



Today is December 10th 2010, a Friday

2010

Holiday Greetings To Our Family, Friends, and Valued Clients:

If you are holding this letter in your hands it means I'm not dead.

Well, I could be dead. But if you have the letter in hand it means that I did not die on the operating table at Swedish Hospital on Wednesday the 15th - the Wednesday coming up next week (as I write this) or the one just past (if you are holding it). I have a "routine procedure" coming up on Wednesday. This will be my 15th time having this procedure done so, as you might imagine, it's kinda old hat by now. However I recently learned (on October 18th, I'll get to this part later) that I could die during the "routine procedure." It's unlikely, but possible. So now I think about this quick, routine "out patient" procedure in a way I never did before. I can't truthfully say I worry about it. Worry is something I save for money matters. (Now I'll get feedback from some saying my priorities are all wrong then, worrying about money more than surgery, money over health. But money, even when we have none, I feel I have a little bit of control over. The other, the medical stuff, just goes on and on and on and on and I feel like I have no control over it. It just keeps coming at me, changing weekly and still coming, and I keep finding a way of living through it.)

So, ah, I am not worried but I am thinking: David and I leave on Saturday the 18th. I am on the table at Swedish on the 15th. Today is the 10th. How many days are left to write this letter, how long will it be? How long to get Kinkos to make 600 copies of it, get them stuffed into calendars, then those into envelopes and are the envelopes ready at the printer's yet? Are the mailing labels organized? How will they treat me at the bulk mail post office place this year and where is Tim and why can't he be here for this this year and on and on. My mind is racing with all that I have to do before we leave and really there's no room for dying in the week ahead. I plan to mail this letter to you on the 16th or 17th so all must go well on the 15th for that to happen. So, are you holding it?

If all goes according to plan, if the good lord's willing and the creek don't rise, as they say (and I love it when they say that), David and I will be walking the cobblestone streets of Puerto Vallarta looking for amazing foods from street vendors and for shops that sell travel trinkets we no longer have the room for when you open this letter. But, well, then again we are flying Alaska Airlines to Puerto Vallarta and they have a history with this flight (just ask Fred Birchman). So you could be holding this letter and we could be dead anyway. Or we could have produced and mailed this letter on time successfully, flown down there and arrived intact, only to be kidnapped on the taxi ride to the condo we have rented. I am sure some crazed drug lord down there would think I'm worth my diminished weight in gold. Point is, you just never know. Plans. Plans? Ask **me** about making plans.

David and I are dog sitting a Weimaraner puppy right now. Her name is Stella and she is 14 months old and a complete handful. Stella belongs to Matt and Maggie Carroll who are spending a week in Manhattan. When Matt casually mentioned their upcoming trip I jumped at the chance to take the puppy. He's asking me about restaurants and telling me what they'll see and do and I'm all, "Who's gonna watch Stella?" I think they didn't quite believe we would want to do this - I almost felt like I had to sell them on the idea. There were several e-mails. We have only had Stella for four days so far. This dog is adorable. And beautiful. So now I'm here with a puppy. David is out with clients and I'm in a typing mood but here's a puppy literally nipping at my heels who does not want me to sit at a laptop and focus and think and write. The puppy has other plans. But I have a deadline.

I started thinking about this letter around the middle of October. A huge amount of "life stuff" was happening to us then and sentences started to form and float around in my mind. As stuff was flying at us fast and furious David kept saying, "Will this make it into the letter?" or "Man, the letter is just writing itself this year." Major stuff was happening. Before long whole paragraphs were written and mentally reviewed and I was worried I'd lose them before I got around to the typing part of my year. Then, near November first, as more paragraphs formed, and as David and I were hitting the VERY PEAK of the "life stuff" activities, some order started to set in for what I had to say this year.

I could have started typing then, and probably should have given what the next seven days look like for us, but I waited for a very specific reason: I wanted to start this year's letter by addressing and then dispatching the big issue from last year - the throat cancer I had. I had two significant medical appointments coming in the first week of December and I decided I'd wait until both of those were behind me and the test results were completely reviewed by my doctors and the two of us. I'd open with whatever news came out of those two appointments, good or bad, and then move on to what an unlikely year it's been for us.

(Yes, I would have opened with the news even if the results were bad. I keep few secrets and I discuss everything pretty much as it occurs. So yes, I would have started with bad news had there been any. However the news is good so this is easier to tell you I guess.)

A Clean Bill Of Health (But Mostly It Doesn't Feel That Way To Us)

On Tuesday the 30th of November I started my day in the office of Dr Burgoyne. He is my Ear Nose Throat doc and he's the one who first discovered the cancerous tumor growing on top of my vocal chords in early 2009. He sticks a flexible scope up my nose until it bends as it hits the inside top of your nose and then it curves and goes down your throat. I have been quite clear with Dr Burgoyne: this process is the most unpleasant thing that has happened to me since I started cancer treatments. I just don't like it. I like it less than having an IV line put in my vein. And, if you know me, you know how I am about needles and veins and blood and all. It amazes me (when I think about it, which isn't often as thankfully that was a long time ago now) that I made it through eight weeks of chemotherapy. That was eight weeks of tapping into many veins.

Anyway Dr Burgoyne needs to put this scope in my throat every two or three months looking for cancerous spots that might be growing on the surface of my interior throat tissues. It could be the old cancer coming back, or new cancer forming, but from what I'm told HE'D BE the first guy to see it. This is the front line I guess.

Later that same Tuesday I was at the Swedish Cancer Institute having what is called a PET CT SCAN. This is where Dr Kaplan's office is located - he's my chemical oncologist. I won't go into the scan details (I am sick of them and I am boring even myself), just suffice it to say you lose another three hours of your life and it's kinda gross. And more veins must be hooked into. The purpose of this scan is to seek out cancerous spots that might be growing UNDER THE SURFACE of my throat tissues or someplace else in my body where Dr Burgoyne's flexible scope can't go, where he can't SEE. So, two exams: A scope up nose with Burgoyne, VISUAL exam. Radioactive glucose coursing through veins while you're in a tiny tube in a vast machine, Kaplan's HIDDEN PROBLEMS exam.

Dr Burgoyne's visual exam is immediate. He pulls the scope out of your nose and tells you what he sees. He sees nothing. The results of the three hour scan for Kaplan are available the next day. Everyone assumes you'll want to be there right away to hear the results. Not me, David and I flew to Palm Springs the next day. Fast forward one full week. On the following Tuesday, December 7th, we both met with Dr Kaplan. And the news is good everywhere: no cancer found, no signs of cancer of any kind found anywhere. NED: **No Evidence of Disease**. So a clean bill of health from both doctors ON THE CANCER FRONT. I put that last part in caps as my day to day life can still be a medical hell, but I don't have cancer. And that's what everyone still assumes (I think) when they see me at 147 pounds trying to breathe air or swallow food with mixed results. They think it's cancer still but it's not. It's the aftermath of treatment for cancer. Medically my life is still no picnic. But NED. You gotta love NED. I admit it, I do. I never tire of hearing of it.

And every time I hear it I immediately ask the same question, "Can I now wait a year before coming back to see you?" I may not be in treatment anymore but all of these visits and tests and scans - they're exhausting. It's a time suck, I have more important things to do, or things I'd rather be doing. It's depressing having to think about it. It's annoying to have to go there. I put on a good face but honestly I'm over it. Even tho' the news has been positive for me every time we test and review results, I'd still like to stop having to do it or I'd like to do it less frequently. I'd rather work or walk my dog or talk to real estate agents or read or anything - anything but make trips to buildings on First Hill. So of course I asked both Dr Burgoyne and Dr Kaplan just 3 days ago, "Am I free until next December now?"

Can I Go Home Now ?

No. No, no, no. I may be in remission but not the latter stages of remission it seems. I'm in the, "I want to scan you every six months" stage of remission. Dr Kaplan says one more complete scan and battery of tests in May or June, and then another complete scan and battery of tests next December, a year from now. THEN (here's the good news), **THEN**, if I'm still **NED**, I can move to annual visits only. So a full year from now I can move to tests only once a year. Until then I'm on the every six months plan. Which won't kill me. And with Burgoyne I'm pushing it to wait for every three months. He said every two or three but I could tell he likes two better. Or he just likes our banter and wants to see me. I'm a fun patient. And I never complain or "woe is me."

Plans. David and I had plans to have dinner on our 24th anniversary at Spinasse on Capitol Hill. Instead, on February 12th 2009, I was on Dr Burgoyne's table having "a mass" in my throat biopsied. That was almost two years ago. Our 26th anniversary is coming up right before Valentine's Day in 2011. We have made no plans yet, but I'm sure we will. David and I like making plans despite the past 22 months.

Plans have been hard to make the past 22 months because I have been quite a mess. NED yes, but I'm really fucked up. (Please excuse my language but it's really the best, most accurate, word for how my body is and how parts of it work, or don't, these days.) Actually making plans is easy. And fun. We both love doing it. Some days we just sit at the kitchen table and have a planning session. It involves three calendars. We plan dinners, to see friends, short trips away, whatever. It's when my body makes the plans crash and things grind to a halt that the massive sadness sets in for us.

FAQ

I love the FAQs on product web sites. I just like Qs in general and when they are of the **F** and **A** kind, well all the better. Here's the answers to my **FAQs** in 2010:

1. No, I have no idea why I got cancer in my throat. No, I have never smoked anything (really, never, anything), no I hardly drank, no I have no ideas on the topic. I don't know, I don't care, and I never think about this. To think along these lines implies there is some reason why I shouldn't have gotten cancer and someone else should have and, well really, do I need to point out the problems with that line of thinking? I don't do the "woe is me" thing very well. Why me? Why not me?

