

January 1, 2012

**Dave Barry** rings out the old year.

*It was the kind of year that made a person look back fondly on the gulf oil spill. ...*

**January** saw a change of power in the House of Representatives, as outgoing Democratic Speaker Nancy Pelosi hands the gavel over to Republican John Boehner, who, in the new spirit of Washington bipartisanship, has it checked for explosives. ...

**February** a massive snowstorm paralyzes the Midwest, forcing a shutdown of Chicago's O'Hare Airport after more than a dozen planes are attacked by yetis. President Obama responds with a nationally televised speech pointing out that the storm was caused by a weather system inherited from a previous administration. ...

**March** On the national political front, Newt Gingrich, responding to a groundswell of encouragement from the voices in his head, reveals that he is considering seeking the Republican presidential nomination. He quickly gains the support of the voter who had been leaning toward Ross Perot. ...

**April** a major crisis is barely avoided when Congress, after frantic negotiations, reaches a last-minute agreement on the federal budget, thereby averting a government shutdown that would have had a devastating effect on the ability of Congress to continue spending insanely more money than it actually has. ...

**May** As the month draws to a close, a Twitter account belonging to Anthony Weiner — a feisty, ambitious Democratic up-and-comer who managed to get elected to Congress despite looking like a nocturnal rodent that somehow got a full-body wax and acquired a gym membership — tweets a link to a photograph of a pair of briefs containing what appears to be a congressional member rarin' to filibuster, if you catch my drift. This member immediately captivates the nation, although, surprisingly, President Obama fails to deliver a nationally televised address about it. ...

**June** the Republican field does in fact continue to grow as Michele Bachmann, Rick Santorum, Mitt Romney, the late Sonny Bono and somebody calling himself "Jon Huntsman" all enter the race, bringing the Republican contender total to roughly 125. ...

**July** Speaking of drama: In Washington, as the deadline for raising the federal debt limit nears, Congress and the Obama administration work themselves into a frenzy trying to figure out what to do about the fact that the government is spending insanely more money than it actually has. After hours of intense negotiations, several walkouts, countless press releases and of course a nationally televised address by the president, the Democrats and the Republicans are finally able to announce, at the last possible minute, that they have hammered out a historic agreement under which the government will continue to spend insanely more money than it actually has while a very special congressional committee — A SUPER committee! — comes up with a plan, by a later date, that will solve this pesky problem once and for all. Everybody involved heaves a sigh of relief and basks in the feeling of satisfaction that comes from handling yet another crisis, Washington-style. ...

**August** With the stock market in a steep nosedive, economic growth stagnant and unemployment relentlessly high, the White House, moving swiftly to prevent panic, reassures a

worried nation that President Obama will once again be vacationing on Martha's Vineyard, where he will recharge his batteries in preparation for what White House press secretary Jay Carney promises will be "a real humdinger of a nationally televised address." ...

**September** In domestic news, President Obama returns from his Martha's Vineyard getaway refreshed and ready to tackle the job he was elected by the American people to do: seek reelection. Focusing on unemployment, the president delivers a nationally televised address laying out his plan for creating jobs, which consists of traveling around the nation tirelessly delivering job-creation addresses until it's time for another presidential getaway. ...

**October** On the domestic protest front, Occupy Wall Street spreads to many more cities, its initially vague goals now replaced by a clear sense of purpose as occupiers focus on the single issue that is most important to the 99 percent: bathrooms. Some cities seek to shut down the protests, but the occupiers vow to remain until there is a reawakening of the national consciousness. Or, winter. ...

**November** the congressional Supercommittee, after months of pondering what to do about the fact that the federal government is spending insanely more money than it actually has, announces that, in the true "can-do" bipartisan Washington spirit, it is giving up. This means the government will continue spending insanely more money than it actually has until 2013, at which time there are supposed to be automatic spending cuts, except Congress would never let that happen, and even if it did happen, the federal government would still be spending insanely more money than it actually has. ...

