



Aren't you glad you haven't been axed from this list?

Nelson + Updike's Annual Newsletter

Surely it can't be 20 pages long again!

Wednesday December 14th

2005

Dear Family, Friends, and Valued Clients:

“ **ROY RIGSBY**” will be the first two words of next year's annual Nelson + Updike Christmas Newsletter IF Roy manages to secure us a lot by the time I start typing next year. ”

He did. Our opening sentence this year is an exact quote that I lifted out of last year's letter. After several attempts and several written offers on several lots that were for sale, none of which worked out for us, **Roy**, and his partner **Jim Webb**, successfully found us the perfect vacant lot in **Palm Springs**, a flat, rectangular lot that wasn't even on the market at the time. He contacted the owners, three owners who all lived different states, he got the lot into contract, and he helped us take it through to closing. **Tom Martin** did the loan, **Roy** and **Jim** and **Tom** dealt with escrow, David and I signed all the loan papers here in Seattle and Fed Ex'd them there, and, finally after over a year of trying, we bought a vacant lot. We closed on June 30th 2005. And now I've kept my promise to plug **Roy** with his name as the opening two words of this year's Christmas letter.

And it was a tough promise to keep as I had another opening line that I wanted to use even more:

“ The week that **Martha Stewart** was released from prison David and I purchased a new house to live in. It's a good thing. ” I liked that line a great deal and the entire week building up to **Martha's** release, back when you got a daily “Martha In Prison Update” on CNN, it kept running through my mind. I just felt it was special that we should buy a home when the home diva was being set free.

So here it is December 14th of 2005, and I still don't have a blog on the internet. I used to worry about that until I read last Sunday's **New York Times**; now I worry that I don't have a vlog on the internet. A vlog (and since I haven't heard anyone talking about this concept yet I don't know if that's pronounced in two syllables as “vee-log” or in one that rhymes with blog as “vlog”) seems to be a video log that you make and upload to the internet. Little 3 to 5 minute daily video logs about you, or things you like, by you and starring you. Fascinating. But evidently not fascinating enough for me to actually go to the sites hosting the vlogs featured in the lengthy article about them. I clipped the article tho' - I'll get to it. Like I'll get to all of the other clipped articles piled up, literally piled up, on tables and shelves, and even the floor, of my office. (My new office - we've moved!) Books I should read, recipes I should make, web sites I should visit, gym equipment I should buy, articles on anything really, anything that interests me. **Leslie “It's My Party” Gore's** a lesbian? CLIP & SAVE THAT ONE. I obsessively clip 'em and put 'em in piles. I am my mother's child. And soon, as we near the end of 2005, the piles will grow taller yet as my FAVORITE kinds of articles start to appear: LISTS. Lists of the year's best this and that, best movies, best CDs, important

books, resolutions, tech products, financial planning tips, the list goes on. I love this time of year. I love a good list. I love to make plans and put them on a list. And nothing motivates me more to do so than saying so long to the year just gone by. Here then is to 2005.

First of all let me say that this year has probably been the most significant year ever in the lives of David and Michael. Heck, what's with the "probably" stuff? It's my letter and I'm just gonna go out on a limb and say it (and I'm not even going to check with David): This has been the most significant year ever for me and David. What defines "significant" for me? Ah, . . . let's say life altering, life changing, life affecting. This year will change the course of our next 10 to 20 years more than any year before it had the chance to change the years that followed it. (Now there's a sentence of questionable quality!) From simple day to day events (such as getting espresso, walking the dog, commuting) to long range plans (such as building a house from the sand up) things have changed and will change more as we go now.

### January

The year starts as David and I are returning home from a week in **New York**, the city. The best city. We get home and I turn on **CNN** and the news is not good. **George Bush** is being sworn into a second term in office and I'm despondent. Still I watch **CNN** as the body count in his war continues to climb. And **Newt Gingrich** is back in the news for some reason. Remember when failure used to be permanent? It doesn't seem like it ever will be again. This is the guy who had an ethics violation in 1997 that caused him to get a \$300,000 fine. This is the guy who resigned from Congress in 1998 after helping his party lose 5 House seats midterm. This is the guy who voted to impeach **President Clinton** even as he was having a long, secret extramarital affair with a much younger aide of his own. People's memories are so short. I fly to **Palm Springs**. When you are sitting by a pool in **January** holding a gin and tonic with a healthy lime wedge in it, well things don't seem that bad. I make this trip alone while David stays home with our pets and his clients. **Inga** must be fussed over and **Calvin** and **Claire** are never left alone. Plus David has to keep working to support my jet set lifestyle.

### February

This is the month it all happened really. February started out slow, easy, and uneventful - like any other month. But this is the month when everything changed. The first weekend of the month we were dog sitting for **Kari**, **David** and **Paul's** beautiful but odd dog, which gave us access to the house on **Guemes Island**. We returned to **Guemes**, a place we don't often go anymore, with **Kari** and **Inga**, dog treats and a pile of DVDs. We all settle in for a quiet weekend.

The following weekend was about, if anything, permanence. It was NOT about change. Nothing changed that weekend. Well, hmmm . . . perhaps how David and I feel about each other changed a bit that weekend. **It was the weekend of our twentieth anniversary.**

We all know that no one really likes it when other's start to pat themselves on the back. I know this. And I'd like to apologize in advance for doing so. But in order to recount for you one of the best days I've ever had, David too, and certainly the best day of our last 365 days, I'm afraid I'm gonna start to sound too self congratulatory. Be that as it may, I have to tell you about the most wonderful day: **February 12th, 2005**, our 20th anniversary. It was actually the exact day that David and I met in

1985. Our first date, a blind date arranged via a personal ad I placed in **The Weekly** in January of 1985, happened on a Tuesday night - **February 12th 1985**. In 2005 this night fell on a Saturday. Once we realized our 20th was going to be on a Saturday night, and so close to Valentine's Day - we realized this about a year in advance mind you - we reserved the top floor of **Canlis**, one of our favorite places in Seattle. (Take note: It's one of our favorite places in Seattle, top floor, an "L" shaped room with soaring ceilings held up by huge beams running the length of the room and lots of glass in a very 1955 mid-century modern kinda way - this will be important later.)

So we had a place, now we needed an event. An event? A party? We've had plenty of those before usually pulled off by us acting alone. What, we wondered, would it be like to have an event planner? In Seattle there is a firm with the coolest name, I had read about them in the papers many times, and I've always liked their name. So I called them: **Two Downtown**. It's two guys and they have an office downtown with a full staff. We hired them, **Howard** and **Lance**. We gave them a copy of the invitation we already had designed and some ideas about the sort of simple evening we wanted. They took off and ran with it.

