

As we honour Christmas 2005 in our hearts,
we think fondly of friends like you and the personality traits which you possess that qualify you to receive
the alternative Inglis newsletter.



Animal Tales

Hello, Snowy here. I'm the only Inglis with the time to write the newsletter this year because Toni's so busy. I'll tell you why in a minute, but I'll get the sad news out of the way first.

My beloved brother and best friend, Catticus Finch, the cat, died this year. He went in for a "dental" with anesthesia in May. I kept waiting and waiting, but he never came home. He had had this procedure many times before; I guess at 13, it was just his time. We used to hang out on the balcony together, but now it's not much fun out there without him.

Life got happier when my human sister, Erin, got a kitten. She brings Ponce de León over pretty often to play with me. I was afraid of him at first, but he turned out to be okay. He's always dashing about and pouncing, living up to his name. When he tries to scare me by raising his back and looking mean, it's a laugh riot.

Now to the reason I'm writing the letter this year. In September my human mom, Toni, took on a writing project for the hospital network where she works. Although I see a lot more of her since she works at home, it takes up all her time; she doesn't even take time out to cycle anymore.

She told my human family members

that she didn't have time to write the newsletter this year and for them to write their own year's summary — in 300 words or less. Ian predicted immediately that no one would get theirs in. She told Ian he was "full of it" (?) and that of course her brilliant offspring would produce Pulitzer-quality paragraphs.

She sent emails to my human siblings that escalated from politely asking them, to guilt-tripping them, to threatening them, and finally to bribery, asking them to submit a xmas wish list along with their paragraphs.

Ian was the first to get his paragraph in. I remember after Toni opened his email with the attached paragraph she uncharacteristically showered dad with affection and praise. Then she ran over to the computer, opened the attachment, and did a word count on the paragraph. Then I heard:

Toni: "Ian! What the [worst bad word]!?!? This paragraph is 4,218 words!!!"

Ian (from the other room): "Read it, dear."

She then realized it was 4,218 words of,

"ALL WORK AND NO PLAY MAKES JACK A DULL BOY", followed by "Merry Christmas".

What transpired after that was a real-life scene from *The Shining*, only mom was Jack with the scary eyes and baseball bat, and dad was Shelley Duvall.

Ian

Toni here. Snowy's out on the balcony chewing her daily pig's ear. Ian is still busy keeping hardened and dangerous criminals out of the jails and out onto the streets. Actually, that's not true. Most of his clients are people just like you and me who accidentally broke some law. Maybe they were having a bad day; maybe they had accepted a miserable writing project....

Snowy here; Toni had to get back to work. Ian really loves living downtown, and every day after he walks home from work he gets down on the living room rug and plays with me. He takes me on a walk every single night

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Ian & Toni with Talula

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before he goes to bed.

This week he's going to Big Bend with his walking buddy, Erik Goodman, but they're not taking me. Dad said I couldn't go because it was against the rules, and I might attract mountain lions, but I know the real reason. A few years ago I went with dad and his brother to Big Bend, and even though I was wearing doggie booties (that screamed out to fellow animals that I was an idiot), my paws got so sore I stranded them.



After taking Amtrak to Oklahoma City, Erin & Toni visit with The Fabulous Aunt Mardee.

Toni

She's my constant companion now that she's at home more. We take lots of short walks. I get really happy when our friend David comes over several times a week, because I know it means a long walk. But they fight about politics so much, I'm not sure why they go.

Mom really loves living downtown. She loves the view, walking most places and taking the bus to the hospital to work, but she's not working neonatal for several months while she's doing the writing project that has her grumpy. Just the other day she declared that in the end she would turn in reams of paper saying only, "ALL WORK AND NO PLAY MAKES JACK A DULL BOY."



Erin & Toni with The Fabulous Claudia Coose in Marathon, Texas



Melissa, Talula & Burton

Burton, Melissa & Talula (Knight)

They're still in Dallas and doing fine, although their dog (*and my best girlfriend*), Keisha, had two knee surgeries this year. Ouchie! Talula is three and really cute, although I confess I'm a little afraid of her.

