



Saturday December 15th

2007

## Holiday Greetings Family, Friends, and Valued Clients:

I'd like to open with some good news, some bad news, and an apology.

Let's tackle the apology first.

We would like to apologize to all of you who are in some way coupled up but have different last names. More to the point, I am apologizing to the couples with different last names on behalf of Bill Gates. You might wonder why. It's like this: Bill Gates owns Microsoft, Microsoft owns Outlook, and thus they own the version of Outlook that's made for Macintosh computers called "Entourage." I am a confirmed Mac user. (I wonder: Is this like in the days of yore when I'd have been called a "confirmed bachelor"?) And, being completely and hopelessly (and quite happily) addicted to e-mail, I bought a Blackberry a little over a year ago. Where is this going? Well... Microsoft pretty much owns the software world. Blackberrys need to synch up with computers, but can only do this with select software on those computers. I was running my e-mail life in Eudora and my contact life in Palm software. But I learned that neither Eudora or Palm would synch with the Blackberry. So I had a decision to make: I needed a new database, but which one? Research was done and, after 20 plus years of not owning a PC or any product made by Microsoft (not that there's anything wrong with either, it just wasn't my choice), I decided to dump my trusted old Eudora and Palm software and roll two separate applications into one new one (for me anyway) made by Microsoft: Entourage. You get Entourage by buying Office for the Mac. So I did.

For the past year I've been fussing my database. All of my Palm contacts were imported (a process I never trust) (with good reason as it turns out), contacts were fussed, contacts were deleted. It's hard to know the ins and outs of a database until you immerse yourself in it. Yes Entourage synchs well with the Blackberry, BUT, quite unbelievably for me, it does not allow for printing mailing labels with two names on them. This is the reason for my apology. In Palm when you have a couple with different last names, perhaps a woman who has married and kept her name, or a gay couple (it's the oughts, you should know the possible combinations by now) there is a FIELD for a second name in a contact. And, more importantly, when you print a mailing label, as I do once each year for this letter mailing, you can stack the names on the label. You can have BOTH names on the mailing label. Yes, of course, you have to decide who is the primary contact (whose name goes on top?), BUT at least it can be done. NOT SO WITH MR. GATE'S SOFTWARE.

I have tried and tried. I have read online manuals and every help menu in the program. I have called my I.T. guy. He is a great resource, a Mac user, a Mac expert, and he's very familiar with Entourage. He confirms what I have learned: In Mr. Gate's world you need to have the same last name.

The most maddening part is that the Entourage software has a field that says: SPOUSE. Each contact can have a spouse. I was pleased to see that when I first started to teach myself how to use the program. But it would never have occurred to me that tho' the field exists that you can't print it on a mailing label. Can you believe that? You can't. You have to go into WORD to make the labels. WORD is in the OFFICE package, tied into Entourage. But once you get there you can't build a label with two names on it. You just can't. If you have a married couple with short first names, like Randy and Judy for instance, you can trick the program by putting "Randy & Judy" in the first name field and then "Peck" in the last name field and the label will then read "Randy & Judy Peck." That's possible, but the two first names have to be small enough to fit in the space allotted for one first name. First names like Charlotte and Frederick would not work as they'd be too long for the field. If your first name was Bill and your last name Gates and you married a Melinda, well then you're good to go. Married couples with the same last name and short first names, well you can make a label for them and thus show some respect. Everyone else, too bad. NO respect for you.

What was Microsoft thinking? Doesn't the option for two last names seem like a no-brainer? I wonder how this works if you are using Outlook and you're on a PC? Anyway . . . .

Whatever they were thinking, I'm apologizing, on their behalf, to all of you whose name was left off of the mailing label. It's wrong. David was very very upset when he saw this. I tried to explain it all to him, but, well David doesn't really have the patience I have for figuring things like this out or for listening to me. He just gets frustrated which then migrates to anger. In closing on this topic, we didn't mean to diss anyone. This letter is for YOU even if we can't put your name on the darn mailing label. We know you're out there. We hope you're not offended. Perhaps Microsoft will have an epiphany and fix this problem in a soon to be released version of Office for the Mac. Until then I'm stuck. Changing databases, and learning a new one, is just too much time and effort. I'm sticking with Entourage. Plus I like saying "Entourage" - it has happy connotations for me.

### The Good News ?

In fussing the database I have greatly reduced the number of contacts in it. People fade away. People diss us. People piss us off. Thus the number of people left in the database is much smaller than it has ever been in the past. Why is this good? It means that this year, 2007, is the smallest number of calendars, and thus this letter, we have ever sent out. *Think* of the trees being saved.

### The Bad News ?

This letter is 23 pages long.

Remember you can stop right now and recycle this and move on with your day. No one makes you read this. There are people who make me write it, but just 'cause they do doesn't mean you have to read it. Decisions, decisions. Settle in with a cup of coffee and power through it? Put it in the bathroom and read a paragraph at a time for the next 67 visits to the bathroom? Throw it out now?

### Something I Worry About

I go to all of these meetings and I hear people say things like, "We're going to power through this," and I cringe inside at what I call "meeting speak," YET these sayings creep into my vocabulary. I am stuck in middle management and I worry I will start to sound like a middle manager.

The Start Of The Year

I love lists. I spent the first few months of this year making them. I made all of the usual lists: big things I want to accomplish in 2007, health issues for 2007, money goals for 2007, things to get done around the house in 2007, and so on. You know, the same kinds of lists that half America might make, you included! But this year, thanks to Merritt Green, there were other lists. Merritt came up with an idea, a great one mind you, for this Christmas letter. It was a concept for the structure of the letter, a radical departure from my usual barely connected ramblings. Her idea, in a nutshell, was to turn the letter itself into a list. Little did she know the stress it caused me.

Let's Pick Up Where We Left Off

Last Christmas David and I traveled to Puerto Vallarta with my favorite cousin Marsha, still from Michigan, and Merritt Green, still of Seattle. The four of us had rented a 3 bedroom, 4 bathroom, penthouse condo in the very heart of the charming, original downtown section of the city. The condo had a stunning view of the bay and beach from a large open air living room and kitchen area. Lazy days were followed by drinks and nice dinners for a full week. One day Merritt and David went to the beach with the 2006 Christmas letter. Merritt wanted to reread it; David was reading it for the first time. (David trusts me and just signs things I place in front of him tho' he has been threatening to not sign it this year because it still doesn't have color pictures like Paul & David's does). When they returned to the condo hours later Merritt shared her new idea for this letter with me: An index. A numerical index. A list of things that could be described in words and then summed up with a number and nothing more. It was to be the *Harper's Index* renamed as the *Nelson + Updike Index*. I said, quite enthusiastically I might add, "Okay" and "I can do that" and the idea was born.

Returning home at the start of a New Year I set about making a list of things in our lives that I could count and track. Making the list was fun. Here are just some of the things I came up with:

- Number of trips I made to Palm Springs in 2007: ?
- Number of days I was in Palm Springs: ?
- Number of trips David made to Palm Springs in 2007: ?
- Number of flights I took in 2007: 33
- Number of flights I took in 2007 while sitting in first class: ?
- Number of air miles we earned in 2007 on our Visa card: ?
- Number of days we were in Manhattan in 2007: 11
- Number of days I was in a foreign country: 0
- Number of vacation days I took this year: ?
- Number of road trip days I spent in a car with Inga in 2007: 6

Number of years David and I have been together as of February 12th 2007:	22
Number of years Calvin and Claire, our cats, who are brother and sister, have been alive:	15
Exact age Inga, the world's smartest and prettiest Weimarer, will be ON Christmas Day 2007:	8.5
What I weighed, stark naked, on Tuesday January 17th 2007:	210
What I weighed, stark naked, today, December 15th 2007:	184
Number of pounds I lost in 2007:	26
Number of trees I purchased and planted in our Seattle yard in 2007:	?
Dollars I spent on all plants (and trees) for our Seattle yard in 2007:	?
Number of palm trees we have planted in our yard in Palm Springs since we purchased the house on March 24th of 2001:	25
Total number of palm trees in our yard in Palm Springs now:	26
Total number of all trees in our yard in Palm Springs now:	27
Total number of OPEN HOUSES I went to in Palm Springs in 2007:	?
Number of properties Roy and Jim, our ever helpful Palm Springs real estate agents, showed me in Palm Springs in 2007:	?
Size of the flat square-ish vacant lot David and I own in Palm Springs:	13,501 sq. ft.
Number of books David and I bought in 2007:	?
Number of books I actually read in 2007:	?
Number of magazines David and I currently subscribe to:	?
Number of newspapers delivered to our home in Seattle each day:	3
The total number of TVs in our Seattle home now:	6
Number of TVs in our Seattle home that I use each and every day:	5
Number of movies DAVID saw in a real live movie theater in 2007:	?
Number of real estate agents working under my supervision at the Windermere Eastlake office on January 1st 2007:	103