Meetings ensued wherein we had to make choices about napkins and ribbons and table cloths and flowers and chair covers and menus and so on. This was just with **Two Downtown**. There was also the part with **Canlis** wherein their entire restaurant menu had to be edited down to our dinner's menu. So many choices. I kept joking privately with David that I felt as if we were planning the wedding I never had. Or at least the reception for the wedding I never had. It was great fun. The hardest part is that David and I agreed to NOT talk about any of it with anyone till after the event was over. This was a bummer because along the way we wanted to share with our friends all the details that **Two Downtown** thought of that we never would have and all of the food and wine discussions we were having with **Canlis**. But we stuck to our pledge to each other: No discussions with anyone about the guest list, who's coming, what's happening, **none** of it. Hard, for us very, very hard, but we actually stuck to it. And this was over a period of months . . . at least six months, the room was reserved in early 2004 and the planning kicked into high gear in October. Thinking back on it I realize what fun it was, all of the planning and preparations - we both love to throw a party.

So the day arrives. Finally. David worked that day - he was showing houses to a couple from the midwest all day - and I paced around our apartment waiting, and trying not to eat but having to eat just a bit as I was surprisingly nervous and my stomach was flip-flopping. Around three we started to shave and shower for the night and by five David was in tux and I was in a black suit and we were ready to go.

We arrived at **Canlis** thirty minutes before any of our guests were scheduled to. **Howard** and **Lance** were there putting the final touches on things, organizing the piano player they provided, talking to the wait staff and such. We arrived with **Mark Weeks**, a professional photographer we met after we rented one of the apartments in our building (former) to he and his partner **Lee**. We got lucky on this as we were definitely more comfortable having a friend take the photos than we would have been with someone we don't know. **Mark** began to photograph the room and David and I scanned the set up. It was stunning. Really stunning. We were so glad we chose **Canlis**, hired **Two Downtown** and decided to barrel through on this no matter the cost or effort to do so. In the end the result was worth every worry we had leading up to the event. We've eaten in this room many times before but we are both stunned by how it looks that night. Elegant. Beautiful. Sweet. Tear producing.

**Mark** then decides to photograph David and me before the guests arrive. So he sits us down, I look around, and - unbeknownst to David or **Mark** or anyone there - I started to cry. I couldn't believe I was gonna get emotional and start to lose it at this point of the evening. No one was even there yet.

None-the-less I start to get, what's the spelling here? "**verklemt**" ???, and have to choke back some tears during our mini photo shoot. Maybe it was the piano, the playing and selections were dead on perfect. Maybe it was the lovely tables. Maybe it was David sitting next to me holding my hand looking ever so handsome in an elegant black tux. I don't know, I was just surprised that I was starting to cry. Perhaps it was just that it was finally happening - a year's planning had got us to this point, not to mention the 19 years of negotiations prior to that. Anyway I got through the two photo shoots with David and wanted a drink so badly but David and I planned to wait until a guest arrived to start drinking. Finally it was 6:15 PM, the appointed start time, and two guests walked up the stairs and into the room right on time. David and I greeted them with big hugs and escorted them straight over to the bar. We all got martinis and the perfect evening started.

The room upstairs at **Canlis** holds 50 people. We invited 48, but one guest was sick at the last minute so we ended up with 47. Plus us, 49. It was a sit down dinner, six tables, flawless food and service. I just want to live that night over and over. **I can't remember a better day in my life.**

The following weekend David and I flew to **Palm Springs**, just the two of us. I say "weekend" but it was four full days there, as it usually is. On the way home I caught a cold that lasted for a week.

So the next weekend I'm home in our apartment nursing the cold and David is out previewing houses. It's **Saturday February 26th**, the fateful Saturday when everything changed. David comes home and says "Do you feel well enough to take the dogs (we're dog sitting **Kari** still) to **Magnuson Park**? The sun's out. It'll do you some good." Off we go. We live on Capitol Hill. **Magnuson Park** is way north and east of our home, on **Sand Point Way**. As we leave the dog park David says "Would you like to look at one house near here? I think you might like it if it were in **Palm Springs**." I ask if it's vacant, it is, and I agree to take a look. As we're pulling out of the park he turns right and heads north. **NORTH**. Further north than we already were. North to an area called **Matthews Beach**.

He heads me into an area where there are ditches. No sidewalks, No curbs. **Remember ditches?** There's one in front of this house. The house is a horrible color, a cross between salmon and pink. I'm complaining to beat the band as we pull up. He keeps saying "It'll only take a minute, give it a chance." He opens the door, we walk in and, as we're walking up a few steps, I look up and see huge beams holding up the wood ceiling with lots of glass at the top of the soaring ceilings. I turn and see that these beams run the length of an "L" shaped room and have more windows at the other end of the beams. There's glass everywhere. The ceilings are wood. There's a fireplace that juts out into the room that is open on three sides. The whole place is a very 1955 mid-century modern design.

I'm sold. Without even walking through the rest of the house, I'm sold. I understand exactly why David brought me here. We spend about 3 hours at the house (those poor dogs waiting patiently in the car). We see it all. **As we are leaving I turn to David and say "If you really want to move that badly THIS is a house I would move to."** We go to dinner and talk about the house. The next morning we go to breakfast with **Rick** and **Tom** and talk about the house. That evening we are having **Dirk** and **Mark** over to watch the Academy Awards but by then David and I are filling out paperwork and can't focus on the show as all we can do is talk about the house. And that's how the big change started. Going to bed now. We'll pick up again tomorrow.

Thursday December 15th 2005

Today we get a bed. Actually we have the bed, it arrived the day before Thanksgiving from **Design Within Reach**. Today we get the mattress for the bed. It's coming from **Macy's**. I'm waiting for it. Today we get a special kitty litter box table so that, at the age of 50, I no longer have to bend over for this task. The task is bad enough, why kneel on concrete to do it? I'm skipping work (very bad of me) to work on this letter. Usually it is done or nearly by this date in December and I'm dealing with the bulk mailing aspect of this. Not this year. With any luck you can open it for Christmas Eve.

David is at work. I'm at home in my huge new office / library. It has a fireplace. I have, of course, **CNN** on as I work. **Bill Maher** is going to be on **Larry King** tonight. **Larry King** drives me crazy - I honestly think he is a terrible interviewer, for instance WHEN is he going to stop asking his guests where they were on 9/11? - but I love **Bill Maher**. He's smart. I know someone who has worked with him and she tells me he is a terrible person. This could be true but smart trumps terrible with me in this case. Anyway my bosses are having their annual Christmas party for their managers tonight at the same time **Larry King** starts. This caused me to just remember - literally - that I have a **Tivo** box on this TV. I hadn't set it up yet as I hadn't changed the channel on this TV from **CNN** since we moved in here. So I just set it up, and even tho' he annoys me, I set up what's called "A Season Pass" to tape all **Larry King** shows from now on. This TV is one of those "**Best Buy** specials" that also has a VCR and DVD player built into it. I know that means that all 3 parts are usually crap components but I didn't care. It was cheap and easy and it's just for the news. If I want a good TV viewing experience I can head up to our TV room. I haven't used the DVD or VCR aspect of this TV yet either. I did buy a copy of the 20 years of **Oprah** fest when I bought **Cherese** one for her birthday, but I haven't opened it yet.