Burton did send his seasonal message into mom.

Here it is: "Since we don't actually have any idea when Jesus was born or when he died, the Powers that Be gave us Christmas so that we may all avoid the guilt and embarrassment one might experience by perennially missing the birthday of our Creator's sensitive and rejected only son.... Details aside, what makes the ole Yuletide so special is the spirited way we all celebrate the birthday of our Lord's troubled son. I mean, small wonder — his mother insisted

till the day she died that she was still a virgin.... Major issues.

"It is not often we celebrate the lives of the abjectly unfortunate with a paid vacation. It's true he was eventually hated and betrayed by almost everyone and eventually was arrested and publicly executed, penniless and still a virgin. But, EVERYONE agrees he was really, really nice. Apparently being God's only son is not the springboard one would think.

"I guess that because Jesus had mostly 'intangibles' to offer people, and kind of looked like a hippie, we remember him with Santa Claus. Santa, on the other hand, has it all (!), being way more upbeat and accessible to children than the sensitive, complex and tragic Messiah. A flashy dresser with a flying vehicle, Santa is the ultimate omniscient philanthropist/promoter of feel-good consumerism, with a look that says 'jolly white grandpa.' Thanks to Santa, every good boy and girl can have the same gazillionaire white grandpa with a key to their house!

"There's more! In keeping with our enlightened American tradition of secular egalitarianism, his connection to anyone in God's immediate family is appropriately vague other than a modest handful of magical powers. Yes, it seems that while Jesus gives Christmas its gravitas, Santa makes it a holiday. Let us all take a few days' break from the endless, quotidian pursuit of the ultimate exegesis, for Christ's sake!

"This is the season for all of us to think of the economy, not just ourselves. I say the true miracle of Christmas is our unified consensus to say, 'the heck with all this pious slaving over the true meaning of a spiritual drama about messianic fulfillment meant to depict the truth about each of us in the form of a long-winded biography of a man-savior already!' If you're stuck in Humbugsville, just listen to your TV; it will show you the way! Merry Christmas to all!"



Erin with Ponce de León

Erin

Rather than send Toni a paragraph about her year, Erin instead sent a crossword puzzle for your enjoyment.

The best thing is that she got my funny kitten friend, "Ponce". In other news, Erin still enjoys her job in the psychiatric ICU as a tech and has embarked upon Plan C: to become a pharmacy tech for a year to assess worklife as a hospital pharmacist. She took the certification exam in November and will hear the results in January.

She and my human brother John took Amtrak to Chicago; they saw



Erin & John visit the Windy City, taking in a Sox game and playing tourist in front of Buckingham Fountain.

the Red Sox play the White Sox at their fairly new, nice field. Then Erin went to LA to visit her best friend from medical school.



John turns 21!

John

A senior at A&M, he's sharing the doghouse with me because he never sent his paragraph into Toni. After he broke his clavicle in a cycling accident, though, he looked so pitiful that Toni couldn't stay mad at him anymore.

He's majoring in history, and it seems like he always reads history books when he visits. I love the summers because he comes back to live with me then, and he pets and plays with me a lot.

He made Toni laugh really hard one day this summer. He had taken me for a run around Town Lake (right next to our loft). We



were gone about an hour and a half, and when we got back I was panting really hard, and John was soaked with sweat.

Toni: "John, good Lord, how far do you go when you run?"

John:

(breathing hard) "Not far."

Toni: "What do you mean?"

John: "I always end up at the same place where I start."

When John was in the shower after that, mom told me his answer explains why he's a Philosophy minor.

Here's hoping we can honour the spirit of the holidays in our hearts, and keep it all the year.

*Love,
The Inglises*



Talula & Erin hanging out at the loft

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Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol, 1843

*I Will Honour Christmas in
My Heart and Try to Keep
it All the Year.*



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