**December** The economic outlook is also brighter in Washington, where congressional leaders, still working night and day to find a solution to the problem of the federal government spending insanely more money than it actually has, announce that they have a bold new plan: They will form another committee. But this one will be even better than the Supercommittee, because it will be a SuperDUPERcommittee, and it will possess what House and Senate leaders describe, in a joint statement, as "magical powers."

---

---

---

## Washington Post

### [Dave Barry's Year in Review: The 2011 Festival of Sleaze](#)

by Dave Barry

It was the kind of year that made a person look back fondly on the gulf oil spill.

Granted, the oil spill was bad. But it did not result in a high-decibel, weeks-long national conversation about a bulge in a congressman's underpants. Which is exactly what we had in the Festival of Sleaze that was 2011. Remember? There were days when you could not escape The Bulge. At dinnertime, parents of young children had to be constantly ready to hurl themselves in

front of their TV screens, for fear that it would suddenly appear on the news in high definition. For a brief (Har!) period, The Bulge was more famous than Justin Bieber.

And when, at last, we were done with The Bulge, and we were able to turn our attention to the presidential election, and the important issues facing us, as a nation, in these troubled times, it turned out that the main issue, to judge by quantity of press coverage, was: groping.

So finally, repelled by the drainage ditch that our political system has become, we turned for escape to an institution that represents all that is pure and wholesome and decent in America today: college football.

That was when we started to have fond memories of the oil spill.

I'm not saying that the entire year was ruined by sleaze. It was also ruined by other bad things. This was a year in which journalism was pretty much completely replaced by tweeting. It was a year in which a significant earthquake struck Washington, yet failed to destroy a single federal agency. It was a year in which the nation was subjected to a seemingly endless barrage of highly publicized pronouncements from Charlie Sheen, a man who, where you have a central nervous system, has a Magic 8-Ball. This was a year in which the cast members of "Jersey Shore" went to Italy and then — in an inexcusable lapse of border security — were allowed to return.

But all of these developments, unfortunate as they were, would not by themselves have made 2011 truly awful. What made it truly awful was the economy, which, for what felt like the 17th straight year, continued to stagger around like a zombie on crack. Nothing seemed to help. President Obama, whose instinctive reaction to pretty much everything that happens, including sunrise, is to deliver a nationally televised address, delivered numerous nationally televised addresses on the economy, but somehow these did not do the trick. Neither did the approximately 37 million words emitted by the approximately 249 Republican-presidential-contender televised debates, out of which the single most memorable statement made was, quote: "Oops."

As the year wore on, frustration finally boiled over in the form of the Occupy Various Random Spaces movement, wherein people who were sick and tired of a lot of stuff finally got off their butts and started working for meaningful change via direct action in the form of sitting around and forming multiple committees and drumming and not directly issuing any specific demands but definitely having a lot of strongly held views for and against a wide variety of things. Incredibly, even this did not bring about meaningful change. The economy remained wretched, especially unemployment, which got so bad that many Americans gave up even trying to work. Congress, for example.

Were there *any* positive developments in 2011? Yes:

- Osama bin Laden, Moammar Gaddafi and the New York Yankees all suffered major setbacks.
- Kim Kardashian finally found her lifetime soul mate for nearly  $2\frac{1}{2}$  months.
- Despite a prophecy by revered Christian radio lunatic Harold Camping, the world did not end on May 21.

Come to think of it, that last development wasn't totally positive, not when we consider all the other things that happened in 2011. In case you've blotted it out, let's take one last look back, through squinted eyelids, at this train wreck of a year, starting with ...

## **JANUARY**

... which sees a change of power in the House of Representatives, as outgoing Democratic Speaker Nancy Pelosi hands the gavel over to Republican John Boehner, who, in the new spirit of Washington bipartisanship, has it checked for explosives.