David is at work. This means I can have Christmas music playing throughout the house. The very best thing about Christmas for me is getting to listen to Christmas music. And I love it all . . . I love even all of the very religious "Do you hear what I hear" stuff and I've never been in a church in my life. "Holy" this and "silent" that and "a child, a child," not to mention everyone's favorite "fall on your knees" (???) I love it all. I don't care if it's not politically correct - I'm just a lover of Christmas music. Period. David claims to hate the overtly religious stuff. I don't get this. As I said I've never been in a church in my life, well, I have, but only because David makes me "see" them when on vacations - not for like the reason **My President** goes into a church - and I still love holiday music. David likes paintings in the **Louvre**, most of which are religiously based. Just as I can appreciate a religious painting for what it is, so it is with Christmas music for me. I honestly just like it.

This year I'm having the time of my life. We have an **Apple** computer that I purchased for the sole purpose of housing our music. It has **iTunes** on it and nothing else. We never even surf the internet on it - nothing other than music. This computer is hooked into our whole house sound system (the joys of custom remodels). So I have gathered all of our Christmas CDs from all of the boxes and various places they were. I'm the guy at **Starbucks** who buys whatever Christmas CD they are selling that season. I have a tall pile of them and, one at a time, I am importing all of the songs I like on each CD into **iTunes** to a special Christmas playlist that I've set up. This means I have to listen to each CD twice, once to see which songs I like and then again as I import it. So far this year I've imported 316 Christmas carols into **iTunes** which tells me this equals 17 hours of Christmas music. And I'm only half way through my stack! Plus I haven't been to **Starbucks** in awhile - there

might be a new one or two I don't have yet. After each import I put the CD in a labeled file box in the shop/storage space never to be seen or touched or moved again. So . . . I'm listening to my **316** Christmas carols on SHUFFLE and REPEAT as I write this.

Okay . . . moving on . . . where was I last night? Still in **February**, about to buy a house. So let's move this along. Saw the house, all David's idea, fell in love with the house, debated living so far north of **Capitol Hill** where there are no curbs (but there are ditches) or stores or coffee houses or food establishments, but couldn't get the house out of our minds. David was ready for change again; I was ready to stop having to listen to David whine about needing change and how much he hated our old neighborhood. As I've said many times before, I could have lived in the **Dubois Apartments** for ten more years easily. The rents were more than the mortgage (here the mortgage payment is the same as it was there but now WE have to make it each month alone) and everything I could ever need was walking distance away - even downtown movies and shopping! Here you can't do anything without a car (except go to the **Burke Gilman Trail** or **Matthews Beach**, which I do weekly at least).

So we bought the house. Non-contingent. We didn't even think about selling the apartment building to do this. With the joys of zero down financing, some deal where you get two loans and one of them is the down payment for the other, all arranged by our loan guy **Tom Martin**, we closed on this house in 16 days. 16 days! And we weren't even planning on buying a house. I'm sure the quickness of this was due to three things: **Tom's** fast and extremely good, I'm highly organized and the keeper of all paperwork, and somehow David and I have managed to keep each of our credit scores above 700 even given our "house of cards" lifestyle.

Oooops. Doorbell. Gotta stop. Actually in our multi hundred thousand dollar remodel we didn't plan for a doorbell so I should say, "Oooooops. Loud banging." Whatever. Gotta run, more later.

**Still Thursday December 15th 2005, but now many hours later:**

OMG. O M G ! The mattress is in place - **Macy's** was at the door earlier. David shopped for it and bought it. I had nothing to do with it (for fear of making a mistake thus giving him an opening to criticize me for years to come). It's some "**Hotel Collection**" thing. I don't know. What I do know is it's about 18 inches tall. I thought we were going for sleek 1950's modern low profile stuff here? If **Carol Burnett** stops by we can put on a very realistic production of "**Once Upon A Mattress**" here now. I have my princess - going on 21 years now - where's the pea?

Where was I? Why I think we've finally moved up a month . . . .

### **March & April**

Let's move up two months actually. Okay saw the house in February, owned it by the end of March. All of March was about paperwork and planning and dragging our friends and coworkers out here (all the way out here) to see if they thought we were crazy. Several did. Most were in shock. Most people liked the house but pretty much everyone was shocked that two totally urban city boys such as us would consider having a ditch in front of their house. "**Where you will go for cappuccinos?**" was the most often asked question.

Somehow in April we managed to box up a ton of stuff in our old apartment and move it all to the basement of the new house. **We had decided to sell the apartment building.** Many people told us to hang on to it and rent our unit out. Rental property, owning a four unit totally fixed up rental on **Capitol Hill**, retirement, financial security, what if you want to move back after living in **B. F. E ?** (You all know that phrase right? It ends with "**Egypt**" for those of you in the dark.) Many many smart people said keep it. And in twenty years or so we'll probably wish we had. **But here's the deal: I'm obsessive.** That place our baby. Of course after 5 years David was ready to throw the baby out with the bath water. I however was not. I loved that building, and I really loved the apartment we lived in. The thought of owning it and having renters in our unit made me shake. The thought of being an absentee landlord made my head hurt. The thought of not being there each day to keep an eye on things (litter for instance, or smoking anywhere on our property) made my disorder really start to act up. And what of phone calls after hours from tenants? Those would shatter the peace of **Matthews Beach** thus defeating one of the few benefits of the move.

So I listened to all of the reasons why we should keep it, but I just couldn't do it - I'm just not wired that way. Plus we don't actually have money as in liquid money you can touch. It's funny cause people think we do, but those who know us really well know we don't. **Nope, all we have is equity.** And there was a new house to fuss. Ya'll know how we love a huge project. Huge projects take real money, not our "looks good on paper" equity money. Plus remember poor **Roy** and **Jim** were beating the bushes in **Palm Springs** actually thinking we could afford to purchase a lot if and when they found one acceptable to us. I didn't want to let them down. So the building had to go.

First we moved all of my piles of paper out of our office. We boxed up half of our books. We boxed up lots of knickknacks and odds and ends. **We know how to stage a place for sale.** We moved 43 files boxes and everything from the odd lamp to deck furniture over to the new house. All within about 10 days. The apartment building went on the market on Monday April 11th and within 3 days there were 3 different parties who claimed to be writing offers and several other good agents we know from the local biz hovering and showing and calling. **It sold within a week at full price.** Of course there were no inspection issues when the new buyers had it inspected. We actually listed it with an agent who didn't work at our office (at the time, he does now). We know about these things (arms length deals, disclosure issues, proper representation, just to name a few) and **we wanted to pay an agent** to handle this for us. So we did. BUT in the end a good friend of ours, an agent who works IN our office as a matter-of-fact, sold it to friends of hers! So after all our efforts to be anonymous and separate from the deal, **Penny Bolton** sells it to two friends of hers! And **Penny** knew we were moving! But she didn't think to sell it to her friends until **AFTER** we listed it.