Number of real estate agents working under my supervision at the Windermere Eastlake office today:	93
Number of listings (a.k.a., houses put on the market for sale) by agents in my office in 2007 (Y-T-D as we have 15 days to go):	486
Number of transactions (a.k.a., real estate deals, properties sold and closed) by agents in my office in 2007 (again Y-T-D):	982
Number of Sunday OPEN HOUSES David held in Seattle in 2007:	?
Number of meals David and I ate out in 2007:	?
Day I got a brand new turntable (a.k.a., "a record player") in 2007:	Tuesday, Feb 27th
Number of vinyl records we owned on that day (relics of our pasts):	?
Number of vinyl records we own today:	?
Number of "new" fall TV shows I tivo'd and watched:	?
Number of shows in general I tivo and watch on a weekly basis:	?
Number of bicycles David & I bought in 2007 so YOU could visit us and ride on the Burke Gilman Trail WITH us:	4
Number of graves Lisa and I walked by (and over) on Friday, March 30th while looking for Frank Sinatra's in a cemetery on Ramon Road in Cathedral City:	Too many to count
Cash value of the silver coins I removed from Sinatra's headstone:	\$1.60

It went on. I could. But I won't. You get the idea. So, I made a list, but I didn't keep track of any of it. Yeah a fixed item, like the fixed amount of coins I could take from a grave, well that was easy. (Who puts dimes and nickels on a grave anyway?) Keeping track of how many movies we see or books we read, was not. However making the list was fun. Just reading some of the featured items from the list now was fun (for me anyway). And it does give you an idea of what matters to me, of what I would be interested in tracking *if I was disciplined enough* to track any of this.

The reality of keeping up with that list was not fun. It wasn't the shameless stealing of an idea, that stressed me out. No. I even went out and bought several issues of *Harper's* so I could see how their Index worked, how it flowed. I was more than ready to rip of their intellectual property. What stressed me out was having to track all of that. If I didn't lead the life I do, I suppose I could have kept up with it. But for me it was an impossible task.

I try to lead a stress free life. I start each day stress free. (I try not to use an alarm clock, I tivo the Today show and relax with it in the kitchen as I feed pets and make coffee, I enjoy my morning coffee while walking through my garden, etc. ) And I try not to let things "get to me" throughout the rest of my day. Merritt's idea was getting to me every time I thought about it.

Fast Forward To June 19th

While stuck in the Ontario, California airport on the afternoon of Tuesday June 19th, I threw in the towel and completely abandoned Merritt's plan for the Nelson + Updike Index. What finally killed it? It wasn't being stranded. I travel ready to be stranded at all times. Being stranded for an extra two and half hours in the Ontario airport was not getting to me. Some people get worked up when the loudspeaker informs them their flight has a mechanical delay. Me, I just look for a table with an electrical outlet near it. I settle in. I view this as very focused, treasured "alone time" and set about to work. The great thing about the Ontario airport is how small and easy to manage it is. However when something goes wrong with your plane (damn you Alaska Airlines!) and you are stranded there it starts to feel like a dead shopping mall. All of the very sad and pathetic shops actually close up at 5:30 PM. There's no food, not real food anyway. Even your standard "airport food" is not an option. And no Starbucks. No coffee of any kind anywhere to be found. It's a sad place. But it has the most wonderful terrazzo floors.

So while the angry crowds were swarming the Alaska desk - as if that's gonna do any good - I bought a bottle of water, a bag of M&Ms with peanuts (nutrition!), got to the one table I know of there with an electrical outlet near it (this is not my first time) and plugged in my laptop.

So I thought . . . . NOW would be a good time to work on Merritt's idea. I opened my trusty Mac, opened my ongoing Christmas letter document, and . . . . I felt stress. And not just because I could see the final mob scene from the movie *Frankenstein* playing out in the distance at the Alaska desk. No, other stress: Letter stress. This was not the first time this happened when I opened the list up. I kept thinking I was going to catch up with the idea, manage it, get it under control, embrace it. But, like a failed diet and exercise plan, it's easy to get overwhelmed, feel behind, then feel bad about yourself and then just say forget it.

As I studied the list of things, 3 Index killing points came to the forefront:

- 1) It was already the latter half of June and I had not been keeping up, I had not been counting. I thought it would be easy to count these things when I started but really, how and where was I going to log how many open houses I stop at on the spur of the moment?
- 2) Even if I spent hours with my personal calendar on my laptop, and even if I spent hours with our JOINT social and travel calendar kept on the wall of our kitchen, I could never catch up with the year so far.

and, the real death knell for this concept,

- 3) If I continued trying to make the Index work I would have to deal with these list items:

What I paid for a brand new, top quality, elliptical trainer made by Life Fitness in November of 2006:	\$
First day in 2007 I used it:	Tuesday, January 22nd
Number of times I have used it since:	0
Cost of elliptical trainer per use in 2007:	?

Cost of elliptical trainer per pound I lost in 2007:

?

I just didn't want to go there. Obviously I could go back into a Quicken register and get the exact dollar amount (I charged it and got a lot of air miles) that the trainer cost. But then I'd have to admit to you, my ever faithful readers, what that number was. And the usage hasn't been, well, let's put it this way . . . there are 6 TVs in the house and 5 of them are used daily. There is one TV in the laundry room directly in front of the elliptical trainer. To calculate usage you could do that math (or you could ask David about it). If I had the usage numbers and the cost, and if I weighed myself and did the math, . . . oh . . . WHY did I decide that I should track cost per pound lost and cost per usage of the machine? Why? I guess 'cause I had such high hopes for 2007 as it started.

Another Christmas Letter Writer would have just fudged the list. Why not, you ask, just backspace over that line item, and perhaps delete a few other related items, and move on? Because I can't. I only type the truth and I stay true to my format. (I wonder if I should qualify "the truth" to say "my truth" but that starts to sound like "meeting speak" and I just can't do it.) Cheating on those items would be not only dishonest, it would make the list, ah, unfaithful? A joke? I don't know. Better to just scrap the whole plan and go back to writing the way I know how. I like to write. I have time to write. I don't have time to count our vinyl records.

So (still at the airport I remind you) at 4:55 PM I just said, " F@#% IT! " and I began to erase most of the index categories. Immediately I started to feel better about 2007 in general and the 2007 version of this annual tradition specifically.

"It's Coming On Christmas, They're Cutting Down Trees . . . ."

Joni Mitchell. But you knew that. Just broke for lunch (what precedes this sentence is what I can get done between coffee and lunch). After the counters were cleared (Ingal!), David I spent another hour in the yard. Even in the dead of winter there are things to do. Today's project, besides the constant poop patrol and leaf and branch pick up, was to better hang the one hummingbird feeder we had and add one more closer the to the picture window that looks out on our gardens from the kitchen. David made up more hummingbird food (seems to be sugar and water, I don't do this) as I dealt with chains and hooks and such. We're back now. Well I'm back. David is literally sitting in a chair staring at the new hummingbird feeder. Waiting. There are no hummingbirds. Yet.

I'm gonna move on, but before I do . . . remember when I was stranded at the Ontario airport? My flight out was supposed to be at 3:30 ish. I left our house in Palm Springs around noon that day to get gas, get lunch, return the rental and get to the airport on time. I got home and crawled into bed at 2:00 AM the next morning. It felt like I had been traveling for 14 hours to make a 2 hour trip. Wait - I had! It was my first major travel hell day of the year. The year is almost over now and so far I've only had one other, and not nearly as bad as the first, for a total of two hellish travel days. Not bad when you consider how often I'm doing this (often enough to finally make GOLD with Alaska Airlines). If I were keeping an index this could be a category. Anyway on that first bad travel day my flight ended up being canceled and all of the other flights were booked (by the hoards who rushed the counter and yelled while I sat peacefully in the corner working on my laptop and patiently waiting for the flight to be fixed = travel fool then, but no more!). I ended up on a shuttle van with a bossy businessman who grabbed the front seat leaving me to sit in the back with a couple that had 5 kids who screamed and fought the entire 2 hour drive to LAX where I was sent to catch an 11:00 PM flight. The second time I had a bad travel day I was at the Alaska ticket counter immediately.