In the State of the Union address, President Obama calls on Congress to improve the nation's crumbling infrastructure. He is interrupted 79 times by applause, and four times by falling chunks of the Capitol ceiling. In other Washington action, Chinese President Hu Jintao is honored at a White House dinner for 225 luminaries, who dine on prime rib accompanied by 17,000 little plastic packets of soy sauce. As the official state gift from the United States, President Obama presents Hu with a six-pack of Bud Light, this being the only American product the White House staff can find that is not manufactured in China.

The month's biggest story is a tragedy in Tucson, where a man opens fire on a meet-and-greet being held by U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords. The accused shooter turns out to be a mentally unstable loner with a history of drug use; there is no evidence that his actions had anything to do with uncivil political rhetoric. So naturally the blame for the tragedy is immediately placed on: uncivil political rhetoric. This results in a nationwide spasm of civil political rhetoric lasting about two hours, after which everybody returns to uncivil political rhetoric, which has been the norm in the United States for two centuries.

In Egypt, demonstrators take to the streets to protest the three-decade regime of President Hosni Mubarak following revelations that "Hosni Mubarak" can be rearranged to spell "A Bum Honks Air." The movement continues to grow in ...

## **FEBRUARY**

... when "Arab Spring" anti-government demonstrations spread from Egypt to Yemen, then to Iraq, then to Libya, and finally — in a development long feared by the U.S. government — to the volatile streets of Madison, Wis., where thousands of protesters occupy the state capitol to dramatize the fact that it's warmer in there than outside. As the protests escalate, 14 Democratic Wisconsin state legislators flee to Illinois, where they barricade themselves in a hotel and, after a heated four-hour debate, decide, by a 7 to 4 vote with three abstentions, to order room service.

In other national news, a massive snowstorm paralyzes the Midwest, forcing a shutdown of Chicago's O'Hare Airport after more than a dozen planes are attacked by yetis. President Obama responds with a nationally televised speech pointing out that the storm was caused by a weather system inherited from a previous administration.

In Europe, the economic crisis continues to worsen, especially in Greece, which has been operating under a financial model in which the government spends approximately \$150 billion a year while taking in revenue totaling \$336.50 from the lone Greek taxpayer, an Athens businessman who plans to retire in April. Greece has been making up the shortfall by charging

everything to a MasterCard account that the Greek government applied for — in what some critics consider a questionable financial practice — using the name “Germany.”

In a historic episode of the TV quiz show “Jeopardy!,” two human champions are swiftly dispatched by an IBM supercomputer named Watson, which combines an encyclopedic knowledge of a wide range of subjects with the ability to launch a 60,000-volt surge of electricity 25 feet.

On Broadway, the troubled musical “Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark” suffers a setback when three actors and 11 audience members are injured in what the producers describe as a “catastrophic spandex failure.”

In sports, two storied NFL franchises, the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Green Bay Packers, meet in Super Bowl XLV, a tense, back-and-forth battle won at the last minute, in a true shocker, by Watson the IBM supercomputer.

Speaking of shocking, in ...

## **MARCH**

... the European economic crisis worsens still further as Moody’s downgrades its credit rating for Spain following the discovery that the Spanish government, having run completely out of money, secretly sold the Pyrenees to China and is now separated from France only by traffic cones.

In domestic news, the renegade Wisconsin Democratic state legislators are finally captured in a late-night raid by the elite Wisconsin State Parliamentary SWAT team, which knocks down the legislators’ hotel room door using a 200-pound, steel-reinforced edition of Robert’s Rules of Order. The SWAT team then subdues the legislators using what one source describes as “a series of extremely aggressive cloture votes.”

On the national political front, Newt Gingrich, responding to a groundswell of encouragement from the voices in his head, reveals that he is considering seeking the Republican presidential nomination. He quickly gains the support of the voter who had been leaning toward Ross Perot.