But in the end it all worked well. The new owners are charming and cool people and we felt very very very good about leaving the tenants we culled to the best and nicest in Seattle in the hands of the new owners. I was worried a "landlord" type would buy it and their lives would go to hell in a hand basket as a new bottom line investor owner type started to meter the water they used or charge them for heat or - god forbid! -impose rent increases. David and I never did those things. David let me run it and my goal was stability and a sure thing. Once I got a great tenant I never wanted to lose them. I gave them whatever they wanted to keep 'em happy and keep 'em. We were actually friends with all of our tenants - we'd even socialize with them off and on. Unheard of for most landlords. **David Wertheimer**, our good friend AND the former owner of **The Dubois**, the guy who sold it to us, used to call me **Mrs. Madrigal** and refer to **The Dubois** as **28 Barbary Lane**. Those days are over. In many ways I'll miss them. But in so many more I will not. I'm not one for regrets.

When I move on, I really move on. When David moves on he's ready to move on again before he unpacks from moving on. **Think I'm kidding?** Ask him how he feels about our new house and neighborhood now. And as you do remember HE sought it out and HE brought me here. Always remember that.

Somehow in **April** we managed to not only pack up and move a heck of a lot of stuff and sell a four unit building, somehow in the midst of all of that we also managed to fly to **Palm Springs** twice, for two different long weekends! How do we do it? Looking back on it I just can't imagine. My dear cousin from **Michigan**, **Marsha Mumm**, met us there the first trip in **April**. Great fun. And in a funny way great for me to reconnect with my "**Michigan**" roots again even if in the land of pools and palm trees. David and **Marsha** and I have a great six days there. Then, towards the end of **April**, David and I return there, this time with his niece **Elisa Ridley**. A much shorter trip, just a three day weekend, but relaxing and fun none-the-less. And as I always tell David, "If we're gonna have a second house we are **OBLIGATED** to use it as often as possible no matter how short the visit."

Back to the house. It wasn't billed as a fixer but within days of closing **Tim Allen** and **Monte Schaaf** where at the house with **Monte's** big purple dump truck and another crew guy. I think they removed two tons of carpeting, paneling, badly build cupboards, weird crap. It's so great to know boyz with a dump truck! Let the remodeling revels begin!

### May & June & July & August

What can I say about this summer? (And fall?) Basically it boils down to this:

**JAS Design-Build arrived at the new house in mid-April and left in late-October.**

I obsessively drove to the new house, now in the midst of a huge remodel, almost daily. I often would have to **FIGHT** the urge to go daily. I think I managed to stay away once maybe three days. That was hard. When we sold the apartment building we negotiated with the new owners both a "**rent free**" period for two months and then a "**pay a whole lot of rent**" period for the remainder of our time there. We became "tenants" on **May 31st** when the sale closed. It was odd - at least it felt odd to me. I all of a sudden became hyper careful in a place we had lived in for years. Anyway by becoming tenants we thus got the money to fund the remodel (most of it) and pay for a vacant lot in **Palm Springs** (half of it) and we got to spend the summer living in that great apartment with that amazing roof top deck. I know it's exactly 8.2 miles from the driveway of our former apartment to the driveway of our new house. I can't count how many times I / we made that drive last summer.

**May's BIG** event was another cool connection with my **Michigan** past: **Lisa Walters**, "the Lisa" as my local circle refers to her, came to Seattle by plane. Once in Seattle she rented a car (barely) from **Hertz** and drove down the coast to **Palm Springs**. We had about four days together in Seattle and then she took off alone on "**Lisa's big adventure**" down **I-5**. Five days later I flew from Seattle to **Palm Springs** and met up with her. This was great fun - in Seattle for me especially. I finally got to tour our new library and I got to go to bookstores I haven't been to in years. (Lisa's obsession is **STEALING** stacks and stacks of **FREE** bookmarks from stores and then - get this - selling them on **eBay**. Evidently if you gather 100 different bookmarks from 100 different bookstores and put a rubber band around the pile and then post it on **eBay** someone will pay you real money for the "collection.") **Lisa** loved **Palm Springs**. This was very gratifying to me. I'm happy when others discover the joys of being there. **Lisa** took to the pool in a big way. I love it when this happens.



Saturday December 17th 2005

Ah! A very quiet morning out here in the 'burbs. It's early. David has left for the gym and then **Tacoma** to visit his stepmother, **Ruth**. I'm home alone. **Inga's** here. I have the fireplace in my office on. It's very early still - 8:30 AM, that's early for me. I've moved off the Christmas music for a while. It'll return to it this afternoon. I have a playlist in iTunes called "**Beautiful Songs**." I only play this when David is away as he always comments something like "This again?" and that ruins the mood of the beautiful songs. I have 3657 songs in iTunes so far. Only 26 of them are beautiful. It's a rarified list. I think of **Merritt** whenever I listen to it as it's weighted heavily with **Sarah McLachlan** songs. The most recent additions to this list are **You're Beautiful** and **Goodbye My Lover** (a hauntingly beautiful and sad song), both by **James Blunt**. He's dreamy. If I were a 15 year old school girl I'd tear a full page picture of him out of **People** magazine and pin it to my wall . . . ah, . . . . wait, ah . . . uh oh.

I got up early. Read (skimmed?) three newspapers and last week's magazine from the Sunday **New York Times**. It was on ideas. I'm skimming the ideas and I come upon: "**Stoic Redheads**." Seriously. That's the idea. Now this is funny to me as I always describe myself, particularly around any illness or medical issue, or body pain of any kind, as "stoic" to David. He'll say, "Why don't you see a doctor about that?" and I'll say "Cause I'm stoic." Or he'll know I hurt myself and am in pain but sees that I don't mention it. Stoic. Or, in the reverse, he'll be dying and moaning and griping when I ask him to help me move something heavy (remember HE goes to a gym six days a week) and I'll say, "You should be more stoic like me." Anyway the idea in this article is that they tested some gene, or a mutation of it called MC1R, which causes red hair. In doing so they found, and I quote:

" . . . . that the variant of MC1R that causes red hair also appears to allow these opiates to work unimpeded. As a result, redheads can withstand up to 25 percent more pain than their blond and brunet peers do before saying "stop."

I think I rest my case! I'm so glad I saved last Sunday's magazine. Now this is something I can clip and save! (I took the **James Blunt** article down and used "his" pin to put this up in its place.)