2. Odds? I really am not good with statistics, numbers and odds. Plus I don't really think this way about me and me being ill (see FAQ # 1 above). But so many people ask this, it comes up in almost every conversation I have these days, that I finally asked my doctors and tried hard to retain enough of their answers to get to this letter. So let's see how I do 90% of the people who have the kind of cancer I had in the place I had it never get it again once it is gone. Mine is gone. I had it, now it's gone. Of the 10% who get it again, 50% of them get it back in the first year after treatment. My treatment ended on May 6th 2009. It has been more than a year for me since my treatment ended - 19 months exactly - and I have not gotten it back. So 50% of the 10% means like 5% (math?) and then of that 5% who do get it back more than a year after . . . I fell asleep around this point. Sorry. It was starting to sound like the odds were small and my chances were good and then there were more numbers and I was lost. Don't quote me on any of this and don't tell me if I'm wrong because I don't really care.

(It's not completely true that I'm bad with numbers. I'm good with numbers if they are telephone numbers or birth dates. I can remember telephone numbers and birth dates. This is one of the reasons why I don't love Facebook: It diminishes me. I can remember your birthday without Facebook sending me an e-mail telling me it's your birthday. I can remember your phone number and your birthday. All on my own. FB makes people like me, OCD people like me, not special!)

(You know what other kind of math I'm especially good at? The kind that let's me know if a child is in it's 3rd year on the planet or it's 4th. The kind that let's me know if David and I are working on our 27th year of coupled bliss or our 28th. The kind that let's me know that the current decade is about to end. It's called counting. David and I have passed our 25th anniversary and thus are IN, firmly IN, our 26th year together. On February 12th 2011 we will have our 26th anniversary. The next day we start our 27th year together. This applies to all anniversaries, years on planet, and decades. Yup, our decade ends on 12-31-2010. A new decade starts on 1-1-2011. Will anyone besides me comment on this? Or did they all blow their commentary wads last year, which was a year too early? I can't let this go. Everyone has forgotten. All of those numbskulls in 2009 saying the decade was ending. Do the math people, do the math.)

3. Yes, I have heard about Michael Douglas. Yes, as far as I know from what I've read, it is the exact same type of cancer in essentially the same spot except mine was Stage 3 when it was found and his was Stage 4. Yes, I am reading everything about his treatment and recovery that I can as I want to see how the treatment I received differs from the treatment the truly rich and famous receive. And by that I mean "the approach" to the problem, not the treatment or behavior of the medical professionals around me. I think I have had the most amazing team of people working on me, with me, possible. I am grateful constantly for Swedish Hospital, the many doctors there, the hospital's systems and ALL of staff that I've worked with over the past 22 months.

4. Yes, I do know there is a show on TV called **The Big C**. Yes I know it's about cancer and it's funny, like me. Yes, I watched the first few episodes, yes, I love the writing and all of the actors in that show, especially Oliver Platt, and no, sorry, I don't watch it. I watched the first few episodes and then I just let it go, I stopped watching. I liked it, really I did, but not that much I guess. I am just - **wait for it** - watching LESS TV these days and thus being more discerning. (That statement about TV, coming from me, is more shocking than any cancer, yes?)

Okay, let's be done with the cancer stuff for this year's letter. You are fully updated. You have the latest version installed. We will not speak of it anymore. We will, I am very sorry to say, have to speak of the aftermath now and then because it caused spells of massive sadness that effected most of 2010 in ways we could not have predicted back in 2009 when we thought the only goal was to eradicate cancer from my body. We were so naive. We wonder if Michael Douglas has the full picture yet.

There Will Be No Proofreading Again This Year

Hey, I got away with it last year.

Of course last year I was a full month late and very weak. You have no idea how much guilt I felt getting this out after New Year's last year. I forgot how many letters came before it, I only knew I was late last year. Last year I was too weak to do basic math; this I went back and checked, double checked, and did the math and I'm here to tell you this is the 24th year in a row I have written and sent this letter. This year I'm back to my normal strength and I'm forced to an earlier than usual mailing date because of the already purchased tickets to Puerto Vallarta

I'd still appreciate my devoted gang of proofreaders to mark their copies up and send them back edited. When I stop this for good (oh yes, that thought does cross my mind) they will be easier to publish as a collected works of if they are edited. I think there are only two people on the planet currently with a complete set. I am one of them. The other is Gary Tucker. At least at one point in time Gary had a complete set. Gary had a complete set on his 40th birthday! Talk about a gift that keeps on giving! Not only a complete set, but a complete BOXED set. However that was many years ago and it was his responsibility to keep it up, to add to it, to tend to it, to care for it, much like they do things at the Library of Congress or the National Archives, from that point on. You can only lead the horse to water.

Hey! It's Christmas party time. Tonight is my office's holiday party. I'm supposed to be in charge. And I guess I am if minding the budget puts you in charge, but really the hosts this year have gone all out and are doing all of the hard work themselves. First they offered to host the event, even with a possible 140 people if everyone came and brought a spouse, guest or trick. Then they just ran with it, interviewing tent installation companies and caterers, putting up trees, decorating their

house and yard, and so on. I am almost feeling bad about this. All I have had to do is answer a few e-mails and call various vendors up with a credit card number. So before I even get there, let me shout out a thanks to Kevin Gaspari and Kent Thielke, tonight's hosts.

Hey! There's a puppy barking at a cat here. There's a puppy chewing up soiled pieces of tissue paper and leaving piles of tissue on the floor. There's a puppy who needs a walk.

Hey! It must be time to take a break, walk to Starbucks with Stella, and shave and shower and put on my party dress.

Today is December 11th 2010, a Saturday

Party Review

I still often forget how old we are. To me David looks every bit of the 29 that he was the year we met. And even crawling back, with very labored breathing, from a 70 pound cancer induced weight loss, I can forget that I'm not in my 30s any longer. Or even my 40s. When do I remember that I'm 55? When I look at my cell phone and see that it's 12:13 AM and that I'm not at home. (I don't have a watch to look at - I haven't worn a watch since cell phones started telling time.) So it was last night. We are never out at that hour. NEVER. We lead a very home centered, domestic life. Cats and dogs expect you home at the dinner hour. Rachel Maddow along with a martini and some appetizers and sections of the Sunday paper you never made it through or internet news on your iPad, make dinner, eat dinner, clean up the kitchen, watch some must see TV, and then - WOW - it's almost ten o'clock and it's off to bed. Seven days a week. We seldom go out and if we do we are never out late. We can't even go to a movie that starts after 8:00 PM. We like movies, we want to go to more movies, but who can go to even a 90 minute movie that starts at 9:00 or 9:30 PM? Who are those people? They are not us.

We are also the people who show up at parties but are long gone by 10:00 PM. Thus it was very surprising to us to realize we were still at Kevin and Kent's after midnight last night. It was more surprising to see (and hear) co-workers drunk. Very drunk. Since we are generally among the first guests to leave we usually don't see how parties end. And how some of the guests end.

[Sidebar: Please don't "tsk tsk tsk" here. And don't worry. We're a highly intelligent lot us real estate agents: We take cabs. And we have drivers. And we drive each other. Plans were in place. Our driver's licenses are crucial to our livelihood. No one was allowed to leave if those of us who only had one drink thought something was amiss with someone else's consumption levels.]

The party was really wonderful. K & K have outdoor speakers and lovely decorations so as you walk up the 47 narrow steep switchback steps to get to their front porch you are filled with the holiday spirit. The house glowed, the music was pitch perfect, the tented backyard was very cool, THE outdoor fireplace even cooler, and the catered food was amazing. There was a bar and a bartender in the tent. We had a great turnout and I hear people stayed on long after David and I left with two agents crammed into our car. They were going to call a cab but they live 2 blocks from us and I wanted to make sure they didn't drive. But our car, my Hybrid Escape, was holding Stella and homeless possessions of ours that we have not yet found a place for. In other words we essentially had a two seater car with a dog and stuff in it and needed to fit 4 people in it, 3 of them who were 7 sheets to the wind (yes David too, but not like the others). I don't eat or drink much anymore so I was I was completely lucid and soaking it all in. We got them home safely.

Meanwhile back at party central, the agent of mine that I'd least expect to pass out and sleep on the couch all night did just that. (I got reports by e-mail and text throughout this morning, great fun for me!)

Co-worker Review

I really like the people I work with. David too. This makes it easy, easy for us to linger at a work party like this for so many hours - over 6 hours last night - and easy to converse with anyone there, and seldom about work, which is nice. One of us isn't bored, dropping hints to the other that they want to leave. We both like these people. Of course I hired everyone who works at my office so I guess I'm predisposed to liking them. Actually I think there are 4 agents who have been there longer than I have and I know my lead admin can pull seniority rank on me anytime. So that's 5 that I did not hire out of 77 - I think 77 is my current count of admins and agents. Sophie lost track. Some of these people I hired over 16 years ago and they are still with me. Most of these people I hired about 10 to 14 years ago. Some I hired just 3 years ago. A few I hired mere months ago.

I have a strong history with most of them. But it's more than that. Real estate agents are a thoroughly likable bunch of people. It's hard to successfully do what we do for a living and not have a good attitude. It's hard to successfully do what we do for a living and not be intelligent. And it's hard to successfully do what we do for a living and not be engaging. Humorous. Clever. Engaging. Quick. Smart. Funny. I'm telling you, a thoroughly likable bunch of people. At least my agents are. And, given what they do and what they've seen, they always have great stories to tell. They are perfect at parties - especially at a party of their peers where they know they can't sell a thing to anyone!

