

Cracklin' XMAS News Flash

DEAN SENDS X-MAS GREETINGS

You know, like the way a fire crackles!

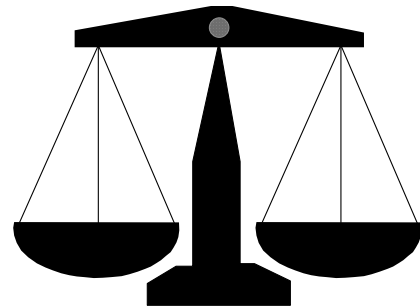
Merry Christmas to you and yours. I hope this holiday season finds everyone happy and healthy.

As Christmas again comes creeping along on its little cat feet, ready to pounce upon the as yet unshredded socks of the holiday season from under the table of holiday cheer, one has to wonder just what in the hell I'm trying to get at with this simile. Ah, but then it hits you between the eyes like a five-pound fruitcake launched from the catapult of other cat-like words; that was no simile but yet another attempt at a bizarre metaphor that has no place being associated with Christmas! What a catastrophe!

As you've surely surmised by this point, I've given up any attempt at writing a legitimate Christmas newsletter as I really don't have all that much to tell you about this year. After all, do you really want to hear yet another tale of a failed evacuation from the path of hurricane Rita? Is there any need at all to divulge the details of my work on the lone shuttle mission of the last two years and our attempts to return to a regular launch schedule? And can anyone honestly say that they're interested in learning more about the woman that I refer to, for lack of a better term, as my girlfriend? Of course not. So let the wild rumpus continue!

Okay, on the oft chance that someone out there might be a tad bit interested in some of the items alluded to in the previous paragraph, I suppose I can write up a bit more. When hurricane Rita was projected to come a-calling as a Cat 5 hurricane, I, like virtually everyone else in the greater gulf coast area, attempted to flee. Unfortunately, the word attempted is a pretty good description of what took place as I only covered about 30 miles in seven hours and so I gave up and stayed at the girlfriend's place which, unlike my house, wasn't in a mandatory evacuation zone. And there I rode out a storm that decided to pretty much miss us.

Work was very busy getting ready for the return to flight, STS-114. There was a lot of excitement after what we thought had been a trouble free launch, but unfortunately upon further review it was determined that some foam had



I THINK YOU'LL FIND THAT IF YOU WEIGH THIS NEWSLETTER AGAINST OTHERS YOU RECEIVE, YOU'LL FIND IT TO BE HEAVIER THAN MOST.

come off out of bounds and there was a 15 yard penalty on the play - we even lost possession of the ball! I'm hoping we can regain possession with an appeal to the refs, but for now the play is still under review and it's hoped that we'll get things going again this spring.

As is generally not the case in this newsletter, I can report that I actually saw many of you this year when I was home for a family gathering. I'd make some mention of my sister's milestone birthday but I'm not sure she's telling people that she turned 40. So I'll have to leave it your imagination to figure out where you might have seen me this year and what even was taking place at that time.

And you know what? If I had indeed made it home for a visit this year there's a chance, just the slimmest of chances that you might find some reference to it at:

http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/Dean_Lenort/homepage.htm

The one thing I've done differently this year is pick up a tradition that has become increasingly popular among the newsletter writers; yes, I've joined the madding crowd and put off writing this thing so long that there's virtually zero chance that it will arrive before Christmas. You'll have to let me know what you think of this new policy. As for me, I like it! But last, and surely not least, it's my sincere hope that this holiday season is a good one full of fun and cheer for you and yours.

Dean