Still in the kitchen having multiple espressos (we have a quality machine here, not like the toys you can buy at **Macy's** or **Starbucks**) (we sorta have to in this espresso forsaken "neighborhood") I see that **John Spencer** died two days ago. I know him from **LA Law**, which I saw every episode of (I love all things "law") and **West Wing**, which I saw only the very very very first episode of and not one since. (Yeah yeah, I know. Trust me . . . . I'm not lacking in my TV watching time.) Heart attack. 58. I read the obits now. Well, I skim them (I skim everything until I need to read it.) The best obits are in the **LA Times**, which we get when we're in **Palm Springs**. It seems that only very famous people, or people involved in some odd aspect of show business, die in **LA**.

Still skimming I see an article on local real estate. The skimming always **STOPS** then. These articles I read every word of. This one was about the high prices of condos in **Belltown**. This is not new news, but I keep reading. Glad I did again. I see the name of the man who now owns and lives in **EAST EGG**, my first fixer on **East John Street**. I know his name, I've talked to him ages ago when he bought it (not from either of us, we weren't the owners then nor were we his agents). Anyway he's interviewed in the article because he's bought a condo that's under construction at 2200 Westlake. From this I glean that my very first house, **EAST EGG** for those of you who have known me that long, will likely come on the market in 2006. If I were a "pushy" agent, the kind you see on TV, I'd call him and try to get the listing. But I'm not. Anyway, can't wait to walk through it again!

Let's see . . . **I think I was up to June.** What did we do in June?

**Four things it seems:**

1. Drove to the new house every day to see our remodel.
2. Visited lots of local friends and went to dinners and movies.
3. I went to Palm Springs for a short weekend again, 3rd weekend of the month, alone this time.

[ **SIDEBAR:** While alone in **Palm Springs** . . . **CNN** repeats it stories. They produce a mini-story, debut it on someone's show, and then, the rest of that day and sometimes all of the next day, they have a regular talking head reintroduce it and then they run it again. For instance, after **Tom Cruise** started losing his mind last spring (his "**Magnolia-like**" performance on **Oprah** for instance), he went on **The Today Show** to establish how crazy he really is. **Tom** got very nasty with **Matt Lauer**, showed anger and disgust based on nothing, and was surprisingly rude. Like **Tom Cruise**, who's kids at that time were adopted, can speak definitively on postpartum depression! Whacked. Later that day **Anderson Cooper** debuted a segment on his afternoon show recounting **Tom's** bizarre behavior and included many clips of **Tom's** nastiness. Like a good train wreck in a movie, I thought it was all great fun. The first 8 times I saw it. After that even I found it tiresome. So . . . late on a Saturday night, after **CNN** ran this "**Let's Watch Tom Self-Destruct**" segment for the 11th time I decided to change the channel. Of course I still wanted news, so I just advanced the channels by one. In **Palm Springs** this will land you on **Fox News**. I got there just as a showed called "**The Beltway Boys**" was about to start. I have heard people (my kind of people) complain about **Fox News**, but you know I'd never really watched it. Oh MY God! These people are crazy. Absolutely crazy. They opened the segment saying "We're winning the war in Iraq." The then showed clips of **My President** that **Jon Stewart** would show and not even have to verbally comment on to crack you up . . . he'd just show the clip and then look at the camera and nothing would need to be said. These insane "news casters" show the same clips and go on to attack **Ted Kennedy** and rave about **Bush** and **Rumsfelt** and talk about how we could have won the war in Vietnam too - just like we're winning this one - had we only ignored the media and certain people. I am not making any of this up. Again, it's another train wreck. I wanted to turn away but I was transfixed. ]

4. Returning home from **Palm Springs**, at the very end of **June**, I took my office - the ENTIRE OFFICE to see the first showing of **War of the Worlds** on the day it opened in Seattle. See I didn't hold it against him! **Tom** may be crazy, but I love a good action flick. (Sadly this wasn't one.) Each summer I pick "the action flick" of the summer and I pay the admission for any agent working in my office who shows up at the first matinee with me. They buy the popcorn. I get off easy.

**It's July! (Good lord am I only half done with this at this point?)**

God this was an eventful year for us. So much has happened I have forgotten most of it. Thankfully I keep a large calendar on the wall in the kitchen and I write down every dinner and every movie and every trip. David and I schedule our **social lives on this calendar** - and this calendar only since we both keep personal calendars but obviously don't know what's on each other's. So there has to be a master calendar for our friends. When I write this letter I refer to that calendar. As I said this was an eventful year for us . . . I just flipped the page to July and . . .

On **July 4th** David and I flew to **London**. We arrived in **London** on the 5th and checked into an uber cool hotel room: **Saint Martin's Lane**. We got settled just in time for the **July 7th** subway bombings. On the following Monday we did the one thing I have always wanted to do. I have been

wanting to do this for years and I told David a year ago that I wanted it to be my **50th birthday gift** to me from us. And it was. We boarded the **Queen Mary 2 on Monday July 11th**. It's a six day sailing from **London to New York**. The boat goes both ways but I wanted to stand on the bow of the boat as it sailed into **Manhattan**, past the **Statue of Liberty**, past **Midtown**. And I did. We were in **Manhattan** only six months before, at Christmas. But we can't get enough of **New York** so in **July** we sailed into **Manhattan** again for a five day stay. Two of those five days were spent on **Fire Island**. On **Fire Island** I saw **Neil Sedaka**. I heard his voice before I saw him. I called **Cherese** and **Lisa**, or was it **Lisa** and **Cherese**? immediately. Thank god for cell phones! This wasn't as cool as having dinner two tables away from **Bette Midler** and her husband and daughter at the corner of 9th and 43rd in Manhattan (which happened last Christmas) but it was cool none-the-less.

[ **SIDEBAR**: It drives me crazy when people who haven't been to **Palm Springs** complain about the heat there. "Oh it's too hot there, I wouldn't like it." And other such ill informed comments. Don't they know, **IT'S A DRY HEAT** for Pete's sake! Case in point: On Sunday July 17th at 4:30 AM (yes, really, at 4:30 AM) David and I woke up on the **Queen Mary 2**, threw on our clothes, left our very nice and spacious stateroom and headed to the deck. (Yes you sail into **Manhattan**, but at a very early hour! I **HAD** to see the **Statue of Liberty** so I could recite the entire "Give me your tired, your poor, you huddled masses" speech as we did.) The boat is air conditioned. The deck is not. David and I opened that door and walked out into **July** heat and humidity like I hadn't experienced since - well, ever! It was never this humid in **Michigan**! The entire time we were sailing in to dock you could reach out and touch and feel a wall of water surrounding you. And it was hot. I kept commenting to David, "Give me the desert any day." And those of you who act all shocked when I say, "Oh I don't know, I think it was 114° in **Palm Springs** this weekend," just stop it. Know this: 115° in the desert is way nicer than 85° with elevated humidity anywhere else. ]

Let's review: **London, an ocean crossing in major style, Fire Island, Manhattan**. Three full weeks. It was my dream vacation. David is supposed to get his dream vacation in 2006 (when he turns 50) but there's trouble. He wants to go to places I deem unsafe (this is a large list) or where I will get the avian bird flu (another good sized list). I chose the lap of luxury on the ocean. He's thinking of places where people carry guns and buses blow up. Or a country where they skin cats and dogs alive for their fur (I saw it on **Larry King** and couldn't sleep for two nights). I keep saying how about Barcelona. Or Germany. Of course we did live through bombs in London, but we were lucky to not have been on the tube at that time. It's a quandary - a travel quandary - for me, not for David.