Last night's party was "Martha Stewart perfect." Kevin and Kent did an awesome job. It's the kind of party you want to be invited to. It's the kind of party you don't keep checking your watch at. (Or phone?) When we got home David and I both agreed all parties should be like this. You should arrive home from all parties a little later than you originally planned and you should arrive home feeling as warmly about the other guests as we did last night.

Today is December 12th 2010, a Sunday

2010 = A Very Unlikely Year For Michael And David

A few pages ago I said the order for this year's letter started taking shape in my mind about a month ago. I think it's time we get to that, don't you? Before writing this each year I just sit without notes, without my calendar, with nothing but a cappuccino, and I THINK back. I think back and see what I can remember from the year, what stands out for me. I don't write it down as I think about it, no notes are made, I just like to see "what pops up" in my mind. Some years this is tough task, but not this year. This year was so easy because two of the events were so unlikely, events not to possible for either of us to have predicted. Two of the 2010 events rocked our world and will undoubtedly shape our lives for quite awhile. 2010 breaks down to three basic categories:

1. Our beloved dog Inga died unexpectedly.
2. We sold our house and moved.
3. The relentlessness of my medical issues and their effects on our day to day lives.

So let's go, and not necessarily in order:

We Still Can't Completely Adjust To Her Being Gone

On Friday October 8th Inga, our much loved Weimaraner who we had raised since she was a small puppy, died. This came out of the blue. She was in good health, had been fine right up to her death, it was a completely unlikely and shocking event.

Inga slept on the floor on my side of the bed near the headboard end of the bed. I could reach down and touch her, and often did throughout the night. At 6:15 AM on this morning I was half asleep but petting her due to the odd sounds she was making. At first I thought she was dreaming, but it didn't stop as it usually does when you pet a dreaming dog. I thought maybe she needed to vomit or something, it was pitch dark as we slept in the basement bedroom (we liked it better) but I got up and said, "Let's go outside" and I called her. No movement. By this point David heard things and was up as well so I turned on the light. We could see something was very much wrong. Her stomach heaving, heavy breathing, not right. She could not stand up. So we tried to pick her up. As we did poop fell out her butt and foamy, very very white foamy drool, came out her mouth along with some day old dog food. So we stopped trying to move her. I told David to find an emergency vet on the internet and I stayed with Inga on the floor in the hall. Turns out there is a very good 24 hour emergency vet on Lake City Way very close to our old house. So I told David to get dressed and I stayed on the floor with Inga. Then David stayed on the floor with Inga while I got dressed. Then we both carried her to the car and got to the vet quickly.

We had a very nice vet who was just starting her shift at 7:00 AM. Her name was Beth. She was very competent and alert and helpful. She said it looked like a stroke (as opposed to a seizure) and that it might pass. She got Inga a bit stabilized and then came out and gave us 3 options to think about. We went with the option where they would take x-rays of Inga, watch her, and manage her for 3 hours and we'd call at 10:00 AM and see if it passed and if we could take her home. Beth didn't advise us taking her home then as she was very unstable and couldn't stand. We asked to see where she'd be kept for 3 hours and they took us in the back. Inga was in a very large kennel immediately, like 3 feet or less, in front of Beth's desk and computer. Beth said she'd be at her desk working and watching Inga and to call her in 3 hours. We reached in to pet Inga but she couldn't stand up or move very well. This was the last time we saw her alive.

So we left and went to Herkimer on the Ave for coffee. As we were finishing coffee, about 8:00 AM, they called and said Inga's heart had stopped beating but that CPR brought her back around but to come back quickly, her heartbeat was weak. We had never gone home so we just jumped back in the car and drove immediately back there. By time we got there she had died. Just typing this again now is making me cry all over again because I felt terrible, we both did, that she died alone. We would have never left had we realized . . . hindsight. Stop this. Still doing it, must stop.

So when we got back there they had Inga in a room on a table mostly covered with a nice red blanket. She looked like she was sleeping under a nice red blanket, she often slept under the covers, under blankets. We got to spend time alone with her. It was so hard. So sad. We were a mess. We stayed with her for about an hour and it was odd because as we were hugging her we could feel her body warmth dropping. She looked so normal, her eyes open looking at us, but she wasn't there. She looked pretty tho' - that beautiful coat.

This is the third dog I have lost in my adult life, David's second. David was much more of a wreck than I was the day it happened - or so it seemed to me - but how do you compare pain like that and why do it anyway? We were both devastated. And in shock as we did not see this coming at us.

In a way it was easier to not have to be asked by a vet, or have it "suggested" by a vet, as we were with Libby and Samson, if we wanted to put Inga down. At least we were spared from having that conversation and making that decision. We stayed with Inga as long as we could but as she was getting colder it was getting harder and harder to stay so we left. We filled out the cremation paperwork and went home to a very empty house.

Weeks later we'd come home and expect Inga to be in the hallway near the door to the garage thumping her tail on her dog bed happy to see us home. It was an empty house for the rest of our time there - which thankfully wasn't long for us at this point.

Now we live in an apartment on Capitol Hill and STILL I come in the door most days after work and wonder where she is. I miss her so. And this apartment, which we rented before she died, was rented for her. The primary reason we live where we live now is Inga. We looked at many options. We selected based on Inga's needs. I love the apartment we chose for her so not only am I grateful for the 11 plus years we had with her, I'm grateful for the apartment we chose for her. Or she chose for us. I don't know. I'm just very happy to be here each day, even if without her.

Stella the 14 month old Weimaraner puppy has returned to her real home. Matt & Maggie returned from New York and picked her up. David was out with clients when this happened, well he was at the gym first and then with back to back clients, so he didn't get to say goodbye to Stella. Point is, he was gone all day and when he got home and Stella wasn't here and he was sad. He then jokingly "blamed" me for offering to pet sit as a tricky maneuver to make him remember having a dog and wanting one again. It's not a question of whether we will have another dog in our lives, it's only a question of when. David's claim is that having Stella here makes him want a puppy now, not in seven months, but now. Dog sitting has once again brought up that expectation in him that a dog should be waiting for you when you return home from a day's work. Not a spouse of 26 years. A dog.

I Like Clever Things

There often are TV commercials that I will watch. This annoys David, particularly if it is a TV commercial I have seen before (or have made him watch before). Yes most commercials are annoying BUT some are great and watchable. Think of them like You Tube videos - everyone loves the short clever You Tube thing so why not love the short and clever TV commercial? This year there were some great ones. That hot black guy in the Old Spice commercials? Com'on - he was great. Great delivery, very funny and fast paced, great editing. The whole series of Snickers commercials with famous people doing cameos. One of my other favorites this year is for a company I know nothing about: J G Wentworth. I have never heard of them. But a guy gets on a bus and starts to sing opera about how he has a note to collect or debt that he's owed. And then people on the bus sing about J G Wentworth and the tag line is: "It's my money and I need it now." All done with supra titles. It's well done. It makes me smile each time I see it. They sing their 1-800 number and they repeatedly sing, "It's my money and I need it now." I gather if you are owed money from someone this company will buy the debt for pennies on the dollar from you. You get cash - albeit LESS cash - now. Sadly too many people out there have had to feel that way about their SEP/IRAs and 401Ks in the past two years. Or has it been three years now?

Given the up and down state of my recovery process there's a whole lot less that took place in 2010 than in years past. Less of everything. Less meals out; they're hard to enjoy if you are existing with a feeding tube and can't swallow anything. Less small weekend trips; they're hard to enjoy if you have to schlep canned feeding tube food along with you. No larger big picture trips. Less social events with friends. Less. There's been a lot less of everything this year. But still we had a year.

January

I was getting my sea legs back as it were. The big event this month was the writing and mailing of the December Christmas letter. History was made: It was mailed on January 15th, a full month late by any standard of measurement! I went nowhere. David visited Michael Stewart in some place in Mexico where Michael often rents a villa. David worried about me being alone. But I was getting my sea legs back and urged him to travel. There were some small events in the month. I remember having a nice dinner with Rebecca and Cherese at Vios on Capitol Hill and actually being able to eat my food.

[Sidebar: So I'm thinking about our year, typing away, minding my own business and my cell phone rings. It's some guy who works for some company that does memory seminars. I'd say it was a "cold call" but it wasn't as another Windermere manager gave him my name, so I guess it was a "warm call," and I was warned by e-mail that my name had been given out. So he calls. I'm ready. He launches into his spiel and I say, "Yes, I seem to remember getting an e-mail about this but I forgot what it said." This was lost on him. So much for humor. He's still talking. I love it when they drop names. It goes like this, "We've already done a seminar at Renee's and we're doing one at Loretta's office next week and we wanted to know when we could fit you in" and blah blah blah. I have zero interest in doing this. If I thought any one of my agents would be able to sell even one more house because they can memorize the names of people they haven't met in a room and then read them backwards aloud to a group, well I'd be all over it. So I wait to find a second when the guy will stop talking and ask me when it will be my turn and I quickly say, "Thank you, that's nice, but it's not something I'm interested in." And they are always shocked. I just don't think they are ready for the friendly upbeat but firm no. He stammers and asks why. I say I've done this sort of thing before and - BOOM, he cuts me off - "With who? Not with us? Are you sure you . . ." Now it's my turn to jump in. I say look I have been managing this office for almost 15 years now and I assure you I have done this sort of thing before and I'm simply not interested. And I can tell he's mad at me as he gets off the phone. Where was I?]

Ah, also in January we had our friends Mark and Dirk over for dinner and the season premier of the last season of **24**. I love a night of food and must see appointment TV.

