

Curse words, theft, nudie magazines, self-proclaimed evil children, admitted skirt-chasers and near-fatal accidents. Oh, happy holidays. And we haven't even hit the teen years. I'm guessing you don't get many of these Christmas newsletters that start off with such cheery greetings. But that's what I have to work with as I try to write with good humor and holiday cheer. So I'll give it a shot.

Hannah's decided she likes Green Day and has apparently been Googling their lyrics, which, if you know anything about Green Day, means that her vocabulary is now several words larger than I'd like it to be. But can she use those words in a sentence? Jefferson can. While watching a newscast on Hurricane Wilma, he editorialized, "Another hurricane? We don't need this crap!" That sentence is true on so many levels. Fortunately, he can sometimes control himself, as he did after a spat with Chris when he asked, "Well, can I just call you curse words in my head?" I worry about what else goes on inside that little cranium.

Even when you think it's good, there's a dark side. Trying figure why you'd put roses on a grave after hearing the Rolling Stones sing the line "And I won't forget to put roses on your grave," Jefferson surmised that they "represent the crown of thorns on Jesus' head" (his exact words). Excellent sentiment, I thought – until a half-hour later when he decided to steal

roses from the neighbor's yard to put on the grave of a bird that died crashing into our bay window. Somehow, I think theft misses the spiritual point of the whole exercise.

Of course, I'm not without blame here. Sometimes I introduce new vices in front of the entire world. Like the time the kids wanted dessert at Friday's. Now I take great pride in my ability to say no. It makes me feel like a good parent. I especially like when I get to do it in public, because I can show off my skills to other parents. So this was perfect. They kept asking and I kept saying no. Finally, I pulled out the big threat, subconsciously making sure all around could hear. "If you don't stop asking, I'll take away your Playboys!" Yeah, that made me look good in front of all the other parents. While some kids have Playstations and others Gameboys, half of Cincinnati now thinks mine have Playboys.



Hannah's arm bothered her for two weeks before we thought maybe we should have it looked at...



...meanwhile, the boy remains unbreakable. Too bad all the stuff around him isn't.

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Then again, one of my kids IS a playboy. When Chris told Jefferson that a friend of his had told her that Jefferson's the kid that likes to chase the girls, our boy shrugged his shoulders and simply said, "He's right." Man we've got a long decade ahead of us.

And Hannah, it seems, does not plan to make that time go any quicker. She informed us she had taken a *Zoey 101* personality quiz that showed she was just like 'Dana'. Gee, that's nice. So, tell us Hannah, what is Dana like? "Bossy and evil." And this is good how? "Because she always gets her way." Apparently Dana's dad never threatened to take away her Playboy. See, I do know what I'm doing.

But not always, as evidenced by the boat incident. I won't go into a lot of detail, but bottom line, Hannah and I nearly died in an evening boat accident while fishing this summer. It was getting dark and I decided a minute too late that we needed to get off the water. Just as we were reeling in our lines a boat came roaring around the corner, headed straight for us at full throttle. He was just feet from slicing us in half when he turned hard left and clipped the front end of my boat, sending me into the water and spinning the boat 180 degrees in the other direction. Fortunately, no one was hurt and the only damage was the loss of my trolling motor, which tore off and sank.

I was still too shaken up the next day, thinking about what could have happened, to even try fishing. But Hannah was unfazed and determined to continue her attempts to water ski. And though she wouldn't master it until a trip with friends to Kentucky a few weeks later, she wasn't about to let our mishap keep her from trying. Perhaps she does always get her way.

I hate to end with my annual near-death experience, so I leave you with an observation about women. Chris is now selling designer clothes at home parties for CAbi (shameless plug – she'll travel anywhere to do a show. Warm climates especially desirable). As a result, I've noticed the strange things women do. For example, a neighbor called recently to say a stranger had stopped her on the street to say she simply had to have her jacket.

Now, can you imagine a man doing that? "Excuse me pal, but I must have your pants." It would never happen. Unless it was over something important. Like a golf club or a boat. Maybe a boat with lights. Now that I could understand.



No way is a little boat accident going to keep Hannah from doing what she wants.

**Until next time, please have a Merry Christmas
And a SAFE New Year**