**Still Saturday December 17th - but late afternoon now.**

I had to run out. I needed to go to **Starbucks** to meet with a prospective agent who I was supposed to meet with yesterday but \*I\* screwed that up - so rare for me to completely miss an appointment - but I spaced on it with all the other stuff going on. Bad. **Starbucks** - my weekend office. I took **Inga** with me as she was sick of me paying bills from lunch on and ignoring her. After the interview I took her to **Magnuson Park** for an off leash romp. She excels at that. She has this weird thing with greyhounds and whippets however. Those are the only dogs that freak her out: She sees one and barks uncontrollably. It is very bizarre.

Have you been waiting for an update on the Christmas carols in iTunes . . . . I'm up to 436 imported songs now. I just finished importing a classic **Nat King Cole** disc of classic Christmas songs AND a recent Christmas disc by **Kathie Lee Gifford**. Seriously. I can enjoy both - that's why I'm so much fun! Trust me I know one is schlock and the other is a classic. I can tell the difference. But still I

can enjoy the cheesy one. I can't allow myself to import Christmas carols after **December 25th** so I gotta keep on it. I've got plenty of CDs to go but I guess there's always next year if I don't finish.

Well I just flipped the page to **August**. Let's see . . . much to the chagrin of our ever changing **JAS** team, we returned from a three week vacation. Imagine the peace they had while we were gone! All good things end eventually. Again 8.2 miles there, 8.2 miles back to the apartment. Repeat daily for the month of August. Thank god for **NPR**.

While driving I listen to **National Public Radio**. This is better news than **CNN** (but it doesn't have pictures). I don't trust **My President**. I think he secretly wants to abolish Social Security. Why do I think this . . . well . . . he says he's just gonna tweak it a bit now with private accounts that we would get to self manage, but I don't trust this. I think this is surely his first step in a larger game plan. Social security is based upon an idea that we as a society have to take care of each other. That's the **BIG concept** here, that we should take care of each other. **Bush's** plan is to drive that idea out of people's heads. (Wait - I might be giving **Bush** too much credit here - someone under him came up with this plan and passed it up the ladder I'm sure.) Anyway it's clear he doesn't believe the big concept. Most Republicans don't - as a group they have ol' the pull yourself up by your boot straps mentality: "I didn't do anything to that man who lost his job when it was out sourced to Mexico when he was 53. Why should I contribute twenty dollars out of my \$200,000-a-year income? I'm not responsible for him. If somebody doesn't take care of him, if he has no family or friends, that's his problem." **So goes their logic**. Getting others to think the same way they do takes a lot of time and indoctrination. Thus they've come up with the idea of self managed private accounts **INSTEAD OF social security**. With these accounts they can slowly train the public to think as they do. Once everyone is responsible for their own individual account it isn't a far jump to everyone is responsible for only themselves. See? They had to start somewhere. That's what I think is going on here. I don't trust them. Him. Well most of them too. Don't get me started.

I'm sure that **Ben Folds** and **Rufus Wainwright** both believe in the big concept. Near the end of August David and I went to see them perform at **Saint Michelle Winery**. **Gary** and **Frank** drove. Also attending the concert that night were **Lance** and **Marcia** but they were in some hoity-toity roped off section sitting on chairs. And they got special food. David and I and **Frank** and **Gary** had to make do with the regular "food" sold at the venue. Occasionally **Lance** and **Marcia** would leave the roped off special section and come over to where the four of us were sitting on the lawn (on cute little chairs provided by **Frank** and **Gary**, mini folding patio chairs). They would sneak us desert and cookies and stuff from their special section. We did get special parking because **Lance** had special parking for two couples (two cars) but his other couple was in his car so when we pulled up to the gate we used his name to get in and got **Doris Day Parking** that night. It was a beautiful **August** night near summer's end. A great evening was had by all. And I love **Ben Folds'** music.

A mere two days later found us down by **Sea Tac Airport**. Another trip to **Palm Springs**? No. We actually know people who left the city and moved 3 blocks from the south entrance (the **SOUTH** entrance mind you - even farther from Seattle) of the airport. Maybe it's 10 blocks. It's walking distance I know because when we're down there we see **Mark** and **Dirk's** neighbors walking while pulling rolling luggage to the airport. It isn't far. Anyway . . . . **Sunday August 28th**, David's **49th** birthday was spent on **Angle Lake** in **Sea Tac**. **Mark** and **Dirk** bought a house there. It's on the water. So we spend the day . . . **Inga** got to come along to play with their dogs, **Gracie** and **Oliver**, and **Cherese** and **Rebecca** where there too. The six of us had a lovely brunch in the backyard mere

feet from the water's edge. We toured the never ending remodel there. David quietly turned **49** as the dogs played and the six of us visited. He looks 40 to me still. Except when I ask him to help me move a heavy banquet table from "the flex space" to the garage.

### Still Saturday December 17th - but late at night now!

We have some late breaking news (it was news, it's not now, but it is late). We just got in from the **JAS** annual Christmas party at their cabinet shop. No one groaned when we walked it - we think this is a good sign. **Fred Birchman** was there. David and I walked up to **Fred** and **Robin** and the very first thing out of **Fred's** mouth is that he's been checking his mailbox daily for this letter - where is it? I say it's at home half done. With any luck he'll have it on Tuesday, Wednesday worse case. **Fred** wants to know if **HE'S** mentioned in it. I look at him blankly (as I do when the other 32 of my friends ask me this each year - and you know who you are). He then reminds me of something that I guess is noteworthy: My fifteen minutes of fame arranged for and due to the efforts of **Fred Birchman**. When we were in **London** and the city shut down after the subway bombings I would write lengthy (surprised?) e-mails and send them to, oh, maybe 50 friends back home plus the entire staff and crew at my office. Why not? You write one e-mail and it's so easy to sent to hundreds of people. My e-mails were of the "your man on the street" variety. I would describe what the feeling was like there, how people were getting around, and what it was like when all the shops (gasp!) and restaurants closed. Also I just wanted everyone here to know we were safe there. So **Fred** was one of the many recipients of these e-mails and he works at **MSNBC.com**. He liked them and e-mailed back asking permission to use portions of them on the **MSNBC** website. Of course I said, "YES!" I've heard from people they thought they saw a quote or two credited to me on TV on the **MSNBC** channel. I don't know. I do know they were on the web site as I went there at the time and saw them. **So I have now had my 15 minutes**. Trouble is I want 15 more.