February

Ah here it is again, our anniversary. This time it's number 25. I love these. I love having them, I love counting them, I love saying to David the next day, "Well now we're in our 26th year of being together." He knows I am right but he hates that I get to add a year to it so soon. We went to Portland for three nights. We took Inga (dog road trip!!!) because she was a GREAT HOTEL AND ELEVATOR dog. So well behaved in both. There's a hotel there called **The Nines**. The hotel is the top floors, I think floors 6 through 15, of one of those classic old department stores, one like Frederick and Nelson's used to be in Seattle. There's still a department store from the ground floor up to 5, and then it is all hotel all of the time beyond that.

They added a restaurant and bar on the roof and there is an open atrium design in the body of the hotel. I am amazed that they could remove all of the floors of the department store to make this soaring lobby. I really liked the design of this place, I had stayed there alone a year before on one of my Inga road trips (so I wasn't alone, I was driving to Palm Springs, or back, with Inga) and I wanted David to see the place. Plus - PORTLAND for three nights. Powell's. The Pearl District. Dog walking. Dinners. And a great hotel room.

More history was made in February: On Thursday February 25th I went into **The Cuff**. David too. Neither of us had ever been there. Let me say that again: Neither. Of. Us. Had. Ever. Been. There. Ever. The occasion was to watch Matt Ketchum sign Karaoke. Matt was dating Gary at the time and evidently once a week they have, or is it once a month?, Karaoke Night. And Matt is willing to do it. I only know two people this brave, my cousin Marsha and now Matt. So there we are standing around in a gay bar holding drinks in our hands. Seemed familiar to me. Hadn't done it in years. Compared it in my mind to watching Rachel Maddow and having a martini with a cat in my lap. Anyway, point is, after like 20 years that the Cuff's been there we have finally been inside.

March

I'm looking at our large paper calendar now. We call it the "social calendar" mostly tho' sometimes we call it the "master calendar." We each keep separate work related calendars in our laptops but some calendar has to rule the social events. Looking at March I can see I must have been getting my strength back as there are numerous social things, mostly dinners, scattered about the month: Robin and Fred's, Gary and Matt's, a Smile Train fundraiser, Greg and Larry's, Mark and Dirk, Michael Stewart, we had some people over for the Oscars, and we saw the movie **A Single Man** (it must have started at 7:00 PM). And we went to Palm Springs for 5 days in the middle of the month. All in one month! I must have been feeling a heck of a lot better - sea legs fully restored!

April

I flew home to Michigan to see my parents. I never know if I should say "flew home" or "flew back to" when talking about Michigan. Certain friends there do a "gotcha" if I say "home" saying this indicates something on my part, a yearning, a true knowing, as if it's some kind of tell or a major slip. I've lived in Seattle for over half of my life. Seattle is home. But home is also always where your parents are (if they never moved as mine have not). Anyway just after Christmas my Aunt Geraldine, my mom's sister, paid for my mom and dad to fly out to Seattle and sit with me in our old kitchen for a week. I was very weak then, everyone was very concerned. Since I was much stronger now I thought it would be nice for everyone to see me up and around again.

There's a once a year event in the Detroit suburbs called **Michigan Modernism**. It's a large trade show or convention for people who deal in mid-century modern furniture and design. Dealers come and set up booths and sell their wares. There is one of these also, but on a much smaller scale, in Palm Springs every February. I have been to the Palm Springs version several times. I wanted to see the Michigan version. So I researched when exactly, how much exactly, where and bought tickets accordingly. Then I found a hotel near the exhibition site. I told everyone I'd be in town two days later than I would be. I flew into Chicago, rented a car, and drove to my hotel. Saw the show, had some "alone time" and then opened myself up to the parade of family and friends for the next six days. All told it was an eight day trip. I flew in and out of Chicago because that's where Alaska Airlines goes. I want to maintain my MVP status which isn't easy when you are weak and recovering most of the year.

January & February & March & April

I almost blocked this out. Denial, such an amazing thing. I only just remembered it now because on Saturday April 17th I made a note on the social calendar about it. I guess earlier when thinking about our year, about what really effected it, this didn't come to mind. And even now, half way into this letter I didn't remember it. Why? Because it was absolutely awful. I hated every minute of it.

Starting in January of this year, and ending on April 17th, I had to go to Virginia Mason Hospital once a day to sit in something called a Hyperbaric Oxygen Chamber. The chamber looks sorta like a submarine so there's this whole nautical theme going on over there. Let's start with the word "dive." Each session in the chamber is called a "dive." A dive is 2 hours long. However you have to get to Virginia Mason Hospital, find parking and get to the Hyperbaric suites each day. Then you have to check in. Then you have to have all of these minor tests done on you, blood pressure, oxygenation, heart rate, get weighed in, and on and on. By time the dive starts you have already invested ninety minutes in the process of getting there and getting ready for it. Then there's the two hour dive. Up to 16 people crammed into this locked down and pressurized tank sitting in Lazy-Boy type chairs with helmets on that cover your whole head. I can't tell you how awful this experience was. After two hours just sitting there you get checked out, you change your clothes back, and you get outta there. All told just shy of a 4 hour process. Every time you go. 40 times. They wanted you to do 3 to 5 dives a week. Some weeks I did 5 straight, some weeks less. All the while counting to 40.

I honestly think it did nothing for me. I would never recommend it to anyone. All I saw was a huge amount of precious time being wasted. 160 hours of my life. Gone.

Today is December 13th 2010, a Monday

Just going to jump right back into this where I left off. Just in from Vivace (across the street LITERALLY from "our front door") where I had my usual start to the day: A morning glory muffin from Macrina and a short quad cappuccino, the Seattle Times (which is so sad and pathetic) and the New York Times. I'm home now and ready to let my fingers fly.

May

A pretty good month. It's always calm before the storm tho', right? Or is that darkest before dawn? June was not dawn by any means. Nor was July. There was no sunshine in June or July so I'm gonna have to go with darkest before the storm in May.

So May. I continued working. I never really stopped working this year. Even during the "horrible hyperbaric days" I went into work every day as soon as I was out of the tank. I have an office to run and I love running it. I resent many of these doctors appointments as they take me away from work which I'd rather be going. Obviously.

May is the month of my 6th month cycle for testing so there were tests. I got to see all of my many doctors again and they did actual biopsies, blood work, and the full body scan. All negative. All NED. See you in 6 more months they all say. So good news, right? I'm feeling good, I'm eating again, the feeding tube had been removed from my stomach, it was all good. To celebrate the

goodness of it all we did our annual Memorial Day Weekend trip to Palm Springs with the girls (aka, Cherese and Rebecca) at the end of the month.

Lurking in the background however was the sense, this was me, my sense, that swallowing was getting to be more difficult again. Each day it seemed to get a little bit harder to swallow food. And water alone (as in alone, not with food at the same time) was out of the question. But I was still eating on my own, independent of a feeding tube, so I was happy.

We threw a small party in Palm Springs on Memorial Day. I made soup. Two kinds. Cold soups that you could enjoy in 115° heat. Tom was there for sure, I don't think Rick was able to be in the valley that weekend. We invited everyone we knew from Seattle who have places in Palm Springs or who were in town that weekend. Donna Bertolino, from Seattle, was there with some friends. It was a nice gathering. The next day everyone left. I stayed on alone one more day to clean up and close up the house. Then I flew home and then it was

June & July

On June 3rd I went into see Dr Burgoyne for my 6th throat dilation. Remember the "routine procedure" I refereed to at the start of this letter? This is it. It is a simple thing, quite quick. They sedate me. They slide rubber rods down my throat. The rubber rods start at a size # 2 which happens to be about the size of a # 2 pencil. The largest rubber rod is a #24. It is larger than your garden hose. I think your garden hose is about a # 20. The goal is to **S T R E T C H** out the circumference of my esophagus. To make it wider. To make it able to accept larger quantities of food without my nearly gagging to death. Each time they do this they try to get a larger hose size in me. (When we do this on Wednesday - 2 days from now - it'll be my 16th time!)

Something went wrong this time.

So I end up at home (this is "out patient" stuff after all) later that day completely unable to eat food. Remember the feeding tube I had, feeding tube # 2) had been removed about a month or two ago. David nurses me through the night. I wake up the next day and simply can't eat. I have been here before and I see the writing on the wall. I can't eat. I can't drink. I already weigh about 140 pounds (when I used to weigh 210). And I have no feeding tube. So I call my doctor and ask him to have me admitted to Swedish. Again. This was my second time staying in a hospital. Last November was my first. Didn't want to do it but I knew I'd need fluids by IV and fast or things would really go downhill. It's hard to function at 135 pounds. I know. I was 135 pounds when they let me start eating again after the last esophagus crash. 135 pounds is just not good.

While in the hospital I was introduced to my new throat surgeon, a man named Dr Aye. He's the head thoracic surgeon at all of Swedish Hospital. And now he's my new throat stretching guy. I have been handed off. On June 5th Dr Aye tries to dilate my throat. No luck. On June 6th I get another feeding tube installed in my stomach. I call it # 3. And on June 8th I am allowed to go home. But not until Dr Aye tells me he wants me to go eight full weeks without eating anything, drinking anything, swallowing anything. He would like it if I could not swallow my own saliva too please. Nothing. No coffee, no drinks, no food, nothing. For at least eight weeks.

And here's where the massive sadness sets in. In April, looking forward to an amazing summer in the yard, I ordered an entire new set of patio furniture from Crate and Barrel. Out with the old (it's at Robert Heuer's place in Port Townsend now) and in with the new. I saw a summer of dinners

on our patio, outdoor brunches on the weekend, all on our lovely new patio furniture under our Smith and Hawkins umbrella. I was collecting recipes. And now I'm told "no food for you" for at least eight weeks. Thus no barbecues, no Fourth of July parties, no cocktails, nothing, no summer of dinners.

