

Christmas, 2006

Dear Friends and Family,

I wish I could come up with a clever intro to my regular Christmas letter, but the plague that is The Holiday Season has dropped me like a bullet. Why is it that every year, from Thanksgiving forward, my schedule fills up to bursting? It's as though everyone is suddenly racing to finish all the things they meant to do during the year, and we are dragged, unresisting, along with the mob. Fun!

My House Calls Computer Service business has grown steadily in the last year, and although every month is its own little Adventure, called "Will Susan Make The Rent?" I feel like I'm making progress. I'm still working part-time at the American Economic Association on the Vanderbilt University campus. My AEA bosses have been amazingly flexible with my schedule, which I'm very grateful for, and I quite enjoy my time there. I have some more website design clients now as well, so I feel like my work is full of my favorite word - VARIETY. I think I've doubled my computer knowledge in the last 12 months!

The nieces and nephews of many a previous Christmas letter are growing steadily - Elliott the oldest has become a teenager this year (NOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!) and the rest are becoming more and more mature and interesting every month. Although I do wish there was another baby coming along. My Knoxville Nieces Taylor, Maddie & Ginny (Woggy) are no longer terrified of me, which is a definite improvement and I only wish they were here in Nashville so I could see them every week too. I babysit my local babies El, George & Henry and Emma almost every Saturday which is one of the highlights of my week, despite the fact that I feel like I'm constantly saying "No, you can't" the entire night. As you can imagine, I am a continual disappointment to them. (No more dessert pizza for you!)

This has been the Year of The Accursed Car, which has been more than a little frustrating. I found that red cars are indeed a BAD IDEA for 2 main reasons:

- 1) They are statistically more likely to be pulled over for speeding, and
- 2) They are statistically more likely to be in accidents. (Really! The guy at the body shop confirmed it!)

Granted, when I was in my little white Civic, I did have to replace the front hood three times from my apparent invisibility to 2 large trucks backing up and a careless deer, but three different incidents in one year (both sides and rear bumper)? That's a red car for you. Of course, I also attribute my problems to the fact that it is a Toyota Corolla and not a Honda as I would wish. From the minute my roof got dented & dinged by mere ACORNS while on my first vacation after purchasing it,

I have been ill-disposed towards my car. So, useful lesson from this? Avoid red vehicles.

This year's obsession? Can you believe, it's back to choral singing! I joined the choir at St. Bartholomew's Church in Green Hills over 2 years ago, and I literally look forward to it all the time now. Plus we were just voted "Best of Nashville: Church Music" in the *Nashville Scene* 2 months ago, which astonishes me, since it's like a war zone up in the loft - only 1 hour of rehearsal to prep over a dozen songs, wordless gesticulating from the director to musicians, some SERIOUS train-wrecks when someone misses a cue, juggling hymnals, programs, and sheet music... and I LOVE it. You have to stay on your toes the entire time and be alert to even a raised eyebrow from the director. And people think improvisational comedy is hard!

Susan's Picks for 2006

TV: *Doctor Who*, *Heroes* and *Eureka*. Let your geek flag fly! Three series that would be classified as Sci-Fi/Fantasy, but transcend the genre. The top of the heap? *Doctor Who*, definitely. Writing, acting, plot, you name it, I love it. The Brits really do know how to make a TV show, especially because they make fewer, and spend more time and money on what they do make. I can't recommend this (newly established in 2005) series highly enough.

Movie: *Casino Royale*. I used to read the original Ian Fleming novels when I was younger, and this really feels like the books. Not that I didn't enjoy the ones they've made over the last 30 years, but those were silly, fun fluff. Daniel Craig as James Bond is layered, compelling, and BETTER THAN SEAN CONNERY. I mean it.

Book: *Dead Bunnies* by Bryan Currie. A new Christian writer in the vein of Anne Lamott and Donald Miller, he tells really funny, personal anecdotes and envisions the world and events as part of an amazing Big Picture. Plus, his relatives live in Batesville, AR too!

Music: *Songs from the Labyrinth* by Sting. The fact that he would spend his fan capital on a collection of renaissance songs by John Dowland is something to be applauded. I really enjoy this kind of music ever since I got to sing madrigals in high school (I like popular songs that you can sing along with; I don't care as much for music that nobody but professionals can perform). Not everyone will like it, and it may be considered a vanity project, but it's definitely worth listening to a few times (not just once; it gets better with repetition).

As I write this on the verge of a very busy month, I hope that all of you, my friends and family, have a wonderful, meaningful Christmas holiday. The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you - Amen!

Sincerely,

susan@shouston.com
<http://www.shouston.com>

Renaissancefrau Press
2006



The number of Sugarplum Fairies has grown alarmingly in recent years; in particular, multiple sightings have been reported in Tennessee.

They can be safely placated by the judicious application of chocolate, and a continual playback of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*. Should your infestation of fairies grow out of control, please contact your local office of Homeland Security, and ask for the Sugarplum Fairy Containment Unit.