[ **Sidebar**: Even tho' **Fred's** name appears in bold type he may not see this citing of him. One year the four of us were having dinner in the spring, not long after the letter went out, and something very obvious that was discussed midway into the previous year's letter came up. **Fred** had **NO CLUE** what **Robin** and David and I were talking about. I dropped my fork and nailed him: "You didn't read the letter!" He reluctantly admitted what I knew all along! Posers! ]

### Sunday December 18th - my last day of this!

Once again the morning papers. In **London** thieves backed a flat bed truck up to a **Henry Moore** sculpture and took it. It weighed two tons and was 11 feet long 6 feet wide and 6 feet tall. Once you take something like that, what do you do with it?

Big article on **Scientology** and **Tom Cruise**. I read every word. Evidently the world headquarters for this is 90 miles east of **LA**. This would make it 30 miles west of **Palm Springs**, close to the **Ontario** airport that we fly in and out of on all our summer trips. I think I'll stop by next time. It's in a place called **Gilman Hot Springs**. Never heard of it but I know how to **mapquest** things.

Hmmmm, **My President** says he authorized domestic spying and is now sticking up for it. Frankly **Tom Cruise** is more surprising these days. I have a good friend who voted for **George Bush** both times and has freely admitted this to me. I won't say who (that would be mean and as I always tell David, "I didn't get the cruel gene") but let me just say he's one of the 32 people who always want a mention in this letter. I'm fighting the urge. Right now. Fighting the urge. Don't get me started, don't even get me started. (A direct quote from **Saturday Night Live**, yes I know.)

Moving on . . .

I admire a GOOD television commercial. One of my current favorites is for **Lendingtree.com** (an evil company but I can still admire a good commercial). They have one where various people are in their houses alone looking at and talking to the house and saying things you would normally say if you were ending a relationship with someone. "I just don't love you any more" or "I need more space" or, my favorite, as a woman looks at a huge growing stain on her ceiling, "Why are you doing this to me?" Clever. I like clever. But my 2005 award for best commercial has to go to **PAXIL**. There's a solemn looking man talking to the camera. He says, "It's like I never get a chance to relax; at work I'm tense about stuff at home, at home I'm tense about stuff at work." I liked that so much I wrote it down after I saw it a few times. I walk around saying that a lot to myself. I don't take Paxil (not that there's anything wrong with that) but I have friends who do. I have other friends who should. As a matter of fact I am more and more convinced these days that David should. Every time I light one of the fireplaces, light a candle, let a cat out, give the dog a human food treat, oh god the list could be exhaustive. David frequently comes up to me and starts a conversation with the phrase, "Are you at all concerned that \_\_\_\_\_?" I have developed a clear stock answer for most of these discussions that starts with a slowly enunciated, "**No-I-am-not-at-all-concerned-about-\_\_\_\_\_.**" It mostly doesn't work. Then I suggest better living through chemistry. (It would be better living for me at least.)

## September

So in September only two things happened.

1. Each time we visited the **JAS** job site we'd ask, "**Can we move in on September 30th?**"
2. David and I spent **Labor Day Weekend** in **Palm Springs** with **Kevin** and **Kent**. I was just looking at the social calendar again because I know that **Lisa**, the **Lisa** from **Michigan**, visited me **TWICE** in **Palm Springs** this year, but I didn't have the when of the second time on the calendar. But then I remembered us going to lunch with **Kevin** and **Lisa** and **Lisa** getting with her fries, but not opening, a very cute small bottle of ketchup. She took it. (Are you detecting a theme with her?) When I mention **Lisa** around **Kevin** now he recalls that lunch. So **Lisa's** second trip must have been late **August** to **Labor Day**.

Who's **Kevin**? Who's **Kent**? Well **Kent** is **Kevin's** husband. (There was a ceremony - David and I weren't invited but we're coping well with this tho' the weekly therapy bills are getting high.) (Now that I think of it this is not the first time David and I haven't been invited to the weddings or ceremonies of our gay friends. What's up with that? Do they think we set a bad example? Or that we'll somehow jinx it? Or that we won't bring an appropriate gift? Why just last night we shopped at **Babes In Toyland!**) (Seriously.)

You're getting off track again . . . who's **Kevin**? Well, remember in 2003 and 2004 when David dumped me as a business partner and got a better one? It went well but then remember that well before 2004 ended that business partner (whose name is never spoken aloud anymore) bailed and left Seattle on what we sarcastically called "Vision Quest?" That ended David's having a business partner. He went solo at the start of the third quarter of 2004 and he moved on. David hired **Lee Curry** (partner of **Mark Weeks** the "wedding" photographer previously mentioned) to design and build a dandy professional web site for him. David moved on.

The trouble is that David honestly likes having a business partner. And we like to get away and you simply can't do that without competent quality backup. Enter **Kevin Gaspari**. I hired **Kevin** to be an agent at the Eastlake office back in 1999. In January of this year David and **Kevin** hooked up as a new team in the city and took off. It's been a good year for both of them but the best thing to come of this new arrangement is that now we seem to be hanging around with **Kevin** and **Kent** more - a new couple to do things with, always a good thing. And one of those things we've done this year was to spend Labor Day Weekend in Palm Springs together.

[ **Sidebar:** A plug for David's web site: [www.davidupdike.net](http://www.davidupdike.net) in case you're curious. He started it when he was a solo act. It's cool. **Lee** did an awesome job with it, great fit and feel, great colors, great layout, lots of photos (often taken by **Mark**). Rumor has it is it currently being reviewed and will possibly be updated to include Kevin's smiling face. I hope my face, not smiling, will be removed from this site soon, or at least replaced. The pic there, well, it's not one of my best: I look like an overweight 50 year old man! Oh, one very cool thing . . . if you try hard you can find the cutest photo of **INGA** ever taken. **Mark** took it. It is hidden in the site. Okay, I'll tell you . . . you have to send David the comment form. After you do the picture pops up. It's so cute some days I go there and send David a note just to see the photo pop up! Keep watching. ]

### October & November & December

Right up to today now. This is it. The end is in sight. And you know what - honestly - I'm not going to proof read this this year. It's late and **Cherese** and **Rebecca** are coming over for dinner (8.2 miles, we're sorry) and to watch the all new and improved **Once Upon A Mattress** on our fancy TV. And I have to fuss mailing labels now. **Tim Allen**, ever so helpful, is planning on helping me send this out tomorrow - so, and face it, I'm later than I've ever been with this this year - usually you have it by the 17th or 18th. That won't be the case this year. Blame it on the move. I do. For the last two months I have blamed everything on the move. The chaos. The boxes. Not knowing where anything is. Comes in ever so handy. So those of you who like to find mistakes and pester me about them - **have at it!**