So what to do. I needed solitary activities. People gather around food and drink. This was just too depressing for me. I went through this back in November of 2009 when I missed Thanksgiving and all of the other holidays. Now I was going to go through that again. I needed something solitary. So I started to garden. Alone. Very much alone. What else was there to do?

So that's what I did. Every moment that I was not at work working I was at home gardening. I was alone a great deal of the time, socially that is. Obviously I was connected at the office. And with David. But other than that, June and July were quiet calm months. I saw very few people. I did very few things. I spent a great deal of time alone. I fussed the garden, removed a tree, re-worked an entire area and got vegetable planter bins, and started growing food. The weeds never had a chance as I had more time on my hands than they did.

I mastered pruning. I walked the dog a lot. I got several new tattoos. I made no plans.

On July 26th Dr Aye made another attempt at stretching my esophagus. This was on a Monday. Dr Aye does his "out patient" surgeries on Mondays. (There will be a pop quiz later.) It had been almost the full eight weeks since he told me not to swallow anything. By now he had hoped my esophagus had healed enough to allow the throat stretchings to begin again and for me to slowly start eating again. Both proved to be true. The July 26th stretching went very well. I was eating a Macrina Morning Glory muffin the very next morning and having a quad cappuccino. I felt like a human again. I still had a feeding tube sticking out of my stomach, this one being # 4 because I had to have it super-sized, but even so I was feeling like things were going back to normal.

August

From this point on just assume that if it's a Monday I'm on Dr Aye's table having rubber tubes slide down my throat while sedated. We did this EVERY Monday in August and on into September. It's a given. It's OLD HAT. It's routine. It's no big deal. (Remember all of this, there will be a quiz when we get to October 18th.)

iPads For Everyone !

Not really, just for me and David.

If you get an e-mail from me sent from my iPad, which really isn't likely, you will see at the bottom of the e-mail:

"Sent from my Lance Hood Commemorative iPad which is cool but not nearly as cool as Lance!"

Lance owned an apartment building. I listed it for sale in 2008 as the market started to head in the wrong direction. We messed around with this for over a year, perhaps two, I don't know. We eventually took it off the market. Sign down. Not for sale. Not the right time. In early 2010 I get a phone call from an agent who says he has buyers for a building just like this, would my client still be interested in selling it? I say I'll call and find out. I do, he is, I report back. Weeks go by.

They call again to see it, to tour the inside of a few of the units. I dig up my keys and set up the tour. I show the property, meet the buyers and the other agent, the usual. More weeks go by. Then an offer appears. And then the fun starts. The "gaps" of weeks between calls early on in this deal should have tipped me off. Time was so NOT of the essence in this contract. I kept joking to David that this deal was never going to come together. Then it did. I told David this deal is never going to survive the inspection period. Then it did. And so on. I told everyone that if this deal closed, which I really thought all along was unlikely given so many things I am not going to go into here, I was going to get an iPad. Heck I'll get two, one for me, one for David (I hate sharing). Skipping all of the details, fast forwarding many months, it did close. After I got paid, this always lags a few days from when the sale actually records with King County, David and I went to the best place on earth (U-Village) and headed directly to the Apple Store. Now we each have iPads. I had a Kindle, I gave it to Rebecca. Now I'm all Apple all of the time. Except for my Droid phone. Apple and Verizon really need to work that out.

It's Not Just A Planning Calendar, It's A Diary !

When I think back now, from this calm, quiet and relaxing spot at our dining room table in our tiny apartment on Capitol Hill, when I think back over the past four months, I just can't believe what we pulled off. It was mostly me doing this, pulling it off, making it happen, pushing pushing pulling and prodding to make it all happen and that alone is astounding given that I'm supposed to be in a weakened state. But I'm a force when I make my mind up and set it to something. And on Thursday August 5th I set it to something new and quite unexpected. It was a hard place to get my mind to, but once there all hell broke loose.

Remember that oversize social calendar we keep? Not only do we write on it things coming up that we plan on doing, I often write on it things that just passed, things we ended up doing. Let's say we go to a movie. I might write the name of the movie on the date we saw it. Calendar? Diary? If we do something I add it to the calendar. I could tell you what I was doing on September 14th 1994 if you asked me. I used to be able to do this quickly, up until about 2 weeks ago, because all of the calendars from our entire relationship were hanging in the vacuum cleaner closet in our basement. Yes, once David and I started living together I saved them all.

Some people think I'm crazy. Some people think I'm a hoarder. I think Merritt Green sums me up best. She said, and I quote, "You're not a hoarder; you're an archivist." I can't tell you how many people have questioned me when discussing what year we did this or that together, they argue with me!, only to have me head downstairs, grab the calendar from 1988 and settle things once and for all. I can still do this but now I'll have to drive to a storage locker in the arm pit of Queen Anne, Interbay, for the specific year's calendar. But I could still do it, settle the debate.

So anyway our calendar is lying on the floor next to the table and I'm flipping through the months and glancing at it as I type and reflect. I turned to August. It looks blank. All of the months up to August had many entries, names of friends, titles of movies and DVDs and plays, names of restaurants and so on. August has only one. On August 5th there's one word written: **DECIDED**

Other than that August is completely blank. Really. Mostly blank would be September, October and November and December. After I "**DECIDED**" most things stopped. Plans that stayed in place (like meeting Carly Simon) were not cancelled BUT NO NEW PLANS WERE MADE. All social events stopped. Everything stopped. Just ask our friends. How much have they seen or heard from us after August 5th?

The Out Of The Blue Move

It's funny because while selling the house and moving absolutely never entered my mind until the day I decided to do it - seriously now, I'm not just saying that for dramatic effect - I don't know how "out of the blue" I can say this was. In the summer of 2008 David started making noises about wanting to move. I was having none of it. But I clearly remember him starting to agitate for this and me saying, as I always do, "But I'm not done here yet." And you're probably reading into that that the house wasn't fully finished yet, that the remodel was not complete, that there were still things left to do, still unfinished areas that we were living in. You're probably thinking back to the two times in the past when David and I have sold houses that literally were not done. It's sorta become a joke in certain circles. Based on two houses only. Yes we sold the house on 14th before the remodel was complete. And yes we sold the house on 17th before the remodel was complete. But that's it - just those two - and yet it's this standing joke now. The apartment building on Harvard was 100% finished when we sold it and moved to Matthew's Beach. Anyway . . . that's not what I mean by "I'm not done here yet." What I mean is I wasn't mentally ready to move yet. I had not fully enjoyed enough summers in the yard. There were still hummingbirds to tend to and fish to feed. And "my stuff" was all around me in a disorganized and unpacked state. I just wasn't ready to think about moving again.

He'll put up a fuss and deny this, but all who know him know this is true: David grows tired of things and wants to move on. Often. Quickly. Frequently. We buy a piece of art. A year later he regrets it. Greg has a line about this, about whether or not the piece "endured." It cracks me up each time the discussion goes to a place where David is debating anything he already has. For what David has he does not want. It is what David doesn't have that he wants. This is true of art, cars, places to live, furniture, anything physical. It is not true of living things (and for this I, along with Inga and Calvin, remain truly grateful). It is true of the vacant lot in Palm Springs, and some days the house in Palm Springs, heck, even very idea of Palm Springs someday. (Having a house in Palm Springs precludes and prevents travel to other places is his theory. That we'd go more places if we didn't always HAVE to go there. Palm Springs is a burden you see!)

Anyway, I'm rambling again. So it's 2008 and for whatever reason David is agitating to move. A condo in the market (the Pike Place Market, Belltown, Downtown) seems to be the new object of desire. Then I got stage 3 cancer. The focus shifted and all discussions of moving ended. During all of 2009 there was simply nothing else on the planning table other than getting me through it. (He did manage to trade in my convertible 2004 BMW 330 for a 2006 BMW 750 sedan that year, I seem to recall signing things in a chemo induced fog, but I digress)

So . . . I'm pretty much improving in all of 2010, riding the ups and downs, but still moving is never discussed. New patio furniture is discussed, but not moving.

Fast forward to August 4th. I spent the day at my office analyzing income projections for the remainder of 2010 and looking forward to 2011. I also was spending some time with spreadsheets from 2005 and 2006 and then comparing those to the year I feel everything changed: 2007. Think back, remember the crashing economy? The bank failures? The bailouts? All of those dire dark headlines? That was all in the fall of 2008 (I'm doing this from memory here, not fact checking at all). I always felt that locally things (and my things I mean real estate) started going to hell in a hand basket in August of 2007. I just didn't realize it at the time. I didn't realize it until late in 2008. Then comes 2009 and 2010 and the short sales and the foreclosures and dropping values and it's a whole new world for me and the 75 people I manage.

I have been selling real estate in Seattle for a very long time, since 1987 to be exact. I remember the bad market crash in 1991. I remember the market crash in 2000. I remember ups and downs. And what I remember the most is they are temporary. Short lived. They don't last long in the Seattle region. But this time is different. 2008. 2009. And now all of 2010 as well. This time is different.

In the back of my mind I think I was thinking this rough patch would end, the value of our house would jump to where we once thought it was (or should be), I'd recover 100% from the cancer and the radiation that killed the cancer, we'd sell someday after all of these things happened, and we'd move to a condo in the Pike Place Market. Spending the day with spreadsheets didn't depress me, but it did put me in a bit of a funk. But I go home, make more food for the hummingbirds, have a drink and move on.

