-tech bird feeder that came with instructions on a DVD and rivals anything over at Laura's Invisible Fence store. Seems it zaps the obnoxious squirrels just as they try to steal the precious bird seed. Betty decided she's had enough of the Henrys and their rowdy Christmases, and she announced that she was done hosting the darn thing. We spent the summer pondering this situation, and just when we'd all decided to just go down to Florida early, Betty had a change of heart, so here we are once more. But, and this is something, the big news is that Betty got the Internet! Still no email, but she has enthusiastically taken on the worldwide web. Better watch out – we all know that a little internet can be a dangerous thing. Next thing you know she'll be googling to figure out how to do an original Christmas. Betcha she gets a Facebook page before Rick. That's our Betty!

Our **Chris** traveled with KC to New Mexico for a pilgrimage and a visit to Santa Fe Mike, hit the ski trails with Ken, sailed in Chautauqua, went to El Salvador for a Board meeting, then on to visit Liz in the orphanage in Honduras. She moved her WECO offices to the old downtown Pepsi-Cola bottling company building at 32nd and Chester, and is now poised to expand the work of providing financial education and microloans to low income individuals. She was totally caught up in the election, bugging all her nieces and nephews about getting out to vote. But Chris's big event is that, hold on, she turned 60. It was a birthday that bothered her more than most, so to ease her pain Ken threw her a private party at NightTown, complete with roasting, toasting, poems and song. She finally figured what the heck, 60 is 60, just get in the game. Hang in there, Chris.

Now **Ken** had a great year. How much better could he have it than to have Liz's boy friend Jason hook up some fabulous skiing in Jackson Hole, and, a few months later, some great beach sitting on the Jersey Shore? Ken was also big into the election, hosting a young campaign worker from Charleston for five months on his third floor, and staying

up far past his 9:00 bedtime to watch the returns. Of course, the lousy economy presents budget challenges for his beloved city of Cleveland Heights, and Monday night council meetings have been tough, but he presses on in his 21st year as a councilman. A new experience for Ken this year was the annual Henry wood cutting party at the cabin. He showed up with his little 30-year-old hand saw, only to find that what he really enjoyed was the power wood splitter. A big event for Ken was his 50th Shaker Heights High School reunion, where his friend Jonathon Shaw showed up as Jennifer Shaw, and was very willing to share the experience. And not to be outdone by Chris's extravagant 60th birthday party, Ken turned 69, and got a balloon and a stick of gum from Aunt Jeannie. Way to go, Ken!

So that's it for 2008. A major highlight was the election of Barack Obama, our nation's first black president. The family dynamics were very interesting, as we would go to the cabin on Sundays and find people of opposite opinions whispering in corners about politically charged issues. Ken's observations is that because we didn't talk about our opposing views to each other, we are still a close family. Indeed, it seems the Henrys are no longer a long line of Geauga County Republicans, but a diverse group made up of intelligent, thoughtful individuals who care deeply about their country. I think our ancestors would be OK with it. In the end, what's important is that we live in a nation where we are involved, and we have free and fair elections and a peaceful transfer of power. Together we will turn this economy around, and move towards prosperity once again.

It's six years, Tim, since we saw you. The heaviness feels a bit lighter as time goes by, but the missing never stops. But we are healthy and moving forward, and very excited to, in just a few days, celebrate the first wedding of your generation. The ups and downs, the ins and outs -- we are just so blessed to all be in this life together.

Till next year, The Clan