In tech news, Apple, with much fanfare, unveils the latest model of its hugely popular iPad tablet computer. The new model, called the iPad 2, is similar to the original iPad but — in yet another example of the brilliant customer-pleasing innovation that Apple has become famous for — has a “2” after it. Apple enthusiasts line up by the thousands to buy the new model, even as excitement builds for the next iPad, which, according to rumors swirling around an excited Apple fan community, will feature a “3.”

The troubled musical “Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark” suffers yet another setback when four orchestra musicians are killed by what producers describe as a “freak clarinet accident.” Responding to the tragedy, President Obama delivers a nationally televised address, expressing his personal sympathy and noting that Republicans in Congress have repeatedly blocked the administration’s proposed \$37 billion Federal Department of Woodwind Safety, which would create literally dozens of jobs.

In sports, National Football League team owners lock out the players after negotiations break down over the issue of — in the words of NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell — “locker rooms being littered with reeking jockstraps the size of hammocks.”

Speaking of negotiations, in ...

## **APRIL**

... a major crisis is barely avoided when Congress, after frantic negotiations, reaches a last-minute agreement on the federal budget, thereby averting a government shutdown that would have had a devastating effect on the ability of Congress to continue spending insanely more money than it actually has.

Meanwhile the economic outlook remains troubling, as Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke, in a rare news conference, consumes an entire bottle of gin. Things are even worse in Europe, where Moody's announces that it has officially downgraded Greece's credit rating from “poor” to “rat mucus” following the discovery that the Acropolis has been repossessed.

On the political front, the field of Republican contenders considering running for presidential nomination continues to expand with the addition of Ron Paul, Rick Santorum and Gary Johnson, all of whom pose a serious threat to gain traction with the Gingrich voter. Donald Trump reveals that he, too, is considering running for president, spurred by a sincere and passionate desire for attention. Trump makes headlines when he appears to side with the “birther” movement, questioning whether Barack Obama is in fact a natural-born U.S. citizen. Under growing pressure to respond, the White House finally releases a certified copy of a long-form birth certificate that appears to prove conclusively that Donald Trump is Belgian. Also, biologically female.

Meanwhile the troubled musical “Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark” suffers yet another setback when the actor playing Peter Parker, the young man who develops superpowers after being bitten by a radioactive spider, is bitten by an actual radioactive spider. Unfortunately, instead of superpowers, he develops a world-class case of diarrhea, which makes for what the show's producers describe as “some audience unpleasantness during the flying scenes.”

But the month ends on a joyous note as millions of TV viewers around the world watch Prince William and Catherine Middleton, two young people widely hailed for their down-to-earth likability and common touch, get married in a wedding costing the equivalent of the gross domestic product of Somalia.

Speaking of joyous, in ...

## **MAY**

... the big story takes place in Abbottabad, Pakistan, where Osama bin Laden, enjoying a quiet evening chilling in his compound with his various wives and children and porn stash, receives an unexpected drop-in visit from a team of Navy SEALs. After due consideration of bin Laden's legal rights, the SEALs convert him into Purina brand Shark Chow; he is then laid to rest in a solemn ceremony concluding upon impact with the Indian Ocean at a terminal velocity of 125 miles per hour.

While Americans celebrate, the prime minister of Pakistan declares that his nation (a) is very upset about the raid and (b) had no earthly idea that the world's most wanted terrorist had been living in a major Pakistani city in a large high-walled compound with a mailbox that said BIN LADEN.

"As God is my witness," states the prime minister, "we thought that place was a Wal-Mart."

In domestic affairs, Arnold Schwarzenegger reveals that he fathered the child of a member of his household staff; incredibly, he does not follow this up by announcing that he will seek the Republican presidential nomination. Herman Cain, however, does enter the GOP race, promising to reach out to as many ... No, wait, let's rephrase that: Promising to take firm positions on ... No, sorry, how about: Promising to appeal to a broad ... Okay, never mind. Former Minnesota governor Tim Pawlenty also announces his candidacy, but winds up withdrawing from the race about midway through his announcement speech when he realizes that his staff has fallen asleep.