The next morning I call Tom Martin in LA. (Yes, this is all his fault!) Between houses and rentals and lines of credit, David and I have nine mortgages. Tom was the loan officer who put most of them in place. He knows us well, knows what we have, and, like me, he has a new found love of Suze Orman. (Well, not like me. I have always loved Suze Orman. Tom used to say he hated her. But recently he has come around.) David and I always joke about that line, "What would Jesus do?" by turing it into "What would Suze Orman do?" - when looking at completely useless \$99 birdcages for instance. Later we changed it, amended it, to "What would Tom Martin do?" We always ask ourselves these things. And then we buy the new computer anyway.

Anyway, Tom and I talked for about an hour - this was early, before 8:00 AM. When we got off of the phone I walked the house once, a slow stroll through every room of it, and did a loop around the yard. Then I stopped. I decided. Then I picked up the phone and called David. It was about 8:30 AM now and he was just leaving the gym. All I said was, "I decided I want to sell the house, is that okay with you?"

(You get that was a joke right? "Is that okay with you?" WITH YOU? I'm asking David this? I'm asking David if change would be okay with him?)

David laughed and answered "YES !" immediately.

And the next day, Friday the 6th of August, David and I embarked on our next really big adventure. We were together all afternoon driving around Seattle looking for a new place to live. In the process every time we passed a storage facility we'd stop the car and I would run in and ask what was available in the way of huge storage spaces. We are not talking about a 5' X 8' locker here. If they sounded like they had a large one we'd stop the living space tour and start the storage locker tour. We were rolling stones, moss does not get a chance to grow near us. Because once I make my mind up all hell breaks loose.

On August 28th Martin Luther King Had A Dream

That same day Glen Beck had a delusion on the mall in Washington, and David Updike had a birthday in Seattle. David's 54th birthday to be exact. All three things happened on Saturday the 28th this year. I am not going to discuss Glen Beck pulling this stunt on Martin Luther King's birthday, many pundits way smarter than me already did this. But I will tell you what we did on David's birthday.

10:30 AM - We met Michael Stewart for a downtown brunch at Lola

NOON - Walked across the street to Bed, Bath and Beyond to get things for the new place

1:30 PM - Go to the QFC on 15th Avenue on Capitol Hill because they have a Coin Star machine. It's green. The same company also owns Redbox, a movie vending machine. Those are red. I love this company. I use Redbox whenever I can (be sure to give them your e-mail address, it's a very slick system). This was my first time using the green box.

Year ago, when the green boxes first popped up on the landscape, I checked them out. At the time you could pour your loose change into the green box and get cash or cash on cards. One of the cards was a Starbucks card. One of the many things I am OCD about is coins. I pick them up if I see them. I will stop on Denny and bend over for a dirty penny in front of traffic. I used to USE my coins every day. Unlike most people if the clerk said that will be \$9.81 I would give them nine dollars and then count out .81 cents. I was fast at it, never held up the line. While waiting I'd group my coins and I'd be ready. Coins never - NEVER - accumulated in our home. I would see them and put them in my pocket each morning and I'd use them.

But then I saw the whole Coin Star and Starbucks card possibility. I'm not a nut; I can change. So I did. I went out and got one of those really large glass "flour" jars, the kinds with a lid on it, I put it next to our dresser, and every night I'd drop the coins in the jar. I never "used" coins in public again. Fast forward about seven years. The jar is not full, but it's getting close. It's driving David crazy. He says it's full. It's not. He tries to weigh it by holding it on the scale and subtracting his weight. He thinks it is 80 pounds. He goes on and on about it. There might be dust in with the coins. I started the coin jar in our townhome on Harvard (the first time we lived on Harvard) and moved it to Matthew's Beach with us in 2005. Now it's 2010. It's at least seven years now. So on David's birthday, as a gift to him, I say we're gonna get our \$\$\$ now. We can't lift it, the jar. We decide to get a canvas Lands End bag (familiar with those?) and put the coins in the bag. Even with both of us it is almost impossible to get the bag to the car. Off we go to Coin Star.

We had such fun doing this. Hauling the bag into QFC. Hogging a green box for over an hour. Scooping handfuls of coins into the hopper. Putting the same foreign coin in the hopper again and again just to see if we could trick the machine! This is one time I took notes for the Christmas letter:

Coin Star takes a 9.8% cut.

Coin Star counts your coins, the numbers of them, by denomination.

Here's what we had:

Dollars = 0

Half dollars = 2

Quarters = 1,639

Dimes = 2,485

Nickels = 1,260

Pennies = 5,241

Total dollars in: \$774.66

Their 9.8% cut = \$75.92

Our take after their cut: \$698.74

We learned how the system works, how you get your money on the spot and so on. We chatted up the QFC manager about how much he's ever seen there at once. We were not the highest take but he said most people are doing like \$50 at a time.

I guess we "lost" \$76 dollars on this foolishness but honestly the fun we had was so worth \$76. People pay \$76 to get into Disneyland and probably don't laugh as much as we did that day. (I have no idea what they pay to get in really but I hear it's a lot.) (I have started refilling the jar again.)

2:30 PM - Visited our new apartment to drop off our bounty from Bed Bath and Beyond.

3:00 PM - Walk Inga in Volunteer Park

4:00 PM - Hit U-Village, one of my favorite places on earth! Visit the Apple Store (of course), Pottery Barn and Restoration Hardware. Walking into Pottery Barn we start to make fun of the place, the style of it, how it's so 11 years ago, etc. Mocking. Mocking Pottery Barn, can you believe it. Shortly after saying I wouldn't own any of this crap we round a corner and immediately I want to spend \$99. David sees it in my eyes. We have \$700 in cash in our pockets from Coin Star. Guess what knocked the mockery right out of me? A BIRD CAGE. A huge bird cage. It was \$249 but it was their last one, marked down to \$99. And even tho' it was David's birthday, I got a gift. I finally sold David on it by saying, "If we ever tire of it it can become staging material!" Staging is our latest private joke. Staging. He laughed, I laughed, we got the bird cage.

Our new apartment is so tiny. But the front part of it, I hesitate to say "the living room" because this entire apartment would fit **into** our former living room, the front part of it is two stories tall. It's "a loft" or so they claim. Above the front door there's a 5' X 6' ledge, or platform, formed by an exterior "front porch" that juts into the footprint of the main floor. When we first saw the place they had it staged and they did something amusing up there. Amusing would have grown tiresome in no time in this case. But I said to David, we can do better than that. Now we have a birdcage up there. It will not grow tiresome. For me. David will tire of it soon and want change. After we bought the birdcage we ran into Linda Moline at Restoration Hardware.

4:45 PM - Our afternoon treats at Starbucks and then rush back to the house to change clothes.

6:00 PM - Meet the girls at our new apartment on Capitol Hill. They arrive with a ferris wheel. David doesn't love it (already) so it must have been a housewarming item for me over a birthday gift for him. We have 4 folding chairs, the kind you'd find in a meeting room, and a folding table from my office at the old house (ask Frank Kennard about the tables - he was seriously jealous of how I spread out there). I got the chairs at Office whatever, Max, Depot, they are the same and ought to just merge and get it over with. We open a bottle of champagne for David's birthday and for the girls being the first to see the new teeny tiny apartment. The tour takes about 90 seconds, 60 seconds on the main floor and 30 seconds in the loft.

7:00 PM - David's birthday dinner at the new location of Flying Fish. It was a full, great fun day.

In late August we had one dinner with some friends on our Crate and Barrel patio furniture.

The Rest Of The Year

September & October & November & December

We must be crazy. Somehow we managed to travel, together and separately, in the last four months of the year EVEN THO' we were in the middle of absolute chaos at the house and with the move.

But other plans were in place before we decided to move, sell and move. (Yes I meant to say, "move, sell, and move" just like that.) We had a trip to Montreal planned. Yup, Canada. There are no terrorists in Canada you realize. It's on my approved places to go list. And David had never been there. I had, I grew up in Detroit, not too far, but I hadn't been there in my adult life. One of the agents who works for me, Paul LeBlanc, is French Canadian. Paul was back visiting his family one day and calling me about a real estate procedural question (we all work while we are away) and I casually mentioned that David and I were going to Montreal and then Quebec City at the end of the summer. (This was our Labor Day weekend plan this year - instead of the BURDEN of having to go to Palm Springs. Again.) Well the next thing you know Paul, who has friends back there, has arranged for us great rooms in the top hotels in both cities at a rate we could never have gotten. We had narrowed our search down to the Fairmont Hotels in both cities, but the prices online were not Suze Orman approved. Paul's friends and family rates definitely were approved.

We had a great time in both cities. I still had a feeding tube in me but was no longer using it. (Remember I'm still getting weekly throat stretchings with Dr Aye on Mondays.) I was full on eating and drinking everything I could find. And all I wanted to do was eat the best food possible in the best restaurants possible. It was a long summer of food denial for me. I was traveling to make up for it - in a BIG way.

Can't afford to go to Paris? Why bother? Just skip Montreal and head straight for Quebec City. I swear they are the same place. The buildings, the food, the language spoken, the people not understanding your stupid English, the coffee houses, the pastries, the food - did I mention the food? - the history. Just go to Quebec City. We had a great time. Making it all the more fun for us, there was some bicycle marathon race something or other thing (sports, I really can't be bothered) happening in Quebec City over Labor Day weekend - the very weekend we were there. Imagine how surprised we were to walk into the lobby of the Fairmont Le Chateau Frontenac on our second morning there to find hundreds of, ah, very healthy looking young guys standing around in spandex checking into the same hotel. All spandex, lots of spandex. It made for, ah, how do I say this? . . . ah, . . . great "people watching" the rest of our stay there. There's a Starbucks in the hotel lobby. So have coffee, read the papers, play with your iPads, and people watch.