Now we're having tea, green tea, as we do every afternoon. And, since it's Saturday, cookies. Before lunch, David went out to get real cookies. There's not much in Wedgwood but there are places that bake things: Top Pot, Grateful Bread, Metropolitan Market, and, in a pinch, Starbucks. We never eat packaged, grocery store bought cookies so close by baked good options are a good thing for us.

Jeeeeeeze . . . . I've made it to page 8 and I haven't started a month-by-month deconstruction of the year? Best get to it before my next break which, given how my neck hurts from sitting at this laptop, will likely be soon.

### January

What is there to say? It's winter, it rained, I don't get to work in the yard. We bought a brand new washer and dryer in January. The old ones that came with the house 2 years prior just weren't cutting it. Sold the old ones to clients of one of my agents for cheap.

The highlight of the month was going to Palm Springs for the MLK holiday weekend. It's the first 3 day weekend of the year and we always make the most of it. We went, as we usually do. Tho' this year (next, in 2008 I mean) we are going to Spokane for the *Robbie Burns Party* instead. It's rumored that Fred Bircham and Joe Schneider are actually going to travel to Spokane next year for this event as well. I guess hearing David speak of this party so often over the years has just made them too curious to not go once. The moment I heard this was a possibility I told David I was in. If they are going, well then I'm going too. Mind you, I don't easily give up the chance to spend a 3 day weekend in Palm Springs. This is hard for me. So hard I'm thinking of flying from Spokane to Palm Springs after the party however and still using that Sunday and extra Monday off to enjoy our other house.

### February

The 12th was our 22nd anniversary. This caused us to celebrate at the *Beverly Hills Hotel*. We flew to LA, spent two nights at the hotel, walked and walked and shopped in Beverly Hills, and saw 4 famous people (at the hotel, not on the streets). Then we checked out of the hotel and in with our friends Rick and Tom (they moved to LA a few years back). More shopping and eating ensued, this time as a foursome. I remember eating lunch outdoors in February at a place called the Abby.

Back in Seattle, the movie *Dreamgirls* opened up and we saw it. We had a potluck here on the day of the Academy Awards. I made a weekend run, 2 nights only, to Palm Springs. David went to the ballet. I started to daydream about backyard projects in my very near future. Gardening, the best.

### March

While waiting to start working in my garden, I went to Palm Springs twice. In the middle of the month David and I went down for 4 nights with Cherese and Rebecca. Then, at the very end of the month, I went alone to meet up with my friend Lisa from Michigan - she's my last surviving friend from my college years. Other than that it was March. Soon it will be time to garden full time. Until then you kill time with movies, dinners with friends, TV nights at home, and short trips to the desert. Frequent short trips to the desert.



April

One night in April we had just gotten into bed and turned off the lights when my phone started to ring. It was after eleven o'clock. We decided to ignore it. We don't have a phone in our bedroom (this is a good idea by the way) and who wants to answer a phone at that hour anyway? Plus, believe it or not, some of my agents have boundary issues and actually would dial me at that hour. So we ignored it as it rang. Finally it stopped but within seconds it started ringing again. We ignored it again. It stopped. A few seconds later David's line started to ring. Okay, THAT got our attention.

I hear David's side of the phone call only. Words like "fire" and "smoke" and "fireman" and stuff like that. Turns out David had sent his parents to Palm Springs for the week. The bedrooms had ceiling fans installed that were not properly wired. The fans were new, but the wiring was not. We knew this and we knew how to operate the wall control that was rigged to work both the light and fan but wasn't really quite proper. We knew that. The parents did not. A wall control decided to burn out, spark out, and shoot smoke and flames into the room. All hell broke loose.

David had wisely given out our friend Roy's phone number as Roy and Jim live only a few blocks away. Roy greeted the parents and their guest of the day of their arrival and so, now that they knew each other, David's mom called Roy after she called the fire department. We got called much later - by Roy - after it was all put out and settled down as it were. I was thrilled because I told David I was going to dine out on the story of how his parents set our house on fire for the next month or two. Roy was thrilled as he got to be in the house with 3 beefy uniformed fireman after midnight giving orders and taking care of things.

A Manhattan Trifecta

Mere days after sending more money to the IRS than David and I made in all of our combined twenties, we flew to New York for the perfect, and I mean PERFECT, three days. Yes, 72 hours. Alaska has a direct flight to Newark, NJ. You leave Seattle at 8-ish and at 5-ish you arrive in Newark. We flew on a Thursday, took the train into Manhattan, grabbed a cab, and by 6:00 PM we were ensconced in our hotel (the *Hudson Hotel* at 9th and 58th - we do NOT recommend it). The first night we had an amazing 11 course meal at *Per Se*. David had been trying to get reservations at this 16 table restaurant for over a year. Every time we go to New York David starts working their daunting reservation process at least a month in advance. Usually to no success. This time the concierge at the hotel (the one good thing from this hotel experience) got us a table for two at the last minute. We were standing on the train platform in New Jersey when the call came in. We were thrilled. The meal, with all cocktails and wine and tip, out the door, was exactly one dollar more than what two of John Edward's haircuts cost. Haircut + Haircut + \$1 = 11 course meal at *Per Se*. His haircut cost had been big news the week before (google it) and it was on my mind as I added the tip and signed the charge slip for the meal.

This trip was great - honestly one of the best we've ever taken to New York. Usually we try to go to Manhattan for a 5 or 6 day stretch. Three nights, which really means only two days by time you figure in the two travel days, was a push. We arrived in Newark in the late afternoon on Thursday. You get on a nice train, you jump in a cab, you check in at your hotel and whoosh you're off to dinner at *Per Se*. Friday we got up and walked and shopped until dinner and then we were off to see *Spring Awakening*. (Which is amazing by the way - we listened to the soundtrack again just this morning as a matter-of-fact.) Saturday was an even shorter day - we had only the morning to explore the city

since we were hitting two shows that day. At 2:00 PM we went to a matinee of *Company*. After the show we relaxed at our hotel and then broke for dinner. After dinner we were off to see *Grey Gardens*. Sunday we got up and headed to the airport after a walk through Central Park. Sunday night we were home watching *60 Minutes* in our kitchen as we always are. A perfect experience.

### Something I Worry About

I worry that some day I am going to lose it when I hear someone say, "Crackberry." Oh, will all of you very very clever people please stop saying "Crackberry" now? You didn't think this up. You are not the first to say it. It has been said before. And frankly, it's tired. Give it a rest now. Those of us who love our Blackberrys simply roll our eyes when you say this and we certainly aren't going to change our ways because you're repeating this clever witty saying. Likewise, if I never hear someone say, "Whole Paycheck" again, I'll be just fine. Those very very clever names are officially over now. You need to move on. Just as those who used to say, "Charbucks" have moved on.

### May

#### Kool-Aid: To Drink Or Not To Drink

I have never been, as I call it, "a joiner." I've never been one who joins things, groups, movements. No Boy Scouts. No Little League. No clubs in high school. I didn't see the point of the debate team. No societies, clubs or fraternities in college. No churches. No political campaigns. No rotaries, clubs, LeTip, cults, professional organizations. I don't march on Washington. I'm just not, for whatever reason, wired that way. I'd prefer to be alone. I'd prefer to be with David and Inga, or with a very small select group of people, and even then on a limited basis. I'm just not a joiner. Joiner reminds me too much of Jamestown. I don't drink the kool-aid.

#### Corporate Bonding Retreats

Here's how these go: You pack an overnight bag, organize your computer bag, grab some files and get in your car on a sunny Sunday afternoon, grateful to be driving a cute little green convertible. You drive 97 miles to a midlevel resort, say Alderbrook on the Hood Canal for instance. People you work with are there milling around. You check in then head out to mingle. Because you are supposed to.