Meanwhile, followers of Christian radio broadcaster Harold Camping prepare for the Rapture, which Camping has prophesized will occur at 6 p.m. May 21. But the fateful hour comes and goes without incident, except in New York City, where, in yet another setback for the troubled production of "Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark," the entire cast is sucked through the theater ceiling, never to be seen again.

As the month draws to a close, a Twitter account belonging to Anthony Weiner — a feisty, ambitious Democratic up-and-comer who managed to get elected to Congress despite looking like a nocturnal rodent that somehow got a full-body wax and acquired a gym membership — tweets a link to a photograph of a pair of briefs containing what appears to be a congressional member rarin' to filibuster, if you catch my drift. This member immediately captivates the nation, although, surprisingly, President Obama fails to deliver a nationally televised address about it. The drama continues to build in ...

## JUNE

... when Weiner denies that he sent the photo, although he admits he cannot say "with certitude" whether the member is or is not his. He finally confesses to sending the photo, and, as the pressure on him to resign becomes overwhelming, he is left with no choice but to declare his intention to seek the Republican presidential nomination.

No, I'm kidding. Weiner resigns and takes a full-time position in the private sector admiring himself in the mirror.

Meanwhile the Republican field does in fact continue to grow as Michele Bachmann, Rick Santorum, Mitt Romney, the late Sonny Bono and somebody calling himself "Jon Huntsman" all enter the race, bringing the Republican contender total to roughly 125.

In Washington, Congress is under mounting pressure to do something about the pesky federal debt, which continues to mount as a result of the fact that the government continues to spend insanely more money than it actually has. Congress, after carefully weighing its three options — stop spending so much money; get some more money somehow; or implement some combination of options one and two — decides to go with option four: continue to do nothing

while engaging in relentlessly hyperpartisan gasbagery. Incredibly, this does not solve the debt problem.

The economic crisis is even worse in Europe, where the Greek government sends out an e-mail to everybody in its address book claiming it was mugged in London and needs its friends to wire it some emergency cash so it can get home. This prompts Moody's to change Greece's credit rating to, quote, "a word we can't say, but trust us, it's worse than rat mucus."

But perhaps the month's most disturbing development takes place in the Middle East when Iran, which is believed to be close to developing nuclear weapons, test-fires 14 missiles, including some capable of threatening U.S. interests, as becomes clear when one of them plunges through the theater roof during a matinee performance of the troubled musical "Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark."

Speaking of disturbing, in. ..

## JULY

... the eyeballs of the nation are riveted on Orlando, where Casey Anthony is on trial on charges of being an attractive young woman who is definitely guilty of murder, according to millions of deeply concerned individuals watching on TV. The trial becomes an obsession for hundreds of people who are not in any way connected to the victim, Caylee Anthony, but are so distraught over her death that they feel compelled to travel to Orlando and lurk around the courthouse expressing anguish, as opposed to doing something that might actually help one of the many living children who are at risk but who, unfortunately for them, are not featured on TV. In a shocking verdict, Anthony is acquitted of murder and set free, only to be attacked outside the courtroom and have large clumps of her hair yanked out by outraged prominent TV legal harpy Nancy Grace.

Speaking of drama: In Washington, as the deadline for raising the federal debt limit nears, Congress and the Obama administration work themselves into a frenzy trying to figure out what to do about the fact that the government is spending insanely more money than it actually has. After hours of intense negotiations, several walkouts, countless press releases and of course a nationally televised address by the president, the Democrats and the Republicans are finally able to announce, at the last possible minute, that they have hammered out a historic agreement under which the government will continue to spend insanely more money than it actually has while a very special congressional committee — A SUPER committee! — comes up with a plan, by a later date, that will solve this pesky problem once and for all. Everybody involved heaves a sigh of relief and basks in the feeling of satisfaction that comes from handling yet another crisis, Washington-style.