Wednesday September 22nd I had the exact same thought twice in the same day. Hours apart, the same "sentence" rolled through my brain. The first time that day it made me sad. Or should I say weary? Melancholy? But hours later I had the same thought again, this time in a "happy context." Thinking the exact same thought on the same day was odd so that's probably why I took notice of it and remembered for now. The thought was, "God I'm familiar with this place."

Context One, the melancholy context:

I am walking through the halls of Swedish Hospital heading to the wing where they yank feeding tubes out of the wall of your stomach. This was the goodbye day for feeding tube # 4, the super-sized one. I know my way around Swedish Hospital without asking for directions. This makes me sad. And reflective for all of the times I have been there and the times I have visited Mark Besta there. And, this year, Tim Allen there (appendectomy). I go there too much for my liking.

Same day, hours later

Context Two, the happy context:

I am walking through SeaTac airport and I think to myself, "God I'm familiar with this place." This time I was off to Denver to hopefully meet Carly Simon. Free of a feeding tube! (I was worried if Carly hugged me she'd feel the 12 inch plastic tube sticking out of my stomach under my shirt!)

CARLY SIMON !

So . . . nutshell this, I am running out of time here, oh - it's Tuesday already by the way, tomorrow is the day on the table at Swedish, this letter has to be at Kinkos by tonight so I don't have to worry about it as they put me under tomorrow where was, oh, yeah . . . Cherese is a stage manager for corporate events. Annual shareholders meetings, product launches, etc. Acura is a car company. they were having a convention of Acura car dealership owners in Denver at the convention center there. Cherese is hired to run the show. Now guess who the after the rubber chicken closing night banquet dinner entertainment guest star is? What are the odds of this? What are the odds I'd be obsessing about Carly Simon since I was 17 in Detroit constantly singing "That's the way I always heard it should be" and now one of my best friends is working for Acura and they have hired Carly Simon and I can get a full access backstage pass to the whole affair?

I think these odds are not great. But they were in my favor. So yes, even with the move, finish, sell and move stuff going on around me, in the middle of all of this, I flew alone to Denver. I had a great time. I'm eating again and taking myself out to nice meals. I'm touring Denver on foot - had never been there, liked it a great deal. And I'm in a super deluxe FREE hotel room (thanks to Paula and Cherese) in the Hilton in the heart of downtown with a schedule in my pocket of when Carly is going a dress rehearsal, a sound check, and so on. So I show up for the sound check. And Ben Taylor and Sally Taylor are there (James Taylor's kids) so it's like a trifecta for me. All of my teenage obsessions, still active and making me feel like a kid again, almost 40 years later, in one room. Between rehearsals and the show I toured Denver finding cool coffee spots and then hung out in my deluxe hotel room at the Hilton.

For the final show I was sitting alone in the front row with Acura dealership owners on either side of me. I think they could tell I was not one of them. Carly was about 12 feet in front of me.

After the show it was arranged that Paula (Cherese's business parter, also from Seattle) and Cherese and I should meet Carly Simon and be photographed with arms around her looking at the camera. (So glad the feeding tube was gone as now I'm touching Carly Simon!) Carly gave me one of her soon to be released CDs signed to me by her with love. The photo of the 3 of us with Carly was later e-mailed to me. The next day I flew back to the chaos that was my Seattle life about then.

If the term "bucket list" didn't make me want to barf, I'd find a way to use it in the telling of this story. But it does so I can't.

I Had The Simplest Birthday Gift For Me From Me Planned

But it was not to be. The gift was simple: I was going to take my birthday off work and spend it from early in the morning till late at night alone in our new Capitol Hill apartment with Inga. But Inga died 3 days before my birthday. We rented this apartment out of all those we looked at for that dog. And she had been here many times. We rented the apartment quickly, back in early August, and got the keys. I am the advance team. I set up things like DSL, phone service, cable TV, and so on. There's lots to do and I'm pretty specific about the order they are done in, who does them, etc. I had a bevy of service providers lined up for appointments on this day. I made calls well in advance to set appointments and when they asked what day they could come out I'd say, "October 11th." So I spent the day here alone organizing things, meeting vendors and building shelves, fussing tools and whatever, all without our dog. It was not a great day.

Oh Pulheeze, We've Done This 14 Times For God's Sake

I had my two days with Carly in Denver alone. And David had planned four days in Palm Springs alone. He was going on a Thursday and coming home on a Monday. I thought, so soon after Inga's death, and with all the construction going on at our house, a trip away would be good for him. So plans were made. But then we realized that he was coming back on a Monday and wouldn't be here to drive me to my routine throat stretching procedure. I say don't worry about it, Rebecca can drive me. But she couldn't this time. David offered to adjust his trip. I say, "Oh pulheeze" and I assure him this is not a big deal. I got it! I'll get up super early, drive to our new apartment on Capitol Hill, drop my car off there and WALK to Swedish where the routine procedure will happen. Later I'll call Mark Besta and he can drive me back to the apartment. I'll have coffee at Vivace (which is what I do immediately after this routine procedure each time since I have to go to the thing on an EMPTY stomach, no coffee, no muffin = hate that! So I have a plan, David goes to Palm Springs, all is well. I have a plan.

So here we are, Monday October 18th. It starts out exactly like it should. I go in, I am on the table, I chat with Dr Aye a bit, they sedate me, and

. in a fog I wake up and I'm on a gurney and I am being rushed, as in ran, through the halls of Swedish Hospital. There are 5 people around this gurney. Dr Aye is not one of them. Who are these people? And why is this one holding a mask on my face? Who is screaming "STAT" all of the time? What's going on? Why is everyone barking at each other? How does this fit into my plan?

Hours later I wake up in the Intensive Care ward at Swedish Hospital. I am hooked to all of these wires and machines and IV lines and no one is around to tell me what's going on. But I know this just ain't right. I am supposed to be home packing and cracking the whip at contractors. I think Mark Besta was there. I really don't remember much till much later that day.

Eventually Dr Aye comes in and looks at me and says, and this is exactly what he said, it burned into my brain at the time,

"Well you look pretty good considering we almost lost you on the table."

It was then that I found out you can die during a simple out patient routine old hat procedure that you have done 14 times before and have completely grown used to. Evidently right after they sedated me and started to slide hoses down my esophagus my vocal chords (not part of your

esophagus, part of your trachea) closed and CLAMPED shut and would not open. This means you stop breathing. I completely stopped breathing. For how long I asked. He said casually, "Oh, I don't know, 3 or 4 minutes." I asked how long can you not breathe on the table before you are dead. He said 8 to 10 minutes. And I said, "Can I go home now?" The answer was no. I had to sleep one more night in a hospital just to remind me what that's like. David was on a plane but by this time he knew I was not at home, what had transpired.

The upshot of all of this? No more "out patient" stuff for me. I have been upgraded to the OR, the OPERATING ROOM, at Swedish Hospital for all future throat stretchings. Like tomorrow. I check in at 9:00 AM (no coffee, no muffin, no food after dinner tonight, etc). Dr Aye used to just give me sedative. I have been bumped up to a full on anesthesiologist now, full on anesthesia for me. The anesthesiologist, puts a tube into my lungs via my trachea (wind pipe) and controls my breathing WHILE Dr Aye is sliding ever larger rubber rods down my esophagus (food pipe). What this must look like while it is happening. Oh, no more Mondays. The OR is a Wednesday deal.

Are You Saying

So now people are asking me about "the light" and other silly near death things. We're all making jokes about it, me the most. A few days later, after all of the fuss died down, David and I were in our old kitchen talking and cooking dinner and I said, "I think I know why it happened. I didn't see a light **but** Inga was there calling out to me."

And David said, "Are you suggesting she liked you more than me?"

And we both burst out laughing.

Here It Is: The Very Last "Thing" We Did In 2010

On Friday November 19th David and I flew on Delta Airlines to Detroit. Remember my super generous Aunt who bought my Mom and Dad plane tickets to fly out and see me when I was weak last Christmas? Well she did it again. Aunt Geraldine this time bought tickets for me and David to fly back there. The reason? My Mom's 80th birthday. My two cousins, Susan and Marsha, planned this along with their mom. My dad had his 80th five years ago and I was there. Aunt Geraldine had her 80th in 2009 at the end of May and I was there. My Mom is the last one to hit it. So a surprise was planned. Her birthday was Saturday night. My cousin Marsha was performing in a restaurant that night and it was set up that my parents and Geraldine would be going to watch Marsha sing. In fact my sister Lynn and her whole family were there, David and I were there, I was hidden in a room wearing a big red bow that Susan made (because I was Geraldine's gift to her sister, get it?)

If you can find my Facebook page you can see the photos (all 2 of them) from this trip. My friend Lisa's husband, Eric, showed me over dinner how I could take a photo with my Droid phone and within minutes have it posted on my Facebook page. So I did that. Twice. I wonder if I could remember how to do it again? David and I took Lisa and Eric out to dinner at Haab's in Ypsilanti mainly so David could see what my family has been referring to for the past 40 years. It was another short - 2 nights only - trip, but fun. And it got us away from the move.

At Least We Know How To Do This Right

When the decision to move was made, once we got past that mental hurdle, the rest was hard work, very hard work, and expensive, very expensive, but in a way EASY. It was easy because at least, thank god, we know how to sell a house. There are hundreds of ways to do, and hundreds of ways to plan your next phase, but there was only one way I wanted to do it: Non - contingent. I did not want to look at places to live and fall in love with one only to have to sell our house to get it. Not just because of the market and economy we are in. Because of the stress. I am not saying there's only one right way to do this, we understand everyone's circumstances and options are different, but, well, let me say we've been advising people for 24 years on how to best do this and I said to David, "We need to follow our own advice and see what happens."