On Monday morning you head down to the hosted breakfast at the appointed time. It's your typical steam table with mass amounts of scrambled eggs, that have been sitting for some period of time that makes you nervous, and some sad looking bacon. You eat and mingle. There's something they call coffee but you long to be at *Vivace* or *Diva* with the *New York Times*. Alone. It's early, alone would be nice. At 9:00 AM you head to the room next store. There are narrow tables, the kinds with skirts on both sides of them, arranged in a big U shape. At the open end of the U there is a screen on the wall and a computer on a table hooked up to the devil's tool: a PowerPoint projector. There are introductions and then the PowerPoint starts up. To keep your mind from freezing up you count the number of people in the room. There are 27 of them. You count them again. You count them again about 16 different ways, in different directions. Still 27 people.

Then it's lunch time and you move back to the room where breakfast was. The same steam table is there but with different stuff on it. Then it's 1:00 PM and you're back at your place in at the U shaped skirted table. Someone different has another PowerPoint presentation. There might be a

handout. The handout is an exact duplicate of the PowerPoint screens. At 4:00 PM you are set free. At 6:00 PM there's another steam table. You size things up and then head to the resort bar to seek out gin. Dinner is followed by - I kid you not - poker. Now you are playing poker, something you haven't wanted to do in the past 30 years (or, in my case, ever) with your coworkers. You do this until 24 comes on. Bonding is one thing, missing 24 is another. You vote for 24 and at 2 minutes to 9:00 you excuse yourself from the festivities. You are not embarrassed to be leaving the poker game for TV show and you are not feeling at all guilty, just relieved. After 24 you call home and talk to your spouse and go to sleep.

You wake up in a strange bed alone and it's Tuesday. REPEAT Monday. Same rooms, same kind of food on steam tables, everyone sits in the same places at the skirted U shaped table. Even more PowerPoint. You wonder why there's never a scene in 24 where Jack Bauer ties the terrorist to a chair and turns on a PowerPoint projector. "Tell us your plans or watch this!" he would shout. Then you start to think about learning PowerPoint. What could YOU do if you knew PowerPoint? Is there an application for it in YOUR life? Could YOU sell more houses if you knew PowerPoint? Would a seller love to see a Powerpoint presentation before listing their home for sale with you? You almost join Satan's ranks. But you are strong and you don't.

Later in the month, not fully recovered from my corporate bonding retreat, I feel a strong need to go to (guess where?) Palm Springs and float in our pool. And look! A 3 day weekend is coming. So once again we're off to the desert, again with Rebecca and Cherese, for a long weekend of eating and drinking and floating and 104° in ground spas (known in these parts as "hut tubs"). It's heaven there.

### Tonight

That was May. Figuratively. Now it's December again. Really, it is December and I've been typing and rereading this (and editing it, believe it or not) all day and I - *Oh! Look at the time!* - I have to stop for the night.

We have parties (plural) to go to. First it is off to David's business partner's party. That would be Kevin Gaspari. Kevin and Kent throw a big bash for Christmas each year and tonight's the night. We must attend so there can be someone in the room over 40. We give this event balance. After a few hours of representing our generation there, we're hitting the annual JAS Christmas Party. That's always fun 'cause it's in a wood shop! A very cleaned up wood shop with great booze selections!

### Something Else I Have To Worry About

The Forever Stamp. It cost 41¢ to buy it and it's good, well, forever. That's the promise. But this is the government. What if they are lying? They have recently lied to us about other things, why not this too? And what's the investment potential here? Let's say you have a safe, one Rebecca and Cherese gave to you for instance, and you don't know what to put in it. (Because you hide your cash elsewhere in a less obvious spot - what thief wouldn't pick up and carry the safe away?) What if you start buying forever stamps by the hundreds and squirrel them away in the safe? What if you end up with say 1,400 of them? Is that a good investment? If postage goes up in value then you can mail things for less. Should you wait to use them? Postage always goes up. The longer you hold them the greater the value? Or would you be better off to put the money in a CD and let it earn interest? Will it earn interest faster than postage goes up? Every think about these things? I don't. I'm normal, just like the rest of you, and I don't think about these sorts of things.

Sunday Morning

As usual I wake up alone. It's 6:45 AM and I wake up only when I hear the garage door, which is directly beneath our bed. Our bedroom is the exact size of a 2 car garage - the footprints are the same. David is, as always, gone. He is driving to his gym downtown in the market. Inga sleeps on the bed (of course!) and so I'm not really alone. She's warm. It's dark out. Then I think I have to finish this letter today so I force myself to leave her there alone. She is still in bed, under the covers. I am in the kitchen.

Our \$1,500 espresso machine (which we bought and put into service on October 29th 2003) has broken. We have been without it for well over a month now as David shuttles it back and forth to the repair shop on Phinney Ridge. It has come home twice in that time only to go back each time the next day. This machine is not light or easy to move. The repair guy doesn't seem to run it before he calls to say it is ready. David goes on about what a nice guy the repair guy is. Then he complains about the repair guy not fixing it. Then he calls him and again he's back telling me what a nice guy the repair guys is. I offer to take the machine in so I can do my share of the heavy lifting. David never lets me do this. I wonder how hot the repair guy is.

Let's do some math: The machine was \$1500, ordered on line from some fancy espresso machine place. A cappuccino is, on the low end, let's say \$2.50. We each make at least one cappuccino a day. I frequently make 2 a day. David has a bunch of rules and he seldom makes more than one a day. The average is likely 2.5 to 3.0 a day, but let's be conservative and call it 2 a day. So on the low end that would be \$5.00 a day we are not spending at some espresso shop.

Now . . . . October 29 of 2003 to October 29th of 2007, that's 4 years.  $4 \times 365 = 1460$  days. And  $1460 \text{ days} \times \$5.00 \text{ a day} = \$7,300$ . Subtract the cost of the machine and we have saved by having this machine about \$5,800. Of course there's the cost of beans (from Vivace only) and fat free milk, I get it, but I don't care. And I don't really care about the money either. It's the sheer convenience of it. We live in Wedgwood. We are miles from quality espresso shops. We are miles from civilization. Civilization is still on Capitol Hill. Of course my 10,000 sq. foot yard is here.

When our machine broke the 2nd time, I mean the 2nd time David had to take it back in for the same repair, I said let's just buy a new and better one. Because I can do the above math. My idea was to step up to an even better machine (we've done all of the online research and have tear sheets printed out ready to go on this), one that could be plumbed in to the wall with a filter in the line. I have run out of projects I can afford to do at this time and this seemed like a small manageable fun project to tackle. Buy the new machine, ship the old one back to New York and have it repaired at the source by the company that sold it to us, and then have them ship it to Palm Springs. See? See how my mind works? Then I'd have espresso in both of our homes. David is fighting me on this. I can't figure this out. I think he actually wants to save money, or charge less. Who is this guy and what has he done with my boyfriend?

(I could have done the above espresso machine math on the elliptical trainer for the index as well but I didn't think the results would have been as positive looking or made a good case for anything.)

So I make a pot of coffee. It's not the same thing, but I can do it. David can't even do that. He has rules, it MUST be a cappuccino. I prefer espresso, but in a pinch I'll make coffee. The pinch is on.

It's A Few Hours Later Now . . . The Newspapers Distracted Me

I am here to tell you I don't know why the hummingbird feeder was ever NOT directly in front of the picture window. As soon as the sun came up today "our" hummingbird came. Now when he's here he's less than 4 feet from me. I freeze as I fear any motion inside the window will panic him and make him fly off. As I sit here at the kitchen table ( I will only sit facing the garden I've worked so hard on) I can see that bird come and go. He's been here 5 times so far these past few paragraphs. Now I'm so close to him that, with my glasses on that is, I can see a bead of nectar on the tip of his beak as he pulls back from the feeder. And it's December. I can't wait for spring! I think I'm going to Swanson's for more chain and hooks and feeders next week.

Oh Gawd! Something New To Worry About

The fear is that I'm going to have to become a Jesus Freak now. As I said yesterday, I'm not a joiner but what if I have done something that forces me to join? Then what? What will I do? Background: I think it was 1995 when I first found e-mail. Sherry Horn introduced me to it while sitting at our dining room table on 17th Avenue East one afternoon. I remember this very clearly, like the first time I loaded Quicken onto my computer. Some things just change your life forever.