But things are not so rosy in Europe, where the debt crisis continues to worsen with the revelation that Greece has sold the naming rights to itself and will henceforth be officially known as the Republic of Burger King. In response, Moody's lowers Greece's bond rating to the point where it is no longer represented by words or letters, just a brownish stain on the rating document.



In England, the News Corp. media empire comes under scrutiny for alleged phone hacking when an investigation reveals that calls to Queen Elizabeth's private mobile number are being answered by Rupert Murdoch speaking in a high-pitched voice.

On a positive note, NFL owners and players are finally able to settle their dispute, thereby averting the very real danger that millions of fantasy football enthusiasts would be forced to develop lives.

Speaking of threats, in ...

## **AUGUST**

... Standard & Poor's makes good on its threat to downgrade the U.S. credit rating, noting that the federal government, in making fiscal decisions, is exhibiting "the IQ of a turnip." Meanwhile Wall Street becomes increasingly jittery as investors react to Federal Reserve Board Chairman Bernanke's surprise announcement that his personal retirement portfolio consists entirely of assault rifles.

With the stock market in a steep nosedive, economic growth stagnant and unemployment relentlessly high, the White House, moving swiftly to prevent panic, reassures a worried nation that President Obama will once again be vacationing on Martha's Vineyard, where he will recharge his batteries in preparation for what White House press secretary Jay Carney promises will be "a real humdinger of a nationally televised address."

In political news, Texas Gov. Rick Perry announces that he will seek the Republican nomination with a goal of "restoring the fundamental American right to life, liberty and a third thing." But the early GOP leader is Michele Bachmann, who scores a decisive victory in the crucial Ames, Iowa, Straw Poll, garnering a total of 11 votes, narrowly edging out Ron Paul and a heifer named Widget. In what will become a pattern for GOP front-runners, Bachmann's candidacy immediately sinks like an anvil in a duck pond.

Abroad, a wave of riots sweeps across England as thousands of protesters take to the streets of London and other major cities to strike a blow against racism and social injustice by stealing consumer electronics and designer sneakers.

As the end of the month nears, a rare 5.8-magnitude earthquake, with its epicenter in Virginia, rattles the East Coast, shaking buildings from South Carolina to Maine but causing little damage, except in New York, where a theatrical set depicting a building topples over onto the cast of "Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark." The producers, determined to escape the bad luck that has haunted the current theater, move the entire production to New Jersey, which unfortunately turns out to be directly in the path of Hurricane Irene.

Speaking of disasters, in ...

## **SEPTEMBER**

... the worsening European debt crisis worsens still further when Italy, desperate for revenue, establishes a National Tip Jar. As markets plunge, the International Monetary Fund, seeking to

prevent worldwide investor panic, announces that it will henceforth be supplementing its income by selling Herbalife.

In domestic news, President Obama returns from his Martha's Vineyard getaway refreshed and ready to tackle the job he was elected by the American people to do: seek reelection. Focusing on unemployment, the president delivers a nationally televised address laying out his plan for creating jobs, which consists of traveling around the nation tirelessly delivering job-creation addresses until it's time for another presidential getaway.

Meanwhile on the Republican side, Herman Cain surges to the top of the pile with his "9-9-9" plan, which combines the quality of being easy to remember with the quality of being something that nobody thinks will ever actually happen. Seeking to regain momentum, Rick Perry also comes out with a tax plan, but he can remember only the first two nines. Adding spice to the mix, Mitt Romney unexpectedly exhibits a lifelike facial expression but is quickly subdued by his advisers.

In what is seen as a sign of public disenchantment with the political process, voters in New York's Ninth Congressional District, choosing a replacement for disgraced Rep. Anthony Weiner, elect Anthony Soprano, despite the fact that he is a fictional character and not even Jewish.