The only way to do this was find a place to land first, set up a bed there with a folding table and 4 folding chairs, set up the internet, the TV, the phones and move. Once you can sleep and function there, get the crap out of your house. And my "crap" I mean anything that does not look like professional staging. Had you ever seen my office? Call Frank Kennard and ask him about it. Had you ever seen our laundry room / shop space? Call Tim Allen and ask him about it.

We looked many apartments. We found one, only one, that I really liked. It is in a killer location (for me) and had never been lived in before (brand new unit). All of the other units like this one in this building were rented long ago but this unit, ours, was the model unit so it was the last one like this they had to rent. And, as the model unit, it has some minor things in it other units didn't have. It had painted accent walls. It was clean. But the main thing was this: It has a ground floor living room with its own private front door. A door to the street. A door with its own address. There are 295 units in the building, but our has a separate and specific address. It has a door that we could walk out with Inga and directly be on the sidewalk. Location and that door. Deciding factors.

The apartment building is brand new - it's called the Joule - it's on Broadway, **where the QFC used to be** (for you old timers.) Our door is "around back" facing Harvard Avenue East. Yes, we used to live on Harvard Avenue but that wasn't EAST and I'm here to tell you it makes a huge difference. We are exactly seven blocks north of the apartment building we used to own. Those seven blocks matter. As they say, "Location, location, location," so true once again.

Our apartment has two doors. There's a tiny main floor. There's a 14 stair staircase going up. When you get up there there's a tiny tiny loft and another door. That door takes you into the regular apartment hallways of the Joule. You can walk to the trash and recycle room, to the lobby, to the mailboxes, to the leasing center (where there's full time staff, it's like having a doorman when boxes are being shipped to you!) and to the elevators that take you to the parking garage or the roof top deck. So we have options when we come and go. QFC is literally 1/3 of a block to the left when I open the ground floor door. It is so close it's unbelievable to those of us who used to live in Matthew's Beach.

If I go out the upper loft door I can walk through the building's courtyard down a nice staircase and there, directly in front of me, are the open doors of Vivace where we have coffee. There were days that I'd get up in Matthew's Beach and DRIVE down here to sit at Vivace and read the papers and have a muffin and coffee. Now it's completely dark at 6:00 AM and no one is out on the street at that hour, and there's no traffic, and I walk down through the courtyard and there it is: Warmly glowing, lights on, doors propped open, no one inside (literally at that hour I am often alone there) and I walk in a straight line and there I am. I don't know that I'll ever want to leave this location.

4,700 square feet · 400 square feet · 789 square feet

You know what other kind of math I'm especially good at? Square Footage Math !!!!!

The house was easy. The main floor was 2,350 square feet. The lower floor was identical. Two times 2,350 and you're at the magic 4,700 square feet. David always jumps in here and says that's misleading, there's a 400 square foot garage in your math, blah blah blah blah. My point is not about living space. My point is about our stuff and how much space it took up. It may have been a garage but we had stuff in it. So whatever, 4,700 square feet, 4,300 square feet, whatever.

The storage locker is easy. It is 20 feet by 20 feet with a large rolling garage door on one side of it. That's 400 square feet. David doesn't dispute this based on whether we can live in it or not.

And then the tiny apartment. When we rented it they said it was between 871 and 1000 square feet, that it varied from loft to loft unit. I could see it was tiny but I also saw two doors so it didn't matter. Last night I got out a 30 foot tape rule and a pad of paper. Here's the deal:

Main floor of this place, living room, dining area, kitchen, 1/2 bath and closets, about 15 wide by 38 feet long. Specifically: 177 inches wide and 452 inches long. 80,004 square inches. Divide by 144 and you end up with 555.58 square feet. But wait, subtract for that front door/porch area, lose 30 square feet. And there you are at 525 square feet. Most of our days are now spent in 525 square feet. Trust me, I've done the math and triple checked it. Good thing we like each other!

And there's an upstairs, a "loft" they call it, a bedroom and full bath, about 14 feet wide (where did that other width foot go?) by 20 feet long. Specifically: 170 inches wide and 249 inches long. 42,330 square inches. Divide by 144 and end up with 294 square feet. But wait, don't count the staircase twice. Subtract 30 square feet for that and you arrive at 264 square feet. (David didn't even want to count the staircase once but I did - it's IN the main floor measurements).

264 + 525 = 789

I have done the math. We are living in 789 square feet and not all of it is useable (staircase). And we have a 400 square foot storage locker. Our stuff has gone from 4,700 square feet down to 1,189 square feet. You can't walk in the storage locker at all. Think I'm kidding? Call Tim Allen.

We now officially have too much stuff. I might be a hoarder. We won't know for sure until a decision is made about where we will live next.

There's Just Too Much Math In This Year's Letter

Storage locker = \$293. Rent = \$1,835. Parking 2 cars = \$150 Dog surcharge on the rent when we get one = \$15. Add those 4 things up and you'll have a monthly number. I don't have utilities figures yet so I don't have a final monthly number, but the initial hard number is good.

VS

Cost to keep and maintain a 4,700 square foot house = I'll never tell. But let me just say this: It was a shocking number. To get to a monthly number for the house I added up every utility bill for several years and got an average for a month (I love Quicken). I added up all yard care costs for

the last two years and got an average. I looked at the housecleaner's cost, maintenance that's house specific, I looked at it all. I did averages. I found a number. A monthly number. And then I compared monthly numbers for here VS there.

Suze Orman would so approve of this move, let me just say that.

It is too soon to know if the authorities are going to make me turn in the **YRENTBY** licence plate at this time. I think the authorities will wait a year or so to see what happens. I think David and I have a grace period. The authorities need to cut us some slack here - after all it's not like we don't have 7 other mortgages still.

Back To Knowing How To Do It Right

Our house sold in 6 days after it hit the market and closed 33 days later.

So here's another FAQ of late: How did you sell your house so fast? How do you do that? The answer is simple. Sad, but simple: Be willing to sell it for hundreds of thousands of dollars less than what you have into it and less than what you once thought (hoped?) it was worth.

Yes, we knew, believe it or not, that this was not the best market to be selling a house in. We also knew that I was strong enough to do it now and that we just don't know what the next year will bring. We knew the 8 miles we had to drive to get anywhere we wanted to be from there was driving us crazy. We knew that should **NED** leave me we wanted to be back down here when he did. There were many factors but basically we knew we had a clear shot at it now that we might not have again for awhile. So once you make a plan, once you decide the time is now, if you're going to do it, THEN DO IT. Find out where the market is and go there.

What your friend's cousin sold for in 2007 doesn't matter even if it is identical to what you have to sell today. What Zillow said back in 2006, the last time you checked their site, well that's not so relevant now. What you paid for it in 2005 and how much you have spent on improvements since then - really? - when you're buying something is this how you'd decide what you're willing to pay? No. You'd check Craigslist or the internet and see what you would have to pay for one similar to it. You'd ask a professional what they thought. Then you'd decide what you were willing to pay.

David and I tell this to clients all of the time. I spend my days coaching agents on conversations just like these that they are having with their clients daily. You might think making a hard choice like this might be easier for us since we live with this all day long. And perhaps it was. Still I spend time now trying to NOT think about what we spent on improvements at that house. I have all the professional photos of the finished product on my iPad and show them to anyone who'll slow down and look at them. I look at them and I admire what we did, but I really try to not THINK about the numbers (math again!) of what we did, what we spent doing it, and then what we sold for.

We lost a vast amount of money selling in this market but we didn't want to wait. We have other things we wanted to do. (We just don't know what they are yet.) On the other hand it's not all boo-hoo-hoo here. At least we were able to sell. At least we were not, pick a term from CNN: "underwater," "upside down," "selling short," and so on. I am a news junkie. I watch all of these CNN shows, financial shows, etc. And I have close friends here and across the country who I am in touch with who have sold short or been foreclosed on. So see even when you're losing massive money, there's a bright side: **You were able to sell!** It's all in the attitude.

What Up For 2011

Well good health comes to mind. I am looking forward to a year from now being told I am still **NED** and can move to ANNUAL check ups from that point on. David is looking forward to me breathing in a quieter fashion. But mostly breathing.

I'm looking forward to seeing what the heck David and I do next. I truly have no idea what that will be as I end this letter. Where we will be living a year from now? What's next? When? Not having these answers is very exciting in a way, it shakes things up a bit. After 26 years together that's kinda fun.

I am looking forward to consuming more food, better food, plenty of better quality food.

Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? I have never in my life seen this game show. Not even 3 minutes of this game show. And I did not see any version of this show in any movie that was based even a wee bit on this game show. I only watch FICTION on TV. I never watch anything where the word "reality" or "game" could be linked to the word "show" SO why am I looking forward to seeing this game show for the first time? Because my dear friend Merritt Green is going to be on the show. It's already in the can. She has been to New York. She has met Meredith Vieira. She has played the game with Meredith Vieira. Merritt has been filmed doing this. And Merritt has won something. But she can't talk about it. When I first heard of this I said we'd have a huge party in the TV room at our old house - that room easily could hold 15 people for the Oscars each year, that couch! But the couch was sold along with the house. I have no idea where I'll be watching **Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?** this year, but I will be. Once.

I'm looking forward to growing even older with David. Hoping he still feels the same way.

We're looking so forward to getting another dog. Of course it will be a Weimaraner. Not only are they good dogs, they are stunning dogs to see. We love the look of those dogs. Just like we love the look of well designed furniture and houses. And they are just the right size. For me. I need a dog I know I'm spooning with when I'm spooning with it.

We're still here. Hope you are too.

Goodbye for another year, and please keep in touch,



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