My father's 80th birthday was October 9th. My 50th was October 11th. What with the remodel and work and the impending move we both couldn't go to **Michigan**. I went alone. I got a room in **Ann Arbor** and spent five days there. I took a red eye there - but for free in first class thanks to the remodel (frequent flyer miles on the charge card). I spent a day with **Lisa**, a day with **Marsha**, and a day with **Susan**. I took my dad to a fancy dinner out and **Marsha** and **Aunt Geraldine** arranged a huge family dinner at a place called, god I hope I get this right, **Earl's** or **Earl's Down Under**, or was it just **The Earl**??? I don't remember - but 14 of us were there, or more, everyone. My sister **Lynn**, her family, mom and dad, all of us that are left. More **Michigan** memories. I drove past all of my old grade schools (seriously), drove around the streets of my old neighborhood, past where my first teaching job was, etc. I got to see where my parents moved to after they sold the house where I grew up. I took photos of big signs that my dad made. I got to spend yet another day in 2005 with **Lisa** - this made for three visits in one year- absolutely unheard of. There's a **Starbucks** in **Ann Arbor** (several actually) and I had a pleasant visit.

I returned home the day before my 50th. The house was ALMOST ready for us, but it was not fully done. David threw a catered birthday party for me there anyway. I guess it was about 50 people, I don't know as I didn't do the guest list (obviously). It was so cool having the party in the unfinished

place - just to get that out of the way. Everyone "got to see the house" and it took the pressure off us of having to have people over after we moved. I told David that all I wanted for my 50th was to have champagne in this house with some of my friends. And he made that happen. The house, by the way, is 50 too. We have the original plans and permits. The construction of this house began in **1955** (the year I was born) and was finished in **1956** (the year David was born). How could we not live here now? The tax records state 1956 its age but I have papers dated 1952 and 1955 as well.

You know the "social calendar" I refer to? It's sad when you turn the pages to October or November or December. Nothing is written in. NOTHING. On October 14th, a Friday, it says: "**MOVE.**" Then, five days later on the 19th is say, again, "**MOVE.**" The first move was ours, from the **DuBois** to this house. It was a bad day for us. Don't make me talk about it. The second move was my office from where we used to be to our new space. I was "involved" in TWO remodels this summer. The owners of my office generously gave me twice the space that I had. We were in 7,000 square feet. We moved to the top two floors of another building they own, next to the one we have, that is about 15,000 square feet. I was involved in all of the planning, the design, the colors, the materials. Some days I'd leave a meeting there to come here and the color chips and tile samples were swirling in my mind at the end of the day.

Anyway . . . honestly since October 14th we feel like we've just been unpacking and organizing and nothing else. **U-Village** is very close to our new house. I have always loved **U-Village**. David too. He just brought me (as I finish this) a brownie and some hot tea. The brownie came from **Pasta & Co** at **U-Village** where he spent the afternoon. Me? I'm there three times a week at least. And it is always to go to **Storables**. I am on a first name basis with the staff at **Storables**. I have spent thousands of dollars there on post industrial shelving and other things for this new house. I know what is on every aisle in that store. I could be the buyer for that store. I've got one more shelving unit to assemble here (in my office, the last room to be "put together" as I made all of the public spaces, and David's office since he's the breadwinner, the priority) and I'm really looking forward to having the time to do that (this letter had to come first).

We did manage to host **Thanksgiving Day** dinner here for 14 people. That was a push, but well worth it. I was thrilled to have Thanksgiving come and go because I set that weekend as the soonest I could start sending out my Christmas cards. My good friend **Michael Kuntz**, who used to have a fancy big job as a graphic-web-site-master-designer whatever, was out sourced. This is, of course, because of **George Bush**. So I wanted to be his very FIRST client as he opened shop as **MWK Design**. I am not sure if I was or not. I was close - another friend also hired him as soon as she heard - or I was the second to place an order but the first to pay. Anyway **Michael** did our very cute Christmas cards and that all encompassing change of address card that many of you received. And if you didn't receive one just let me know (e-mail me your mailing address) because I have plenty of them left and they are so cool, and the envelope **Michael** made is even cooler, and, well I know you are going to **WANT ONE**. So let me know and then I'll be able to say, "**You've got mail.**"

We did manage, also, to host the Eastlake office's annual Christmas party here last weekend. That was **140 people** and you know what, it worked. This house can entertain that many. Of course it helped that we rented a heated tent to put on the back patio. It was 10 feet by 15 feet and it housed the 8 foot bar and two bartenders. Getting the bar OUT of the house at any party helps. The very next night **Kevin and David** hosted a much much smaller event for people they needed to thank for 2005. Same tent, same bar, same caterer (**Cass Vaivadas** who owns and runs **Stellar**



**Catering**, most excellent!) but different food. That party I was not stressed about as it had nothing to do with me. I was lucky to be invited.

**I feel as tho' we have completely broken this place in already.** We have lived here just over two months and we've entertained hundreds here already. (JSF - take note!) It feels good. Notice that I didn't go on and on and on about the house, the remodel, what we did, why we did it, how big it is, the layout, our "flex space," what it's like to have a real two car garage attached to the house, or the ten foot tall custom shower curtain that Kim at JAS thought up and executed. I spared you all of that. All you need to know is that I love it here, surprisingly so. I can't believe I have to drive on streets with names like **Lake City Way** or **Northgate Way** ever, but I do. And it, so far, hasn't freaked me out.

I'm saving all of the stuff about the house for **NEXT YEAR'S** letter. It'll give you something to look forward to. And it'll give me something to write about if next year is a bum year and nothing happens and we go nowhere (as David is convinced is going to happen). I don't think any year will ever - EVER - be like this year was. But who know with us, we could surprise yet again.

I think I'm at the end. As I said, and I'm serious, I'm not going to proof read this. Still if you find mistakes I'd like to know so it can be perfect when it gets uploaded to the internet. And it will. So please (Merritt, Greg, the writing wonks out there) let me know what you find amiss.

I'm done. It's been a good year here, exciting and fun. We hope yours was the same even if you don't feel the bizarre need to tell us about it (we recognize that this is bizarre).

**Keep in touch,**



**Michael Nelson**

michael@nelsonupdike.com

**206 . 328 . 2145**



**David Updike**

david@davidupdike.net

**206 . 329 . 0484**

[ Both of those are cell phone numbers and get both texts and emails ]

**Notice that David has a new e-mail address based on his new web site.**

**Notice that if you go to our old web site (the one my e-mail address is based on, did you ever do this before?) the old 1999 Christmas letter, the one that caused such drama in our lives after it was scanned and uploaded to the internet (ah . . . Ned and Garry, where are they now?) is gone.**

**Pray that a year from now there'll be new content at [www.nelsonupdike.com](http://www.nelsonupdike.com) instead. David says you want this letter that way - that you'd rather get it from a website than you would in the mail with a calendar. Is that true?**