Disenchantment is also apparent in New York's Zuccotti Park with the birth of the Occupy Wall Street movement, a gathering of individuals who seek to focus the nation's attention, laser-like, on the problems of income inequality, greed, corporations, student loans, hunger, mortgages, health care, deforestation, unemployment, political corruption, racism, gender discrimination, lack of tents, consumerism, global climate change, banks, poverty, people wanting to tell other people where and when they can and cannot drum, fossil fuels, showers, immigration, animal rights, Internet access, capitalism and many other issues that will not be resolved until people finally wake up, get off their butts and start seriously engaging in long-term urban camping.

As the month draws to a close, an anxious world looks to the skies, as a NASA satellite weighing more than six tons goes into an uncontrolled reentry, breaking into fiery pieces that hurtle toward Earth but fortunately come down at sea, where they do no damage other than sinking a passenger ship that had been chartered for a recuperation cruise for the surviving cast members of "Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark."

The downward trend continues in ...

## **OCTOBER**

... which sees yet another troubling development in the world economic crisis when an International Monetary Fund audit of the 27-nation European Union reveals that 11 of the nations are missing. "Also," states the audit report, "the nation claiming to be Slovakia is in fact Belize using a fake ID." Meanwhile in Greece, thousands of rioters take to the streets of Athens to protest a tough new government austerity program that would sharply reduce the per diem rioter allowance.

In Arab Spring developments, Libyan strongperson and lunatic Moammar Gaddafi steps down and receives an enthusiastic sendoff from his countrymen, who then carry him, amid much festivity, to his retirement freezer.

On the domestic protest front, Occupy Wall Street spreads to many more cities, its initially vague goals now replaced by a clear sense of purpose as occupiers focus on the single issue that is most important to the 99 percent: bathrooms. Some cities seek to shut down the protests, but the occupiers vow to remain until there is a reawakening of the national consciousness. Or, winter.

Attorney General Eric Holder announces that the FBI has uncovered a plot by Iran to commit acts of terror in the United States, including assassinating the Saudi ambassador, bombing the Israeli Embassy, and — most chillingly — providing funding for traveling productions of “Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark.”

On the political front, Sarah Palin announces that she will not seek the Republican presidential nomination, noting that the GOP field is “already funny enough.”

In technology news, Apple releases the iPhone that comes after the iPhone 4, which was rumored to be named the “5,” but which instead is named — talk about innovation — the “4S.” It is of course a huge hit with Apple fans, who, upon purchasing it, immediately form new lines outside Apple stores to await the next breakthrough iPhone, preliminarily rumored to be named the “4.7.”

In sports, one of the most exciting World Series in history is won by some team other than the New York Yankees.

Humanity reaches a major milestone as the United Nations estimates that the population of the Earth has reached 7 billion people, every single one of whom sends you irritating e-mails inviting you to join something called LinkedIn.

The month ends on a tragic note when Kim Kardashian, who only 72 days earlier had a fairy-tale \$10 million wedding to the love of her life, professional basketball player whatshisname, files for divorce, citing irreconcilable differences in height. “Also,” she states in the filing documents, “I am a total slut.”

Speaking of fairy tales, in ...

## **NOVEMBER**

... the congressional Supercommittee, after months of pondering what to do about the fact that the federal government is spending insanely more money than it actually has, announces that, in the true “can-do” bipartisan Washington spirit, it is giving up. This means the government will continue spending insanely more money than it actually has until 2013, at which time there are supposed to be automatic spending cuts, except Congress would never let that happen, and even if it *did* happen, the federal government would still be spending insanely more money than it actually has.

Undaunted, Democratic and Republican leaders move forward with the vital work of blaming each other. As it becomes clear that Congress will do nothing, a visibly frowning President Obama delivers a nationally televised address in which he vows to, quote, “continue reading whatever it says here on the teleprompter.”

Speaking of the many benefits provided by the federal government: As Thanksgiving approaches, the Department of Homeland Security, having apparently handled all the other terrorist threats, issues a warning, including a scary video, on the dangers of: turkey fryers. I am not making this item up.