I remember Sherry worked at Microsoft then (she now actually works for me at Windermere) and she was explaining this new thing to me. I was a luddite back then. We went to my computer and, doing the most basic thing possible then, we dialed up AOL and set me up on e-mail. It was AOL, it was very basic, but I took to it like a fish to water. I still have to this day the e-mail account I made up with AOL way back then (over 12 years ago). I'm: yrentby@aol.com (Don't bother using that.) I'm also: nelsonupdike@aol.com (Again don't.) AOL has a free option now and I just keep those. Someday I may want them again. But I digress from Jesus . . . . .

Several service providers and a number of years later, I began to just sign my e-mails with the letter " M. " Soon after, while cycling through various e-mail applications, the basic style options available to me increased, and, as I became a much better e-mailer, I increased the size of the letter " M " to several font sizes greater than the font size of my e-mail AND I began to color the now BIG LETTER " M " RED. If you've seen an e-mail from me you know - they end with a big red M.

(This topic will be another chance for David to go on and on about how David and Paul have a color newsletter with photos in it - he'll say the big red M could have been in red and when will I stop and why isn't this online yet and blah blah blah. I hear it every year. And every year I say, "That's a great idea! Why don't you do that? Learn to do it and start your own tradition." He huffs off.)

So then, years and years later, I start getting tattoos. (Who can see where this is going?) I start slow, get kinda carried away, and haven't stopped getting tattoos. I'm getting more right after the holidays actually. About 3 years ago I decided to have a big bold capital letter M tattooed on my right shoulder in red ink. And I thought I'd put a black circle, a thick black circle, around it. So I did. That was years ago.

Earlier this year I'm driving home from work. I read a lot of newspapers. Including both the Weekly and the Stranger. I guess I just skip over any religious articles as somehow I missed this this story. Anyway on "our street" - the one that takes us home, a.k.a. NE 95th Street - there's a church that was there for awhile and then it closed up shop. It sat vacant for many months. One day I'm

driving home and - Helloooo! A big banner! - the church seems to have come to life. There's a huge banner hanging where the sign for the old church used to be and guess what's on it? There's a big bold capital letter M and it's in red. Around this big red M there's a thick black circle. Below this logo it says, Mars Hill Church. I start asking around. What is this? I attend a CMA meeting with David and Kevin because it's at my favorite client of all time's house - Sarah Bayless - in Ballard and somehow we get to talking about this and she knows all about this group. They have an outpost in Ballard at the site of the old Ernst store by the Ballard Bridge. After the meeting I drive by. Yup, same logo, this time in black and silver - no red. I call Sarah back. She tells me more unsavory things about this group. David coins it the "Mars Attacks Church," after the movie of the same name, and now that is how we refer to it exclusively. We never say "Hill," we only say "Attack." They have attacked Wedgwood. On Sunday morning when you drive by you see "them."

Here's my fear . . . someone sees my tattoo and thinks I'm a member. Of course only David ever sees these tattoos. Other people could see my tattoos in only 2 places: Our pool in Palm Springs or at the beach at the dog park in the summer when I swim with Inga. No one in Palm Springs is going to make this Mars Attacks Church connection. But what if a JF is at Magnuson's dog park and has never received an e-mail from me and jumps to a different conclusion? Have I inadvertently joined?

Here Are Several Things David Worries About

That I won't stop getting tattoos. That I'll run out of room on my upper arms and move on to other more visible body parts. That I will lose my job at Windermere and, since I'm too old and too fat to be a downtown bike messenger, I'll have to join a tawdry circus and hit the road as the old tattooed man. That I will be ostracized at the old folks home and everyone will shun me.

June

Finally it's all about the front yard and the back yard, the yards I refer to as "My Garden." I don't grow fruit and vegetables. There are grocery stores for that sort of thing. Nothing is edible, at least not intentionally. Except for the herbs - I do have fresh herbs as close to the kitchen door as possible and I use them every time I cook, spring to deep fall. Every daylight moment I have free is spent in the garden doing stuff. Weeding, planting, moving previously planted plants, cutting back, organizing, fussing with the ponds, creating patios and sitting areas, whatever . . . it just goes on and on. With a garden you are never bored and never have nothing to do. Of course literally everything else suffers: paying bills on time, doing our taxes on time, organizing the mess o' stacks o' papers in my office, paying attention to David, exercising, caring about work, need I go on? Really all I think about is my yard and all I want to do is either work in it or make a glass of iced tea and sit in it.

This is what happens when you don't have an outline: things get out of place. I forgot to say that on the last trip to Palm Springs, over Memorial Day Weekend with the girls, we emptied the house out. After the minor electrical fire, and after years of wanting to anyway, we finally got our butts in gear, finally organized the list of what needed to be done, finally found a good contractor who could and would return phone calls and read e-mails, and finally had enough room on a line of credit (really this was the part that was the hardest to arrange) and we pulled the trigger on this. We had 2 of those PODS containers delivered to the house and we completely packed it up. Lots of stuff was throw away or given away (but not enough it now seems) to avoid having to pack it up. When we left for home the house was 100% empty and we handed a set of keys and the alarm code to our new contractor and left not to return until October. The interior remodel took about 4 and 1/2 months.

I bring this up now as in mid-June we flew to Palm Springs for Kevin Gaspari's 40th birthday party (did I mention we're the oldest people he knows?) and actually stayed at a motel. That was odd. Of course we got to go to the house and see the contractor's progress (the most fun part for me - I love a good remodel!) Kevin rented space at the Viceroy Hotel for his party - friends from Seattle flew down and stayed various places and met and partied on the great lawn.

### Here Something For You To Worry About

Did you know there's an amoeba in water, usually found in rivers and lakes, that can go up your nose into your brain and eat your brain? Did you know that? It's called Naegleria fowleri. It could be in pool water too if the pool is abandoned and not properly chlorinated. If you go swimming and snort water up your nose that's how it gets in. It's killed 6 people in the U.S. this year. Merry Christmas.

### July

The BIG thing in July, the thing that started in late June but took us to the middle of July, was this: Our second - and final - trip to Alaska. Perhaps I shouldn't speak for David. He might go to Alaska again. I will not. I've been twice now, I think I'm done. We did Alaska once before in 2001, with my mom and dad, in early September. It was a bit late in the season. This time we thought we would go in the height of summer: July. And since I had taken my folks, David thought we should do it with his. So we flew everyone to Anchorage, hung out in the Anchorage area for two days, and then got on the cruise ship. Rather than get on a boat in Seattle and go north and then turn around and go past what you just saw on the way up coming back, we decided to go by plane farther up and then see all new stuff on the way back. This was our FIFTH cruise (we seem to like them).

If you go to Anchorage, stay in Anchorage. Do not stay in Girdwood, which is 40 miles out of the city. Do not stay at the Alyeska Prince Hotel. Don't be fooled by online reviews and what guide books say (as David was). Do not believe that it's a 5 star resort (as David did). You'd be better off at a Holiday Inn Express in Anchorage.

The one reason to go to Girdwood, Alaska is a chance to eat at a great restaurant we found called **The Double Musky**. We didn't find it. At the hotel we were told Senator Ted Steven's eats there and other important people eat there too. It was so cool. It reminded me of the wooden road house in the movie **From Dusk to Dawn** (for those of you who saw that gem). The service was perfect, the food was great, the place was funky and fun. This is the only reason I'd ever consider going back to Alaska.

The ship we were on was the Volendam owned and operated by Holland America. Other boats in their line are the Maasdam, the Oosterdam, the Amsterdam, the Zaandam, and so on. All of their boats end in the word "dam" and we now know why. Some cruise experiences are better than others. But we had a good time none-the-less. Saw huge chunks of ice falling off of glaciers just like in **An Inconvenient Truth**. I kept looking around for Al Gore to see if was on board gathering material for his nobel prize winning PowerPoint.

