



Karen Anderson

## My Tips For Writing Holiday Letters And Thinking Of New Year's Resolutions

*If you would rather wade into a sea of last-minute Christmas shoppers than sit down to write a holiday*

*letter, or try to think of resolutions for next year, this column is for you.*

I don't know what I dread most about the coming of winter: writing our holiday letter or drafting my New Year's resolutions.

The holiday letter is the grown-up version of the perennial high school essay topic, "What did you do on your summer vacation?"

As I kid, all I could ever remember about summer was the smell of suntan lotion and the sound of the waves. I blamed my parents for not taking our family to Disneyland, Europe, or better yet, somewhere with bears.

The holiday letter assignment is even worse than the high school essay. With the letter, we're stuck trying to recall the highlights not just of one season but of an entire year. I'm approaching the age at which I think of time not in years, but in eras. Currently, I'm in the era of living in Ballard with the Scholarly Gentleman. But the years are starting to blur together. We visited friends in San Antonio ... but was that 2013 or 2014?

This year, I turned to the Internet (where else?) for holiday letter inspiration. One website suggests asking yourself these questions: Were there any births or major birthdays? Important anniversaries? Engagements? Weddings? Graduations? Job changes? Moves or construction projects? Speeches or publications?

All very well, but I'm not planning to write about celebrating the anniversary of my divorce. Or about my niece's graduation (which she couldn't attend because she and her friends hacked the principal's Twitter account and changed his photo to that of Wolverine).

Even if you can answer yes to some of those questions, you're not in the clear. Can you really write about any of those topics without bragging, whining or losing your marbles?

If the answer is "no," you may find yourself falling

back on my favorite option: Lie through your teeth. I find it useful to imagine some fictitious household that has a superficial resemblance to ours.

I'm sure that anyone who has received my holiday letters for the past few years has the hazy impression that I float through the year writing articles for clients they've never heard of, dining at affordable ethnic restaurants in Seattle, and vacationing (modestly) with the Scholarly Gentleman in the Bay Area and New England. I mention neither my dinner with a New York Times bestselling author in April, nor the renegade washing machine that destroyed our basement in July.

I know my holiday letter is finished when my nose has grown to a length at which it touches the laptop screen.

Sure, living your life on Facebook or writing a blog may absolve you from writing holiday letters (or even sending holiday cards), but you can't get away from societal expectations that you make New Year's resolutions.

From January 1 through Superbowl Sunday, you will be asked wherever you go – at the dentist's office, in the break room at work, or at the supermarket (usually just as you reach for the premium ice cream).

So don't try telling people you don't "do" New Year's resolutions – you'll just end up in a whole long discussion about it. Instead, come up with something plausible. If you've gotten a good start on white lies while writing holiday letters, coming up with a short list of New Year's resolution shouldn't be hard at all.

My three favorite New Year's resolutions are:  
"I've resolved to stop eating raw geoducks." (Best used locally.)

"I've resolved to fix grandfather's bagpipes and sign up for lessons." (Excellent for next-door neighbors.)

"I've resolved to get 10 more cats from the shelter." (This has the advantage of encouraging the other person to end the conversation and leave.)

But for 2015, I've hit on a New Year's resolution that will bring joy to my heart and to everyone in my address book. It's even true!

For 2015, I've resolved to stop writing holiday letters.