Abroad, the worsening Greek economic crisis forces Prime Minister George Papandreou to resign, leading to the formation of a new coalition government headed — in what some economists view as a troubling sign — by Bernie Madoff.

In domestic politics, the Republican Party is rocked by polls showing that 43 percent of all likely voters — nearly 55 million people — claim to have been sexually harassed by Herman Cain. With Rick Perry stumbling and Mitt Romney continuing to generate the excitement level of a dump fire, the GOP front-runner becomes none other than that fresh-faced, no-baggage, anti-establishment Washington outsider ... Newt Gingrich!

Speaking of extraterrestrial phenomena: Astronomers watch closely as an asteroid 1,300 feet across hurtles extremely close to Earth. Incredibly — NASA calls it “a one in a billion chance” — the asteroid fails to hit anyone or anything connected with “Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark.”

In business news, GM, responding to fears that the Chevy Volt might be prone to catch fire, issues a message to the six American consumers who have actually purchased Volts, assuring them that the car is “completely safe” and “should never be parked near buildings.” American Airlines files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, but assures its passengers that “normal flight operations will remain just as screwed up as before.”

The month ends on a reflective note as Americans pause to observe Thanksgiving very much as the Pilgrims did in 1621, by pepper-spraying each other at malls.

Speaking of pausing, in ...

## **DECEMBER**

... Herman Cain announces that he is suspending his presidential campaign so he can go home and spend more time sleeping in his basement. This leaves the Republicans with essentially a two-man race between Gingrich and Romney, which means it's only a matter of time before we start hearing the name “Bob Dole.”

The U.S. Postal Service, facing huge losses, announces a cost-cutting plan under which it will start delivering first-class mail “to totally random addresses.” The resulting savings will enable the USPS “to continue providing every American household with a minimum of 145 pounds of junk mail per week.”

Meanwhile, in a vindication for the Department of Homeland Security, alert passengers aboard a United Airlines flight foil an apparent terrorist attack when they subdue a man attempting to

deep-fry a turkey in economy class. After the plane makes an emergency landing, the man is removed by federal agents, who confirm that he was carrying not only cranberry sauce, but “enough stuffing to choke a buffalo.”

Abroad, the member nations of the European Union, in a last-ditch effort to avoid an economic meltdown, announce that they are replacing the euro with a new unit of currency, the “pean,” the exchange rate for which will be linked to the phases of the moon. The goal, according to the EU announcement, is “to cause American tourists to become even more confused than they already are.” The plan starts paying dividends immediately as a pair of elderly ladies from Indianapolis purchase two croissants at a Paris cafe for six peans and wind up leaving the equivalent of a \$3,780 tip.

The economic outlook is also brighter in Washington, where congressional leaders, still working night and day to find a solution to the problem of the federal government spending insanely more money than it actually has, announce that they have a bold new plan: They will form another committee. But this one will be even better than the Supercommittee, because it will be a SuperDUPERcommittee, and it will possess what House and Senate leaders describe, in a joint statement, as “magical powers.”

So the nation is clearly in good hands, and as the troubled year finally comes to an end, throngs of New Year’s revelers, hoping for better times to come, gather in Times Square to watch the descent of the famous illuminated ball, followed by the rise of what appears to be a mushroom cloud from the direction of “Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark.”

But there’s no need to worry: The president is planning a nationally televised address. So everything will be fine. Happy new year.

*Dave Barry, co-author of the novel “Lunatics,” which is being published this month, can be reached at [wpmagazine@washpost.com](mailto:wpmagazine@washpost.com). Read his Year in Review stories from past years, and chat with him Tuesday at noon ET.*

IF THE NEW YEAR REQUIRES  
RESOLUTIONS, I SAY IT'S UP TO  
EVERYONE ELSE, NOT ME!  
I DON'T NEED TO IMPROVE!  
EVERYONE *ELSE* DOES!