### More July, and August, And September Too

In July we went to Guemes Island - our long awaited return trip, it had been a year at least I think. Got Inga in the car and headed up for a nice long weekend. We saw a whale in the channel right in

front of the house. We played a game with David and Paul that I actually liked and even went out and bought a copy of. This is huge news. Anyone who knows me knows I don't play games. I don't have that kind of time. But now . . . well now, after this experience, I have started to BUY games. So far I have the deluxe wooden box with drawers Monopoly game (a gift from Chereese), the similar Scrabble game, and Boggle, Stratego, the game we played on Guemes, and so on. This is a bit scary for me. None of these games have been opened or played yet, but there's a threat of a "game night."

There was more gardening. There always is. On Monday, July 30th, I planted the final tree in our yard. It's a red maple tree, I know which one and where and what day it went in the ground. I have a log on my computer of what I plant and when I plant it. (I can't say it's up-to-date however.) I know this was the last tree as there is no more room for trees. When we bought this house I had every tree in the front and back yard removed. They were huge and all wrong. I'd say we took out about 11 trees, 7 of them that were huge cedar or pine trees. No light. No view. No good. Now we have planted at least 33 trees - I should go count this now that I'm done - but I'd say 33 easily. But smaller and more appropriate trees. Anyway that Monday the last tree went in and the following Friday we hosted the summer party of the Eastlake Windermere office to show off the garden.

My cousin Marsha visited us for a week in August. We showed her the town when we could get her off of the Burke Gilman Trail. She travels with rollerblades.

David turned 51 on August 28th and Lance and Marcia took us to a lovely dinner and then to see the soon to move to Broadway musical *Young Frankenstein*. A fun night. As we drove to the restaurant and then to the theatre afterwards, David and I sat in the back of their mini-van, or whatever it is, it's new, it's made for children, and watched the movie *Young Frankenstein* on the ceiling mounted TV put in those kinds of cars to keep children entertained. It worked. David and I were entertained. It was a fun night. David is older. For a month or so he was 51 just like me. Then October rolled around and now I'm a year older than he is again.

### God's Waiting Room

A year or so ago, I was in Palm springs the weekend Bob Hope died. This year I was there when Merv Griffin died. I kept going down all summer to monitor the remodel. Someone has to check on these things and answer the contractor's questions. I went once each month in June, July, August, and September. Each trip was short. I either stayed at the Chase Hotel or I stay at the very lovely condo owned by our good friends Dirk and Mark. Staying at their place is so cool as it is literally 4 blocks from our house. I would walk back and forth (even in the 112° temps, it makes you want to jump in the pool when you get back to where you are staying) and meet with our contractor and his subs.

### Just when you thought the perfect week was about to end . . . . .

I'm in Palm Springs for Labor Day weekend (which I somehow managed to stretch into a full 7 days) all by myself. David felt he should stay home and work as his business partner Kevin was on a cruise. Plus David whines about the extreme August heat (I just don't understand this). Mark and Dirk didn't come. Tom and Rick were supposed to be there but bailed at the last minute. I'm alone. The good thing for me: I love being alone. It happens so rarely. I'm staying at Mark and Dirk's (they were supposed to be with me and so was David) and spending lots of time at our house as the remodel enters its' final weeks.



I have the first of two flat screen TVs being delivered to our house and a contractor to come and mount it on the wall. Oh, and California Closets showed up as scheduled to install our master closet organization system. What could get better about this weekend? I'm alone in hot weather with a pool, new terrazzo floors to marvel at, a remodel to wrap up, subs to deal with and a new flat screen TV being mounted on our living room wall. It is, frankly, my dream. What I ask could possibly make this better? Three words: Senator Larry Craig.

Just when I thought the perfect week was about to end, just as the returning home blues began to set in, just as I was thinking there's nothing to look forward to . . . . CNN to the rescue! Out of the blue [ 5:15 PM on Tuesday September 4th ] there's a segment on CNN that says Senator Larry Craig isn't so sure he wants to resign after all. Oh no, he thinks maybe he resigned in haste. This is why I think CNN should be on 24 hours a day: You just never know when a nugget like this is gonna be handed to you! Senator Larry Craig would like to rethink his nationally televised resignation! A wave of news-junkie joy washed over my whole being as CNN replayed the audio of his arrest again and again and again. Days of talking heads debating this. John Stewart. David Letterman. See? Life can be fun.

Also fun in September, our bathroom was selected by **Seattle Homes & Lifestyles** as "Bath of the Year" We didn't make the cover of the magazine (darn!) but we had a nice spread inside with great photos of our bath and a fluff interview with David and me. Once again JAS Design Build delivers. I don't even remember when we did that bathroom project. I guess it started near the end of last year and finished up early this year . . . . my memory! . . . . but I remember every day what a great room it is. I can't tell what I like the most: The shower? The lighting? The lovely heated terrazzo floors? or The flat screen TV with an attached DVD player and Tivo box? I can shave and watch **Today** or **60 Minutes** or the dance videos on Logo whenever I want to.

### October

All I wanted for my 52nd birthday was to move back into our house in Palm Springs. Well that and a good excuse to load things in the Hybrid Ford Escape, get my dog, buy a box full of new music and drive. I melded the two into a great 10 day trip. Inga and I pulled out of my office's parking garage on Friday October 5th (I worked half a day to make it seem like I was in a full week) and hit I-5. We made it down in two days. When we arrived, very late on Saturday night, there was nothing there so we literally slept on the floor on those packing quilts you can buy at Home Depot.

The next day we got up (that was easy) and set out for coffee in the desert. Returning home we unpacked the Escape and waited for the first PODS container to come back. Once it did the real work began. Between unloading the first container, and then the second 3 days later, and having stuff delivered, well there wasn't much time for fun. David flew in a few days after Inga and I got there (by then there was a mattress on the floor and sheets and pillows) and pitched in 100%.

This was a good trip - but a lot of work. The best part of it, well there are two best things . . . One, the remodel was actually done, on time, finished. This was the best remodel wrap up ever in our history of doing them - they usually seem to linger on. When we got the house back, we got it back fully, 100%, with no need to have subs visit or things undone. That was great.

But even better was my birthday gift from me to me. Yes, I bought myself a gift. It's best this way - I know what I really want. And when I ordered it I asked if it could be delivered on October 11th. Since I ordered it so far in advance this was possible. I had a credenza built for my stuff in

Palm Springs. Some people might call it a console, I call them credenzas. It's is about 9 feet long, it flanks the entry area at our house in Palm Springs, it sits opposite my desk where I work when I'm there. I had it built to the inch to what I wanted. I drew it out. I measured (neurotically I might add) what would go in each section of it and I had those sections built to accommodate my stuff. A large bank of drawers in this (Are you ready? I'm going to reveal how crazy I really am!) was built to hold the cardboard boxes that Velveeta cheese USED to come in when I was in college and when I first lived in Seattle. Oh yes. I have cardboard boxes that are over 30 years old and I store pens and stamps and office supplies in them and I had a cabinet built to hold these boxes. Exactly. The drawers were built so the boxes would fit in them just so with no extra room for the boxes to slide around as you open and close each drawer. Of course I never told Nathan Hartman, he owns Kerf Design, they make furniture on Magnolia, why the measurements had to be just so. I'm the client. I just said specifically what I needed. And he delivered, on my birthday, the perfect thing. Recognize your crazy ways and embrace them, that's what I say!

David and I both left on the Saturday of the next weekend. David few home and I drove. back with my dog. We were back at work on Monday morning like we were never gone. But back at work a tad exhausted, not rested. And when we left the house still wasn't put back together for use yet.

### November And Now December

Well of course things are slowing down. The garden has shut down for the winter, all of the leaves have fallen, still I'm picking them up. Other than the need to pick up after the dog, I don't go out there as much anymore. Whole days go by and I don't go out there. It feels odd. Of course you've read the papers and seen all of the news shows, the market for real estate has slowed at bit as well. Not so much in Seattle as in the midwest or other parts of the country (thank god!) but still the pace of the market seems to fit the pace of these dark, short days. It's winter, things are like this.

The big big big excitement for November was another trip to Manhattan. This one was years in the coming. Cherese Campo was turning 50 on November 11th and she wanted to celebrate this in style in New York. This trip was planned almost a year in advance. Knowing that we'd be here for this longer stay made the first 72 hour stay back in April easier to take.

