

In case you didn't notice, 2016 was an election year in the US...

*We would typically use the local political scene to make some opening jokes, but every time we wrote down an idea for a joke, we fact-checked it and found out it had actually happened!*

*As a result, we have given up on fact checking since it so often disappoints us. Instead, we have embraced fake news, and you are challenged to find the five lies hidden in the*

## **2016 Lefton-Steinbart Holiday Letter**

Hannah started 2016 by embracing the gig economy with jobs as a dog walker, an Uber driver, a stint working in an attorney's office and most recently leading tours and workshops at the Fernbank Museum of Natural History. Since she was living at home with Lew and Enid, she acquired valuable first hand experience with dinosaurs, which no doubt helped with that last job. She returned to Athens, GA over the summer to work full time again at Extra Special People, making some great friends and really making a difference in the lives of families with children with developmental disabilities. Hannah's BIG NEWS is that she's officially joined the Peace Corps and will be spending the majority of the Trump administration in Senegal. This pleases her on many levels, and we are very proud of and excited for her. She leaves in February and will be gone for about 2.25 years. We all wish her bon voyage, or whatever that translates to in French. Hannah visited Lew's sister Irene in California this year, and also hit the road to say "see-ya-later" to friends around the country including stops in Niagra Falls, Texas, and Memphis.

Natalie is a junior Chemical Engineering major at Georgia Tech. She did a research program over the summer at the University of Delaware. Next time you see her, ask her about inorganic materials synthesis and catalysis, then nod your head and smile. Enid, Lew, and Monica met Natalie in Philadelphia for a nice summer weekend where we did most of the required tourist stuff: cheesesteak consumption and Independence Hall but skipped the Rocky library steps run. We even got yelled at for accidentally ringing the Liberty Bell with a backpack during a selfie. Natalie's still engaged with awesome service work like a leadership role in the Campus Kitchens project and STEM mentoring local girl scouts. Her BIG NEWS is that she's heading to Baytown, TX (Houston suburb) for the spring 2017 semester to do an internship for ExxonMobil. We expect she'll parlay this into a position in the State department. Working for the petrochemical industry, even as a short term intern, initially gave her pause, but since it's a prestigious, competitive, and challenging assignment (and the fact that she'll make bank) she's keeping an open mind. Natalie will return for a full time class schedule over the summer, and we're very proud of and excited for her.

Monica's BIG NEWS was that she graduated with an AA from Oxford College and moved into her own apartment on the main (Atlanta) campus of Emory University. This makes her the 4th member of our family with a college degree (don't worry Natalie, you can do it!). Monica's still an English major and Econ minor and is writing for the Emory Wheel, currently writing the crime reports section (a typical starting point for the Pulitzer prize). She had a summer internship writing for Creative Loafing, our local free culture, entertainment and politics paper. As a member of the Press, Monica scored a lot of free movie and concert tickets (but had to pay for Music Midtown), and she embraced her role as the "modern media" by opening a Twitter account which she uses to conduct all her private business. Outside of class, she was one of the leaders at Leadership Oxford, and she tutors high schoolers who need help with writing high stakes essays. Monica and her roommate Mia acquired a fish called Peggy (apparently the Wandas were sold out). And of course, we're very proud of and excited for Monica, and we're working on a way to let her know that via the soundtrack of Hamilton.

The Lefton pets are all well. Madison's showing her age and whenever she barks, our Amazon Echo says "Did you mean 'Get off my lawn' ?". Bo still tries to intimidate people, but you can tell his heart's not in it anymore. Plus, all that howling and scratching can interfere with his rigorous schedule of sleeping, eating, and pretending you're a tiger in the jungle and that little rodent is a gazelle.

We all enjoyed some travel this year, with a highlight being a 4-day cruise from Miami which hit the Bahamas and Key West. The five of us joined Lew's sisters Linda, Charna, and Irene so it was once again a cruise with Lew and seven women. It was great fun to see the beautiful Caribbean beaches, snorkel over a coral reef, and test the limits of the unlimited drink card on board the ship. We saw lots of family, including cousins at Hillary Shoemaker's wedding in Florida, and the Jones relatives at the Petit Jean reunion in Arkansas. We also had some fun short family trips such as Yurt "camping" in north GA, a trip to watch the Broadway production of Hamilton (thanks to tickets the girls won via a web promotion), the Nebraska bowl game in Nashville, and some nearby breweries in Athens and Asheville.

Enid began the year running in 5K races and ended it with a broken leg. Coincidence? She was a trooper as she navigated around, first with a hard cast and a knee walker scooter, and later a walking boot. She now has a much better appreciation of ADA compliance laws. In other body part news, Enid's cataracts are now completely gone thanks to a freak accident with a laser. She enjoys her super-hero like vision and not having to mess with glasses or contacts. Enid still plays cards regularly with a local group of friends, and she is keeping up with stemware trends via her Bunko and book club meetups. At work, Enid has been helping lead departmental curriculum overhauls, and continues her awesome advising to undergraduate math majors. She is upping her game with regard to her cooking and baking and is now trying out Senegal recipes in anticipation of a future visit there.

Lew is still an Assistant Dean of Information Technology at Georgia Tech and also the Executive Director of Decatur Makers, the non-profit makerspace he helped to found. For some reason, he just can't hold down a job (it has to be two or more). He continues to perform stand up and improv comedy several times a year, and his research on applied humor (the Humor Genome Project, Improv for Engineering Design, Humor in STEM education, etc.) has yielded some publications, but no funding yet. Lew's leadership role at Georgia Tech keeps his calendar full of meetings, but sometimes he finds time to read, write, teach and even (gasp!) do math. He taught his parallel computing course again last fall and is exploring options to convert his published textbook to an updated and open online version (because another project is just what the doctor ordered). He's been put on a Provost commission to explore future trends in higher education, and what he's learned alternates between terrifying and fascinating. The world of Higher Ed seems like it's about to undergo some major changes, but then again, as we saw in 2016, the future can be pretty unpredictable. Lew's IT responsibilities continue to be at the forefront of his work as GT explores how to best manage LOTS of research data, cloud computing, use of analytics, and challenges of staffing an agile technical workforce. In August, because of his involvement in the maker movement, Lew got invited to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (but didn't meet Obama). He's still involved with the Atlanta Maker Faire, but most of his volunteer efforts remain focused on his community makerspace Decatur Makers. The path toward creating a sustainable non-profit continues as he was able to hire a part-time associate director this year, which helps free up some of Lew's time.

Did you find all the fake news? Hint: the "fact" that there are five lies in this letter might be one of the lies...

### **BRAINSPLOSION!**

We would love to see you in 2017! Atlanta is easy to get to, and you always have a place to stay.

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May you and your loved ones have a new year full of happiness, health and peace.

Happy <belated> Hanukkah!

Merry <belated> Christmas!

Happy <belated> New Year!