I could go on and on about the things we did to make her birthday special, and I could tell you what 4 people, very famous people who you can see on TV literally 5 days a week (that's a pretty specific hint), sat directly across from me at breakfast one day. I could cover all the two different places we stayed, where we ate, where we had her big party, but, well - she should write letter of her own, doncha think? I do. Back to me. Back to David and me. We went to see the stage version of Xanadu. We saw two other plays. The day AFTER we saw our 3rd play the stagehands went out on strike. It didn't hurt us as by then we had seen 3 plays and we were moving more into Cherese party mode. In the end it was 6 more days in Manhattan. The weather was spot on perfect for long walks. David and I took long walks - long ones - that often involved clothing stores. We love it there, and two trips in one year there can move you to GOLD status with your airlines!

### David's Work Is Never Done

As you know, David left early today and it's almost 3:30 PM now and I still haven't seen him. Turns out he met with clients for breakfast and then had an open house to hold in the afternoon. The open

house was a condo on Capitol Hill. It was first shown to Windermere agents on Monday the 10th, it officially went on the market on Wednesday the 12th, it was held open on Thursday the 13th, and then it sold. It sold so close to full price we might as well say it sold at full price. Today, even tho' it's sold, he is holding it open. But look . . . the market is still okay for a well priced (the key), well presented property. This condo sold in less than 5 days.

It Really Is Not Gloom And Doom Here

I know the media has this housing crisis story like a dog with a bone, and I know all of the news about mortgages and mortgage lenders and adjustable rates and foreclosures and all of it. I'm a news junkie. I follow it all. I have CNN on right now as I'm typing this. It's been on literally all day. I watch all of the Sunday news talk shows. I hear it all. But I'm here to tell you, in Seattle, it's just not that bad. Things have slowed a bit from what we in the biz like to call "the crazy time" but it is not dead. I have 90 some agents in my office and I assure you they are all making a living, all showing houses, and often selling them. I could site story and verse about this, share tales, blah blah blah but just take my word for it - things are still happening here and I don't think giving this city's make up it is likely to change anytime soon. It may be a bit slow for the rest of December, and likely even into January or February, but my sense is that by March it will start back up as it has in the past.

Well . . . I've put in a good word about the real estate market. That oughta make the cost of copying this hundreds of times and sending it out a legit IRS tax deduction. And I've let you know we're still in the business (in case your could have some how forgotten this). David and Kevin's real estate partnership is a going concern, a strong going concern. They have, in my opinion, the best web site of any agent's I've seen. Many web sites are sad or, as I call them, "canned," but theirs is not.

As for me . . . I'm still the Managing Broker of the Windermere office on Eastlake. My office is doing extremely well. I could throw numbers and you and brag a bit, but, well who likes that? I took this job 10 years ago. I started in late October of 1997 and when late October of 2007 came and went I thought "WOW." I remember so clearly when I started down this path how I was afraid to stop being an active agent, how I didn't want to give it up, how I wanted to keep working with David, all of it. But what I remember most is thinking, "I'll try this for a few years, maybe 3 or 4, and see what happens." Who knew I'd love it? Who knew I'd be as good at it as I seem to be.

Or maybe I'm just good at it because I love it. I have 95 or so agents (the number moves) who come to me with legal problems, moral problems, strategy problems, looking for sales advice, looking for working with crazy people advice, whatever. I am the guy they come to, and I love it. Plus I get to call attorneys all of the time. I love talking to attorneys. If I could do anything I wanted to do I'd be a hugely successful attorney. In New York. Yeah, that's the ticket. Of course that's only on the days when I'm not dreaming of being a landscape designer. And that's only on the days when I'm not wishing I worked at an animal shelter or was a dog walker. Those are the only 4 things I ever fantasize about being / doing: real estate, lawyer, landscaper, dog walker. Well, there are days when I want to run JAS Design Build. Okay so that's 5 things. But that's it.

What else ???

I have made 2 very short (2 nights only) trips to Palm Springs since Thanksgiving. The house is not in order. Yes everything is out of the PODS, but it ain't put away. Chaos reigns. And we're going to

be going down for 9 days after Christmas with the girls and using the place. So I've been running down every other week to work. It is almost unpacked, I almost have thrown away or given away or sold everything that doesn't belong anymore, and most of our new stuff has arrived and is in place. Last trip I actually sold 12 chairs on Craigslist. It was my first time. I'd never posted and add and dealt with these people before. The public. You gotta love 'em. It took me 3 different encounters with "the public" to unload the 12 chairs. I took Surrey to dinner the the money from the first 4 chairs. Cash in hand at 4:00 PM, cash to waiter at 9:45 PM. The next day I sold the other 8. the chairs I sold were wood. David bought 10 new plastic chairs from **Design Within Reach** (within reach only if you make a pile of money, one of my friends said that and I've always liked it). Wood out. White plastic in. White plastic speaks to the white terrazzo floors better.

What else?????

I've just turned the pages of the calendar on the wall in the kitchen and there are gaps (believe it or not) and things not addressed in this letter. If it feels disjointed to you, you could invite us over for dinner and we could fill in the gaps. A few cocktails and I'll remember things I could never type here.

It's December. I am in love with all of the political candidates, on both sides. Some I love more than others, but I love them all for being around, being at debates, being on Wolf Blitzer when I'm having my Sunday morning coffee and paper time. I am in love with the fact that they are not all old white males. I am in love with the fact that some might belong to wacky religions. And that little guy who says crazy stuff - come 'on, ya gotta love him. (Plus on issues I care about he's always 100% in my camp.) I am only sorry that on January 3rd I will be flying home. Had I known the FIRST caucus (or primary?) of the season was that day I surely would never planned to fly that day. No, I would have planned to be home in my office downstairs with the door shut (so David can't bother me) pattering around all day with CNN on constantly.

It's December. As I sit here typing the rain is beating on our less than two years old metal roof. I usually say our \$\_\_\_\_\_ metal roof but I can't put that number in print. Last week our \$\_\_\_\_\_ metal roof leaked. I was not mad - I was stunned. Then amused that a \$\_\_\_\_\_ metal roof **COULD** leak. I saw a puddle of what I thought was some pet's pee on the floor in the dining room, which was odd, and as I was kneeling down cleaning it up some pet peed on my neck. I was confused until it happened again. Then I realized this was a DRIP. I was shocked. David was in Tucson with Michael Stewart that weekend and I was home alone with drips in the dining room and water coming into the guest room downstairs. But not a flood. Some clients of ours who just bought near here - they had a flood. I just can't complain about our little water issues when others have it so much worse. However the roof is a bummer because now when we sell we'll have to answer YES on our seller's disclosure statement where it asks if the roof ever leaked. I was planning on crowing about how a \$\_\_\_\_\_ metal roof could never leak and how awesome it was and how it would last 50 years or more. I guess I'll have to adjust my crowing a bit. Now whenever it rains I'm constantly going from the guest bedroom floor to the dining room checking for water. Fortunately for us it has to rain for 4 straight days really hard before the guest room carpet gets moist. The roof, we hope, has been repaired. Of course it's never the roof; it's always the flashing.

### Gary-palooza

The 24th of December is Gary Sarozek's 50th birthday. It's starting to seem like an endless parade of 50th birthdays in our little group. This is because we hang out with old people. And this is

because *we are old*. Usually because Gary's birthday is the 24th of December we blow it off. Not on purpose, but, well we are generally out of town for other, ah, reasons. But this year we planned to stay. An affirmative plan to NOT be away for other reasons on this day was made. So . . . we are here for the day. There's gonna be a party at a nice restaurant in Ballard and I've already sent everyone an e-mail reminding them to NOT say anything about it being the Eve of anything, to not say "Merry" anything, and to not say "Happy" before any word other than "Birthday." This is about Gary's birthday. This is not about Jesus' birthday. For god's sake find some birthday wrapping paper, don't use the extra stuff for that other birthday that might be lying around. We must keep our focus! I'm looking forward to it. We've got a killer gift to give, the meal is gonna be great, there is a cake gathering afterwards, and the next day . . . back to us . . . we fly to Palm Springs. I am hoping the airport is EMPTY on Christmas Day for a 7:00 AM flight.

Can I Stop Now ?

Really I think that's about it. I've been typing (and thinking) for 2 days now. It's late in the year. So late that in an effort to get this out quickly, like tomorrow I hope, or by Tuesday at the very latest, I am not going to edit this or proof read it. I will leave that to Merritt. And you. If you find errors let me know by mail or e-mail and I'll correct them PRIOR to this being posted on the internet. Do your part! And the errors are errors. You type for 2 straight days and see what happens. It's harder than ya think.

I'm still at the kitchen table. It's dark now. And pouring. No hummingbirds. David has come home, gone to the store, and is back making dinner. It's Sunday night. Sunday night is ALWAYS the same. it's NACHOS NIGHT. On Sunday night we make two plates of nachos, one for each of us, we open up Mexican beers, and we sit here and eat and watch **60 Minutes** (which is tivo'd in the kitchen as well so we never see commercials). Really. Any Sunday night of the year you can find us here doing this. Unless we do something else that night.

Speaking of commercials (I almost did up there), you know what I just hate? It is those damn commercials for some financial company named Ameriprise with Dennis Hopper in them talking about the American dream. God those irritate me. HE irritates me. There is a series of these commercials, I think 3 of them, and I hate them all. the one where he's sitting in the chair on a street in a suburb really - oh, never mind. His voice and tone is annoying. **Easy Rider** my ass.

On the other hand some commercials bring me pure joy. There's the one with the 4 attractive guys, all a very good looking 50-ish, and they're sitting around singing Viva Viagra to the tune of Viva Las Vegas. 'Cause guys do this, sit around and sing. How about the one with the car salesman selling cars and dancing to the song **Maniac** from **Flashdance**? Makes me smile every time. How about any of the current Century 21 commercials? The people in the yellow coats? Here on the West Coast, Century 21 is a bit of a joke, but, if I understand correctly, on the East Coast they are big, like Windermere is here. I don't know. But I like the people in these commercials and what they say. Where's my yellow sports jacket?

Speaking of things that bring me pure joy, did anyone see the **Today** show on December 6th? They had this newlywed couple on who, at their wedding, broke into a great dance to the tune of **Baby's Got Back** in the middle of their "first dance" which started out to **Unchained Melody** by the Righteous Brothers. I laughed so hard I cried in the kitchen that morning. I played it back about 14 times. I have it saved on Tivo. It was so sweet. And you should'a seen this average white white guy moving to **Baby's Got Back**. He was into it and very good. It was priceless. I'm sure it's on You

Tube if you're at all interested. Or it's saved in our kitchen.

"Hello, I'm A Mac." "And I'm A PC."

One of my favorite sayings! Besides being the very best commercials on TV, others are good, but **these are genius**, it describes my next computer. I am so excited. Between today and Friday I am going to the Apple store at U-Village and I am buying a new laptop. I'm moving up, after over 3 years with this old slow laptop with the teeny-tiny memory, to the new Mac with a dual processor. It's a Mac. It's a PC. I had Sherry order Vista for me just the other day. I'm gonna get a new version of Office with hopefully an improved version of Entourage on it that respects couples with different last names. I'm gonna flip back and forth from Mac to a PC environment. (I have no idea what I'll do when I get to the PC environment, but none-the-less I'll be able to do it). I'm gonna learn new shit. And I'm geeked about all of it.

Goodbye To 2007

It's as good as over. David and I are in good health, Inga is an angel and Calvin and Claire are, ah, well, ah . . . we're starting to have a variety of problems with them. I think it comes with age. Let's not go into it. Still staying ahead of the mortgages here and still getting along well. We've seen more than one couple fall this year, but somehow we go on. Speaking of good health up there, I guess I really have lost 26 pounds this year. I see that on the scale, but I feel the same, and I think I look the same. Thank god for others. Many people have commented upon the weight loss, especially those who see me rarely. Surrey was a recent example. Last week we went to my bosses annual holiday party and the caterer, the same caterer who has catered this party for the last 10 years, came up to me and commented upon this. So it must be so. As for how . . . everyone asks how. All I have done is eat less. And watch what I eat. Obviously I'm still having a cookie with David each afternoon, but one now whereas in the past it could have been two. I just have been eating less and better. Trust me it is not due to exercise. When I was 210 and first got the elliptical trainer I told myself I'd get on it when I weighed 190. When I was at 190 I debated moving that number to 185. I stayed at 190 for the longest time. It seemed that losing 19 pounds and hitting 191 was easy. It took months and months to hit 189. Bizarre. Of course the elliptical trainer might have helped that along. But logic never works for me with this. Anyway I'm hovering around 185 now. It can be 183 one day and 187 the next. I think in January, after looking at the elliptical trainer for 14 months, I may work it into my day. God knows there's a TV and a DVD player and a Tivo box in front of it. You can lead a TV junkie to the trainer but you can't make him ride it.

I should start making some lists for 2008. Diet. Exercise. File papers in office. Organize our books. Document our art. Organize and identify our vast piles of photos. Have taxes done before March 10th. Be able to pay them April 15th. Focus more at work. Walk the dog more. Garden. HmMMMM . . . sounds familiar, but why?

Ending E-mails With Inspiring Quotations

And I know you know exactly what I mean here. Sometimes they come just before the person's signature (which could be a big red M) and contact information, other times they follow that. Either way they are meant to inspire. YOU. They are meant to inspire you. Okay, I have to confess, I love it when others do this. I read each and every quote that ends an e-mail. However in my case, not only do I read them, I think about them.

First I think about whether or not I like the quote, agree with the quote, admire the quote. Then I wonder if this should be *my* quote, should I steal it and attach it to the end of my e-mails? Is that wrong to do? If someone else uses a certain quote, is it wrong to make it your own? Mostly however I think about why the person on the other end of the e-mail selected *this* quote. What does it mean? What does it mean to *them*? If I know them, which I generally do not, the reason is generally easy to divine. If I don't know them, as is mostly the case it seems, I compare the quote to where they work, what they do, and the little I know about them from the e-mail in question. I try to see if the quote jives with what little I know of them.

What's up with my social circle by the way? Now that I think of it, not one of my close friends, not one of the people who e-mail me regularly, has an inspiring or educational quote included at the end of their e-mails. Why is that? Does my circle not want to inspire? Or are they like me?

If they're like me it's because they can't decide which inspiring quote to use. They just can't commit to just one inspiring quote. Not when there are thousands to choose from. Let's say you do find and settle on one, does it change? How often? Daily? That seems hard and since you don't e-mail everyone daily your efforts would go unnoticed. Monthly? That seems reasonable, you'd only need to find 12 good quotes a year. Still I don't do this.

Maybe rather than at the end of an e-mail I'll use this forum. Here's a quote I rather liked that I came across in the May 2007 issue of the Sun. Given the season (the political one, not the other one), I think this is a good choice:

What the people want is very simple. They want an America as good as its promise.

- Barbara Jordan

We sincerely hope life is a good for you and yours !

Goodbye for another year,

and keep in touch,



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Oh gawd now he's doing out takes! Letter bloopers. Is there no end?

From the abandoned index:

Why I paid money to see *Music and Lyrics*:

If you know me you  
know the answer to  
this one: Because  
it's all about the  
lyrics

Why does jazz suck?

No lyrics

Why I like lyrics so much:

Lines like these:

Mother mother ocean, I have heard you call,  
Wanted to sail upon your waters, since I was three feet tall,  
You've seen it all, you've seen it all.

Watched the men who rode you, switch from sails to steam,  
And in your belly you hold the treasures few have ever seen,  
Most of them dreams, most of them dreams.

Yes I am a pirate, 200 years too late,  
The cannons don't thunder, there's nothing to plunder,  
I'm an over 40 victim of fate,  
Arriving too late, arriving too late.

Well I've done a bit of smuggling, and I've run my share of grass,  
I made enough money to buy Miami but I pissed it away so fast,  
Never meant to last, never meant to last.

Well I've drunk now for over two weeks,  
I passed out and I rallied and sprung a few leaks,  
But I got to stop bitching and got to fishing down to rock bottom again,  
With just a few friends, just a few friends.

I go for younger women, lived with several awhile,  
Tho' I ran 'em away they'd come back one day if I still could manage to smile,  
It just takes awhile, just takes awhile.

Mother mother ocean, after all the years I've found,  
A occupational hazard means an occupation's just not around,  
I feel like I'm drowned, gonna head up town.  
I feel like I'm drowned, gonna head up town.

A Pirate Looks At Forty - Jimmy Buffett